

Aastha

WHEN SEBS UNITED FOR THE NATION

2017

Aastha



SOCIETY OF
EX-BUDHANILKANTHA
STUDENTS (SEBS)

Message from the President



**SOCIETY OF
EX-BUDHANILKANTHA
STUDENTS (SEBS)**

Dear Readers,

It gives me great pleasure to share yet another edition of the Aastha – the official publication of Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students (SEBS). This year's magazine is a special issue covering philanthropic and voluntary works of SEBSers who contributed for the relief and reconstruction efforts of the nation after the devastating earthquake of April 2015.

Nepal was facing one of the worst natural disasters in its history and the nation needed all its compatriots, residing here in Nepal and beyond, to work for its rescue and relief. Realizing the potential of a 4,000+ membered organization of compassionate people, we started an earthquake relief campaign on the evening of April 25. At the end of a three-month long relief project, we were able to touch the lives of over 10,000 families, while maintaining a high level of integrity and transparency. Continuing with the spirit of the relief campaign, SEBS is currently reconstructing a community school in Bhaktapur.

Our efforts would not have been possible without the support of our strong alumni network in Nepal, North America, UK, Japan, Australia, India and beyond and important stakeholders like the Budhanilkantha School family. With

this letter I would like to thank all our members and contributors for working days and nights to help us raise funds, execute relief works and formulate a school reconstruction plan. The executive committee will always be grateful for all the members who contributed in the process.

SEBSers have been known for their generous contribution to the society. Whether it be for individual efforts by impact philanthropists and social change makers or institutional efforts by the executive committees of SEBS in the past, the society knows us as a compassionate cohort serving voluntarily for the best interest of the society. Be it with the World Bank funded 'Doko Dai Project', the 'Nationwide Scholarship Program', 'Post-Earthquake Relief and Reconstruction Projects' or 'Winter Relief Campaigns', we have been setting up benchmarks for social change, impact and transparency.

With this publication we are trying to honor the works of different SEBSers who will always make us all proud. Thank you for doing it for the nation and for SEBS.

My sincere appreciation goes to my executive committee members who have tirelessly worked for the successful tenures of the two executive committees I have had the pleasure to lead. I would



also like to appreciate the efforts of the Vice President (2nd) of SEBS Kaushal Raj Sapkota (000 C), the Aastha Magazine Coordinator Surakshya Gautam (6000 D) and writers Monila Shrestha, Prakriti Shrestha (6000 D) and Shreeti Shrestha (7000 D) for working as a team to publish the magazine.

I hope you will have good read.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sneedha Mainali (136C)

President
2015-17

Message from the President of SEBS – North America



It excites me to know that SEBS is publishing yet another issue of the Aastha magazine that highlights the efforts of SEBSers in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of 2015. I would like to congratulate the SEBS executive committee and the Aastha publishing committee for bringing this special edition to SEBSers and friends.

SEBS - North America (SEBS-NA) is a registered Charitable Organization in the United States. It was established in 2000 with a goal of uniting our members in North America, and actively helping our alumni, our alma mater Budhanilkantha School, and our communities in general. The impact of the earthquake was devastating and our country is still reeling from the aftermath two years hence with a lot of reconstruction efforts still in limbo. However, I take comfort in the fact that, along with other volunteers, SEBS-NA and SEBSers worked tirelessly during these difficult times to make things better for those who suffered - volunteering directly on ground zero and/or coordinating fund raising efforts globally. Within 12 hours of the earthquake, SEBS-NA Executive Committee coordinated a task force to raise funds and worked with SEBS in relief efforts as soon as feasible. SEBS-NA, with collective efforts from global alumni, raised approximately US\$0.5 million for

Earthquake Relief, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction efforts. The leadership and altruism shown by the SEBS community post-earthquake have been exemplary. I want to take this opportunity to thank the entire SEBS community for the tremendous job in coordinating the response, relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of 2015.

