



# Concern Nepal

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## Editorial

### A Matter of Pause

Our dear colleague and Executive Secretary of Canada Forum for Nepal (CFFN), Alys Muckart, passed away unexpectedly in December 18, 2007. Born in Scotland and lived in Canada, she was a freedom loving person never bound in the confine of national boundaries. She was drawn to causes whether they be in Nepal, Tibet, Canada, or Iraq. However, the death of an intelligent, inspired, and energetic person, who was working in full capacity until October 2007, makes us pause!

In year 2005, dark clouds were hanging over Nepal's sky as Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the King Gyanendra's autocratic regime were poised for ever bloodier war. Political parties were teetering with their leaders under house arrest and people not standing on their support. Emboldened by Musarraf's "success" in Pakistan to run an autocratic regime, King Gyanendra was sending his emissaries around the world asking for more military gear to fight the "terrorists". Contemplating the possibility of the looming human disaster, Nepalese people were increasingly nervous and people like us living abroad were anxious to advance the people's causes for peace, justice, and democracy. Shortly after we wrote one page appeal and circulated it around, there was Alys Muckart saying she would work with us to advance the cause of Nepalese people and we never looked back. We discussed, debated, collaborated, and coordinated on all complex issues and she was with us for a long haul.

While everyone today seems to be driven by "I must be professionally successful and financially strong" mindset, even people of Nepalese origin find it difficult to part their time for the causes of Nepal. But Alys had taken early retirement from an established position to devote fulltime to the causes of humanity. Despite meeting death unexpectedly, she left an inspiring legacy. She also imparted that the trick to meaningful life is in not waiting for an ideal time to get involved in worthy endeavours but in recognizing that the right time is now and never tomorrow!

## **CFFN Programs and Activities: Report from the Executive Board**

Two years have now elapsed since the formation of Canada Forum for Nepal and these years have been filled with many worthy and enriching activities. Whereas our activities of early 2006 were guided by averting looming human disaster in Nepal, our post Jana Andolan II (people's movement) endeavours have been shaped by the spirit of building knowledge resource for a peaceful transition of Nepal. Although Jana Andolan gave an outlet for lessening number of political problems, a large part of people's aspirations have yet to be addressed. Consequently, it is not a time for resting neither for the people of Nepal nor for the conscious people living in Canada and around the world who have affinity towards Nepal. The journey of building social harmony, justice, and prosperity in Nepal, therefore, continues.

In this respect, CFFN has continued its work with intentions of being useful in positive transformation of Nepal and in building better relations between the people of Canada with the people of Nepal. We remained a busy and energized in year 2007 as we were in 2006 and evolved our works to remain in tuned with the changing needs of Nepal. Here are some of the highlights of our activities in 2007:

1. **Himalayan Heartbeat**

CFFN organized a multifaceted cultural evening, "Himalayan Heartbeat: Nepal Cultural Evening" on 6 October 2007 in Ottawa, where accomplished Nepali singer, Susan Maskey, along with her daughter a young and aspiring singer Astha Tamang Maskey, enthralled the audience by their brilliant performances and beautiful dances performed by various Nepalese youth artists spell bound the audience. The featured speaker of the program was the former mayor of Ottawa, Hon. Marion Dewar, who eloquently emphasized the role of public education and public health in the development of Nepal. The program also recognized the most accomplished Canadian mountaineer and aerospace engineer Megan McGrath for her successful accomplishment of seven summit of the world and for saving the life of Nepali mountaineer Usha Bista while descending from the summit of Mt. Everest in May 2007.

2. **CFFN Conference on Nepal: Unfolding Futures – Nepalese Economy, Society and Politics**

From 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2007, CFFN organized a conference titled "Unfolding Futures" that focused on the contemporary issues of economy, society and politics of Nepal especially focusing on governance, federalism, and political restructuring, health, environment and economy for the future Nepal. Scholars from Canada, Nepal, India and USA contributed with their papers. The issues on the conference were presented with rigor and brought significant scholarly work from highly accomplished researchers. The keynote speaker of the conference was Dr. Ronald L Watts, former Vice Chancellor of Queen's University of Canada and a world's most well-known and leading scholar on the issues of federalism. He presented on the contemporary relevance of the federal idea with reference to Nepal.

3. **Interaction Programs**

○ **Interim Constitution and Issues of Ethnic Representation**

February 11, Ottawa, Canada: In the context that Terai tensions had broken out in Nepal and dozens of people were massacred, CFFN organized an interaction program to hear the first hand experiences from the ground through human rights defenders. Mr. Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, General Secretary of Joint Forum for Human Rights, an organization of more than 50 Human Rights NGOs in Nepal, was the main speaker of the program.

○ **The Dreams and Realities of New Nepal**

March 29, Montreal, Canada: The Executive Director of CFFN, Dr. Pramod Dhakal, was the panellist on an educational interaction program organized by the South Asia Research and Resource Center (CERAS) in Montreal, Canada, on the new developments in Nepal. This program centered around the implications of revolutionary groups entering the Nepali parliament and

analysis of the political future of Nepal. Shahrzad Arshadi, Montreal filmmaker, photo journalist and human rights activist was the other panellist.

