

### Executive summary:

Weforest is partnering with SAWED TRUST – a recognized non-profit organization- to work towards the empowerment of underprivileged women and children, with health, vocational training and education programs. Together we train local communities in the Sirumalai Hills in sustainable reforestation to address food insecurity caused by population growth, land degradation and water shortage. Planting 85,000 trees creates over 10 permanent and 30 temporary jobs, primarily for women, which will help these families to feed their children and send them to school.

### Population growth and environmental degradation

The Sirumalai Hills<sup>1</sup> (Eastern Ghats) is situated 6.5 km south of the Dindigul District of Tamilnadu state, South India. We are restoring 450 to 620 hectares, which includes barren lands, patta lands and forest area. The rainfall regime is tropical with the bulk of the rain falling during the retreating monsoon period from October to December. The vegetation ranges from tropical thorn forest to mixed deciduous forest, dry evergreen forest, moist deciduous forest and semi-evergreen forest. 82% of the population live in rural areas engaged in agricultural activities. This area is recurrently subject to food insecurity mainly due to population growth and environmental degradation.



### Breaking a vicious circle



The major causes of deforestation are expansion of farmland, engagement of the farmers in charcoal and fuel wood production, fuel-wood shortage, utilization of wood for housing construction and grazing of the land by cattle. Out of all of these, the major one is the density of population, which has compelled the farmers to encroach on the area for farmland. As a result of all these factors, land degradation, wild life extinction, over-grazing and shortage of fodder for livestock have occurred. These in turn have led to soil degradation, low agricultural productivity, food shortages, water shortage and changes in the agro-ecology of surrounding areas.

### Taking care of the trees

The community participates in the reforestation program and in so doing is educated in conservation practices. Conservation clubs will be formed, involving schools, to carry out seedling planting on the mountain. The Office of Agriculture, local forest departments, the Panchayat village administration and small farmers' association will also be involved.

<sup>1</sup> 10° 7' – 10° 18' N latitude and 77° 55' – 78° 12' E longitude

In selecting the species that we plant, climate, soil suitability, the environment, and species which benefit the local population are taken into consideration. We plant Artocarpus, Acacia, Ailanthus, Azadirachta, Bambusa, Ceiba, Tamarnidus, Bassica, Tectonia, with a density ranging from 1600 to 400 per ha, depending on the species. Our capacity is currently 75,000 tree seedlings per year to be planted in the hills and 35,000 fruit seedlings which will be given to the small and marginal farmers in the community to generate income. Every year the planting season starts around August for the nursery work, trees and transplanted in Oct and November.

#### **What are the direct benefits for local communities?**

- Planting 85,000 trees creates over 10 permanent and 30 temporary jobs and 80% of our workforce are women.
- Planting will restore the ecological balance of the Sirumalai hills
- Community mobilization around land restoration including 60 surrounding schools, which will be educated on the value of forests
- Farmers will get trained to organic practices
- The distribution of fruit seedlings to the community will provide income and better nutrition.
- The parallel introduction of fuel efficient stoves to surround community will reduce the rate of deforestation by half.

**We thank you for wanting to make a difference in one of the poorest regions of India!**

