

Volunteers Initiative Nepal (ViN)
Volunteer Completion Report Format
Volunteer Information

- **Volunteer Name:**
- **Project:** Sustainable Food Production
- **Location:** Okhaldhunga
- **Dates of Service:** (04/11/24 - 08/04/25)

Executive Summary

This report highlights the Project Sustainable Food Production

The report details project goals, the volunteer's role, key achievements, community impact, personal growth, and recommendations for future volunteers and ViN.

1. Project Background

- **1.1 Project Description:** The project aims to introduce permaculture and other sustainable agricultural practices to ensure sustainable food production.
- **1.2 Volunteer Role:** I had to work with the farmers of the community to train them and to physically help them in the implementation of the sustainable practices.

2. Achievements and Outcomes

- **2.1 Key Achievements:** During the duration of the project we raised 13 beds (with the permaculture practice of layers), painted 35 water tanks (to slow down the erosion process caused by the sun and other natural factors), planted 170+ trees for the creation of a food forest (the farmers will have fruits to sell in the market in the future, the farmers can visit the forest to learn how we did it and implement the practice in their own farm, the land will be full of roots this will give more stability to the soil), started a prototype of benches made from bamboo that will be used by the community, made a small manual that explains how to make beds.
- **2.2 Community Impact:** The family's farms where we raised the beds will have more vegetables, this will allow them to stop or reduce their dependence on buying food in the market. The families where we painted the water tanks are sure that for some years their water tanks will be safe from erosion. The family where we planted the food forest will be able to sell the fruits of the trees in the market and the farmers from the communities will

be able to see how to plant a food forest. The young people or kids of the community will have new benches where to sit and spend time together.

3. Personal and Professional Development

- **3.1 Skills and Knowledge Gained:** I learned new techniques about agriculture, some more modern (permaculture) and some related to the traditional way of working or Okhaldhunga (carrying things with doko or using khukuri). I learned something about how to plan and manage a project.
- **3.2 Reflection:** The best moments are for sure the moments that I spent with my teammates and the local farmers working together. We had a lot of fun and we created connections that go beyond the cultural and language barrier. This experience made me feel closer to myself and to life in general.

4. Challenges and Solutions

- **4.1 Challenges Faced:** Project related I faced a lot of challenges. Since the first moments there was a lot of confusion and the only clear thing was that, for the moment, we had to raise beds in the farmers' house. Creating beds is for sure an important thing but, for somebody that will stay 5 months, the things that the volunteer can do are way more. We tried for at least 1 month to change this thing: we proposed to make a manual (that we did) that explains to the farmer, in a very understandable way, how to make the beds. In this case we would have more time to do more things and to implement new activities in the project. Sadly nobody cared about this and after more than 1 month we stopped thinking about new ideas and new things to implement in the project (this led to a drastic decrease of enthusiasm in both long term and short term volunteers). The perfect example is the water tank painting: Vin can provide the paint to the farmers and they can do it by themselves while the volunteers can help in other things that have a more lasting impact on the community.

In general communication was pretty bad: we were involved in the activities just for the “physical” part, almost all the time we got to know things related to our project (training, events, change of plans etc..) just on the same day (some time not at all). We never had the feeling of being 100% involved in the project.

Painting or digging is ideal and very fun for somebody that decides to travel for a few weeks in a sustainable way but not for somebody that is committing for 5 months.

- **4.2 Problem-Solving Strategies:** I suggest you involve the long term volunteers more in the process of decision making and planning; listen to their ideas! Implement a manual for the bed digging (it's very easy the farmers can do it by themselves) so that the volunteers can have time to monitor the families while doing other activities (ex. surveys, planting forests, improving the seeds bank etc...). Another important thing is to train properly the long term volunteers, it would be ideal to have a training at the beginning with Bibek or in the “training center” in Badhaure because all the trainings we had were

in nepali, in this way the volunteers will be able to train the farmers and the short term volunteers. Focus more on the forest plantation part because it has a lot of potential: it's good for the farmers that receive the trees, for the community to learn and for the soil because you give it stability with roots. The more the long term volunteers will feel involved the more they will be enthusiastic.

5. Feedback for ViN

- **5.1 Project Feedback:** In the project the role of long term volunteers shouldn't be just physical but they should be more involved in all the aspects of their action. For short term volunteers it is a good experience!
- **5.2 Support and Resources:** I think the local staff did everything they could with us, I suggest more support coming from the HQ.

6. Recommendations for Future Volunteers

- Be ready to walk and work a lot, expect to spend most of your days in nature and to create very good bonding and connections with teammates, local farmers and the amazing environment in Okhaldhunga. Enjoy every single moment because this experience is very precious.

7. Conclusion

The overall experience was amazing, it really changed me and my perception of life; I feel like I'll go home as a better version of myself! There were challenges but it is understandable given the fact that we lived in a rural area, the local staff was always helpful and I feel like they are part of my family now. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to live this experience. I'm leaving a part of my heart here in nepal; I will always be grateful for this!