- **The Risks and Opportunities of Federalism on Inclusion**  
May 20, Washington DC, USA: A theme paper titled “The risks and opportunities of federalism on inclusion” was presented by Pramod Dhakal, Executive Director of CFFN, in a talk program organized by America Nepal Society (ANS) in Washington DC, USA. He presented a model of federalism called “distributed federalism.” The paper was critiqued by Dr. Chitra Krishna Tiwari and Dr. Shyam D Karki of USA and Ms. Sujata Koiral, a political leader in Nepal.
  - **Models of Federalism**  
May, Kathmandu, Nepal: Ram Acharys, Executive Member of CFFN, presented his paper titled "A Model for Political Restructuring and Electoral System of Federal Nepal" in an interaction program participated by key figures of major political parties and members of civil society. The paper was critiqued by representatives of major political parties in Nepal.
  - **The Issues of State Restructuring**  
June 20, Kathmandu, Nepal: Pramod Dhakal, Executive Director of CFFN, gave a feature presentation on "The issues of inclusion, prosperity, and federalism in New Nepal" on a program titled "The Issues of State Restructuring" organized by Solidarity Monthly with an objective of facilitating the political parties that are committed to the endeavours of restructuring the state as part of the roadmap of New Nepal. Other presenters were Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Nepali Congress (Democratic), Mr. Chakra Bastola, Nepali Congress, Mr. CP Gajurel, Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), Mr. Shankar Pokharel, Communist Party of Nepal (UML), Dr. Krishnahari Nepal, Former Ambassador to Japan, Prof. Durga Dutta Poudel, Louisiana University at Lafayette.
  - **Federalism and Constitution**  
August 04, Ottawa, Canada: CFFN organized an interaction program with Nepal Bar Association Delegates on the issue of federalism and constitution in Nepal. The NBA delegation consisted of President Bishwa Kanta Mainali, Vice President Prahlad Bahadur Karki, General Secretary Raman Kumar Shrestha, Treasurer Sabita Bhandari Baral, Central Executive Member Nara Bahadur Shahi, Prof. Bidur Bikram Thapa, Women lawyer from Tarai Ranju Thakur, and Project Director Badri Prasad Bhandari.
  - **Constitution, Constituent Assembly and Democracy**  
September 03, Houston, Texas: The Executive Director of CFFN, Dr. Pramod Dhakal, had participated on a workshop held on Houston, Texas, USA where he presented his model of “distributed federalism” which emphasizes on devolving power to numerous small governments that could be managed by common people. He was speaking on a day long workshop titled "New Nepal in the Making: Constitution, Constituent Assembly and Democratic Republic" organized by NANDRON. The program covered a number of other areas where Dr. Ram Upadhyay, Mr. Shambhu Katel, Dr. Durga Poudel, Mr. Bhim Karki, Dr. Dilip Panthee, Ms. Kiran Rana and Ms. Muna Poudel were the presenters.
4. **Project: Rural Education Nepal ([www.cffn.ca/school](http://www.cffn.ca/school))**  
CFFN revived an earlier project launched by Mrs. Donna Lea of Illinois, USA. Since then, three volunteers have visited Sarkuwa, Baglung, Nepal and helped establish Internet connectivity, an off-line mailing and educational web-browsing facility, and a basic foundation for a computer lab. CFFN is collaborating with a number of notable individuals and WizzyDigital of Pennsylvania, to implement this project.
5. **Press Visibility and Collaborations: Articles, News, websites, emails, and more ...**  
CFFN activities were widely covered in media; many featured articles were published by CFFN. A number of other activities throughout the year, such as networking, consultative meetings with CIDA and other organizations, web publications, participating in events organized by like-minded organizations, periodic communications with members and friends, and so on.

## Featured Articles:

# Crossing the Chasm: Education in Rural Nepal

[David Campbell](#)

Illinois, USA

My phone rang as I was driving home from a pleasant dinner party. When I picked up the phone, my friend Zach Gaydos had one question for me: “Would you like to go to Nepal with me to teach English?”

We met for drinks to discuss the details, but the decision in my mind was made the moment Zach posed the question over the phone. Of course, I wanted to go to Nepal. It sounded like once in a lifetime opportunity to go and do something meaningful and useful. Going to a rural village in Asia with worthy cause of teaching, while having an opportunity for an adventure in the birthplace of Buddha, was too good of an opportunity to let go by.

Zach explained that two teachers, Donna Lea and her husband Thomas Lea, from our area in Illinois were involved with a rural school in Nepal. They were working with a former student of that school, Pramod Dhakal of Canada Forum for Nepal. They were doing the coordination work for our travel and we were doing our part.

Nothing could have prepared us for what came next when we landed in Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. As we stepped through the exit and into the hazy atmosphere of Kathmandu valley, an army of Nepalese approached us asking to carry our bags to a taxi. Within this chaos, we managed to find our contact person, Sudeep Dhakal, who was waiting for our arrival. After welcoming us, he ushered us into a taxi, which hurtled us through the crowded streets like a bat out of hell. Welcome to Nepal, where the traffic laws aren't exactly observed!

We stayed in Kathmandu for a few days, taking in the wondrous sites of places like Durbar Square and Swayambhunath and the not so wondrous sites of disorderly congestions, dirty alleys, and polluted air. To my Western mind, there was something fascinating about this place. The experience was riveting and at any given moment I felt as if the city may descend into chaos and mayhem. But then, I sensed there was an order in the mayhem. Sudeep taught us the phrase “Sab Thik Chha!” [It is all good].

We traveled to a small town on the western highway called Kushma by a rickety ‘local’ bus, and from there we hiked for six hours to get to the village of Sarkuwa. Eventually this journey would only take us four hours, but we were still new to the rigors of walking along terraced rice paddies and up and down the steep clay trails of the Annapurna range’s foothills. Everywhere we looked, we saw luscious greenery, banana trees, seasonal waterfalls, and gushing rivers. This was a world away (literally) from the flat plains of my home state Illinois.

We were warmly welcomed by our hosts, Megh Raj and his family. The next day we visited the school where we were going to volunteer. Mutual curiosity between us, the staff, and the students, bloomed into treasured friendships. Their personal warmth was very touching, and a far cry from detached western city lifestyles.

We hiked uphill every day for half an hour to get to school, and many of the students and staff had to walk farther. Janata Higher Secondary School is quite remote and rural, with walking being the only mode of transportation. Communication is quite a challenge.

The students had an insatiable appetite for interacting and learning from us, but this is not to say that there were not difficulties. For example, hardly any English material was available for the students to explore. The situation in the cities is different as there are many foreign tourists, books, and television channels in English. Consequentially in examinations, the students in the cities score significantly higher than students in rural areas, especially in English. In subjects taught in Nepali, our students' achievements were not that far behind the urban average. This meant that rural schools can significantly benefit from better outreach programs in English.

