

## Namaste from the Board



Now in its thirteenth year, Chandra Gurung Conservation Trust (CGCT) is as committed as ever to supporting “people-oriented biodiversity conservation” (POBC) in the memory of our friend, colleague and mentor, Chandra Prasad Gurung. Chandra died in a helicopter crash in eastern Nepal on September 23, 2006 while on a mission to hand over management authority of a newly established conservation area to local people, in a model patterned after the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) which he co-led.

Why did Chandra believe it important to involve mountain people, women, marginalized castes, and trekking guides in the conservation of Nepal’s biodiversity and natural resources? What exactly is people-oriented biodiversity conservation?

Biodiversity conservation is about ensuring that natural landscapes, with their array of ecosystems, are maintained, and that species, populations, genes, and the complex interactions between them, persist into the future. (KINRMG, Tasmania)

After decades of striving for conservation by force of the stick, leaders such as Chandra and the others who died with him in the helicopter realized the efficacy of local resource management using a carrot approach. People whose lives depend upon those resources have a vested interest in assuring their sustainable use. If we can help them realize an economic gain from conservation – such as through ecotourism or sustainable development of forest-based products – they will want to and continue to benefit from conservation.

“People-oriented biodiversity conservation” thus recognizes and supports local people’s role in protecting and managing the natural resources and ecological values around them.

This year, CGCT expanded its reach to support new approaches to POBC, as described in this newsletter, including:

Initiating a new partnership with Wildlife Trafficking Alliance (WTA) aimed at discouraging the purchase of items made from wildlife parts in Nepal.

Lending support to an age-old strategy of biodiversity conservation – tree planting – involving the Sherpa community of Khumbu, in an era when Nepal is looking to backpedal on 40 years of highly successful community forestry.

Helping an eco-lodge in the Helambu trekking region to build a grey-water recycling system that not only demonstrates a model of water conservation but serves a tourism and hospitality training program to spur local youth employment.

Strengthening the ongoing Mentorship Program by providing mentees with skills in participatory planning through APPA training.

CGCT also celebrates the long-awaited completion of a secondary school in the earthquake-devastated Gorkha region that your contributions aided. CGCT congratulates its sister organization Chandra Gurung Conservation Foundation on its tireless efforts to rebuild the school.

### 2019-2020 CGCT-Supported Programs

With your support, CGCT has committed financial support to the following programs for 2019-2020.

#### The Partners Nepal

CGCT contributed to The Partners Nepal (TPN) in 2019 for its “One Day, One Tree” Project. TPN was established in 2012 by a group of longterm Nepali staff at The Mountain Institute (TMI). It aspires to work in partnership with local communities in the Nepal Himalaya for environmental and cultural conservation and restoration.

Deforestation of once forested slopes in the Everest region has been exacerbated by the growing influx of tourists, which annually multiplies the native Sherpa population by several fold. Although more trekkers’ lodges are now using non-wood fuel for cooking and heating, the hillsides remain partly bare due to prior reliance on fuelwood and the slow growth rate of trees at these elevations.

TPN started the “One Day, One Tree” community forestry project to restore denuded hillsides surrounding sacred lands in the Khumbu (Everest) region of Nepal. The project is committed to planting and nurturing the equivalent of one tree for every day of the year. Tree planting started in 2016 in Pangboche, a village (at 13,000+ ft elevation), long known for its potato cultivation.

Next, the Sherpa communities of Kunde, Cheskam and Phortse invited TPN to plant trees in their areas. They requested juniper seedlings, highly valued for use as incense despite their slow growth rate, and birch seedlings, a “pioneer” species that grows quickly on marginal lands. Fir and rhododendron seedlings are also grown in the TPN nurseries.

Once again, the CGCT Board thanks you beyond words for your continuing support and encouragement to help us keep Chandra's legacy and dreams alive. Please read about our work and show your appreciation with a generous donation to CGCT on our website or by check or money transfer.

Sincerely,

CGCT Board members: Wendy Lama, Maureen DeCoursey, Steve Powers and Wendy King

## Mentees Make Their Mark

The CGCT/CGCF Mentorship Program is now in its 11th year. Thus far it has supported 16 young Nepali graduates as they pursue their professional dreams in people-centered environmental conservation. Mentees have benefitted from the research experience, financial support, and the advice and guidance provided by their mentors. As the Program has evolved, they have also received training and expanded professional networks, described below.

