Together Renewing Endangered Ecosystems through Human Ecology

SeedTree

Projects in Progress

Issue 23 **Annual Report** **2018**

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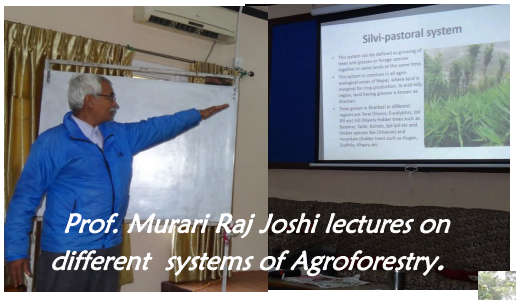
Seed Ideas take to Wing: The opportunities that opened before us at the close of 2016, *ie.*, the enthusiasm of the **Kathmandu Training Center** (KTC) at our participatory processes and the invitation from **Nepal Peace Corps** to collaborate, left us energized with an exciting sense of promise. After 2017's long delay needed to synchronize schedules, we are progressing on both fronts.

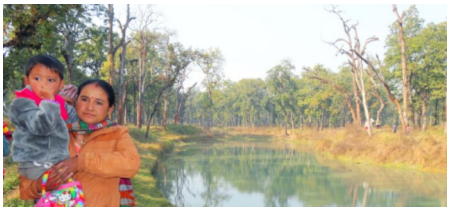
In January 2018 we funded a 4 day workshop, including travel for the Peace Corps Volunteers and their Local Leader counterparts (PCV/LL teams): **Integrating Environmental Systems for Food Security with Regenerative Eco-Agro-Forestry.** The workshop, held in Chitwan, combined classroom lectures on Natural Science for the Eco-Ed Facilitators with a Nursery Preparation practicum for the Nursery and Tree Planting component. The field demonstration was hosted at Navajagrathi Community Forest (CF),



Prof. Murari Raj Joshi lectures on different systems of Agroforestry.

founded in 1996 after a workshop that SeedTree initiated with the District Forest Office introducing the opportunities provided by Nepal's successful policy for Community Forestry. The PCVs enjoyed seeing the Shore robust (*sal*) forest, so different from the Middle Hills. Another reason this Peace Corps partnership a priority is that it exposes the American Volunteers to Community Forestry, which has done so much for Nepal, curbing, and in some cases, reversing the tide of deforestation. As tomorrow's leaders, they may consider how a related policy might benefit degraded lands at home.

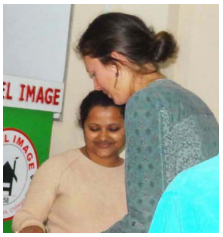
Nursery –making Practicum



I had visited the land that *Continued page 3,*

After practicum and CF tour, participants gather on the banyan and pipal chautara ouside Navajagrathi 's gate.

Closing ceremony: Our Nepal Programs Manager, Beeju Poudyal had impressed upon me how important certificates from NGO trainings are to the Nepali participants. Since accountability is equally important to SeedTree, I designed the certificates as commitments for each participant to work with their team partner for the success of the project. The PCVs agreed to report results. Each PCV and LL signed before receiving their certificate. Experienced local Seed Tree Nepal (STN) members contributed with our SeedTree team: Beeju, Ram & son Sujan, Baburam and me. Our Kate Kinley Gregg Work-Study Scholar, Shilpa Hamal, making excellent progress in her BSc studies at the Institute of Forestry, assisted with translations. Our other Work-Study



Kate and Indu sign and receive their certificates of completion.

Shilpa

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Scholar, Suraj Upadhaya assisted remotely with budgeting and logistics from Univ. of GA. From there, he and Dr. Rob Lilieholm from TX joined our **Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom,** seamlessly arranged in October at the Univ. of Maine by Dr. Brian Roth where he, Suman Acharya, George Ritz, and I met in person.

Teagan in Kathmandu picking up tree seed for Peace Corps sites.

Our greatest impact is often in the initial introduction of our programs. People come together to plan and work effectively for a better future. As a leader of one of our original 1995 Groups, still meeting today, said, "The Nursery Program was the basis of our union."

Each Peace Corps community will host Volunteers for just a few years before moving on to another, underserved location. This gives us a chance to sow our "seed deeds," in an expanding network of sites, otherwise unreachable.