You may wonder why this is of such significance. In order to progress to university or colleges, Nepali students need to have demonstrated ability in English. Many courses are actually taught in English, and if they want to attend an Indian university, proficiency in English is a necessity. The language provides them with many more opportunities for employment and higher education, and in an impoverished Nepal, opportunity is everything.

Practically every Nepali I talked to indicated that there is a lack of opportunity for the common person. There is hope though in their earnest ambitions for the future, that a prosperous Nepal is possible. In this small underdeveloped nation, a little effort can go a long way towards creating a bright and hopeful future. We found that the concerned citizens of the world could make a tremendous contribution in rural Nepal in advancing English language proficiency through provision of modest computerized learning environments where a wide variety of learning materials can be made easily and economically available.

**[David Campbell obtained BA in Fine Arts from University of Illinois in 2007 and went to Nepal and volunteered at Janata HS School, Sarkuwa, Baglung District, Nepal from September to December 2007. He lives in Champaign, Illinois.]**

## Namaste

**Zachary Gaydos**  
Illinois, USA

"Namaste!" I was to hear this greeting many, many times in the three and a half months I spent in Nepal. I heard it from taxi drivers, hoteliers, old women carrying firewood on narrow mountain trails, and hundreds of times from students at the school I taught at. Loosely translated, "namaste" means, "I bow to the divine within you." A bit different from the common "hello" most often heard in English speaking countries. While in cities, "hello" is becoming increasingly widespread, especially in areas frequented by tourists, in the rural areas "Namaste" still reigns supreme. It is an excellent example of the polite respect Nepalis afford to all visitors to this beautiful country. It also showcases the narrowing bridge between a formerly isolated Himalayan Hindu kingdom and a modern nation.

Nepal is a country in Southeast Asia, sandwiched between the Tibetan Plateau of China in the north and the Indian subcontinent on the eastern, southern, and western sides. Its climate ranges from subtropical jungle in the southern river basins to the frigid apex of Sagarmatha (otherwise known as Everest), the tallest mountain on Earth. Nepal is likewise home to tremendous variety cultural identities, including dozens of linguistic and ethnic groups and a plethora of religious affiliations (Hindu and Buddhist being predominant). While Nepali citizens hail from very diverse backgrounds, there remains a strong national identity and a collective motivation to move forward together. The Nepali people are internationally known for their friendliness and generosity. It is not surprising that Nepal is a highly acclaimed destination for international travelers.

However, Nepal is still experiencing growing pains as it emerges from its traditional agrarian lifestyle towards a future more developmentally modern. Many of the people in Nepal are extremely poor. Urban areas face great problems with overpopulation and subsequent pollution. Ten years of political instability have damaged Nepal's emerging infrastructure. Dozens of political parties (often with divergent goals) are attempting to reach consensus, as Nepal attempts to transition from a Hindu monarchy to a republic. Mirroring this political transition, Nepal's educational system is also shifting from a more traditional system towards methods that emphasize computer training and foreign language instruction. There is also a developing emphasis on providing educational opportunities to females, the poor, and members of the lower caste (caste being the Hindu social classification system). For Nepal to move forward, to become a successful modern nation, there must be synergistic evolutions in its infrastructure, political processes, educational system, and social equality. It speaks very highly of Nepal that its people remain so friendly, communicative, and generous in the face of such brutal adversity.

I taught English for three months at an isolated school in Baglung District, west of Pokhara. While there is some access to modern teaching materials and methods in the cities, rural schools often lack funding or educational resources to prepare students for continued education. There has been an increased emphasis on instruction in the English language, both at the specific school I was at and in Nepal as a whole. This is because proficiency in English is an essential requirement to study at universities abroad. While Nepal is home to several universities, it is often impossible to receive advanced degrees in a particular subject. Therefore, for Nepal to continue the process of development (a goal shared by every Nepali I spoke to), they must have access to the best educational opportunities. Proficiency in English provides the linguistic passport to pursue these opportunities.

Another aspect of our work at Sarkuwa involved introducing and teaching information technology. The vast majority of students at the school had no experience with computers; some had never seen one before. As the global community becomes increasingly dependent on technology (and moves ever further into the digital era) it is essential to people in modernizing nation like Nepal to have basic literacy in computers. While I am far (very, very far) from being an expert on this subject, it gives students a huge advantage (especially in respect to higher education) if they can successfully turn on a computer, operate word- processing and spreadsheet applications, and send and receive emails. Access to the Internet literally opens a new world to the children of Nepal's schools.

As stated above, education is one component of a larger aggregate of developmental goals. Education is of special importance, however, because it provides the ideological basis and technical skill to bring about changes in myriad other categories. Nepalis are highly motivated to this end. However, assistance from the people of other nations is essential, regardless of the form it takes. As modern transportation and information science bring an often disparate world closer together, it is beneficial for the people of all nations to achieve a shared standard of living. The time I spent teaching in Nepal was certainly not without difficulties, but it was, and is, a worthy endeavor. Namaste!

**[Zachary Gaydos obtained BA in Anthropology from University of Illinois in 2007 and went to Nepal and volunteered at Janata HS School, Sarkuwa, Baglung District, Nepal from September to December 2007. He lives in Champaign, Illinois.]**



# Community Empowerment

**Dr. D.D. Poudel**

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A community is the center of all aspects of human necessities including psychological, socio-economic, philosophical, intellectual and cultural. For an individual, the community provides a psychological safety, which is important for the confidence building and intellectual development of the person. The community is also a venue for the development of individual's ability to interact and observe various processes and activities in social context. Therefore, community empowerment is extremely important not only for the physical and socio-economic development of an individual, but also for the sustainability of the community and the nation.

A community heavily influences the development of its members' cognitive, behavioural, humanistic, and intellectual faculties. Since higher learning capabilities, positive behavioural development, self-actualization, and full participation of individuals requires positive community environments available to its members. Such environment can induce responsible resource use, problem solving, cultural enhancement, leadership development, socio-economic transformation, and capacity building, which propel sustainable societal development. The importance of community empowerment, therefore, cannot be overemphasized.

