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The Before and After of an Ecosystem

In Brazil, as in many parts of the world where forests exist, a large number of areas have been deforested in order to be used for agriculture and livestock. In the State of Minas de Gerais, a photographer and his wife decided to bring to life a piece of land whose trees were cut down and which looked, a few years ago, like this:



At that time, it was a sad and desolate terrain that had no life of any kind. Then this couple, the Brazilian photographer Sebastiao Salgado and his wife Leila came up with the idea that they could replant the forest and do something to contribute to our planet Earth.

They began this great work with some helpers and many detractors. It would not be an easy task, but they wanted to try and above all to do it in the best way. Then they began to look for native trees' seeds and established a nursery where these seeds grew with the necessary nutrients and were developed as seedlings. When they were the right size, they were planted on the terrain.

This was the initial idea and despite the effort, hard work and good intentions, this first attempt was a failure. Many of the seedlings died when they were planted mainly because the soil was too arid and there was not enough water for the seedlings to survive. It then became a challenge for the couple to make the land kind for the seedlings and allow them to get used to it so they could grow, and they made a couple of more attempts.



When the plants began to grow, so did their hope that they could achieve something and 20 years later they have managed to plant over two million plants, giving to the initial land a better aspect and above all a new life.



Just as this land has been reforested, it has brought other forms of life to the place. Birds, reptiles and some mammals have returned to a place that some time ago could not have hosted them. The story of Leila and Sebastiao shows us that when the importance of plants is recognized and there is a commitment to the environment, it is possible to contribute to the regeneration of Earth itself and to make life come back once again.