Mentorships last for one year, beginning when the new cohorts are announced at the annual commemoration event held in Kathmandu in early December, coinciding with Chandra Gurung's birthday. Over the course of a year, each mentee is responsible for completing a field project based on their winning proposal. They must also write a final report, publish an article in a popular publication, and make a presentation at the December event, attended by past mentees and mentors and members of the Nepal conservation community.

Working together, CGCT, CGCF and affiliated advisors continue to fine-tune the program, with input from mentees and mentors alike. The program's success is evident by mentees' acquired skills, their commitment to the path of people-oriented biodiversity conservation (POBC), and their professional development following the mentorship.

From the beginning in 2008, the focus of the Mentoring Program has been POBC, a cornerstone of Chandra's philosophy. The core component of the mentees' work is a community-based project that involves action research while working closely with communities to understand the value of local involvement in conservation.

CGCF has also initiated a partnership with The Record Nepal to help mentees improve their writing and publication skills. The Record is an independent online publication based in Kathmandu that provides fresh analysis on politics, society, and culture, available in English and Nepali. Check it out at <https://www.recordnepal.com/>

Professional networking is key component of the Mentorship Program. Mentees are encouraged to collaborate with other similar initiatives in Nepal, such as the Center of Excellence at the Institute of Forestry in Pokhara, Resources Himalaya Foundation and ICIMOD. Mentors also introduce mentees to professionals and opportunities in their fields.

## 2019 Mentorships

### Ms. Tshiring Lhamu Lama Snow Leopard Conservation in the Dolpo Region

Mentors: Dr. Ghana Shyam Gurung, World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) Nepal and CGCF Board Member, and Dr. Rodney Jackson, Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC) USA

Dr. Ghana Shyam Gurung helped Tshiring get off to a good start by guiding her through a personal and professional goal setting exercise. As Tshiring noted:

"Before the mentorship program, I did work very hard but I did not seem to get any-

TPN partners with Sagarmatha National Park and Makalu-Barun National Park and each of their Buffer Zone Management programs and User Groups, and with other local organizations to implement the project. CGCT is happy to contribute to TPN in support of locally managed community forestry.



*Tshiring Lama distributed 300 khatas bearing a snow leopard at a local festival*

## Community Management of Forests Under Threat



Now, 40 years after the revolutionary move to empower local communities to manage forest resources in their environs – a practice and legal framework known as community forestry, which spread from Nepal

where worthwhile. Now I discovered that goal setting is a powerful process for thinking about my ideal future, and for motivating myself to turn my vision of this future into reality. The assigned mentorship questions really guided me to choose where I want to go in life, what I want to achieve and where I have to focus my efforts.”

Dr. Rodney Jackson then helped her elaborate her plan for “Raising Snow Leopard Conservation Awareness through Khata Presentation” in Dolpo. The khata is a ceremonial silk scarf used by Tibetans and other highland communities as a sign of greeting and appreciation. Tshiring designed one with a picture of a snow leopard and a quote from a highly regarded spiritual leader encouraging their protection, and passed them out at a local festival. The khatas were a big hit with the local people and will be re-used for years to come as per the traditional practice.

With the support of Dr. Jackson and others, and with an eye on creating a similar program in her home territory, the Dolpo region, Tshiring will be joining a snow leopard trek in Ladakh this winter to learn how ecotourism is helping to protect snow leopards there.



*Tshiring Lama distributed 300 khatas bearing a snow leopard at a local festival*

### **Ms. Anisha Rana**

#### **Status of Ecotourism Homestay and its Role in Biodiversity Conservation: A Case Study from Annapurna Rural Municipality**

Mentors: Chhing Lamu Sherpa (Mountain Spirit and CGCF Board Member) and Maureen DeCoursey (DeCoursey and Associates, CGCT Board Member)

It has been an exciting year for Anisha Rana, a graduate of Nepal's Institute of Forestry in Pokhara. In addition to carrying out her CGCF project, she was working in the Terai and received a scholarship to study for her master's degree in Denmark! We are very proud of her and wish her all the best as she takes another giant step forward in her professional development. Anisha scored another first by presenting her mentorship findings at the CGCT/CGCF annual commemorative event in Nepal in December from Denmark via video. You can view it here.