Although we hear the words "community empowerment", its meaning is vaguely understood by most people. And, the governments and communities around the world are unable to take it as an integral part of national development. Many international institutions, governmental machineries, nongovernmental agencies, and other related organizations have given a lot of emphasis on community development, and are involved on the developmental works such as water supply, electricity, road networks, schools, and hospitals. They, therefore, have taken it as means to end poverty and improve living conditions of underprivileged people. However, results on poverty eradication are not sufficiently encouraging. Those developmental works which are imported from outside have not been quite successful in the community empowerment, which was supposed to ensure that a community is capable of developing its own infrastructure for its growth, its own leadership, technical and business skills, innovation and capacity for perpetuating the development. Only when these basic ingredients are in place, a community can move forward on its empowerment and sustainable development.

Also, community empowerment requires an equal representation of its people in their legislative and policy-making bodies. Thus, the type of electoral system under which a community is operating is paramount for community empowerment. Therefore, the goal of the 21<sup>st</sup> century political system must be a fair representation of ethnicities, minorities, lingual, gender, and social demography in the decision-making bodies. This ensures that concerned people are fairly contributing in policymaking.

An important challenge faced by today's communities in developing countries in formulating consensual policies has been the practice of confrontational politics largely fed by the commonly practiced First-Past-The-Post electoral system. Such systems have not been able to fulfill the goal of fairly representing various thoughts and segments of societies. Recognizing such shortcomings, many countries around the globe lately are adopting the Proportional Representation (PR) system. Because the PR systems tend to include smaller parties, minorities, independent candidates, ethnic groups in the fold, traditionally privileged people and political parties tend to view PR system with scepticism. However, the PR system's core strength lies on enhancing the self-respect,

pride, and shared representation among the communities, which are the precursors of peace, progress, and prosperity of a society. Therefore, a PR system is a major step towards community empowerment and sustainable societal development, especially to take the communities from confrontational politics to consensus based politics.

For nation building, people should be mobilized fully to solve their common problems such as food deficiency, poverty, infrastructural underdevelopment, corruption, and social injustice. Yet such mobilization would not be possible to either initiate or to sustain in absence of freedoms, human rights, liberties, rights of self-determination, and people's ownerships. A community whose voice is never heard at the center or at the regional level would not effectively mobilize either. Therefore, it is extremely important to have a political structure set up in such a way that ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and regional diversities are taken into account. This is because sovereign people are the source of all effective and innovative organizations.

Ensuring public good, such as education, health, recreation, environment, and agriculture, is one of the core contributions an empowered community can offer in building a prosperous society. The chronic problems of almost every developing country worldwide – the eradication of poverty and social inequities – are no doubt best addressed at community levels.

As Nepal seems to be heading towards federal democratic republic and the adoption of fully PR electoral system, communities representing various ethnicities, linguistic groups, castes, minorities, etc. are expected to have their full representations in the legislative body in the near future. Once the policies and programs are developed considering the voices and the concerns of various communities across the nation, community empowerment will emerge as the highest priority work for the government. Through community empowerment, which includes necessary technological assistance, financial support, skills and leadership development, innovation, capacity building, and people mobilization for development, Nepal can effectively move forward quickly on sustainable societal, economic and national development.

## The Economy of Scale

**Dr. Pramod Dhakal**  
Canada Forum for Nepal

As I pondered the economic state of my mountain village in Nepal after a visit this summer, I noticed a number of anomalies. While someone from almost every household is working in a foreign country and has been sending money back for years, I could not find much improvement in the material or spiritual wealth of the village. I could not find the remittance money working for the betterment of the villagers. Obviously the village has changed in many ways as the thatch roofs are replaced by tin roofs, ropes are made not of babiyoo (*Eulaliopsis binata*) but of plastic; containers are made of not copper or wood but of aluminum; and polyester and nylon have replaced cotton. There is reduced diversity of crops and reduced production of food, but virtually unchanged poverty and hardship. A Dalit man had committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree the night I reached there, and many had done similar deeds in the recent years – an emerging but tragic phenomenon in the village. Adult men are in search of foreign jobs, and the village is inhabited by children, the elderly, and women. Most students in the village school will never pass Grade 5, let alone Grade 10 or 12. The remittance – which earns more hard currency for Nepal than all exports, tourism and foreign aid combined [1] – stays largely on the hands of



manpower companies and moneylenders living in the cities. Slogans of prosperity have been sung by a few in the cities while the rural economy is being hollowed out and is being sustained precariously on “leftover remittance”.

Historically Nepal was not this badly dependent on outside money for a meagre survival and there was resilience amidst the poverty, illiteracy, exclusion, and discrimination inflicted on the people by its isolationist rulers. Amidst all difficulties there was an internal production mechanism, and a sustainable trade within the country and with the people of the north and the south. When my parents sent me for a two-year high-school education in Kathmandu, they had no other source of income than trading small quantities of diverse products which included grains, pulses, ghee, lumber, hay, fruits, tobacco, chilli, herbs, cane-sugar syrup, and lemon concentrate. Although done in grams and kilos – not in tonnes – this trade was nevertheless a viable one, tried and true for centuries. Similarly trading of services was also a potent means of survival for many. While surviving within the meagre scale of their economy, these largely illiterate people sought opportunity for their children in education. They poured their energy and money in building public schools while relying on the traditional economic foundation – a more farsighted endeavour than that of our educated “economists” who dismantled the public education in the latter years.

