SEED Together Renewing Endangered Ecosystems through human ecology

SeedTree

Projects in Progress:

Issue 15 December, 2010

Facing worldwide forest loss, our seed idea, conceived in 1995, was to demonstrate the most promising principles and practices to stem the tide of forest loss and degradation and turn it toward ecosystem restoration. Planting that seed in Nepal we soon learned that in the planning process, ***inclusion of greater human diversity*** (by age, status, gender) ***protects greater biodiversity***. In particular, we see how crucial is the role of ***women in conservation.***

This was a theme of a luncheon in Washington., DC, October 7, honoring 6 **Women Heroes of Global Conservation** http://www.actforconservation.org/why-it-matters/women/women-heroes/ including Nobel Laureate Dr. Wangari Maathai.

In rural Nepal, the traditional gender roles lend differing interests in the forest; for example, men who construct dwellings or plow fields take more interested in timber, its strength and hardness. Women tend to better know forests as producers of fuel, food, fodder, dyes and medicines. By including these vital and more assuredly sustainable values of forest species in our community dialog, we expand the community's call for more species to protect.

Additionally, since most of the agricultural and forest work is done by women, their perspectives should be given a prominent priority in forest policy design and practical decision-making. As discussed by the 6 international Women Conservationists, it is women who are often the most harmfully impacted by ecosystem degradation. They must go further and spend more time collecting fuel, for example, often at great risk to themselves.

Approached cheerfully for the photo above, the woman said "dukh," meaning pain or difficulty. Prolapsed uterus has reached near epidemic proportions in some areas of Nepal, spurred by such difficult labors. To reduce this burden, our first priority tree planting site is near the home.

Women report our **improved efficiency stoves can reduce their fuel consumption and thus gathering time up to 50%,** and biogas plants even more. This year we provided for the construction of **15 biogas plants and 134 improved cooking stoves,** replacing the open fires on the earthen floors that make a health hazard for homes, particularly for women and the young children at their side.

Dr. Maathai called upon the US to develop a global conservation strategy since so many of our other strategic goals depend upon conservation of natural resources. She points out that scarcity of natural resources is at the root of much strife and violent conflict. Put simply: ***natural security sustains national security*** and well-being.

SeedTree's Carol Kinsey gives Dr. Habiba Sarabi, Afghanistan's only female Governor, instrumental in establishing its 1st National Park, a SeedTree pen made from apple wood descended from Johnny Appleseed's last known hand planted apple tree.

Maya in 1996 shows us her village Ghidhaniya's eroding gullies.

In 1996, Maya Bandari, showed us the eroding gullies around her home, typical of deforested Dang at that time so recent that young adults could still recall fearing tiger as children they walked to school along jungle paths. Maya's women's group hoped to halt the erosion brought on by the severe deforestation through planting trees.

We helped them start a "guerrilla nursery" that suffered considerable losses of seedlings when their water supply went dry. Also in 1996, the Maoist conflict broke out, and Dang, driven by such desperate conditions, became an insurgent stronghold. This year, 14 years later, I returned with Program Manager Bed Bahadur KC for the first time since 2001 during the worst years of the conflict . We were greeted ceremoniously as they showed their appreciation with garlands and oil lamps.

This, our precarious 1996 nursery effort has now yielded a 3.5 hectare forest encircling fields. We will further guide the process of developing a sustainable management plan leading to a legal hand-over of full rights to their Community Forest User Group CFUG, to utilize accordingly.

2010 *Above and below: Maya in the red sari center and other groups members proudly show a 360 degree panorama of Ghidhaniya women's group's community forest*

This forest now protects fields from wind and water erosion, supplies fuel, fodder and timber, and recharges their water table, as birds and other wildlife return, bringing seed to add to its growing biodiversity. It may also have contributed to keeping the peace through the war. This 1996 nursery group, composed of women from the warring factions, kept peace and quiet unity through the decade of conflict as they watched their creative efforts bear fruit. We revived their environmental trust fund, which had collapsed in 2001 as the conflict escalated, and gave credit management training to 6 other Dang savings and credit groups in a 2 day workshop.

Dang Eco-credit workshop

As a seed reaches roots down into soil, we meet the on site needs of these traditionally forest peoples for forest products, engaging diverse community members inclusively in dialogue about their traditional uses of native species. Thus we found our tree-planting program on indigenous knowledge of their ecosystem's diverse species: for food, fuel, fodder, climate, erosion and water resource control, beauty, and medicine. 2010 saw success in restoring to Dang a 2nd extirpated medicinal species, *Terminalia arjuna*, as we have with

Medicinal saved from local extinction

Vijaysal, (Pterocarpus marsupium). Recent research confirms *Arjuna* efficacious in treating several cardiovascular maladies, as recognized for millennia by Ayurvedic medicine.

Saplings in Sri Krishna CFUG Nursery, Dhading

Tree planting: Gyaneshwor CFUG, Mangalpur, Chitwan

Nursery Mgmt. topic circles

Largely with Working Assets/Credo Mobile's Fueling the Future Credit Card support (funding the planting of 150,000 trees over the past 2 years), we established 21 nurseries in Chitwan, Dang, Dhading, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok and Kathmandu, **growing 216,397 new trees of 41 species,** planting 195,803 trees in their permanent sites: by homes, roadsides, shelterbelts, in gullies and increasingly to enrich the developing community forests. Participants affirm by action their faith that they *can* act for a better future.

