

Pipal Tree 2023 H1 Update, Prospects and Needs



1. Introduction

The Pipal Tree financial year follows the calendar year. This is a very brief outline of our achievements during the first half of this year (H1) and of our prospects and plans for the remainder of 2023. We continue to support the work of three implementing partners in Nepal, namely the NGOs the Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT) and Our Sansar and the social enterprise Lily's Leaves. Our focus is primarily Madhesh Province which is the most populous of Nepal's seven Provinces and arguably its most overlooked. Our Mission Statement is:

*"The upliftment of the **most vulnerable** people in Madhesh Province, southeast Nepal, with a particular focus on children from the lowest castes and marginalised ethnic groups, women and girls, the natural environment and disaster relief. We are at the forefront of the fight against climate change in Nepal through a major reforestation programme, while helping communities to adapt and become more resilient."*



2. Operational activities

a. MWT

MWT implements projects on behalf of Pipal Tree and our supporting organisations. These relate primarily to reforestation and education, although previously these have included disaster relief.

In respect of **reforestation**, this year our projects have been unavoidably constrained by climate change where the region has seen unusually dry and hot weather that is not conducive to planting saplings. Worse still, Nepal has been swept by wildfires that have resulted in a huge loss of trees, although losses have been modest in our area of operation. However, at the time of writing, the monsoon has brought rain and cooler temperatures although the forecast is for a shorter monsoon season. This means that we can start planting saplings imminently.



VC-1 fencing being installed. Both the fence material and posts are handmade. The fence has to be made high to exclude deer.

We have two main active forest sites; the **Dhanushadham Bird Park** and the **Gurkha Memorial Forest** which are both employing the rapid-growth Miyawaki Methods. During the reporting period, the Bird Park project has seen the reclaim of some community land that had been encroached upon by a local villager. The forest can now be extended under a Phase 4 development once we secure a new £11,600 investment. The Gurkha Memorial Forest consists of a series of 13 "Victoria Cross" forests (VC-forests) that will eventually coalesce to form an important wildlife corridor. Each forest costs approximately £25,000, the cost varying according to the purchase price of the land (which comes under MWT ownership). We have procured and prepared the land for the first two VC-forests (VC-1 and VC-2) that will be planted this month. Our next funding objective is VC-3 @ £25,000.

In respect of **education**, we continue to support a large community school at Bhatighadi and Community Learning Centres (CLCs) that offer non-formal support and an entry point to mainstream education for children from the lowest castes.

At **Bhatighadi community school**, which serves 250 children, through Guy's Trust funding, we have built a new computer room in 2021. During this reporting period, we carried out roof repairs to a classroom that had become unserviceable. We have also continued to fund a support teacher, Jina Tamang Sherpa, who is an MWT staff member, and issued children with warm clothing and school rucksacks. Also during this reporting period, through a [£60k individual donation](#), we are about to begin the construction of a new two-storey classroom block. This should be completed by the end of this year.

At **Dhanushadham CLC**, which we built in 2021 through McGough Foundation funding, we have continued to support the education of 234 children on a daily basis. The funding of the costs of two tutors and stationery has been by St James' Place Foundation and The Gilchrist Educational Trust. The facility has been a victim of its own success with attendance much higher than we could have anticipated. Indeed, tuition at the two-room facility has only been possible through educating children on a shift basis. Therefore, in June we launched a new appeal for £25,000 to cover the costs of a second building, which will reduce overcrowding and give a seated capacity for all the enrolled students.

We have been building a new CLC at **Pasman Tol** since late 2022 with the professional support of [Community Beyond Construction](#) (CBC). The project has been jointly funded by The Allen and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust and corporate supporter Eleos Compliance. This project has taken much longer than we had expected, principally because the local contractor has struggled with the exacting (but excellent) specifications of CBC. The biggest challenge seems to have been laying the foundations in a very difficult terrain and MWT have had to monitor the works closely to ensure compliance. However, the walls are now rising, and the project should be completed to a very high standard within the coming two months.



