



Children from a Dalit ('untouchable') community displaced by climate change-related flooding of the Kamala River at a newly completed Community Learning Centre, a project implemented by our NGO partner the Mithila Wildlife Trust and funded through a Big Give education appeal from the summer of 2024.

Pipal Tree

2025 H1 update report

1. Introduction

This report provides a review of the first half of our financial year from January to June 2025.

We are pleased to report that the strong momentum we built in 2024 - both in the UK and in Nepal - has continued into this year. However, significant challenges remain.

Pipal Tree and its partners are actively responding to the global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, which are having a severe impact on Nepal's environment and its most vulnerable communities. These needs have come into stark focus in recent weeks, with two major disasters occurring: catastrophic mountain floods caused by a glacial lake outburst, and a prolonged drought in the southern plains (the Terai). This is the second serious drought during the monsoon in just three years, something previously unheard of.

Rice farmers rely on flooded fields to plant their crops, and this year many have been unable to do so. The socioeconomic consequences for their livelihoods and for both the local and national economies will be severe. If this is the shape of things to come, the implications are deeply troubling.

2. Projects in Nepal

Our project work is primarily focused on two key geographical areas: Kathmandu Valley and Madhesh Province. Madhesh is Nepal's most populous and, arguably, most overlooked province. In Kathmandu Valley, our implementing partner is the social enterprise Lily's Leaves. In Madhesh, projects are delivered primarily by the NGO Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT) with a major project implemented by the NGO Our Sansar and one by Lily's Leaves.



a. Kathmandu valley – Lily’s Leaves projects

The social enterprise Lily’s Leaves is now primarily focused on urban reforestation. This activity began in July 2023 with the planting of Kathmandu’s first rapid-growth Miyawaki forest along the banks of the Bishnumati River. In just two years, what was once an informal rubbish dump on waste ground has been transformed into a thriving green space. The forest has already shown signs of biodiversity recovery – we recently spotted a bird’s nest in the branches of one of the young trees. We planted two additional Miyawaki forests along the river in 2024, laying the groundwork for a future wildlife corridor. This programme has been supported in part by a gift made in a Will.



Lily Katuwal KC visiting her first Miyawaki forest, now two years’ old

Urban land is scarce, and while efforts continue to secure additional sites, Lily’s Leaves has recently turned its attention to Swayambhu. This is one of Kathmandu’s most iconic landmarks and a major Buddhist pilgrimage site, also known as the Monkey Temple, on a hilltop overlooking Kathmandu valley. Once rich in native forest, the surrounding slopes have been degraded by deforestation, soil erosion, littering, and the planting of non-native pine trees, which acidify the soil. Restoration has required extensive groundwork: clearing waste, excavating and enriching soil, fencing off vulnerable areas from monkeys, and planting native species. (Note: The planting took place in early July - see [this blog post](#) for more details.)



In the past, one of our key limitations was the narrow range of sapling species available for planting. Most were timber-producing varieties donated free of charge by the Department of Forestry, supplemented by fruit, nut, and flowering species purchased from private nurseries. For these purchases, we have been limited by what species are available, rather than having a choice in the best interests of restoring biodiversity. Thanks to recent support through Big Give campaigns, we’ve now addressed this constraint by establishing our own nurseries at Lily’s Leaves. The female workforce (most of whom are deaf) have embraced the opportunity to grow saplings from seed for the first time. They’ve started with relatively common species, which are easier to cultivate and offer valuable learning experience. We plan to expand this work to include the propagation of endangered

species, grown from both seeds and cuttings, as part of a wider effort to collect rare plant specimens and seeds from nearby forests.

Future prospects: There is significant potential to expand the new forest plantations at Swayambhu, particularly given the strong support from the local community. Lily's Leaves also plans to establish a 'Bagmati Corridor' as a series of forest sites along the banks of the sacred, though heavily polluted, Bagmati River, which flows through central Kathmandu. Funding for the first two of these forests has already been secured through recent Big Give campaigns.



Lily's Leaves trainees constructing polytunnels at a sapling nursery

In addition, a major hospital has expressed strong interest in partnering with Lily's Leaves to plant forests within its grounds. This initiative will depend on continued fundraising success, alongside a meaningful financial contribution from the hospital itself.