Our “get rich quick” economists who wanted to reach either the Asian Measure or prosperity at par with Singapore’s, had no ideas to transform the self-reliant economy by focusing on education, organization and discipline – the three pillars for founding a prosperous economy. They could have mastered the art of doing trade through the specialization, productivity enhancement, diversification, education, and research, but they could not see anything worthwhile inside the small agricultural economy of Nepal. They saw the future in big industries, like a rubber industry based on imported rubber, a paper industry based on imported chemicals, a television industry based on imported ready-to-assemble televisions, and other industries which had pretended to be Nepali but assembled and branded foreign goods. Many of these schemes were merely tools to circumvent taxes or to create an illusion of progress. And then there were profitable industries like alcohol and cigarettes, which did nothing but eat away the physical health of the people and, therefore, their economic potential. Only a few industries, like cement and marble, still rely on internal resources. Others, like the garment and carpet industries, use foreign materials and internal manpower but are extremely exploitative of human labour. Workers in these factories cannot even send their children to schools. The traditional Nepali strengths of arts and crafts have not been preserved: nobody talks about the Tapke of Birgunj, the Karuwa of Palpa, the Topi of Bhaktapur, the Paper of Baglung, and so on, let alone promoting them to the wider markets. Never was there a focus on specialization, and on continuous improvement of quality and productivity, but only on the quantity - a sure recipe for failure at the first encounter of competition.

Hearing about the “economics of scale,” but lacking the know-how to run large systems, Nepal’s “visionaries” brought large scale projects like Karnali, Arun, Nepal Paper, Bhrikuti Paper, Gorakhkali Rubber, Janakpur Cigarette, Bansbari Leather, which have all failed, mostly due to corruption and incompetent management. Forget about managing large and complex organizations, they did not even have the know-how for managing small systems that our villagers were successfully managing, such as schools, rest-houses (Dharmashala), temples, canals, farmlands, and trade. There existed an ulterior motive in wanting the industries of scale for they had figured out how to get “mega aid” and “mega mortgage.” Most of these projects became easy places for the upper elites to secure employment.

Unfortunately, they did not calculate the future consequences on the environment, society, and economy.

Even tourism, long identified as a potential balancing force for Nepal's trade deficit, was not developed in any integrated way that would benefit the wider economy and the population of Nepal. The industry is in the control of a few. The general population has neither the know-how nor the enthusiasm for building the necessary infrastructure, while the government says it does not have enough money. Therefore, the annual tourist flow has remained at below 500,000 tourists a year for decades and the earning per tourist has not surpassed \$300. There are plenty of hotels in Kathmandu but the rooms are hardly ever filled. However, tourism is not going to be developed by having mountains in the north and hotels in Kathmandu. Development requires a complex maze of activities.

Going back to rural Nepal, there were many cows and buffalos but not enough pasture and grassland in the past, but now there are too few cattle and unused pastures. There is fodder but no one to feed it to the cattle. Native herbs, grass and shrubs are being devoured by a toxic Banmara (*Eupatorium odoratum*) accidentally introduced to the land through imported grains or goods. No one knows if figs, oranges, Amala (*Embllica officinalis*), coffee, limes, grapes, sumac, pears, bamboos, fiddlehead, etc, could bring commercial value to the village. Hardly any knowledge exists in finding the previously undiscovered value in plants, animals, the environment, tourism, and so on. There is little relationship between education, research, industry, commerce, and renewable resources available in the country.

I left my village convinced that there must be a way by which those people should be able to improve the lot of their lives without waiting for a miracle to descend from the donor countries. As I turned to some books on economics for some wisdom, I came across a quote from Adam Smith: "*The **annual labor of every nation is the fund** which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes*" [2]. If that is true, the economic fund of rural Nepal is evaporating by virtue of the steadily diminishing annual labour input in the economy, and this does not bode well for Nepal's prosperity. The salvation for Nepal's economy should, therefore, be found in mobilizing the pool of labour that is available in the country to lift the lot of everyone collectively. The economy could grow internally if some people generate electricity from the stream water, some use the electricity to run a stone cutting mill, some run a carpentry workshop, some mine the rocks, some build school buildings and houses, some make crafts, some raise goats for meat and milk, some grow fruits, vegetables and grain, and so on. All these activities, except the grain production, are virtually free of any pressure from the world competition and carry potential to improve the living standards of the people.

In addition, if public schools were to deliver quality education in a fair and equitable environment, the remittance money, which hardly trickles past the big cities today, could flow to the village as there would be no need to keep the children in the towns to enrol them in private boarding schools. The mother, who is now grumpily sitting idle in Pokhara all day long while her children have gone to boarding schools, would have happily fetched fodder for her buffalo and tended her farmland, thereby adding some substantial drops to the meagre GDP of Nepal and for the prosperity of the village. Remittance can then accelerate the internal economic activities in the villages. Exportable commodities should then be able to trickle out of the villages once again to feed the larger economy of Nepal. However, there needs to be coordination from a committed and incorruptible government if these tiny streams of productions were to sum up to a river

Our economists might be worried that Nepal does not produce anything in a quantity large enough to compete in the global economy. If that is the case, Nepal must use education and technology to exploit its resources such that it would not require shipping them out on trucks and airplanes. It should add value to internal products while improving existing skills, developing new skill sets, and elevating competitive potential. All these can be done such that people around the world would come to Nepal and consume the products and services from within Nepal.

Why can't we provide medical vacation to the elderly of the industrialized countries? Why can't we develop direct links with the grassroots communities of the world? There must be millions of ordinary citizens of the world who could volunteer to take vacations that carry more meaning than looking at the mountains. It should not be hard to imagine that millions could integrate their vacations in Nepal with teaching, knowledge dissemination, skill transfer, art and crafts, and development of micro-trades with the world. In return, people of Nepal can offer them hospitality, nature, beauty, scenery, and the services they require. A new brand of "global-village tourism" can emerge to eclipse the newly popular ecotourism. The productive capacity of the people can then be gradually enhanced through sustained focus on public education, technology, training, and research. This might stabilize the economy and the population of rural Nepal such that people would emigrate only for better opportunities but not because they could not make a living in the villages.

The problem, however, is that such potential for non-offensive integration with the world exists maximally in the mountainous regions of Nepal, then in the hills, then Tarai, and lastly in the cities (as they stand the most polluted and unliveable now). Because the decision makers of Nepal feed off the activities of the wealthy and large international donors, they show no interest in building a new economy that empowers the rural people whom they think have no potential. They hope to develop Nepal through any industrialization granted by "international investor" without knowing what the environmental, social, economic, and political consequences would be. While the elites mask their failures with a shroud of the much desirable democracy, people continue to suffer from the failures of their social and economic policies continuing from the Panchayat era. But the focus seems to be shifting towards making it easier for the Nepalese to emigrate so remittance can flow in their coffers at a faster rate and temporarily diffuse the social conflicts that their policies will eventually create. Can we expect to see any emphasis on an internal economy and public education any time soon?