Seed Tree Nepal's 2010 workshops # participants:

25 Jan	Refresher Course for Eco Ed Facilitators (for 09 classes in progress at the time)	13
26 Feb	General Assembly of Seed Tree Nepal	82
21 Mar	Nursery Management Training for groups' reps	28
14 Jun	2010 Agro forestry management workshop	17
21-24 Nov	Eco-Ed (Basic Environmental Systems Sci. & applied Human Ecology) Rural Night Course Facilitator Training Workshop for 20 groups	20
10-11 Dec	Eco-Trust credit management training in Dang	12

SeedTree Outcomes Summary:

	1995-2010	2010
trees planted	3,772,991	216,379
wells / pumps	95	16
5 mo. Eco-Ed Classes	107	10
improved stoves	866	134
outhouses / latrines	394	36
biogas -stove -latrines	170	15
vegetable gardening	330	39
scholarships	78	8

OUEST's Fulmati Thapa addresses Seed Tree Nepal (STN)'s 8th General Assembly held in Chitwan

As a seed sprouts up, reaching out for energy, so we strategically connect our rural participants with allied agencies positioned to inform and assist their efforts. That Seed Tree Nepal has implemented this strategy effectively was demonstrated at their annual General Assembly, attended by various stakeholders including the District Forest Officer, representatives from District Coordinating Committee, OUEST, Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN), STN Central Committee and general members.

STN President Baburam Vishwakarma leads a session at Eco-Ed Facilitator 4-day Training

Coordinator Damodar Neupane, leads an initial Environmental / Eco- Ed. Class, in Shaktikhor, Chitwan

ST completed 10 of STN's 15 Environment and Human Ecology Classes and began 20 more, now providing solar and rechargeable lanterns for villages little or no electricity. Attendees gain a greater understanding of nature and sustaining their relation, thus becoming agents of transformation through their homes and communities. They contributed to the activities in the diagram at left, and others such as horticulture, recycling, making natural organic insect repellent to substitute for harmful pesticides, improved waste management., tending community forest, etc.

As our SeedTree has grown and matured in Nepal, this component of eco-education applied in action is a seed that may travel, carrying promising principles, to cross-pollinate with local conditions in other areas. Aqif Shahzad of EDEN, an environmental education organization based in Lahore, Pakistan, sees a SeedTree EDEN Project as the Project as the next STEP for the communities and

Pakistani children join in planting trees

groups EDEN serves. Aqif is translating and publishing an Urdu edition of a text based on "Ourselves and Our Environment" that has served our aims so well in Nepal. Aqif is working with a variety of groups and communities, from Christian children to Muslim men. In an address to the latter, he opened the discussion saying he missed seeing women among the participants. EDEN is encouraging all to better understand, honor and work for the well-being of all creation. Common to all three of the monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—is the story of Noah, exemplifying the worthiness of saving species. This publication, always aiming at application, will mean a lot to the groups reached.

Nahua Fundo, SeedTree Eco-Reserve:

Logger Juan Lao views one of our Peruvian reserve's old Ceiba pentandra trees.

Another of our seeds is taking root in Peru, where we are establishing an eco-reserve in Ucayali, along the of Mishaua River, forming the boundary with Cusco Province. The land, called Nahua Fundo (deep in the Nahua region) is separated from the recently contacted Nahua tribal reserve only by a logging concession held by our reserve's previous owner, Juan Lao. Except for an area cleared for use by missionaries and anthropologists, it is largely wild jungle. By maintaining a presence there we can protect such threatened species as macaw, spider monkeys, turtles, as well as the reserves' great old trees—seedtrees for future reforestation efforts—from illegal harvest.

As a logger, Juan Lao was accustomed to value the land only by the price of the standing timber easily accessible for harvest. Program manager Adam Stone intends to demonstrate its greater value as an intact ecosystem. The area is perfect for cacao on cleared lands and as understory throughout. It will yield diverse native seed for reforestation, serve as a way station for the recently contacted Nahua Tribe's reserve upstream, and as a destination for small eco-tours engaging in plant and animal species protection / restoration activities such as turtle protection. An initial biological inventory is planned.

At the Home Office, we elected John Perlin, author of "A Forest Journey" President of the Board, joined by Mark Dittrick, right whale activist. We added basement insulation, window inserts made by Mark, and hosted MESEA and SEADS's solar installation workshops adding solar electric panels to our grid tied system and progressing with a solar water heater. Thanks to all participants.

Soni & Charles plan for solar hot water installation

We wish long time friend and ally OUEST Founder Leah Schulte well as she leaves OUEST staff in the good hands of International Partners in Mission. Originally SeedTree directly supported OUEST's projects in the Nuwakot & Sindhupalchowk hills. After forming Seed Tree Nepal in 2001, OUEST became a donor to STN, giving us impetus to develop multi-donor accounting capacity.

Pinus Roxboughi pines planted in early SeedTree OUEST collaboration

In sadder transition, we say fond farewell to our great friend David Demere. As a Debley Trustee, David constantly supported our work, offering creative suggestions, appreciation and always encouraging our support for women. His amazing love of life made him an inspiring hub of our local community. Happily, David's son Seth will continue to coordinate for Debley.

With Credo Mobile sustaining our tree-planting, Kate Kinley Gregg has been a leading life support for our overall program flexibility. Debley and Anderson Rogers Foundation have generously met her matching challenges allowing us to respond to opening opportunities. To all the many friends who contribute however able or inspired, I convey the deep appreciation and gratitude I see in the households I visit, representative of the hundreds who have benefitted from what you have enabled. Thank you. We look to you as we face the challenges and opportunities before us.

Carol Kinsey, Executive Director