

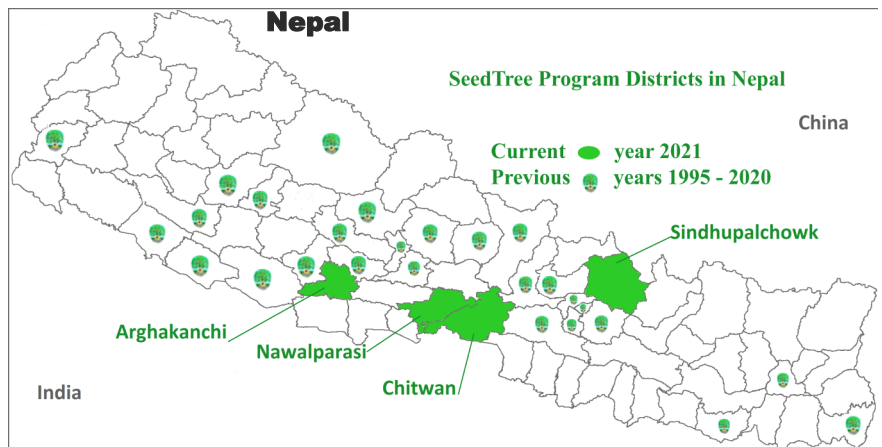


Arghakanchi Leader Goma Malla, left, and members of one of her two 2021 groups prepare to plant their nursery's trees.

SeedTree Projects in Progress 2021 Annual Report

Donor generosity matched the enthusiasm with which we greeted the expansive opportunities opening before us in January 2020, before we imagined the extent of the disruption covid would bring. This generosity enabled us to persevere through the delays and uncertainty since March 2020 when all Peace Corps Volunteers and our Assistant Director Dr. Brian Roth were withdrawn from Nepal, keeping our 2020 commitments to groups. For 2021, we set more modest goals, relying, as we will in 2022 on proven Nepali partners in **Arghakanchi**, **Sindhupalchowk** and around the **Chitwan** National Park, and frequent online meetings. During one of these, we decided this would be a **time of transition**, with Dr. Brian taking up more of the leadership role and that he and former Peace Corps Volunteer PCV John Buscarino would travel together for a supervisory tour 12/21-1/22 to assess impacts of past work as well as the potential for future collaborations and projects. John's linguistic and practical experience gained from two years as a Nepal Food Security PCV, combined with Brian's Forestry expertise, make an effective SeedTree team, well prepared to address the integrated components of our program in the communities.

Barely skirting airline closures, they arrived, and joined up with regional Manager Ram Gautam on the road to Sindhupalchowk where we completed the remaining 6 of the 15 groups in Bhotsipa (ward) of Indrawati Municipality, Sindhupalchowk. that had requested our program during the large Participatory Rural Appraisal held in January 2020. All 15



Brian and John on the road



Standing, Dr. Brian, Ram, and John meet one of 15 SeedTree groups in Bhotsipa, Sindhupalchowk, December 2021.

had agreed to contribute to the much needed planting of trees along road, newly cut through the steep slopes of Bhotsipa.

Besides tree and vegetable seed and fruit tree saplings, each group received training and stipend for their selected community Environmental Education Facilitator to lead the Natural Science and Human Ecology, "Eco-Ed" classes, usually held evenings and attended by the women. The much appreciated vegetable seed we provided proved sufficient for participants' to



PCV John sells his group's produce to high-end Pokhara restaurants.

feed their families, but not for selling, they told John. Responding to our groups' increasing interest in income generation, we have been exploring trainings for such income generators such as vegetable production and bee-keeping due to groups' increasing interest. During a fruitful meeting

with Peace Corps Nepal, we learned they intend to address this interest as they plan revisions for their reopening. We will meet again online March 2.

The fruit tree saplings we distribute are also highly valued and found to be growing well, especially at lower altitudes. In Chitwan, it is not uncommon to see fruit even in the first year after planting saplings.



1/20

In two year our avocado tree has grown this tall.



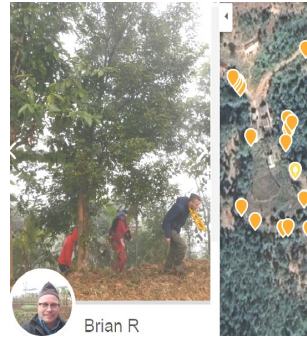
1/22

Our ceremonial sapling planted 1/20 at our Chitwan hotel is ready to produce avocados.