Sarita facilitates her Eco-Ed class

Nine PCVs: **Teagen Baresi, British Griffis, Hope Radford, Kate Wilcox, Kyle Ojima, Ryan Cooper, Hayden Rue, George Muncrief, and Elizabeth Prinkey** found able local counterpart Leaders (LLs), most for both roles Nursery and Tree Planting Leader and Facilitator for the Environmental Science/ Human Ecology classes. All 5 Peace Corps districts: Syanjha, Myagdi, Lamjung, Bhaglung and Arghankanchi are in the Western Region (blue on map) and new to SeedTree. Hope, British, Kate and Kyle will continue in 2019 with new groups. Kate, who helped a lot with seed distribution and coordinating in 2018, is also similarly taking initiative in planning for 2019. She reports 17 more—though not all confirmed, for a **total of 21 PCVs are interested in joining in 2019.** Kate's words give insight into the group activity and relationship:

Mala, Beeju, & Kate introduce SeedTree to incoming PCVs at their Resource Fair

Kate and Sarita's group sows and mulches their nursery.

Ryan & Indu's group making a nursery in the "middle hills" of Arghankanchi.

"The SeedTree project was an incredible way to connect with my community over the environment and an empowering experience for our class facilitator, Sarita. … She ran the classes in a way that the women enjoyed coming together to read through the curriculum and connect new topics with the environmental issues that they observe every day. ...One of the most important aspects of this program is the explanation of climate change, its causes, and the steps we can take to reduce its impacts.... Although a small contributor to global CO^2 emissions, ... Nepal is heavily impacted by Climate Change...The SeedTree program has given women the language to talk about these issues... also provided a space for me to give agroforestry-related trainings such as cover cropping and fruit tree planting techniques….[We] planted the seeds of 16 different varieties of fodder, lumber, medicinal and religiously significant trees. On our first plantation day, we distributed and transplanted hundreds of *lapsi* [a uniquely Nepali fruit tree], *bokaino* [Chinaberry], and moringa trees. The day was filled with excitement and sentiment. To me they said, "When these trees are big, we will sit under their shade, enjoy their fruit and remember you, our Nadi" I can't imagine a better way of being remembered by the community I have grown to love."

George Muncrieft, the only PCV my elder, completed his term and returned to America. He wrote, "SeedTree was an important part of my PC service.... My # one problem… I call the 'Nepal war on trees.' So much deforestation in the middle hills and excessive pruning to feed buff[alo] and goats. So the work of SeedTree made sense to me and I hope the current PCV and new PCV will participate. Pushing these efforts down to the village level is, I believe, best."

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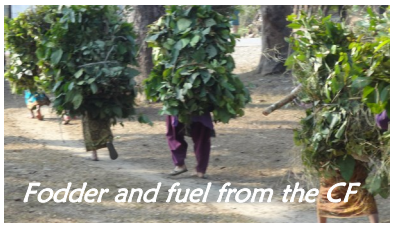
was to become Navajagrathi CF in 1994. Cattle grazed under the old, *Shorea robusta* (*sal*) trees, consuming new growth, hard-packing the bare soil. Navajagrathi is now a thriving 780 acre, diverse and productive Community Forest augmented by several of our understory enrichment plantings. In a major wildlife corridor, NCF is extending the range of such endangered species as Asian Rhino and Tiger beyond the Chitwan National Park, while sustainably meeting mem-



Fodder and fuel from the CF

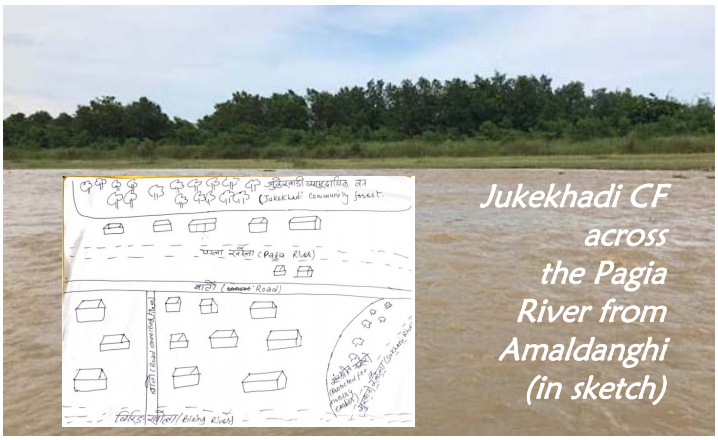
Planting in Navajagrathi CF

Mango saplings in bloom.

Baburam plants a mango tree with Navajagrathi CFUser Group members.

Chitwan-based Seed Tree Nepal's Baburam Vishwakarma led seven Nursery and Tree Planting groups all with associated Eco-Ed classes in Chitwan and Nawalparasi. Four of the five Groups in Chitwan were at schools, including Navajagrathi Bidyalaya. Another Community Forest, Namuna (meaning 'model'), was one of the two groups in Nawalparsi, the adjacent district to the west, across the great Narayani River.