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## **Abstracts of the Conference Papers**

### **A Study of the Evolution of Governance in Nepal**

#### **Pramod Dhakal**

Establishing a system of governance that instils rule of law, welfare of people, provision of facilities, standardization and development of trade, education of people, and growth of industry and innovation remained the primary challenge for Nepalese society throughout its history and it remains today. The research reported in this paper has found that Nepal had a rich history of knowledge, innovation, and

prosperity until 18th century. Historic anecdotes tell that a proper system of governance must have four faculties: executive, legislative, judicial, and innovative, in intransitive power relations.

There was never a superior geographic boundary, but there existed superior art, architecture, industry, and trade. But the society plunged into darkness when rulers embarked endeavours of territorial expansion and political repression. In general, distributed governance led to sustained innovation and prosperity, whereas the focus on centralization led to short lived progress, oppression and entry to dark periods. Hierarchies, which are the key enablers of a centralized state, were useful only in maximizing the output from past knowledge and skills and in territorial expansion but were not useful for developing sustained peace, equity, and prosperity. The paper recommends that Nepal must seek a prosperous future in massively distributed system of governance. The organization of such systems must be centered on building system of accumulating knowledge and transferring it over to generations through properly engineered collaborative system.

## **Ethnic Nationalism and the Future of Nepal**

### **Basudeb Sharma**

Politicians and concerned citizens as well as scholars have been searching for a suitable governance system for a new Nepal. Federalism is one that has been widely proposed in this respect. However, there are various models of federalism, and it is important that decision makers select an appropriate type of federal structure by keeping in view the ethnic, geographic and linguistic diversity of the country. The key objective of this paper is to inform the decision makers on this important issue. To that end, it first examines the concept of ethnic nationalism and analyzes its role in determining an appropriate federal structure for a new Nepal. Since the ultimate objective of any type of governance system and the resulting government should be to uplift lives and living conditions of citizens, the paper then outlines an economic policy framework necessary to achieve this objective by drawing on insights from such academic disciplines as development economics and business strategy. The paper then concludes with some remarks on alternative futures of Nepal.

## **A Model for Political Restructuring and Electoral System of Federal Nepal: Building on the Strength of Ethnic Diversities and Regional Complementarities**

### **Ram C. Acharya**

The paper develops a framework for a political restructuring of Federal Nepal and also a model of electoral system. It identifies the natural homelands of 11 ethnic, linguistic and caste (ELC) groups (called ELC focus regions) and argues that these regions must be an essential component of federation, but federation based on them is not desirable economically. The main intended outcome of making Nepal a federation of such ELC groups (inclusiveness in political power sharing) could be achieved by making these regions electoral constituencies. It further argues that the political constituencies of the federation should be provinces that extend from north to south by combining few ELC focus regions. This north-south corridor will generate immense benefit from the complementarities in natural endowment and comparative advantage between northern and southern regions, a provision not possible if federation is made up of the ELC regions. Moreover, this arrangement will allow all provinces to be bordered with the rapidly emerging China and India. Hence, the paper proposes that ELC regions be electoral constituencies and Nepal be a federation of four provinces (each province with three ELC regions), and one territory in the most North-Western part. It proposes bicameral parliaments both at the national and the provincial levels, where all citizens are equal in the lower house of both levels of

parliament; all provinces (ELC regions) are equal in the upper house of national (provincial) parliament. Finally, It devises a proportional representation system and electoral formula where ethnic, linguistic, caste, gender and regional issues are addressed to foster an inclusive democracy.

## **Political Transition in Nepal: Toward an Analytical Framework**

**Chaitanya Mishra**

Nepal is in transition heading to a political break from the monarchy and the past semi-feudal instruments but the scope and implications of the transition remain uncertain. Also remain uncertain the constitutive political-economic themes: neoliberal vs. liberal democratic vs. social democratic, and state structures: union of near-sovereign units vs. less than federal but highly autonomous local governments vs. centralized. The conjecture made in the article is that the ensemble of historical shifts and contradictions at multiple levels of social organizations, for example, the levels of the individual, household, class, gender, caste, ethnic groups as well those at state and international levels, have led to a specific form of political transition in Nepal. The constitutive features of the transition in general and democratization in particular were erected upon five variables including (a) the weakening and demise of precapitalist, including feudal, political, economic and cultural forms at multiple levels of social organization, (b) the expansion and intensification of capitalism. The framework for explaining the historic development leading to the 2006 political transition in Nepal is developed on those five variables is presented in this paper.

## **Food Insecurity, Livelihood and Nepalese Agriculture: Challenges and Potentials**

**Kalidas Subedi | Bishnu K Dhital**

Agriculture is the backbone of Nepalese economy thus serving as a basis of livelihood and subsistence for the majority of its population. Despite being an important sector for the development of the county, it faces several inherent challenges and limitations. This paper analyses and presents the overall biophysical and socio-economic conditions for Nepalese agricultural sector, food security situation and livelihood issues, environmental sustainability, and opportunities for improvement. Over 43 districts out of 75, especially in the hills and mountains of Nepal are food-deficit. Food production and distribution are highly skewed. Subsistence farming, fragmented and small sized farms, poor technical know-how of farmers, land degradation and water limitation are the key factors which led to low agricultural productivity. Rapidly increasing population, remoteness (lack of transportation), low income generating opportunities and low access to food are the key factors for food insecurity, especially in the remote mountain districts. Rapid urbanization and poor technological know-how of the majority of the farmers led to the environmental problems such as chemical contamination, soil, air and water pollutions and land degradation. We see tremendous potentials for the improvement of agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability through land consolidation, crop diversification, soil and water conservation practices, infrastructure development such as utilizing the country's vast water resources for irrigation management, rural electrification and roads, and capacity building of farmers through training, education and pro-poor agricultural research and extension programs.

