



PIPAL
TREE



Impact Statement 2023

www.pipaltree.org.uk



Our Mission

'To empower the most disadvantaged people in Nepal towards living productive, fulfilling, and healthy lives through improving education and healthcare, offering training opportunities and by the restoration of the natural environment.'

We focus primarily on women and girls, the lowest castes, marginalised ethnic groups, and people with disabilities.'



Founder's statement

Pipal Tree marked its ninth birthday on the 4th January 2024, a date that coincided with the 25th anniversary of the tragic death of my first wife, Esther Benjamins, an event that caused me to change my life and start my charitable activities in Nepal. I am proud of what has been achieved in that time, most recently through Pipal Tree. By keeping Pipal Tree as a home-based charity run on a daily basis by me and my wife, Bev, with the support of a dedicated group of Trustees, we keep our operating costs at an absolute minimum. This ensures that the maximum amount of donor money gets to the point of need. It's also important to state that we've confidence that those funds are getting to the right place through our close personal knowledge of Nepal (Bev and I lived there for eight years) and the strong and transparent professional relationships we enjoy with the project implementing organisations.

My ethos has always been to not be overawed by the scale of a challenge to the point of doing nothing. Rather, I feel it's important to make a start and be prepared for efforts to be amplified by the subsequent inputs of others or, for that

matter, by serendipity. A case in point is the massive challenge presented by the climate crisis, which is wreaking havoc in Nepal. In this impact statement I describe how we've been planting tiny rapid-growth forests in Nepal that are sometimes not much bigger than a few tennis courts in size. It would be easy to write this off as being the proverbial drop in the ocean, yet our demonstration site has now attracted visits from forestry officials from 66 of Nepal's 77 Districts and our pioneering method is being copied. It's also been profiled in the national media, and even HM the King asked me to send him more information about the method when, in December 2023, he invested me with an OBE for services to vulnerable people in Nepal.

I hope that you find this statement useful and inspiring. I would be honoured to help you make a meaningful contribution to a people and a nation that are so deserving of our support and friendship. And particularly to those whose voice is rarely heard and whose needs are seldom seen. Let's meet and discuss!



Reforestation is a hands-on community effort

Overview

The UNDP's annual Human Development Index (HDI) survey, a measure of health, education, income and living conditions, classifies Nepal as a 'medium' development country placing it at 143rd in a league table of 191 countries.

This is just behind India at 132nd and ahead of Pakistan at 161st. It is also characterised favourably as a non-aligned state that is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural. It's admired as a secular, democratic republic, that over the past two decades has emerged from being ruled by an autocratic monarchy, surviving a civil war and natural disasters.

International tourists are attracted by its rich culture, spiritualism and natural beauty. And it enjoys a special relationship with the UK that dates back over 200 years, with an honourable tradition of some of its best sons serving as the British Army's legendary Gurkhas.

But, all is far from rosy:

- Nepal is the tenth most affected country by climate change – glaciers are melting, weather patterns are changing rapidly and the poorest people are contending with failing harvests and natural disasters
- In the spring of 2023 Kathmandu became the city with the worst air quality in the world and the highest rate of lung disease, with those at the extremes of age the most vulnerable
- Nepal has the seventh highest suicide rate in the world, with women affected more than men. This is perhaps unsurprising in a society where gender discrimination continues (including Gender-Based Violence – GBV) and where young people have a sense of hopelessness at their lack of prospects.

Homing in on Madhesh Province, the most populous of Nepal's seven provinces, you'll understand why we've chosen this as our main operational area. It has huge barriers to social progress including:



A village boy in Madhesh Province

Overview Continued:

- Chronic neglect by central government that goes back decades
- Ethnic discrimination – many people lack Nepalese citizenship, which limits their rights within society
- Religious prejudice – the ‘untouchable’ caste within Hinduism remains marginalised, and the Muslim communities are considered to be even worse off
- Gender discrimination – GBV is commonplace, and rape is endemic and frequently covered up
- Schools have high dropout rates (particularly affecting girls), which feeds into child marriage and perpetuates the cycle of poverty
- Once fertile land is exhausted from over-farming, unable to support communities, with a loss of biodiversity

And against this bleak national and regional backdrop, there is the perennial threat of natural disasters such as earthquakes, droughts and floods, the latter two accentuated by the impact of climate change.