Most significantly, Lily's Leaves is positioning itself to play a central role in a major reforestation programme scheduled to launch in Kathmandu in 2027. This ambitious initiative will require a large volume of saplings from carefully selected native species. Discussions are ongoing, but Lily's Leaves - with its newly established nurseries - will be well placed to fulfil this need, offering a pathway to long-term sustainability.

b. Madhesh Province – MWT projects

MWT projects span the areas of environment/conservation, education, healthcare and livelihoods with considerable overlap of these interest areas within projects. The current projects are:

- The Dhanushadham Wildlife Corridor
- The Dhanushadham Bird Park
- Community Learning Centres
- Snake rescue and snakebite mortality mitigation

(i) **The Dhanushadham Wildlife Corridor**

This project, primarily funded by the Swiss foundation La Lomellina and through Big Give campaigns, launched in mid-2024. It aims to establish a corridor - both tangible and intangible - linking the Chure Hills, which stretch east to west across mid-Nepal, with the Dhanushadham Protected Forest (DPF).

DPF represents the last significant tract of untouched forest on Nepal's eastern Terai plains and serves as a critical stronghold for biodiversity. The corridor will span 12 kilometres, following the Baluwa River, which



already acts as a natural (but very exposed) migratory route for large wildlife such as elephants, antelope, deer, wild boar, and big cats. Beyond enhancing biodiversity and conservation, the corridor will also help reduce human-wildlife conflict by offering safe passage and cover for animals, keeping them away from nearby villages and farmlands.

The **tangible** aspect of this project is our ongoing creation of small, fast-growing Miyawaki forests along the southern 2-kilometre stretch of the corridor, forming what we have named the Gurkha Memorial Forest. These 13 forest clusters recognise Nepal's history in that each honours a Gurkha soldier or officer awarded the Victoria Cross (the highest military decoration for gallantry in the British and Indian armies) since the Second World War.

To date, we have secured land for ten of the thirteen forest sites and successfully planted eight of them. However, our progress has been significantly hampered by the latest drought affecting this part of the Terai. Soaring temperatures and a lack of water have made it impossible to continue planting. We are increasingly vulnerable to the unpredictable and extreme weather patterns driven by climate change. Clearly we now need to go beyond planting trees and push back against climate change through a major new drought resilience programme (see later).

The remainder of the 12-kilometre corridor will be developed through more conventional means, encouraging local farmers to adopt agroforestry practices in partnership with the Dutch social enterprise [The Green Intelligence](#). This work, too, has been delayed due to the harsh climatic conditions.

The **intangible** element of the project has been our trialling of organic, non-lethal wildlife repellents to prevent animals from straying onto farmland and damaging crops. Developed by Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT), these low-cost repellents -made from ingredients such as cow urine, garlic, fish entrails, and rotten eggs - have proven highly effective and have been well received by local farmers. With strong early results, the programme has the potential for wider adoption across the region, supported by farmer training.

MWT's core philosophy is that conservation efforts must also meet the broader needs of local communities. Alongside promoting agroforestry, we have supported the creation of women's cooperatives to provide alternative livelihoods, underpinned by microloans. We've also placed strong emphasis on environmental education for local children - tomorrow's conservationists - on whose commitment the long-term success of the corridor will ultimately depend.



Spraying crops with organic repellents – masks required!

(ii) The Dhanushadham Bird Park



Spotted Owlets at the Park

We launched the Dhanushadham Bird Park in December 2021 as our first Miyawaki forest project in southern Nepal. What was once overgrazed and unused community land has been transformed into a dense forest and a haven for endangered flora and fauna. After just three years, the forest has matured to a point where controlled community access is now possible. Livestock are once again allowed to graze, this time in a managed way that benefits the ecosystem, as their movement helps aerate the soil and their droppings enrich it, contributing to the forest's biodiversity.