## **Decentralization of Energy Systems for Sustainable Economic Development in Nepal**

**Arjun B. Chhetri**

Energy is a key determinant factor for economic development that supports basic needs including cooking, lighting, water pumping, health services and communication including industrial, commercial and transportation sector. Even though, Nepal is endowed with huge energy resources especially

hydropower, solar and wind, majority of people still have to rely on traditional energy sources such as biomass. The demand of fossil fuel is solely met by imports, requiring more than 40% of total export earnings of Nepal. Over 80% of Nepalese people living in rural areas use biomass, mainly fuelwood and agriculture residues as their energy source. Current analysis shows that conventional centrally managed systems will never be able to meet the energy requirements due to harsh geographical terrain; a decentralized energy model based on the future re-structuring of Nepal is discussed.

This paper discusses on the misunderstandings on the Nepal's hydropower potential, potential and prospects of various renewable energy sources, and local and regional opportunities among others. Even though, hydro power export has been a hot debate, real economic benefit can be captured only if such excess electricity is used to produce and export marketable goods rather than exporting electricity. Nepal's energy problem is inherent with the current geo-political system rather than any technical and economic reasons. Interest of foreign corporations, vested interest of the political parties, financial irregularities and mismanagement prevailing in the country's energy sector have caused irreversible damage in the Nepalese energy sector. This paper deconstructs the conventional feudal-based policies and discusses on the necessity of paradigm shift in energy policy in Nepal. Nepal's comparative advantage to exporting energy among the SAARC countries has also been detailed which will have significant positive impact to lessen the trade and economic imbalance.

## **Community-based Resource Management Paradigms in Perspective of the Inclusive Social, Economic and Political Movement in Nepal: Retrospect and Prospect**

**Krishnahari Gautam**

Functioning of community-based resource management regimes are being assessed solely on the basis of production or depletion of particular products and/or services but ignoring their impacts on social, economical and political environs. This paper attempts in examining the contribution of community-based resource management regimes to the social, economical and political movement in a historical framework with reference mainly to the community-based forestry evolution in Nepal.

## **Farmer Cooperatives for Food Self-sufficiency, Agricultural Commercialization, and Socio-economic Development of Nepal**

**Durga D. Poudel**

In Nepal, where ninety percent of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood, the country as a whole has had a food deficit for the last 26 years, mainly due to subsistence farming, small and fragmented land holding size, low agriculture input and productivity, uneconomical farming units, and lack of decentralized grass-root-based agricultural developmental policies and programs. Widespread poverty, malnutrition, political instability, resource degradation, and serious food deficit have become major national problems. Agricultural policies and actions for raising farmers' living standards, achieving food security, and enhancing the natural resource base are urgently needed. Farmers need to begin thinking as a group and take unified action in order to achieve these overarching developmental goals and to sustain their livelihood and agriculture. Farmer cooperatives which are formed by the farmers, governed by the farmers, and run by the farmers in a democratic fashion are an ideal mechanism to increase agricultural production and farm income, enhance agricultural sustainability and food self-sufficiency, while promoting Nepal's socio-economic development. Through cooperatives,



farmers are empowered and economic growth is stimulated. Appropriate governmental policies, programs, rules/regulations, and support systems are essential for the success of farmer cooperatives.

## **Challenges in Closing Gaps of Health Inequities, Inequalities and Disparities in the New Era of Nepal**

**DP Rasali**

Nepal, the vast majority of population is rural, poor and disadvantaged. The poorer and less disadvantaged communities are not only sicker at the alarming rate, but also they are lesser recipients of the health care services from the publicly funded health facilities compared to richer and advantaged ones. The existing structure of the state's public affairs including the health care is underpinned by the feudal elements inherited from the past, and is favorable to the "haves" against the "have-nots". Without fundamental reforms in the way health care system is put in place for providing health care to the larger benefit of the masses, the health care will continue to be less accessible to the disadvantaged people, who are discriminated as poor, women, children, Dalits, rural and remote, Madheshi and Janajati ethnic groups. While majority of the population lives in the rural areas, most of the health infrastructure and human resources are ironically clustered in urban areas, especially the capital city. Restructuring state machinery for regional autonomy and accountability of health care distribution and applying a universal system of health care that is reasonably uniform by all standards across the country could bring the health care closer and more accessible to masses who have found it otherwise in the past. Challenges undertaken towards closing gaps of existing health inequities, health inequalities and health disparities among populations could be a way forward in the new era of Nepal. This paper attempts to discuss some thoughts on these issues in the context of restructuring the new era of Nepal, drawing from my personal experiences and internationally available data.

## **Inclusion Begins at Birth: A Model for Developing an Early Childhood Education Program for Rural Nepal**

**Michael J. Casey | Martina Casey**

As elsewhere in the world, there is a continuing need in Nepal for a standardized form of pre-school day care so that working parents can have assurance that their children are in warm, caring, safe, affordable and readily available setting while they are away at work. Nepalese parents have needs which are no different from the needs of corresponding parents in western countries. Professional child care providers cite several key factors to ensure that suitable day care is available to the working parents:

- The service must provide a safe and caring environment for the children
- The service must be easy to access and be affordable
- The service should be open to all children regardless of social or financial status of the parents
- The service should provide a means for parents to participate in the running of the daycare under the supervision of a qualified day care specialist.

A program of Early Child Care is available in Nepal but not widely, nor is the program sustainable in rural areas, as parents are often overwhelmed with the task of organizing and maintaining a daycare facility. With more and more fathers traveling out of the country to work, mothers are burdened with maintaining the family enterprise (farm, shop, etc.) for long periods of time while caring for the young children. While the concept of group or home childcare is not unknown in Nepal, facilitating its

establishment is a struggle. We, therefore, propose a variation of an existing child care model in Nepal; one that is sustainable, provides guarantees for quality care, and is a proven method for preparing children for schooling. Emphasis is placed on a so-called child-centered play-based program which has proven to give positive results. Recent studies show such programs help prepare the children better for schooling and have substantially reduced the drop out rates in grades 1 and 2. The inclusive nature of the program also allows young girls to thrive to the same degree as young boys.