We focus our activities on the following areas:

Reforestation

Empowering vulnerable women through education and training

Education of children from marginalised communities

Child protection and rehabilitation including of GBV victims

Disaster preparedness



*Philip Holmes and Dev Narayan Mandal
with an Indian Teak sapling*

Reforestation

We're proud to have been pioneering The Miyawaki Method in Nepal since December 2021. This is a reforestation method that, it's claimed, results in trees growing ten times faster and thirty times denser than those planted conventionally and with a twenty-fold increase in biodiversity. Even in a very short space of time, we've proven that this is broadly true, with the outcome nothing short of stunning.

The Method is labour-intensive, involving the use of mechanical excavators and the siting of a deep layer of compost to prepare the ground followed by the dense planting of saplings. It can therefore be around ten times more expensive than conventional reforestation methods and is not affordable for large scale efforts. However, in specific scenarios (projects) we've seen a

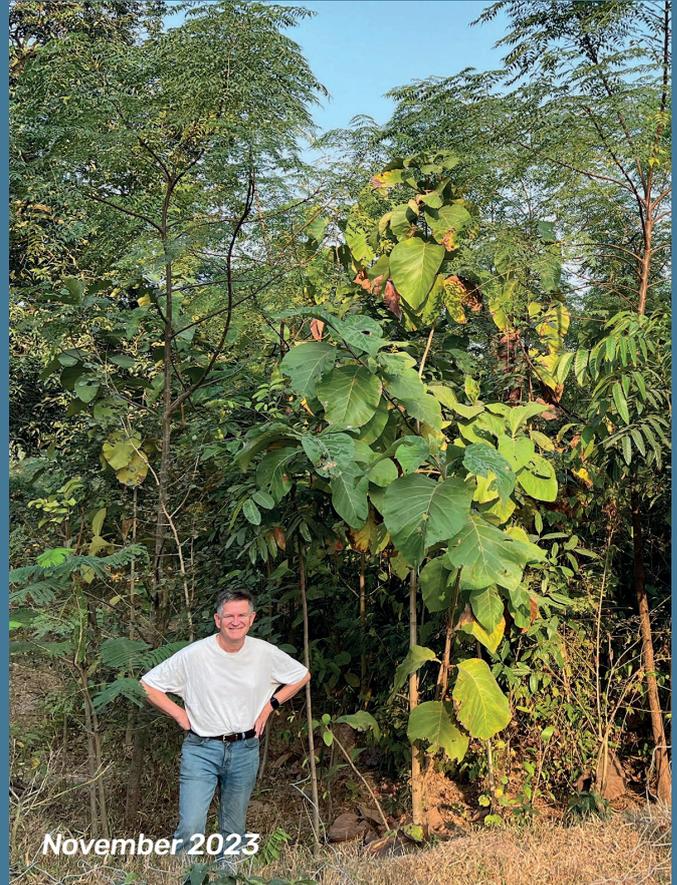
high return on investment in planting small scale forests that are characterised as being sometimes as small as a tennis court, as a minimum. The scenarios/projects have been:

The Dhanusha Bird Park

In Dhanusha District we've created Nepal's first community-managed forest for bird conservation (see pictures). This has been sited on exhausted community land that can now provide value to the local villagers through ecotourism while benefiting flora and fauna. This is a model that can be replicated across Nepal, amplifying its impact. Within the plantation we've planted a strip conventionally as a 'control' to demonstrate to visitors (including forestry specialists) how much more effective the Miyawaki Method can be.

The Gurkha Memorial Forest

We're creating an important wildlife corridor that will connect the last vestige of remaining virgin forest at Dhanushadham with the wooded



Reforestation Continued:

hills (The Chure) that runs east-west across central Nepal. This corridor is also serving the dual purpose of being a memorial forest for the thousands of Nepali men who've served as Gurkhas since The Second World War. The strip consists of 13 Miyawaki forest nuclei, one for each Victoria Cross won since 1939. These will ultimately be connected with one another by conventional reforestation.