SEBSers have grown in number and stature throughout the globe. We have immense level of love and respect for our alma mater and our members. Let us all strive to help our members and continue to support Budhanilkantha School in any way we can. In recent years, SEBS and SEBS-NA have worked together to make a positive difference in Budhanilkantha School, our communities and beyond. The cooperation between the two organizations has increased immensely over the past few years and I would also like to take this opportunity to request the global alumni community (SEBS-UK, SEBS-Australia etc.) for involvement, support, and continued cooperation in our collective endeavors.

Respectfully,

Krishna Chhetri (503B)

President of SEBS-North America (2015-2017)
San Francisco, California, USA

Message from the Vice President (Second)

Dear Readers,

Thank you for subscribing to this edition of Aastha, the official publication of Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students (SEBS). This year's magazine is a journal of the philanthropic initiatives taken by different SEBSers in individual and organizational capacity to help the people of Nepal to resurrect from the effects of the devastating earthquake of 2015. Just like the past, we have yet again proved that, as the graduates of one of the leading schools of Nepal, we are ready to take responsibilities of our community, society and the nation.

It has been a pleasure to facilitate the editorial team of Aastha lead by Surakshya Gautam (6158 D) and comprising of Monila Shrestha (6161 D), Prakriti Shrestha (6047 D) and Shreeti Shrestha (7177 D). They have been very professional with their work and have been working for the past four months. On behalf of the executive committee, I would like to congratulate and thank the team for completing the project with such energy. It's because of you that SEBS is publishing its publication after six long years.

My sincere gratitude also goes to all the contributing SEBSers who kindly accepted our request for interviews. While we tried to accommodate the works of SEBSers that we had known from a survey in different online platforms of SEBS, we understand that we might have still left out some of the philanthropic initiatives of our valued members. On behalf of my team, I would like to apologize for such cases.

I am also grateful towards the Executive Committee of SEBS 2015-17, who worked relentlessly for two years to volunteer in different roles. You are the force behind the achievements and activities of the executive committee.

Further, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our esteemed members who have been with us in this journey as advisors, donors, contributors and volunteers. Lastly, on behalf of my team, I would like to thank the entire Budhanilkantha School family and its stakeholders for supporting us in our initiatives.

Hope you have good read. We would look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,

Kaushal Raj Sapkota (041 C)

Vice President (Second)
SEBS 2015-17



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From the Editorial Team



Surakshya Gautam (6158D)

completed her GCE A-Levels from Budhanilkantha School and graduated in the year 2016. She is an undergraduate student at Jacobs University Bremen (JUB) starting from September 2017. During her school years, Surakshya served as an Academic Prefect and

was one of the actors in the 2015 Budhanilkantha School Play 'Major Barbara'. She enjoys reading books of various genres and is extremely passionate about writing and travelling.

Experience:

'First of all, I would like to thank Kaushal dai, Sneedha di and the whole SEBS executive committee for entrusting me with the responsibility for this special edition of Aastha Magazine.

Through this exposure, I made great connections with SEBSers from 100A to 4000D and learned about how SEBS operates as an organization. Through the repetitive process of transcribing, taking notes, writing and editing, I improved my writing skills and learned a great deal about journalism.'

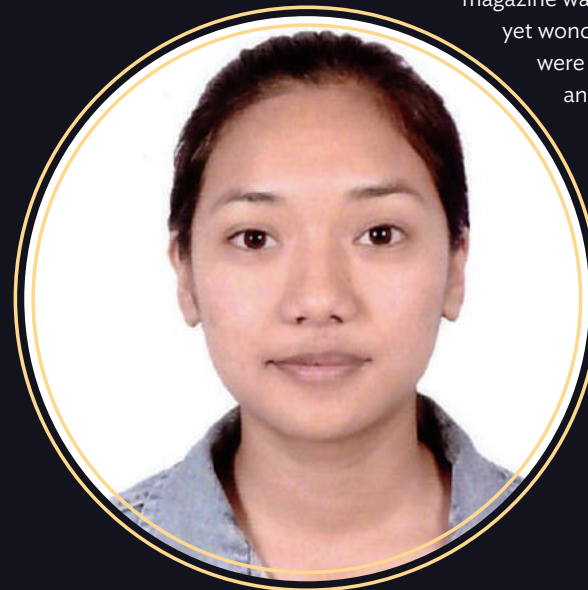
Prakriti Shrestha (6047 D)