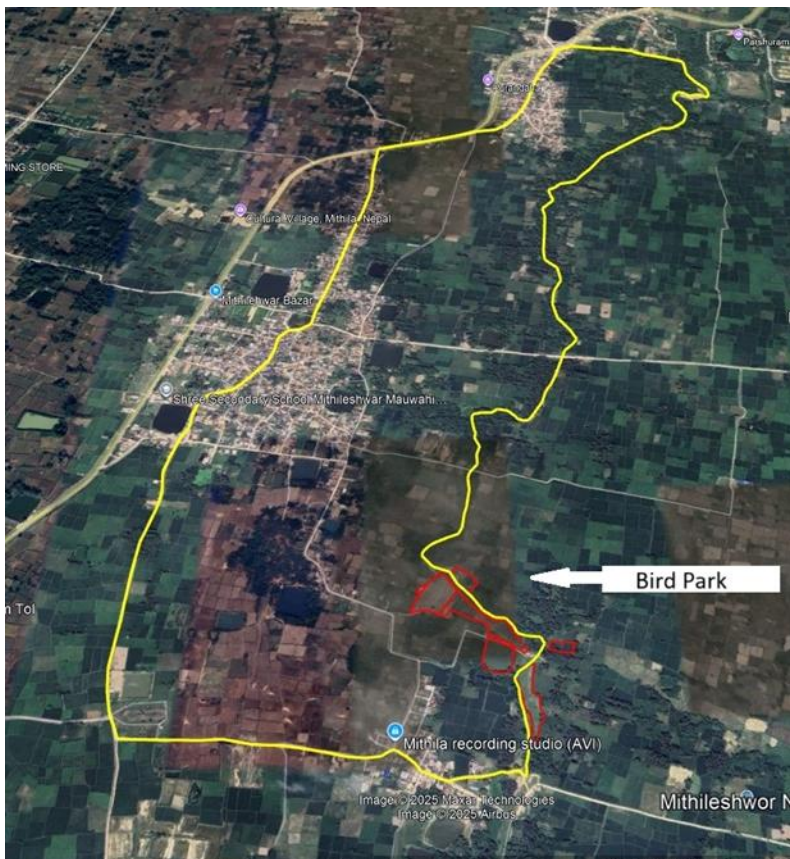
December 2021



August 2024

Although originally conceived as a *bird park*, the site has naturally attracted a wider range of wildlife. It is now home to a family of endangered Bengal Foxes, and the discovery of a shed King Cobra skin – an apex predator – indicates a thriving and well-balanced ecosystem. As additional funding has become available, we have gradually expanded the park, with new forest plantations and small dams creating wetland habitats.

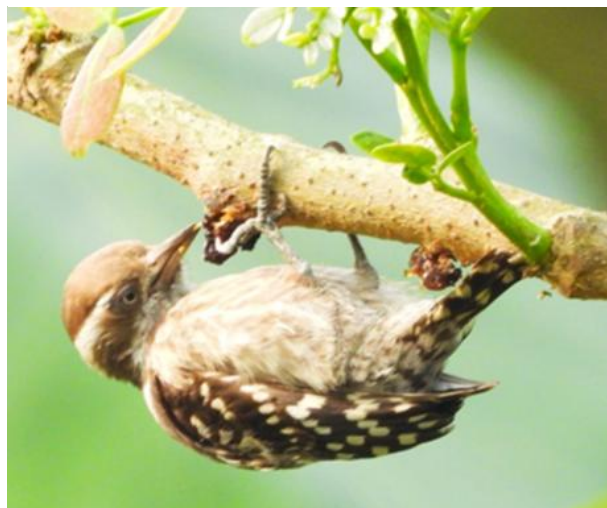
This year, MWT set up a birdwatching group for local children. Each Saturday, up to 45 children and young people visit the park, equipped with guidebooks and binoculars. This hands-on engagement with nature is not only educational but also vital for building a new generation of conservationists who will help safeguard the future of this unique, community-managed nature reserve.



Looking ahead, our master plan is to make the Bird Park (outlined in red on the adjacent map) the centrepiece of a new eight-kilometre nature trail (marked in yellow). Designed with young naturalists in mind – rather than mass tourism – the trail will include additional Miyawaki forests, wetlands, and interpretive signage to highlight the ecological features of the landscape and its integration with the local community. This model, we believe, can be replicated across Madhesh Province. The trail will also recognise those who helped make it possible through grants or from gifts in Wills.



Left: The Dark Sitana Lizard is endemic to the Terai region of Nepal and one of the world's most endangered reptiles. Up until a few months ago it was found only in one of Nepal's 77 Districts. But now it is resident in a second District after taking up residence in five of our Miyawaki forests.



Right: A Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, photographed for the first time ever in Madhesh Province spotted at the Bird Park in May 2025

(iii) Community Learning Centres (CLCs)

Children from the Dalit community - often referred to as 'Untouchable' - face severe barriers to accessing education, especially girls. Many struggle to enter mainstream schooling at all, and those who do often drop out before completing even a basic education. A key reason is the lack of self-confidence that stems from entrenched caste discrimination. Others receive little or no academic support at home due to parental illiteracy. For girls, additional challenges arise at puberty, when the absence of appropriate school facilities and the pressure to enter into child marriage lead many to leave education altogether. Child marriage, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of poverty and contributes to high rates of maternal and infant mortality.