The Kamala Basin buffer forest

We're planting a Miyawaki forest on one bank of the Kamala River, to prevent it from bursting its banks and causing a repeat of the devastation that occurred ten years ago at the cost of scores of lives.

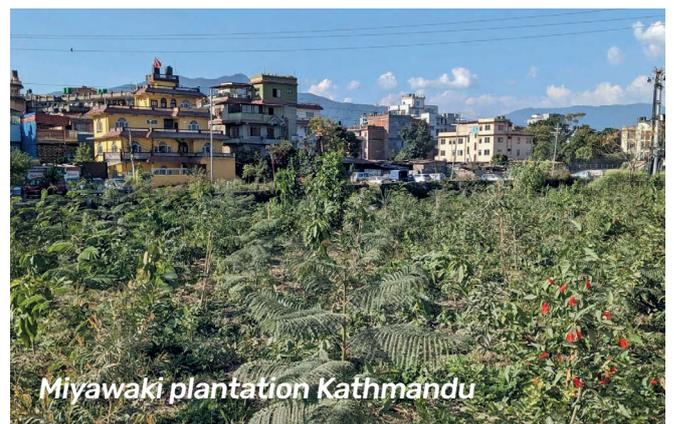
The Kathmandu Miyawaki project

The Miyawaki Method comes into its own in an urban setting where usually only small areas are available for reforestation. Added to the biodiversity benefits, urban forests absorb pollution, have a cooling effect and improve the mental wellbeing of city dwellers. To this end,

we're planting Kathmandu's first Miyawaki forest on wasteland alongside the Bishnumati River.

All of the above projects are high impact, as we pave the way for others to replicate our work and for us to engage with local children and students, the environmental activists of tomorrow. The first three projects are implemented by our partner NGO The Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT), and the fourth by our partner social enterprise, Lily's Leaves.

As a guide, it costs approximately £25,000 to plant a Miyawaki forest, an expenditure that may include land purchase, ground preparation, fencing and planting/maintenance of saplings.





Lily Katuwal examining handcraft products made by women in Madhesh Province

Empowering Vulnerable Women

In October 2020, we provided startup funding for the Kathmandu-based Lily's Leaves social enterprise and have provided monthly revenue support since then. Lily's Leaves provides training and employment to vulnerable young women, some of whom are hearing impaired. The Founder is local businesswoman and entrepreneur Mrs Lily Katuwal (hence the name).

Lily's Leaves' initial activities were confined to its Kathmandu training and production centres (these are collocated). We've trained the young women primarily in tailoring and silver jewellery manufacture while developing their life skills. Our

vision is that ultimately the initiative will be self-sustaining through a combination of product sales and grants. Products are already being sold both nationally and internationally. For example, Lily's Leaves silver jewellery can be purchased through The Gurkha Museum in Winchester, UK.

The social welfare element of Lily's Leaves includes an overlap with our education programme (see below) through the distribution of free school rucksacks and reusable sanitary pads (dignity pads) at community schools in Madhesh Province. These have been made centrally at the Kathmandu workshop but in 2023/2024 there has been a decentralisation, with Lily's Leaves opening new combined production centres in Madhesh Province. This reduces overheads and brings employment and training directly to young women in rural areas.



Proud recipients of Lily's Leaves' school rucksacks

Empowering Vulnerable Women *Continued:*

These trainers have been themselves previously trained at the Lily's Leaves Kathmandu centre. The distribution of free goods is conditional upon schools undertaking to provide tailoring contracts for school uniforms to Lily's Leaves' rural centres. This reciprocation provides some added sustainability to these new centres. Lily also goes personally to the schools for

distribution of rucksacks and pads. This gives her an opportunity to speak to both girls and boys about girls' rights and the need for girls to have respect and privacy while they're having their periods.