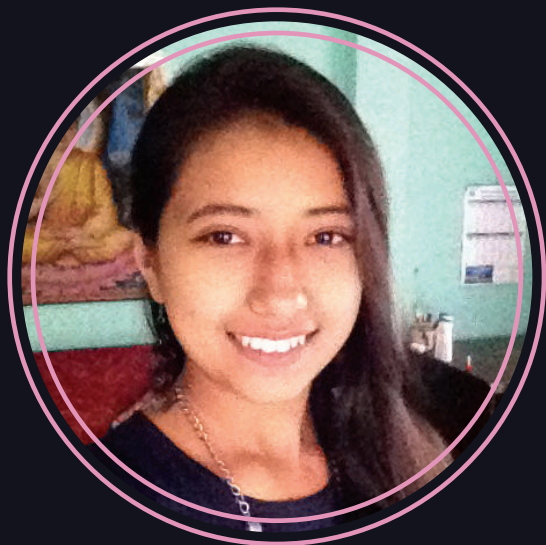
completed her GCE A-level education from Budhanilkantha School and graduated in the school's Class of 2016. She plans to attend Wesleyan College of Georgia, USA starting August 2017. During her school years, she served the Council of School Prefects as a School Prefect and the House Captain of Choyu House. Before working for "Aastha" magazine, she was involved in similar activities during her school years including her work in the Editorial Team of school's "Bhanjyang" magazine and her tenure in

Journalism Club of Budhanilkantha School. She loves reading books of various genres and keeps a special interest in learning about science and humanities.

Experience:

'While working for this magazine, I met with SEBSers from 100A to 100D batches. From a school principal to a politician, an engineer to a musician, I learned the perspectives of people from a wide range of professions and it has undoubtedly helped me broaden my thoughts and grow my mind. My experience in "Aastha" magazine was also enriched by our small yet wonderful team of people who were very cooperative, supportive and helpful towards me.'





Monila Shrestha (6161D)

completed her GCE A-level education from Budhanilkantha School and graduated in the Class of 2016. She plans to study Architecture and Landscape Designing. During her school years, she served the Council of School Prefects as the Deputy School Captain. Before working for “Aastha” magazine, she was involved in similar activities during her school years including her work in the Editorial Team of school’s “Bhanjyang” magazine and as a member of the Journalism Club of her previous school. She loves reading books especially related to human biology and psychology. Her special interest lies in literature and debates.

Experience:

‘Throughout school life I always heard about how SEBS was doing so many different things. I felt honoured to meet these people who were the role models for so many. To call people that were a senior to us by a whole generation ‘dais’ and ‘didis’ and to establish a connection with them was a different experience in itself. Through this journey, I learned about how big projects are planned, handled and turned into reality and how even the smallest things can create big changes. I want to thank everyone who helped me in this journey and allowed me to be a part of it.’

Shreeti Shrestha (7177D) has recently appeared for the GCE A-Levels examinations in May-June 2017. Currently, she is in her gap year. She works as an intern at Leadership Academy, Anamnagar. During her high school years, Shreeti served as an Academic Prefect. She is extremely passionate about writing. She loves to experiment new styles in writing. She enjoys reading books of various genres and also enjoys learning different languages.

Experience:

‘I am currently in my gap year and the experience with the Aastha Magazine has definitely helped make it fruitful. Working as a part of the editorial team has not only helped me explore and showcase different styles of writing, but also connected me to many seniors. From sharing experiences with people in different walks of life, this experience has truly helped me understand a wider range of perspectives. I feel grateful to be linked with one of the strongest alumni networks. My short period of experience was made more joyous and memorable by the extensively cooperative seniors who initially guided me through the tasks.’ ■



Taking off from Morang to become the aviation leader, Birendra Bahadur Basnet's beyond ordinary journey and Buddha Air's role during the earthquake

-6158D SURAKSHYA →

From working as a farmer in an ancestral property in Morang to owning Buddha Air as the Managing Director, 245A Birendra is a self-made man. In fact, the command in his voice itself speaks volumes of what he's been through and how much he's achieved. Hailing from a family of farmers, Birendra is a first-generation entrepreneur who launched Buddha Air while on a brink of financial crisis. The rest, of course, is history. Today, Birendra is one of Nepal's best business people and his Buddha Air is one of Nepal's best airlines. His passion and dedication towards aviation are itself reflected by the many toy-sized replicas of Buddha Air's aircraft models in his office.

