



Jaleshwori Community Farm

Nepal Remote Villages Trust

A small, effective non-profit organisation run entirely by volunteers

Alison and Chris Burns set up Nepal Remote Villages Trust (NRVT) in 2014 after a trek in Nepal. Their trekking guide, Pasang Tamang, now chairman of NRVT Nepal, told them about the poverty amongst the subsistence farmers and their families in areas away from the main tourist routes – places such as such as Jaleshwori, where he grew up.

NRVT started out small, helping individual families with donations of livestock. Over the past six years it has expanded to working on community-based projects where more people reap the benefits. With a grant from Rotary International, solar power has been successfully installed in five local schools and NRVT has supplied complimentary learning resource packages. Most recently, drip irrigation and sprinkler systems have been distributed in Jaleshwori – together with appropriate training – to enable water management and improve crop yields. These projects are still ongoing, and NRVT hope to be able to expand them to benefit more villages in the future.

Alongside this, NRVT is setting up the Jaleshwori Community Farm, an ambitious new project which will promote adaptation, demonstrate good farming practice and offer advice and guidance as well as supply new seed and tree varieties, to the farmers of Jaleshwori.

NRVT is fully registered with the charity commission in England and its sister organisation, NRVT Nepal, is registered as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) in Kathmandu.

The Story of a Nepali Village

The remote Nepali village of Jaleshwori, located in the district of Khotang, in the foothills of Mount Everest, is the home of a hard-working, close-knit, but vulnerable community. Lost in the extreme environment of the Himalayas, the village has only been accessible by 4x4 jeep since 2018, and even now is often only reachable on foot due to landslides. Over 400 households inhabit this mountainside, with the population consisting almost entirely of subsistence farmers and their families. The main crops grown in this area are millet, potatoes, maize, and occasionally rice, with chickens and goats kept alongside.

The village receives its water from glacial run-off and rainfall. Glacial ecosystems, which provide a source of water for millions of people across the globe, are being strongly impacted by climate change and the steady reduction in the size of glaciers casts doubt over the reliability of this water source in the future. Already the people of Jaleshwori are reaping much smaller yields; millet crops are stunted, maize does not produce as it once did, potato harvests are uncertain. This could be due to the reduction in water, a decrease in soil organic carbon content, or any other of the multiple shifts in the system that have been shown to be caused by climate change.

The families of Jaleshwori have very few options, often becoming migrant labourers in the overcrowded and polluted factories of the Kathmandu valley or on the dangerous building sites of the Middle East to try and earn a little money. Sadly, the amount they earn often does not cover the debts they incur to make the journey.

Young and old alike would prefer to stay in Jaleshwori and continue a more modern version of their traditional lifestyle. This requires adaption – water management systems, modern farming techniques, more varied crops and access to new markets. With roads to Kathmandu finally opening up this is becoming possible but the farmers have little education and fewer resources. They cannot do it alone. Nepal Remote Villages Trust's vision of the Jaleshwori Community Farm is key to turning the goal of a village whose livelihood is threatened into a thriving community.

The Vision

Adaptation

NRVT is funding the purchase a piece of land in Jaleshwori to set up a community farm. The farm will demonstrate good farming practices and modern agricultural techniques to the local people including irrigation, mulching

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techniques, composting, plant inter-cropping, rain water collection and storage etc.

The farm is being purchased through NRVT Nepal and NRVT Nepal will be the legal owner of the land. The land has been identified and a purchase price agreed with Pasang Tamang, chairman of NRVT Nepal.

The purpose of the community farm is to trial new crops to establish which are the most vigorous and productive so that farmers can grow new varieties with confidence. The farmers themselves do not have sufficient land to trial new produce – a failed or reduced harvest literally means less to eat.

Through growing a wider range of produce village families will have a more varied diet and improved nutrition. New produce will also provide a cash crop to sell at market.

NRVT are currently in contact with a soil analyst who is able to laboratory test the soil and determine to its type and nutritional content. With this information it will be possible to predict which crops are most likely to succeed.

In addition to growing new types of vegetables, the farm will also establish fruit and nut orchards. We plan to research which varieties grow best in local soils and at the various altitudes of Jaleshwori village. With this knowledge a tree nursery can be set up to produce tree saplings that can be purchased cheaply by the local people. The most effective way to do this is by growing suitable rootstock and grafting onto these from a 'mother' tree that has delivered a good fruit yield. The fruit trees selected for propagation will be those which produce a crop that is easily transported or can have value added; for example, fruit that can be dried and stones that can be crushed to make oil. Peach, apricot and almond come into this category.

An additional benefit of the trees is that they can become part of a carbon offset scheme. Each tree will sequester approximately 500kg of CO₂ during its lifetime. The public will be able to sponsor trees for donation to local subsistence farmers at the same time offsetting some of their carbon footprint. It is envisaged this will provide useful revenue.

Turmeric, ginger and cardamom will also be grown on the Community Farm. These can be exported as branded cash crops to the EU.

All crops will be grown organically, free of artificial fertilizer and pesticides.

The farm should have some livestock such as chickens and goats to help with recycling and fertilizer production.

School Groups

Once the farm is established, we envisage that the community farm will welcome visiting school groups from the UK/Europe. This should be a good income stream for the organisation and for the community in general. For this we will need to install operating toilets (possibly dry) and showers, and establish a good flat area for tents. The land currently under negotiation already has a building on it that could be used as an eating/cooking area.

Farm Manager/Worker

The farm will need to be managed and tended daily. Thus we propose creating the post of Farm Manager which could be held by an individual or as a job share between a couple. The manager(s) would be expected to live on the farm premises as tenants and would have a section of land for their own use. Additionally, they will be offered a small monthly salary and will receive a small percentage of any revenue from farm produce sales as a bonus.

Sponsorship

Nepal Remote Villages Trust are currently seeking a sponsor to help with the set up and initial running costs of the community farm. This is a great project for a company looking for a way to engage in corporate responsibility and offset some of their carbon footprint. On a more personal level, it is an opportunity to become closely involved with a remote community and help directly in its survival.

Naming rights to the farm are also negotiable.