In Nepal's most southeastern district of Jhapa,



Jukekhadi CF across the Pagia River from Amaldanghi (in sketch)

Beeju found the disadvantaged/*Dalit* community of Amaldanghi. Bounded by three rivers near their confluence, residents were hard pressed to find sufficient fuel without encroaching on the nearby Jukekhadi Community Forest. Since no one was found qualified to facilitate our Eco-Ed, Beeju addressed this growing concern of deforestation by focusing on more efficient means of cooking to reduce firewood demand. Beeju arranged the construction of 75 Improved Cooking Stoves ICS, replacing the

Inefficient open pit stove

wasteful and unhealthy open pit stoves with efficient, contained stoves, drawing smoke through chimneys to carry it away. These will considerably decrease the need for firewood (estimates range up to 50%), relieving pressures on Jukekhadi CF and on the human residents as well by reducing time spent gathering firewood. Meal preparation becomes more pleasant and healthful.

The folk art in the upper left of the p.1 banner, shows another traditional cooking fuel, equally wasteful, made by drying dung cakes on the side of one's home. That manure is better used as fertilizer, by composting the slurry from home biogas systems. Beeju also had 100 Biogas plants installed: 45 for Amaldanghi and 55 for surrounding *Satar* (the indigenous Tharu of Nepal's Eastern *Terai* or lowlands) communities.

Ram Prasad Gautam worked exclusively in the Central mountainous district of Sindhupalchowk, devastated by the 2015 earthquake. Government aid is finally reaching those who can rebuild with more quake-resistant designs. Many were eager for our support to rebuild with 120 improved stoves and 156 latrines, 30 with attached biogas

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systems.

Ram kept another part of the promise of 2016 by engaging students of the Kathmandu Training Center (KTC) from all over Nepal to assist him in conducting our PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal. This helps the students toward completion of their required social service and a chance to practice methods fully in accord with those promoted by KTC for use in their home communities. These participatory processes allow the communities to make informed choices whether and how to join an offered program. The results of PRA also allows us to plan on the firm basis of the groups' expressed desires and needs, which, despite progress, are still great in Sindhupalchowk — as the brick rubble near the Eco-Ed class above shows.

Well tile attached to latrine for mixing slurry of water, livestock & human wastes

KTC students help us in Sindhupalchowk

Eco-ed class meets in Sinhupalchowk

Just as with the Peace Corps Volunteers' sites, we provided 6 species of vegetable seed (beans, peas, spinach, radish, peppers, and bitter gourd) to participating Sindhupalchowk households along with 3 species each of fruit tree saplings: mango, guava, and citrus. Both the vegetable seed and saplings are greatly appreciated.

Recognition: In October, Focus Nepal honored "Mr. Ram Prasad Gautam of NAFSCOL Krishiban … for his continuous service in the sector of agriculture and forestry" with their *National Service Award 2018.*

Congratulations are due as well to SeedTree supporters. Too often unrecognized, you deserve to take pride in the "continuous" nature of Ram's service to struggling communities. NAFSCOL Krishiban (Agroforestry) is the non-profit service organization associated with the seed cooperative. Though we have long shared a seed network with NAFSCOL, its associated non-profit, NAFSCOL Krishiban, was formed later as our implementing partner in the Central Mountains. Except for membership dues, it is funded entirely by SeedTree.

In closing, I share a story of recognition long denied Eunice Newton Foote, who in 1856 was the first experimental scientist to foresee the problems CO^2 could make for our atmosphere. Our Senior Advisor John Perlin at UCSB is righting this historic injustice. https://tinyurl.com/y79p84hr Happily, you are ensuring that more women are heard and able to act with the support that recognition brings. Thankfully, Carol

SeedTree 2018 Program Outcomes Summary:

	2018	1995-2018
Trees planted by 22 groups	116,582	5,311,134
Scholarships	2	100
5-month Eco-Ed Course Groups	19 w/481 participants	265
Improved Cooking Stoves ICS	195	2,297
Latrines (constructed new)	156	
Biogas plants: (stove & Latrine, new construction)	130	840
6 species vegetable seed given for 420 households gardens.	420	
1260 fruit tree saplings 3 species given for household horticulture	1260	
# of 481 Eco-Ed students without any extra funds also did:		
(PCV classes) Bee-Keeping	4	
Fishery	1	
Green Manuring (organic fertilizing)	357	
Home Horticulture (STN participants)	75	
Waste Mgmt., Recycling	433	
Biogas plants (STN class participants)	21	