

THE PROTECTORS: TREE GUARDS

I still remember those days during installing tree guards on the restoration sites; we faced a series of unexpected challenges. There were no labours and mules that usually helped with transport; they were already engaged in other tasks. On top of that we had a strict deadline to complete the task on time. To make matters worse, heavy rainfall caused landslides, cutting off road connectivity. The reason was urgent, the shepherds were about to move their flocks from upper hills to the lower areas. If the saplings were left unprotected, the goats and sheep could destroy or graze the entire saplings in a single walk.

Waiting for help was not an option; the tree guards had to reach the plantation area somehow. So we took the responsibility ourselves, we carried tree guards by ourselves, walking without any load itself felt nearly impossible but with heavy tree guards on our shoulders every step became a struggle. The path was rough, the slopes unforgiving and there was no one else to share the weight.

Most mornings, we started with nothing more than a cup of tea, coffee and a few pieces of toast, biscuits, and bread. That was the only fuel. After hours of hauling the tree guards and transferring those to the plantation/ restoration sites, our body felt completely drained, legs trembled, shoulders ached and even standing still felt like work.



HRP-Anecdotes

By the time we reached the field station, exhaustion took over. Cooking a proper meal felt harder than the climb itself, yet we forced ourselves to prepare food because there was no other option. On some days, we didn't even have the strength for that, we simply lay down and fell asleep without eating, our bodies surrendering to fatigue. Those moments taught us the true meaning of endurance. It wasn't just about planting saplings or placing tree protectors; it was about pushing forward despite hunger, exhaustion and impossible terrain driven only by commitment and resilience.

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