Since 2013, MWT has tackled this problem through its Community Learning Centre (CLC) model, offering non-formal education and extra tuition to children from marginalised communities. The goal is to help them transition into school - and crucially, to stay there. Once enrolled, children continue to attend the CLCs for supplementary lessons at the start and end of the school day. These sessions are led by college students from the same low-caste backgrounds, who receive modest stipends that help them complete their own studies.

In 2023, we introduced a new climate-resilient building design for our CLCs. With rising temperatures caused by climate change, the innovative design includes features such as a raised roof for better air circulation, eco-bricks made through cold compression rather than being kiln-fired, and covered outdoor areas where teaching can continue when indoor classrooms become too hot.



Teaching at the covered open-air classroom at the Kamala River CLC

Using this model, in the past six months, MWT has completed construction of a new CLC in the Kamala River Basin (see title photo), serving children from a community displaced by severe flooding two decades ago. Many of these children were out of school entirely. The CLC was built on elevated land using excavated earth to reduce future flood risk. The excavated pit is being converted into a fish pond for commercial aquaculture, creating much-needed income for the community.

Meanwhile, in Sarlahi District, another CLC is nearing completion to meet overwhelming demand. A CLC opened in the area last year was unable to accommodate all the children who needed support. This latest project has been made possible largely through the generous support of our German nonprofit partner, Himalaya Friends, from corporate partner VICTVS and by individual donors in Ireland.

Looking ahead, in August we will launch a special Big Give education appeal as the first stage of a £100,000 fundraising campaign to build three new Community Learning Centres. At the time of writing, we have already secured £25,000 in matching pledges, ready for the Big Give campaign to go live on 7th August.

In October 2025, a second Big Give campaign will focus on supporting women and girls. This appeal aims to raise £20,000 to fund bursaries for college students - particularly from marginalised backgrounds - who serve as tutors in the CLCs, enabling them to continue their own education while helping younger children stay in school.

(iv) Snake rescue and snakebite mortality mitigation

MWT operates a dedicated wildlife rescue service, with a particular focus on snakes that become dislocated from their natural habitats and stray into villages. Some species - such as cobras and kraits - are venomous and potentially lethal, while others are harmless, but all play an important role in controlling vermin populations. However, fear and misunderstanding often lead villagers to kill any snake they encounter, regardless of species.

Tragically, many human fatalities occur not just from snakebites, but from the delay in receiving proper medical treatment. Survival rates are very high if antivenom is administered within one hour—often referred to as ‘The Golden Hour’. Yet many victims lose precious time seeking help from traditional healers offering ineffective remedies, often with fatal consequences.

MWT’s rescue team works to safely remove snakes from village areas and release them back into forest habitats. Just as importantly, they deliver vital community education about snake behaviour and the importance of seeking medical treatment within The Golden Hour - a message that has the potential to save countless lives.



Subodh Acharya, MWT rescue team member, with a King Cobra

In 2024, we received a major grant from the Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust to support this work, followed by further one in early 2025. These funds have been used to train police, army, and forestry personnel in safe snake handling and rescue techniques.

We continue to seek major grant funding that will allow us to extend this life-saving programme to other Districts within Madhesh Province. Our aim is to secure the funds that will allow us to launch an annual ‘snake festival’ that will raise public awareness about snakes, their welfare and the Golden Hour alongside securing funds from festival proceeds that will make the programme financially sustainable.

c. Madhesh Province – Lily’s Leaves project

In 2024, Lily’s Leaves relocated its basic tailoring training programme from Kathmandu to Sarlahi District. This strategic move significantly reduced operating costs and brought the training closer to the intended

beneficiaries - marginalised young women from Madhesh Province, many of whom have previously worked as low-paid day labourers in the fields.

Each six-month course trains 16 women to a high professional standard, equipping them with the skills needed to earn a sustainable income. Upon graduation, we give each woman a sewing machine, work table, and a start-up grant to help launch her own tailoring business. This can be either independently or in partnership with fellow graduates.

The full cost per trainee is £1,000, which includes six months of training, equipment, and the start-up grant. **We are actively seeking funders to support or part-fund future courses.** This is a high-impact, cost-effective programme that transforms the lives of disadvantaged women and generates lasting benefits for their families and communities.