Building works underway at Pasman Tol. Note the use of eco-bricks – bricks that are made using the cold compression of cement and sand.

We have almost completed the building of another new CLC at **Saghara**, also funded by Guy's Trust. Both the Pasman Tol and Saghara CLCs will serve extremely poor communities where up until now there has been no such educational provision at all. The TUUT Charitable Trust has provided central grant funding towards the operating costs.

For all our CLC projects, we require sustainability in meeting these operating costs, primarily covering the tutor salaries. To that end, in October we will be taking part in a [Big Give Women and Girls Match Fund](#) in October. If, through this appeal, we can create a £20,000 fund this will be sufficient to cover the costs of female



The new CLC at Saghara

tutors for several years. Already we have a £10,000 pledge in place for this appeal and we hope that the Big Give will be able to match this from one of their own “Champions”.

b. Lily’s Leaves

We helped with the setup of the Kathmandu-based Lily’s Leaves social enterprise in October 2020 and have funded the operating costs since then through a monthly transfer of funds. These have covered the employment and training costs of vulnerable young women (some of them deaf) who are either from Kathmandu valley itself or who are from Madhesh Province and have joined residential training. The initiative has been challenging since the outset as we have had to contend with both COVID and a cost-of-living crisis. These have negatively impacted fundraising, operational costs and our efforts to identify markets for products. Notwithstanding that, silver jewellery has been produced for buyers in the USA and the UK. A major activity has been the production of school rucksacks and dignity pads (reusable sanitary pads) for free distribution to children in Madhesh Province community schools, incentivising attendance and pushing back against early dropouts by girls and the associated child marriage.

During this reporting period, ten young women, six of them deaf, have been involved in manufacturing rucksacks and dignity pads that have been distributed to 1,351 girls at six schools with a further 900 due to benefit from a distribution of dignity pads that are currently in stock. At the time of writing, the workforce has started on a new order for 1,050 rucksacks and 500 dignity pads that will keep the women in well remunerated good employment until September.

This work has been funded by the Christmas 2022 Big Give appeal, through central grant funding by Maiden Factor and a personal donation from Nicky and Karishma Turner.

Lily’s Leaves has always collaborated closely with MWT (e.g. in the selection of trainees and schools for distributions) and that collaboration has now extended to a new reforestation project in Kathmandu valley itself. Lily Katuwal, Founder of Lily’s Leaves, has been alarmed at how Kathmandu’s air quality has deteriorated markedly in the past year and sees the need for action to do something to improve circumstances in the capital. Accordingly, Lily’s Leaves is contributing towards a cleaner Kathmandu through creating

Kathmandu’s first Miyawaki forest under MWT guidance. A neglected piece of community waste land by a river has been identified and prepared for planting during this reporting period. The Lily’s Leaves workforce has joined the local community and the authorities in clearing the waste from what had become a dumping ground and fencing it off to limit further waste disposal. It will be ready for plantation in late July after the government completes some local drainage works in the area. The first phase of the project is fully funded, also through the Christmas 2022 Big Give. A Phase 2 extension to the project requires a £27.800 investment.



Bandna Gurung, who is deaf, giving instruction to visiting teachers from the British School in Kathmandu during their training day (with a difference!).



Bishnumati, the site of the first Miyawaki project in Kathmandu valley.

c. Our Sansar

Since March 2020, we have been funding 50% of the operating costs of a girls' refuge in the principal town of Madhesh Province, Janakpur. This is a joint venture with registered charity Our Sansar which takes the operational lead. The refuge is operated by an independent NGO that is also called Our Sansar. Our share of the monthly operating costs is in the region of £1,500 (there is a monthly fluctuation).

During this reporting period, the refuge has supported 82 girls (35 at the refuge and 47 in the community). In addition, there have been 152 participants during community training (domestic violence, child marriage etc) that is part of our outreach work. The majority of our cases at the refuge have been rape survivors. We are now working increasingly with female volunteer health workers, thereby managing to reach more girls and families than before.

