



THE **SANDBOX** BLOG

Scott on the ground in Nepal—watch the CBC interview

April Greene — April 28, 2015

When Pilot Projects' founder and director Scott Francisco left New York City for Nepal last week, he had no way of knowing his trip would coincide with a magnitude 7.8 earthquake—Nepal's most devastating in over 80 years.

Scott's visit was to center on meetings with [ForestAction Nepal](#) and other organizations and people involved with community forest management, in an effort to further develop strategies for Pilot Projects' [Brooklyn Bridge Forest](#) (BBF) project. Dr. Sarah Wilson, of [International Forestry Resources and Institutions](#) (IFRI) at the University of Michigan, who is very involved with BBF, had traveled to Nepal a few weeks prior for post-doctoral research which involved trekking in the Langtang and Helambu regions of the country to interview people who have taken part in reforestation efforts in very deforested areas. Sarah and Scott had planned to overlap and collaborate on their research.

Below, Scott tells the story of what happened next to Paulina Abad, Associate Producer at Canada's CBC News Network. You can also see a video of his interview with CBC anchor Andrew Nichols here: "[Canadian Helping in Nepal.](#)"



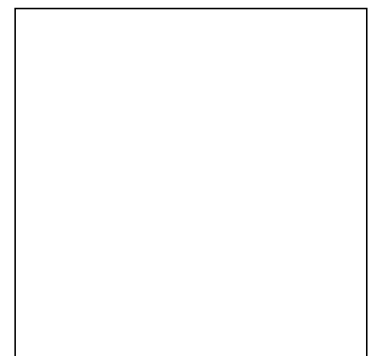
Many buildings sustained structural damage



Scott and Sarah in Nepal

We were just outside Kathmandu arriving at Bhaktapur (one of the most devastated areas) when the quake struck. With 30-some locals, we jumped out of our overloaded bus to find the ground swaying beneath us and the sight of dust clouds in the surrounding buildings, which we gradually realized was from their collapsing.

We proceeded on foot to Bhaktapur to find sections of the ancient city in ruins. After trying to help there (but nothing we could really do; shortage of hands), we proceeded to walk the 10km back to Kathmandu center. The walk with thousands of Nepali trying to make sense of what was happening around them was an awesome one, difficult to put into words. We passed collapsed buildings, huge buildings leaning over but still in 'one piece'...



Children walk carefully on damaged ground

The second day, without news or a full sense of the impact of the quake, we set out for Langtang, wanting to assess the damage and help if we could. What we found at the bus depot was more sporadic devastation and word that Langtang's roads and buildings had been 'wiped out.'

It is worth noting that some of the devastation due to landslides may be attributable to the deforestation of hillsides for pasture. This would go to show that deforestation is a major problem worldwide, with far-reaching and potentially catastrophic consequences.

So we set off on foot on a north-to-south walk through Kathmandu, helping locals where we could: doing some informal building assessments for families and building one temporary shelter for a family in preparation for coming rains.

I am now in Patan, one of the hardest-hit parts of the city, to do building assessments of local homes and around famous World Heritage Site Durbar Square with community leaders, including the president of the [Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust](#), Rohit Ranjitkar. We are planning to do 'transects' (a forestry research term) of local blocks in the area to get a sense of the percentage of buildings damaged at different levels: no visible, superficial, moderate structural, major structural repairable, mortal damage must be demolished, etc.

I have also initiated an effort to host teams of international engineers to work on immediate and longer-term building assessment and restoration.

Will have more to report this evening.

We at Pilot Projects are of course relieved that Scott and Sarah are safe, and know they're doing everything they can to help with recovery efforts. We look forward to posting more updates, as they become available.

Tags: [brooklyn bridge forest](#), [sustainability](#), [world monuments fund](#), [mcgill university](#)

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Kathmandu Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

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