During her mentorship, Anisha surveyed five homestay operators and fifty tourists in the Panchase Lekh area just west of Pokhara. She found that the majority of tourists are Nepali and visitation has increased steadily over the past three years. In terms of biodiversity conservation, she identified several activities conducted by homestay operators that protect or enhance the overall quality of the environment. These include establishing tree plantations, participating in community-based anti-poaching campaigns and conducting environmental awareness activities. While measuring direct impacts on biodiversity were beyond the scope of the study, Anisha recommended that a connection be made with students from a school in Pokhara to conduct annual inventories of the local flora and fauna as a way to more accurately monitor population status.

throughout the developing world – community forestry is at risk of dying in Nepal. And the ACAP model that also reverberated around the world in the early 1990s as a successful model of local resource management and sustainable tourism is being torn apart by competing factions.

### **Community Forestry**

Community forestry was initiated in Nepal in the 1980s, and after more than 22,000 local community forest user groups were established and took responsibility for forest management, Nepal's forest cover nearly doubled<sup>1</sup>. Not surprisingly, the forests have matured and are now producing commercially valuable timber.

The question now is: who should manage the forests in Nepal's new federal structure?<sup>2</sup>

- The 2015 Constitution placed national forests under the authority of the provincial governments, but also listed national forests as the common right of federal, provincial and local governments.
- The Local Governance Operation Act of 2017 provided rural municipalities the right to protect, use, manage, monitor, regulate as well as formulate and implement laws.
- The recently drafted Forest Bill curtails the rights of Community Forest User Groups, the very elected local committees responsible for protecting the forests under the 1993 Forest Act, which led to the forests' abundant production.

The Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECO-FUN) is fighting for the rights of community forest user groups. Former Director General of Nepal's Department of Forests -Bijaya Paudel says, “Whoever

## 2020 Mentees and Mentors Announced!

Another exceptional cohort of mentees and mentors are on board for 2020. Dr. Hemanta Mishra and Dr. Sumitra M. Gurung, CGCF Advisor, will be mentoring Ms. Shikha Acharya as she pursues her project to increase women's participation in red panda conservation in Langtang National Park. Preliminary objectives are:

- To encourage leadership among women in red panda conservation activities
- To establish an existing mother's group as a red panda conservation activist club
- To initiate a red panda information center in Ghyangfedi region.

Shikha is currently studying at the Agriculture and Forestry University in Hetauda (Nepal) and has previously conducted baseline research on red pandas in Langtang. Dr. Mishra is one of Nepal's foremost rhino and tiger conservationists, now based in Washington DC. He is the author of several books on conservation in Nepal and has held key positions locally and abroad with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and others. Dr. Sumitra Gurung is a highly regarded sustainable development specialist based in Nepal with over 30 years' experience in natural resource management, community participation, microfinance, peace-building and social inclusion.

This year's second mentee, Mr. Sakar Jha, is in his final undergraduate year at the Institute of Forestry in Pokhara. His project aims to inspire youth to conserve Nepal's degrading wetlands. To accomplish this he will engage students of four schools around the Bishazari Lake complex, a RAMSAR site in the Chitwan region of the Terai. A Ramsar site is a wetland designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention that came into force in 1975.

Using various interactive lessons and activities, Sakar aims to increase awareness and protection efforts among the local Tharu schoolchildren, their parents and communities. He is well-qualified for this work: previously he co-founded a conservation organization named "Roar for Conservation (<http://www.roarforconservation.org>) that promoted ecotourism through wildlife photography. He has coordinated wildlife awareness days in the Pokhara valley and will be focusing his bachelor's dissertation on the economic valuation of wetland ecosystem services provided by the Bishazari Lake complex. He will be mentored by Ms. Reshu Aryal Dhungana, Director of the Fulbright Program as well as the Habeli Outdoor Learning Center in Nepal. His international mentor is yet to be named.

We wish all our new mentees and mentors a productive and fulfilling journey over the course of the next year!



*The new mentees and mentors for 2020, left to right: Bidur Pokharel, CGCF Treasurer; mentees Shikha Acharya and Sakar Jha, and mentor Dr. Sumitra M. Gurung.*

ends up managing the forests, the functional modality of the community forestry program that transcended political and administrative boundaries should not be dismantled. If we do, all our efforts and investment will come to naught, and the very thing we take pride in, our green forests, will be lost once again.”

Projects such as The Partners Nepal “One Day, One Tree” (see associated article) are proactively involving local people in protecting and re-establishing Nepal's forests.

## Annapura Conservation Area Project

The Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) was the brainchild of Chandra Gurung, alongside Hemanta Mishra, Mingma Sherpa and others. It established a new model of protected area management in Nepal, one in which villages are embedded and integral to environmental conservation, where tourism and other means of livelihood development are managed sustainably.