Our underlying revenue support to Lily's Leaves is approximately £5,000 per month, but we make occasional one-off additional payments for specific projects, such as the setup of a new rural training centre.



Samjhana, who is hearing impaired, a trained silversmith at Lily's Leaves Kathmandu workshop



Devi, a Lily's Leaves' tailoring graduate, earning an income in her home village



Children at a Community Learning Centre (CLC) within a leprosy care centre

Educating Marginalised Children

So often, education is described as being the best route out of poverty. If only it were that simple...

The community schools that serve impoverished marginalised communities in south Nepal are terribly under-resourced. Classrooms are dilapidated and demotivated teachers are expected to manage large classes.

Small wonder that the schools experience high dropout rates. This is particularly the case for girls who leave school when they start their periods, since schools lack adequate toilet facilities. The answer, in part, is to build and refurbish classrooms, install proper sanitation

and provide support teachers. We do all of these things, but still that is not enough, for a large part of the problem is that children growing up in the traditionally despised and downtrodden 'untouchable' castes can lack the self-confidence to even join school, and their illiterate parents can do little to support them with their homework.

Our solution is to complement the mainstream schools with non-formal education and tuition provided through a Community Learning Centre (CLC) model that our partner NGO, The Mithila Wildlife Trust, launched back in 2013. CLCs hold classes before and after school that act as an entry point to mainstream education and that offer children who're attending the assistance that their parents cannot provide. It's a win-win situation as the tutors are college students from the same caste groups, who receive modest salaries that allow them to complete their



Inside a Community Learning Centre (CLC)

Educating Marginalised Children Continued:

own college education. These tutors therefore act as excellent role models for the children, demonstrating that education can offer a pathway to success.

Specifically, we've funded the following activities across the educational spectrum:

- Building classrooms, toilets and CLCs
- Paying for support teachers and CLC tutors. We've set up a special fund that specifically covers the costs of female tutors, replenished by the Big Give Women and Girls matching appeal in October 2023
- Providing material support to children that includes free school rucksacks and reusable sanitary pads (made by Lily's Leaves) and issues of warm clothing in the winter months
- From April 2024, operating a bursary scheme for children who wish to join the 11th grade after passing the tough Secondary Education Examination (SEE).

As an indication of expenditure, it costs approximately £25,000 - £30,000 to build a CLC, £80-100 per month for a CLC tutor, £40 per month for a bursary, £10 for a school rucksack made at Lily's Leaves, £5 for a pack of reusable sanitary pads (dignity pads).



Tutor Ambika Sada teaching at one of our CLCs in south Nepal



Rooftop rehabilitation at our girls' refuge in Janakpur

Supporting **Child Rape** Survivors

It's not unheard of for a rape victim in Nepal to be compelled to marry her assailant, an arrangement involving a financial settlement with the family and brokered by the police. Clearly, this is a dreadful way to deal with a victim and with a criminal offence.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is endemic in south Nepal. It spans rape and attempted rape (including marital rape), sexual abuse, dowry violence, child marriage, retribution for alleged witchcraft, illegal abortion and burns (including through acid attack). According to data from the Nepal government's Women, Children and Senior Citizen Directorate, Madhesh Province is the worst affected by GBV out of Nepal's seven Provinces.

In March 2021, in spite of the operational challenges presented by COVID, we set up a 20-bed girls' refuge and rehabilitation centre in the Provincial capital, Janakpur, in collaboration with our UK-registered charity partner, Our Sansar. This is the only facility of its kind in Madhesh Province and acts as both a shelter and a focus for outreach to victims within the community. We also attempt to bring rapists to justice while at the same time reintegrating victims with their families and communities.

Our Sansar has taken the operational lead in this initiative, with its eponymous NGO being the local implementer. Our commitment is to meet half of the operating costs, involving a Pipal Tree contribution of approximately £1,100 per month.



The floods of 2017 caused devastation in south Nepal

Disaster Preparedness

Sadly, in Nepal it's not a case of 'if' but 'when' in respect of disasters. Usually grant-making Trusts are unable to help in an emergency situation as the grant application process can take several months. And even an appeal to our supporters under these circumstances can take one to two weeks to deliver funds to the point of need, by which time lives can have been lost.