## **Citizen Participation in Local Government Management**

### **Ishwor Dhungel**

Citizens' participation in program development, management and service delivery are an integral part of local government administration. It is obvious that good participation of the people will let new ideas emerge; including techniques, methods, and innovation in the local government settings so that quality services could be delivered. Participatory management will support local governance, through productive, impartial, sustainable and democratic development practices. Local governments in the developing world still have less autonomy compared to the developed world. It appears that more power lies with the federal and provincial government. With the lack of power decentralization and autonomy, local governments do not often develop citizen participation in the developing world. This is one of the barriers for local governments to serve their citizens better. The most crucial factor in establishing a sustainable citizen participation program is providing room for local people in management and decision making process of the local government initiatives. Developing, implementing and institutionalizing citizen participation programs at local level are very important in empowering government staff and local citizens. It is seen that local government employees' attitudes are often not supportive and positive toward citizens. Either they have no power or fear to deal with citizens about citizen's roles and rights.

## **Dalit Exclusion and their Assertion after the Janaandolan II**

### **Uddhab Pd. Pyakurel**

This paper deals how Dalits are trying their best to be assertive to get an equal share and participatory opportunities in the governance and polity after the Janaandolan II. The post-1990 and more especially the post-Janaandolan II democratic environment in Nepal has proved favorable to identity based peaceful political formations including those of Dalit, who argue that they have been historically discriminated both socio-economically and politically by the state. Their numerical strength, organic relations with grassroots communities, and an emerging discourse of exclusion/inclusion within Nepal are the resources to make the Dalit community more assertive. However, internal competition leading to politics of blame and the politics of defaming opponents are the causes which made the Dalits not assertive as people assumed after the Janaandolan II. Most of the Dalit activists affiliated to the political parties are full subscribers of their party position in terms of the agenda of state restructuring even if the agenda is against the Dalit upliftment and inclusion. Such tendency of Dalit activism has made the Dalit movement somewhat difficult to comprehend. Likewise, some of the NGOs with the vested interest of its donor play a negative role in gathering all Dalits together and making the movement more assertive. Dalit communities mainly under the leadership of Dalit NGOs and the Dalit wing of political parties have to make an united effort to get in making their steps more assertive if they want to capitalize the ongoing transitional phase into their favour.

## **Rainwater Harvesting: A Key to Drinking, Irrigation, Disaster Prevention and Poverty Alleviation in the Mountains of Nepal**

**Bhuwani Paudel**

Despite having abundance of water resources, rainfalls, and precipitation, Nepal is in dire need of clean drinking water and irrigation for its people. In absence of new technology and in face of harsh geographical challenges, peoples in the mountains regions are living with their conventional practices, which have not undergone through improvements for ages. The quality of life of people can be dramatically improved if only of a fraction the average precipitation of 1400 mm per year can be brought to effective use. In this context, the role of appropriate techniques or technologies that use locally available impervious natural materials for sustainable use of rainwater is highlighted in this paper. It proposes for utilizing numerous but reasonably sized water harvesting reservoirs instead of using small number of massive reservoirs, which are potential environmental hazards. This concept paper builds a logical foundation for developing knowledge, technology, and methodology, and taking them to people in the form of standards, guidelines, and operational manuals.

### **Nepal's Economic Situation:**

#### **A State of Perpetual Poverty, Stagnation, and Regional and Ethnic Disparities**

**Ram C. Acharya | Prem Sangraula**

Besides comparing Nepal's economic performance with its two neighbours, India and China, the paper examines regional and ethnic, language and caste (ELC) group disparities and also intra-region and intra-ELC group disparities in economic standing and educational attainment in Nepal. The regions and ELC groups considered in the paper are the same 12 regions and groups that are identified as building blocks for a federal Nepal in Acharya (2007). Results show that Nepal's productivity is stagnated and the level of poverty is alarming. There are wide disparities in economic plight both by regions and by ELC groups. The Richest region and group is about four-times richer than the poorest counterparts. But these disparities come mainly from the income differences of people at the higher strata. The poorest are equally poor across all regions and ELC groups, but the share of people under poverty varies a lot by regions and groups, making poverty a national and to some extent a regional and group issue. Nowhere in the country, the rate of illiteracy is less than 46% (up to 59% for a region), indicating that basic education also is mainly an outcome of economic disparities and less so of regional and ELC group division. However, at the higher level of education attainment, there are wider regional and group disparities. Furthermore, female illiteracy rate is at least 20% more than that of male in all regions and ELC groups. All in all, poverty, illiteracy and gender inequality have certainly been sharpened by regional and ELC group disparities, but they penetrate across all regions and groups in Nepal. One of the reasons of these problems is the alarming rate of within region and within group income disparities, especially in richer regions and groups. This sorry state of the economy indicates the failure of the past economic and social policies, warranting an immediate and new national strategy to address these problems with appropriate regional and group dimensions in it.

## **Inclusive Education: A Framework for the New Age of Communication**

### **Pramod Dhakal**

Ranked 140th out of 177 countries by UNDP in Human Development Index, Nepal suffers from chronic illiteracy and human poverty. However, attempts to bring its 28 million people out of this situation have produced dismal results and the Millennium Development Goal set by UNDP remains an illusive goal for Nepal. While politicians and policy makers are busy selling their policies being inclusive, the gap between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the marginalized, and the elite politicians and the grassroots people are steadily widening. And, breaking this cycle of stagnation is not going to be possible unless some non-conventional techniques are used to deliver education to the people living in the economically deprived regions of Nepal. One such non-conventional approach is to pool the resources of many communities into a common pool of knowledge-resources and using them collectively to deliver significantly improved-quality of education to the population. This approach warrants an application of the latest telecommunication and computing technology to make the pooling of knowledge-resource possible and a new approach to make these endeavors sustainable on their own.

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