ACAP marked the beginning of ecotourism in Nepal. Since its inception in 1985, ACAP—the largest protected area in Nepal -- has hand-in-hand with community leaders, improved environmental management and developed ecotourism that generates village income with the result of lush regrowth of forests and relative affluence along the popular trekking routes.

Now there are three levels of government fighting to manage ACAP and the lucrative revenue stream it collects from tourists.<sup>3</sup>

With motorable roads replacing trekking routes, and increasing numbers of tourists exceeding carrying capacities for resources and waste management, ACAP is at a cross-roads. Calls for new

## The Glass Half-Full: APPA Training for Mentees

Anyone with experience in community development work knows that asking stakeholders about their problems is opening a can of worms that never closes. It breeds dependency upon outside interventions, and relieves the beneficiaries of responsibility for solving the problems.

The alternative – and far more productive approach -- is to ask them:

“What is working well, and what could work better?”

“Who, what, when, where, and how can (the situation) be improved?”

“What can you do, as an individual and as a community over the next one, three, five or more years to help achieve that vision?”

“What action can we take today?”

These are the four stages of the planning cycle called the “4-D model.” This is the framework of a participatory planning approach known as Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA). Using the APPA approach vs the age-old problem-based method encourages and enables local people to actively take part in the process of development and resource management, addressing issues that directly affect their lives and livelihoods. It emerged from Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in the 1980s as a tool of organizational development and business modeling in the U.S.

Picked up in the 1990s by The Mountain Institute’s Himalayan Programs and partners, it became the touchstone for positive change in tourism and micro-enterprise planning, women’s development, wildlife conservation, and institutional capacity building at the village, non-governmental and government, and private levels, spreading across South and Southeast Asia through the 2000s. Please read more about APPA and [Community-based Tourism for Conservation and Development](#).

The 4-D model begins with Discovery (appreciating, valuing and identifying past successes), followed by Dream (envisioning a shared desired future), Design (co-constructing the future, with commitments), and Destiny/Delivery (immediate, ongoing and measurable action to sustain the future). The APPA process can be used as a framework for personal development, partnership or alliance building, and small or large-scale community and organizational development and planning.

With the aim of providing mentees of the CGCT/CGCF Mentorship Program with skills in APPA to apply in their community-based research projects, CGCT sponsored this year’s mentees to attend a four-day APPA training. Mountain Spirit, a Nepal-based non-governmental organization, conducted the training in partnership with CGCF, and with additional funding support from Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC) of USA, whose local partners also participated as trainees.

In addition to learning the 4-D model, CGCT/F mentees applied the approach specifically to their research design to make it more participatory rather than the traditional Q&A and household survey approach that they learn in Nepal’s universities.

Mentees Tshiring Lama and Anisha Rana attended the APPA training in June 2019 and had this to say about it:

*“I found the APPA training to be one of the most practical and useful approaches I’ve ever learned, even in university... Now I am able to develop a community based conservation plan within a short period of time. After the training, we trainees had to make a commitment and my commitment was to turn one-year’s trash from my house into cash and to give the collected cash to Chandra Gurung Conservation Trust and Foundation toward continuation of the APPA training. I really appreciate the great support from Chandra*

longterm management strategies with full participation and buy-in from the local communities are being voiced. CGCT and its partner CGCF will continue to keep watch.

<sup>1</sup>From Sonia Awale, “Who now owns Nepal’s forests?” *Nepali Times*, January 4, 2019.

<sup>2</sup>Increased out-migration during this time also helped reduce population pressure on community forests. From Peter Gill, “In Nepal, Out-Migration is Helping Fuel a Forest Resurgence.” *E360 Yale Environment*. August 20, 2019.

<sup>3</sup>From Editorial, *Nepali Times*. “Fixing what ain’t broke”. January 4, 2019. Yuvaraj Shrestha, “Municipalities want to manage Annapurna”, *Nepali Times* Dec 28, 2018.



### School Rebuilt After Earthquake

In October 2019, CGCT partner, CGCF, announced the completion of Janasewa Primary School in Yamgaon village, Gorkha District. CGCT had contributed to the administrative costs of the school reconstruction, supplementing the primary funding provided by New York-based Gurung Society.

Gorkha District was the epicenter of the April 2015 earthquake and the school building had been flattened. CGCT and CGCF had already provided relief funds to the community of Ghyachchok in Gorkha District, and decided to prioritize school reconstruction after immediate relief needs were largely met.