For this reason, we've been building up an emergency relief fund that will allow an immediate response. This fund is enhanced by adding a small percentage from our Christmas

appeals, but in future we can use legacy donations for this purpose. At the time of writing, our emergency relief fund stands at £20,791, however a fund of in the region of £100,000 would be significantly more useful if Nepal were to have, for example, another earthquake of the scale of those that struck in 2015.

We are very proud of the specific and tangible impact that we can have as a small charity that is engaged at the grassroots. In 2020 we fed 29,000 people who faced starvation during a COVID lockdown. In 2021 we fed 14,000 during a second lockdown.

How To Support

Here's how you can make a real difference in Nepal

You can make a strategic investment through donating via one of our Big Give appeals. We launch three annually, namely:

- **The Big Give Green Match Fund in April, which supports our environmental projects**
- **The Big Give Women and Girls' Fund in October, which supports our female empowerment/girls' education and training projects**
- **Our Big Give Christmas Challenge in December, which allows a broad range of our projects to start the following year on the right foot.**

In between these dates, we're open to discuss how you might like to make a specific donation that could, for example, be to mark a special occasion for you, or represent an in memoriam or a challenge, with there being a possibility of setting up a bespoke Big Give appeal wholly around your interests and plans.

Remembering us in your will

If you're writing or updating your Will, you might wish to consider remembering our needs after you've made provision for family, friends and other causes dear to your heart. Even a small percentage of your Estate could make a huge difference to a small charity like Pipal Tree. If you'd like to discuss this, please contact Philip and, if you wish, we can meet by Zoom or in person to explore your interest.

Of course you can make a gift at any time using the link/QR code:

<https://pipaltree.info/donate>



Financial Headlines 2023

Overall, a great year and a charity with stable finances!

Our income was £338,678 compared to the previous year's £379,960. The latter included an advertising gift-in-kind valued at £59,268. This means that, in cash terms, in 2023 our income increased by £17,986, a 5.6% increase on 2022.

Expenditure in 2023 was £305,311 compared to the previous year's £419,298, which also included that £59,268 gift-in-kind (for accounting purposes, the gift-in-kind income and expenditure cancelled one another out). Therefore, in cash terms, in 2023 we had a modest operating surplus of £33,367 compared with an operating loss of £39,338 in 2022.

9.2% of our expenditure was used for fundraising (there's no 'free lunch' in fundraising) with the remainder going towards our charitable activities.

Our level of unrestricted reserves at the start of 2024 was £63,112 which is largely unchanged on the year (January 2023: £62,750).

Our restricted reserves include £20,792 set aside for future disaster relief. We aim to add at least £5,000 per year to this important fund.

Our financial year ended on 31st December and we filed our independently examined accounts with the Charity Commission on the 13th February. That is outstanding compliance – charities are allowed up to ten months after the end of the financial year to complete this process.

For full annual report and accounts use the link/QR code:

<https://pipaltree.info/annualreport2023>

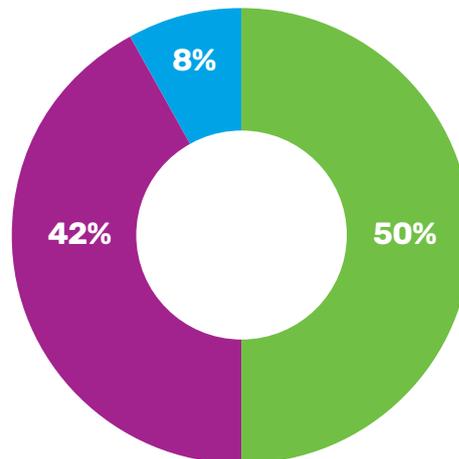


Spent on Nepal projects: £236,362

Mithila Wildlife Trust £117,163

Lily's Leaves £98,970

Our Sansar £19,629



Spending by project area

Empowering women and girls £89,807

Education & community support £80,806

Environment & reforestation £47,371

Supporting vulnerable & abused children £18,379