Graduates from the Lily's Leaves June 2025 basic tailoring course in Sarlahi District

d. Madhesh Province – Our Sansar project



Madhesh Province reports over 10,000 cases of gender-based violence (GBV) each year. The Janakpur area, in particular, experiences high rates of child exploitation, forced marriage, and abuse. Survivors are often left to deal not only with the trauma of their experiences but also with rejection and isolation from their families and communities.

In response to this crisis, Pipal Tree partnered in 2020 with our sister charity Our Sansar to establish a dedicated support programme for survivors of rape and sexual abuse. At the heart of this initiative is a 30-bed shelter in Janakpur - the only one of its kind in the province. The shelter provides a safe and nurturing environment for girls who have experienced rape, trafficking, or domestic violence, offering them care, therapy, education, and practical skills training.

Through counselling, creative activities, and vocational programmes - including confidence-building boxing sessions - we support survivors in their recovery, helping them regain self-esteem and begin planning for a brighter future.

Due to the sensitive nature of this work, the project operates largely behind the scenes to protect the privacy and dignity of the girls in our care. Pipal Tree contributes approximately £1,500 per month, covering half of the shelter's running costs, with the remaining financial support provided by Our Sansar.

3. UK – Financial statement

Our strong financial position from 2024 has been sustained into 2025. In the first half of the year (H1), our income reached £297,044, representing an increase from £182,574 during the same period in 2024. Expenditure for H1 stood at £332,956 compared to £213,144 last year, reflecting our continued strategy of directing funds with all haste toward impact in Nepal rather than accumulating reserves in the UK. We owe this to our donors, beneficiaries and to the planet.

Unrestricted reserves currently stand at £73,717, which is in line with the Trustees' target of maintaining a minimum of £50,000 - equivalent to six months of UK operating costs. Typically, we expect the level of reserves to decrease over the course of the financial year towards the Trustees' target by December.

We are also in the final stages of receiving a major legacy gift from the late Mr Jeremy Short, who passed away in September 2024. These funds will be primarily allocated to the Dhanushadham Wildlife Corridor project, enabling us to meet our co-funding commitments to La Lomellina and other supporters, and ensuring full delivery of this vital initiative.

Finally, our hard-working Trustee/Treasurer John Clark FCA added a further personal contribution this year by running the London Marathon for Pipal Tree. This followed his running The Rome Marathon for Pipal Tree in March 2024.



Trustee John Clark seeing Tower Bridge from a different perspective on a very hot day in April

4. UK – Fundraising

Our major fundraising initiatives for this year are The Big Give, a new special challenge called 'The Year of the Sixes' and gifts in Wills.

a. The Big Give

In 2024, The Big Give accounted for 73% of our total income, making it our most important strategic fundraising platform. This model allows us to leverage public, corporate, and foundation donations through matched funding, including additional 'Champion' contributions from The Big Give itself.

We participate in a series of themed campaigns throughout the year, using each as a fundraising milestone. The 2025 campaign calendar is as follows:

- [Big Give Green Match Fund](#) (April 2025): We raised £194,000, with an additional £2,500 in Gift Aid, against a Big Give target of £202,540. Although one £14,000 pledge went unmatched, it was still received in its entirety and will support future work.
- [Big Give Education Appeal](#) (7–14 August 2025): Our target is £50,000, with £25,000 in pledges already secured. If fully matched by a supporting Foundation, this could yield a total of £100,000 towards building three new Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Nepal.
- [Women and Girls Appeal](#) (8–15 October 2025): This campaign will aim to raise £20,000 to fund college bursaries for Dalit girls who will serve as tutors in our CLCs, helping both themselves and the next generation of learners.
- [Main Christmas Appeal](#) (2–9 December 2025): We aim to raise £100,000 to support our environmental projects in 2025. **To meet our £25,000 pledge target, we need to secure £1,799 in pledges by 29 August.** Pledges can be made here: <https://pipaltree.info/Christmaspledge2025>
- [Follow-on Christmas Appeal](#) (9–24 December 2025): This second campaign will target £100,000 in support of our women and girls' initiatives, including the Our Sansar refuge, tailoring training in southern

Nepal, and employment opportunities for deaf women at Lily's Leaves. Pledges can be made at any time through this link: <https://pipaltree.info/Christmaspledge2> .

b. The Year of the Sixes

Each year, our Founder and CEO undertakes a personal endurance challenge to raise funds for our work in Nepal. In 2026, to mark his 66th birthday, **he plans to run six European marathons with the goal of raising £66,000 for six life-changing projects**. He won't be running alone - his wife, Bev, who will also be 66 next year, will join him on the journey, along with other supporters taking on their own challenges as part of a team effort.