Brian made progress with his aim to record more of our planted trees to treetracker.org via Greenstand's app and teach some of our leaders (John B, baburam V, Ram D) to do so. The website shows the earth with clusters of numbers on different continents. Zooming in on a cluster, it separates, ultimately into individual trees located by GPS coordinates with a block-chain



12/21: John and Brian flank Peace Corps staff, with Managers Beeju and Kishore Ghimire in the center.



Brian R

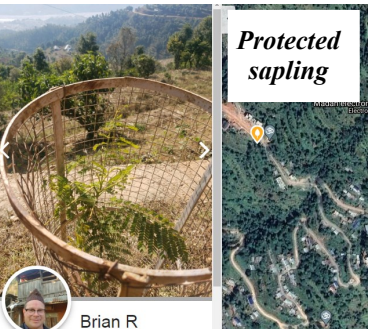
Exploring Dhading groups' 2013 trees.

planted in 2013. After seeing so many 1-2 year old saplings in Sindhupalchowk, they were impressed to see how the eight year old fruit trees in Dhading were thriving and the extensive area forested with mixed species. Magithar group leader Kamala Pandit, shows the litchi and lemon trees grown from our saplings. She says she learned leadership from SeedTree and the group formed still exists and was the foundation for local government and the farmers' group, also



Litchi & lemon trees from 2013 saplings

Hom Bahadur Thapa

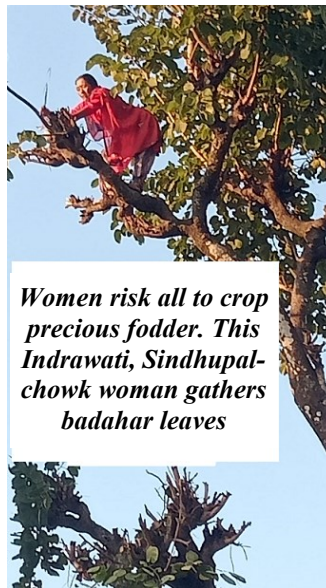


Protected sapling

Brian R

protected "impact token," generated for each. The owner may sell on the global market. This gives incentive to care for the planted trees, as this newly planted amla sapling in Sindhupalchowk.

On the way to Chitwan, the team stopped in Dhading to compare trees



Women risk all to crop precious fodder. This Indrawati, Sindhupalchowk woman gathers badahar leaves

planning future work such as organizing tractor use to plow their fields. The mango saplings we gave Hom Bahadur Thapa inspired him to purchase and add over a dozen more 2-3 years ago. Usually we give three fruit saplings to each participant in the community's nursery of diverse species. From it, the members are encouraged to plant all they wish on their own lands and the remaining seedlings are planted in their Community Forest or public lands. Farmers limit the numbers of trees they plant on their own lands due to their need for crops. So, when Raj Kumar



Raj Kumar Kadel

Kadel, in nearby Baishi Khor (buffalo stable), Dhading (coordinates: 27.7974123, 84.8473176), chose to plant 460 trees from the 2013 nursery on his own land, other farmers scoffed and laughed at him. Now, 8 years later he is so proud of his trees, he insisted our team come to see them. He has good reason to be happy with

his choice, as they stabilize his steeply terraced land, protecting it and his home from erosion and landslide, while providing habitat and forest products for fuel and construction. Raj finds turmeric grows well as an income generating understory crop. Turmeric was also being grown by Indira Devi Mahato's Hariali Women's Bufferzone group in Madi, which had been so ceremoniously honored us in 2014.

In 1996, 1997 and several subsequent years, SeedTree sup-



2000

Hariali tree planters take a break



2014

ported Hariali to plant diverse species to reclaim their abandoned and eroding floodplain of the Riu River. Hariali is one of a wide network of nurseries we established throughout Madi, a remote area south of the Chitwan National Park bordering India. When, in 2001 WWF's Terai Arc Landscape TAL project began work in the buffer zone around the Park, they followed and expanded approaches we had pioneered and developed: diverse nursery and tree planting, environmental



2022

Now Hariali's lands are protected from flood and productive.

education, and water harvest ponds, later even, hiring one of our local managers. Our team benefited from one interesting TAL innovation: Homestay Eco-tourism. They lived in a Tharu home associated with the Hariali Community Forest. The CF had also used our initial support to gain that of TAL, for a water harvest pond allowing 3 annual harvests whereas previously, only one was viable.

During the 2nd, Delta wave of covid, districts bordering India went into lockdown, most severely affecting our programs in Chitwan, Nawalparasi managed by Baburam VK, and our Manager Beeju Paudyal in Jhapa, who caught the Delta virus in her home office, despite precautions. Baburam VK, was able to complete 6 Eco-Ed classes, 4 diverse tree and one bamboo nursery in Chitwan.