All credit for this success must go to Julia Krepska, the Founder and CEO of Our Sansar, who is central to coordinating this project. Doubly so as last month her charity took first place in the coveted 2023 Charity Awards!



Girls at play at the Janakpur refuge.

3. Financial review and fundraising

The Pipal Tree Trustee/Treasurer John Clark FCA produces management accounts on a monthly basis. The highlights of his H1 review (available upon request) are as follows:

- Compared to the same period last year, unrestricted funds have increased by £6,000 and restricted funds by £38,000, although these figures have been skewed somewhat by the individual donation of £60,000.
- Unrestricted expenditure is up by £3,000 reflecting an increase in fundraising expenditure (a one-off consultancy expenditure of £5,000, potentially refundable). This has been offset by cuts in operating costs, especially in travel to Nepal.
- We are £1,000 over 50% of the annual budget, so are well in line with projections from the start of the year.
- Unrestricted reserves have decreased by £15,000 in the year to date to £47,500. This is still comfortably above the Trustees' minimum of £40,000, although based upon historical trends we are likely to drop close to that level as the year progresses before the usual restoration of reserves at Christmas.
- We have £10,000 in pledges for the Big Give Green Match Fund in October and £19,600 in pledges for the Big Give Christmas Challenge.

In spite of this healthy financial position, fundraising is proving to be **very** difficult. Our two Big Give appeals from earlier this year – The Green Match Fund in March and the Back to School appeal in April fell well short of our targets. There has been a drop in response to grant applications from Trusts and Foundations, which is why we have taken on some consultancy support as a “fresh pair of eyes”. Our main challenge is the fundraising required to sustain Lily's Leaves and I am using my annual trekking challenge (the Pembroke Coastal Path in August) as a fundraiser for that purpose. My target is £30,000, underpinned by a matching pledge of £10,000 from a London-based company.

4. Financial needs

Reforestation:

- The Dhanushadham Bird Park Forest can be extended under Phase 4 once for a further £11,600.
- We need to raise £25,000 for VC-3 as the next fundraising objective towards raising the total of £250,000 required for the completion of all thirteen VC forests.
- Phase 1 of the Kathmandu Miyawaki project is fully funded. £27,800 is required to extend reforestation under a Phase 2 development.

Education:

- £5,500 for the annual salary of teacher Jina Tamang at Bhatighadi School
- £5,650 as tutor allowances for two tutors, two interns and stationery/teaching materials at Dhanushadham CLC
- £5,955 as tutor allowances for three tutors and teaching materials at Pasman Tol and Saghara CLCs
- £25,000 for the new CLC building at Dhanushadham

Female empowerment:

- £10,000 will fund training and employment of vulnerable women at Lily's Leaves between from October through to December, making rucksacks and dignity pads that in turn support the education of girls in south Nepal.

Child protection:

- The Janakpur refuge is well funded for the foreseeable future and therefore not a priority for donations.

General:

- I am aiming to raise £30,000 towards Lily's Leaves through my annual trek. The sponsorship link is <https://pipaltree.info/Pembroke> or scan the adjacent QR code. Matching funds of £10,000 were available of which £4,350 remain to match sponsorship gifts.
- We have secured £19,600 in Big Give pledges towards our £25,000 target. If we can identify further pledges of £5,400, these stand to be **doubled** by The Big Give from their own network of "Champions" and the combined pledges may be **doubled again** through public donations during appeal week in December. Pledges are registered through this link - <https://pipaltree.info/2023pledge> - or by scanning the adjacent QR code. Pledges are payable in December and not before.



Recommendation: As a guide, our top priority is Lily's Leaves and ensuring training and employment of vulnerable women is sustained in the final quarter of this year. This can be supported either by a direct grant or by sponsorship of my trek. Please contact me using the email address below to discuss this or any other of our financial needs.

Thank you.

Lt Col Philip Holmes OBE
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13th July 2023