Full details, including how to donate or set up your own challenge, can be found at: <https://pipaltree.info/Sixes> (Offline donations can also be credited toward the total.)

c. Legacy fundraising

In 2024, we joined the Remember a Charity campaign, giving us a profile on their website, visibility during their annual Legacy Week in September, and access to the Co-op Will-writing service. In June 2025, we also registered with a free online Will-writing platform for people in England and Wales - a service that is cost-free for charities and recommended by Martin Lewis of MoneySavingExpert. Also in June, we subscribed to Smee & Ford, who monitor proven Wills to identify individuals who have granted their Executors discretion to donate to causes aligned with the legator's values. We will now receive notifications if Wills reference relevant themes such as Nepal, the environment, or wildlife.

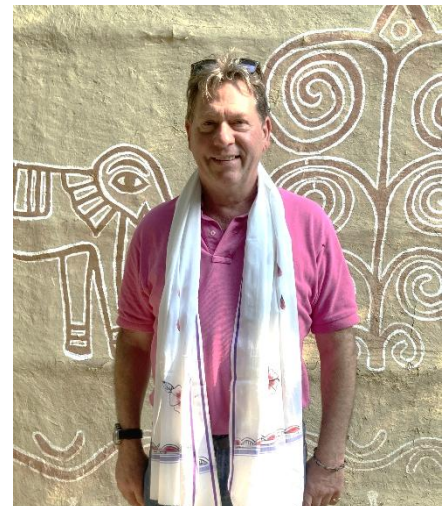
d. New prospects

We continue to explore potential corporate partnerships and, as a first, the possibility of engaging with U.S. philanthropists through a new contact in the USA.

5. UK – Governance matters

The Board of Trustees held their quarterly meeting on 18th July, reviewing progress in H1 against the business plan. Here are the key points that arose:

- There was agreement on the need to appoint an administrator (possibly part time) from 2028 in advance of Philip and Bev Holmes standing down as CEO/COO in early 2029. From that date, Philip and Bev aim to spend between 1 and 5 months per year in Nepal in direct support of our implementing partners, while inputting to fundraising, communications, evaluation and monitoring from afar. This will allow the charity to continue to grow and engage even more closely with the global crises that impact upon Nepal.
- Work continues on rebuilding the website and on policy development. It was agreed that the business plan would come under formal review by continued monthly meetings of a Trustee subcommittee.
- The Trustees appointed Nigel Clarke (right), a volunteer of longstanding, to join the Board. Nigel recently retired after completing 20 years as manager of Branding, Wayfinding and Signage at Heathrow. He helped build Terminal 5 and Terminal 2 – the signs of smiling Beefeaters and saluting soldiers at arrivals are all testament to Nigel's creative vision!



Nigel Clarke visiting south Nepal

6. In Conclusion

We are looking forward to 2025 being another highly successful year with some excellent new opportunities, however we flag up three pressing challenges, one in Nepal and two in the UK:

- In Nepal, we are deeply concerned that our operational area in the Terai is enduring its second drought in three years. This makes project implementation very difficult indeed given that the planting and management of saplings requires moderate temperatures and rainfall. But, more importantly, this presents an existential threat to agrarian communities that were already on the margins of sustainability. We will respond by setting up a new major resilience pilot programme in Dhanusha District for which we are likely to require major funding support.
- In the UK, **we urgently need to secure £1,799 in matching pledges for the Christmas Big Give appeal** to reach our £25,000 pledge target. Here is the pledge link: <https://pipaltree.info/Christmaspledge2025> We are also particularly keen to identify donors who might be willing to contribute towards the Lily's Leaves basic tailoring training in Sarlahi District - £16,000 for sixteen trainees attending a six-month course. We would dearly love to be able to run another of these high-impact courses in the latter half of 2025 and maintain training momentum.

Thank you for your support!



Lt Col (Retd) Philip Holmes OBE MSc
Founder/CEO Pipal Tree

**REMEMBER A CHARITY
IN YOUR WILL**
Help the work live on...



Philip Holmes running the Barcelona Marathon, March 2025, raising £5,000 for Pipal Tree



During a February evaluation visit to Nepal, Bev Holmes visited Lily's Leaves graduate Rabina (left) at her home in south Nepal where she learned how Rabina was now running her own tailoring business through which she is supporting her family. She has also taught her younger sister her skills.