In Kawaswathi, Nawalparasi we provided a nursery in Nawalpur, at a site associated with a BCN Vulture conser-



Musahar women carry seedlings for planting.

vation protect to restore 9 species of Nepal's Vultures, 7 of which are endangered, 4 critically, by

feeding them carcasses free from the NSAID toxicity that has decimated the populations. The dalit Musahar (from *rat-eater*, indicative of their extreme poverty) community is proud of their uniquely community-led biodiversity conservation efforts. With 3 annual harvests, they are lifting themselves out of the poverty with which they have been long associated.

Brian and John found these groups very motivated and recommended for continuing work. They were similarly impressed the strong and capable leadership demonstrated by Goma Malla in Ar-



ghakanchi, calling her “a gem.” Goma’s 2020 group, despite the departure of her Peace Corps Volunteer partner Sheri, had succeeded so well that we supported her leading two groups in 2021. Her accomplishments were also admired by an Agricultural technician from her municipality and an online news portal published a story about it. After Goma confided in her, Beeju wrote up her story (pdf available on request). Goma said “It was never too late for me to gain the confidence in life. I got the opportunity to work with SeedTree in right time. Now, I travel alone, visit different offices, look for the opportunities for my community and lead. I feel so happy to work for my community, especially with the women groups. They support me for all the works.... It feels good to be praised.”

Brian checked in with IOF Pokhara to find that they had been inspired by our 2020 demonstration nursery and its financial support to expand it to produce an estimated 50,000 seedlings, which they distributed locally.

Scholarships:

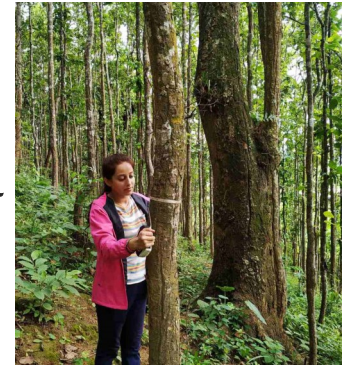
Our former **Kate Kinley Gregg Work-Study Scholar**, **Shilpa Hamal**, despite covid19 delays, was graduated with her **Forestry B.Sc.** In 2021 from the Institute of Forestry IOF Pokhara.

Sadhana Ranabhat is the current recipient of the **Kate Kinley Gregg Scholarship**. For three years Sadhana had volunteered to help Beeju arrange our IOF-Peace Corps trainings, earning her recommendation for the award which Kate granted in May. At that time Sadhana was taking online classes from her Tanahau home due to the covid closure of IOF. She helped Beeju to prepare scripts for recording lessons from our Eco-Ed for radio, though the studio had to close for covid. Sadhana now is in Nawalpur, Nawalparasi, completing her field research at the Amaltari Tharu Village Homestay. Her topic: “*Understanding the economic impact of covid19 on homestay based ecotourism.*” is indicative of the growing popularity of homestay as a way communities can profit from biodiversity conservation. Sadhana expects to graduate in March,



2022 from the IOF Pokhara with a **M.Sc. Degree in Community Forestry**, a new graduate degree at the IOF in a field where women have gained near parity with men through their dedicated efforts.

The **Rob & Barbara Lilieholm Scholarship** was awarded to **Uchita Lamichhane**, for her Masters level research, just successfully completed and defended for the **Agriculture and Forestry University AFU Hetauda** at two Community Forests (CF) in Makwanpur District. Her study is most relevant to our mission: **Impact of Community Forest Management on Tree Species Diversity and Carbon Storage.** Here, Uchita takes measurements critical to determining mass and carbon uptake of the trees.



When in 2020 AFU Dean **Balaram Bhatta** (right) put his arm around Beeju saying he was going to steal her, I feigned anger. However, we couldn’t be more pleased and proud to announce that she has been deservedly selected to join AFU as Assistant Professor. This is a crowning success for Kate Kinley Gregg’s first scholarship recipient, as Beeju is fulfilling her professional aspirations, as it helps SeedTree to respond to Dean Bhatta’s invitation to help AFU develop a field program for students.



Congratulations, Beeju!

Thanks to all for your patience and support!

Clintson

SeedTree 2021 Program Outcomes Summary*:

	<u>2021</u>	<u>1995-2021</u>
Trees planted by 23 nursery groups (all 15 Bhotsipa groups 2020-2021)	80,734	5,592,205
Scholarships	2	106
5-month Eco-Ed Class Groups	14	290
# participants in nursery & tree planting:	346	
# farming vegetables	329	
# composting/green manure	329	
# recycling/waste mgmt.	329	