CGCF Executive Director Amanda Manandhar Gurung led a heroic effort

*Gurung Conservation (Trust) and Foundation for changing my positive image into positive action.” Tshiring Lhamu Lama*

*“It was indeed one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had. It was nice meeting you all and learning Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA) techniques and tools. Thank you CGCT/F, MS and SLC for providing us with such an immense opportunity.” Anisha Rana*



*2019 mentee Anisha Rana practices the APPA approach*

CGCT looks to you our supporters to help us continue to provide APPA training to all future mentees. Participation in the APPA training costs approximately \$300 per trainee per year. We welcome a one-time or continuing annual pledge for one or both CGCT/CGCF mentees to participate in the APPA training.



*APPA trainees gather with informants*

to oversee the reconstruction project, including multiple all-day trips on primitive dirt roads through the earthquake devastated landscape. Whereas Gurung Society had required that the school be re-named after Chandra Gurung as a condition of funding, changing the entire name proved unfeasible. Gurung Society accepted modifying the name to Chandradaya Janasewa Primary School, as it is named today.

CGCT thanks CGCF, Gurung Society and everyone who worked on this project and congratulates the students on their new school. We also extend heartfelt gratitude to you, our supporters, for your generous contributions immediately following the two horrific 2015 earthquakes in Nepal.

### **Grey-Water Recycling Facility Coming to Sermathang**

Spring water is the only source of water in many mountain communities of Nepal. Spring sources are becoming scarcer each year due to climate change.

At the same time, there is increased demand for water due to changes in village lifestyle, particularly in regions such as Helambu where residents have become accustomed to western-style toilets (which use significantly more water than traditional toilets); trekking tourism further influences the choice of toilet design in lodges and homes.

CGCT has provided a grant to Yangrima Education Trust, which runs the Yangrima School and Yangri-Ma Ecolodge in Sermathang, to develop a grey-water recycling system. Recycling of domestic wastewater (excluding sewage) will reduce water use, improve sanitation and increase water availability (enhanced by a rainwater collection system) for vegetable production in local kitchen gardens. Treated grey-water can be used for laundry and toilet flushing, and irrigation of both food and non-food producing plants.

Yangrima Educational Trust is committed to uplifting the level of education and livelihood opportunities available in Helambu. The Trust, which runs the Yangrima School, plans to run hospitality and tourism training programs at the Yangri-Ma Ecolodge to stimulate hiring of local youth in

## Anti-Wildlife Trafficking Awareness

CGCT is pleased to be working with the Wildlife Trafficking Alliance (WTA) on projects in South Asia. WTA is a coalition of for-profit companies and non-profit organizations whose common goal is to protect wildlife through educational efforts aimed at discouraging the public from purchasing wildlife parts.

At its inception in 2015, WTA focused on projects in the U.S. but recently decided to extend its reach through international partnerships after recognizing that travelers may not receive the warnings prior to departure from the U.S.

CGCT will fund poster-sized graphics to be produced by WTA and distributed in airports in Nepal and Bhutan to be viewed by visitors waiting in immigration lines. The posters discourage the purchase of jewelry and other items made from wildlife parts. As they say, "When the buying stops, the killing can too."

For more information about WTA click [here](#) and please consider donating to CGCT to help expand our efforts.



Please give generously to the Chandra Gurung Conservation Trust. All administrative work in the US is done voluntarily so that all contributions go directly to field programs. Semi-annual financial and program reports are available for review upon request. Chandra Gurung Conservation Trust has received Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt status with the IRS thus, allowing your donation to be tax deductible.

tourism rather than hiring of employees from Kathmandu. It will train 20 students in grades 11 and 12 each year. As well it will provide short term courses to over 30 lodge-owners from across the Helambu region, initially free of cost. Skilling up local youth is an excellent way to keep them in communities and help reverse the trend of out-migration to Malaysia and Qatar.

The Ecolodge will also provide subsidized and healthy meals to students, teachers and local people throughout the year. It uses only local produce and supports local farmers. Revenue from the hospitality and tourism training will go toward funding a scholarship at Yangrima School for a disadvantaged student for three years.

The Ecolodge will demonstrate the construction and use of the grey-water recycling facility to local lodgeowners and families to encourage installation of such technology in Helambu homes and lodges and increase access to drinking water for all. This will be the first grey-water recycling system in Helambu. *In the past, CGCT has supported the construction of water tanks for Yangrima School to better provide a clean and reliable water source.*



*Sermathang Village, Helambu*

## Chandra Gurung Conservation Trust

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