

# TIST

## The International Small Group & Tree Planting Program

It only took two hours of hard rain to bring the mountain down on the town of Murukora, Uganda. Terraces of farmland, carved into the mountainside over decades, disintegrated into a deluge of mud, vegetation, and water. The avalanche of earth crashed toward the valley floor obliterating farmland and lives. Baryahisahe Nathan's voice grows soft as he recalls losing cattle, goats, chickens, and two acres of farmland. He's one of the lucky ones. Thirteen of his neighbors died and dozens more remain displaced or homeless.

The population in Nathan's region has skyrocketed in recent years. With more mouths to feed, valley communities have ventured farther and farther up the sloping jungle hillside to clear land for planting. They planted maize, millet, and beans, inadvertently sowing the seeds of their villages' destruction.

On Nathan's farm there stands a tree planted by his grandfather. Generations of Baryahisahas have taught the value of planting trees. Faced with the destruction of his community, he began to mobilize. The government was distributing emergency supplies. But Nathan needed a solution for the future. He turned to TIST.

Deforestation and landslides require a community solution. Nathan recruited ten of his neighbors, and educated them on the benefits of planting trees. With TIST, farmers could protect themselves and earn an income at the same time. In the village, people took notice. Soon they started a new Cluster, with Nathan as their leader. Over the course of 2018, they have added 15 new TIST Small Groups, planting more than 9,300 trees. Row by row, the seedlings they planted are spreading their roots, creating a bulwark against future landslides.

Down in the valley, Nathan's Cluster is meeting each month. They started participating in TIST to prevent landslides, but the farmers are doing much more now. Nathan has kept bees for decades. Through the TIST network, he is sharing this skill with his community members. His Cluster is learning financial planning and improved agricultural practices. They select trees with strong roots on the hillsides, and plant fruit trees beside their houses. Nathan plants trees with his children, saving future generations from the mistakes of the past.

There are now over 90,000 TIST farmers in four countries. They have planted and kept alive over 18 million trees that have sequestered over 5 million tons of carbon dioxide. Every day more farmers want to join.