Birendra joined BNKS as a primary level student in Grade 4 and graduated in the year 1981. In fact, he is one of the founders of SEBS as we know it. Under the clear blue skies, while sunbathing on the grounds of Amrit Science Campus

(ASCOL), Birendra and his friends came up with the name 'Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students' and decided that the acronym 'SEBS' had a nice ring to it. Sharing the anecdotes of how SEBS came into creation, he adds, 'We were around 70 students in ASCOL from BNKS. There were around 30 students from St. Xavier's College who would head over almost every day after classes to 'GAA-Godavari Alumni Association', located just behind ASCOL. We were a much larger group than them. Yet, we didn't have any proper organization to represent us. So, we decided that we should create our own alumni organization.' Thus, SEBS came into existence. Birendra went on to become the first general secretary of SEBS and served his term of two years.

At 11:56 am local time on 25th April 2015, Birendra, like millions of Nepalese all over the country, experienced his worst fears in the form of an earthquake. Sharing his personal experiences, he says, 'No one had imagined a 7.8 magnitude earthquake to shake our lands on a Saturday. We

were shell-shocked.' His immediate and sincere thoughts went out to all the earthquake victims. He wondered about what he and Buddha Air could do to lessen their endless misery. In this regard, he decided to pledge NPR 5 million as financial support from Buddha Air. When the question of how to channelize the funds arose, Birendra vested his trust on SEBS. 'I immediately decided on SEBS because using it as a platform would ensure the involvement of as many people as possible. The seed money we provided would act as a binding force for all SEBSers to be together, emotionally and morally in their relief efforts,' Birendra adds.

Sooner than later, Birendra contacted the President of SEBS, 136C Sneedha, and summoned a meeting with fellow SEBSers to formulate appropriate strategies for the relief project. First, they identified the goods for immediate relief. They decided to provide 1 tarpaulin (15' X 18', 90 GSM) and 1 sack of rice to each family. Second, they selected Sindhupalchok as



the distribution centre. So, the money provided by Buddha Air was utilized to generate 3000 sacks of rice and 3000 tarpaulins. Through Birendra's contacts in Birgunj, they bought the rice and the tarpaulins were airlifted by Buddha Air's plane from Siliguri. The coordination of the relief work was done with the support of Buddha Air Staff in the Buddha Air's office as the primary command centre. Within the next seven days of the earthquake, SEBS team had delivered their promise. When asked about how SEBS managed to complete their goal smoothly without any significant hitches, Birendra mentions, 'The kick start of the relief operation to Barabise and Melamchi would not have been possible within a week after the earthquake without

the dynamic leadership of the field coordinators Rabindra Maharjan and Bijaya Shiwakoti.'

Buddha Air's donation to SEBS approximates to 19 percent of the total donations for the Earthquake Relief Action Project. Along with NPR 5 million as the seed money, the Buddha Air staff also did a voluntary contribution. From Buddha Air's suppliers, business partners like ATR airlines and various other insurance companies, they raised more money. Thus, under the initiative of Buddha Air itself, around 1.5 crores were contributed to the relief project.

Birendra sincerely believes that no organization can function without

financial transparency. So, he made sure to include in his proposal to SEBS that the money provided by Buddha Air should only be used for immediate relief and that later, all their sources for fund generation and distribution be presented transparently in the media. Thus, SEBS became the only organization to clear its accounts related to the relief work publicly on newspapers. 'This ensured our credibility in the minds of every individual, SEBS batch or organizations that donated to SEBS as they were satisfied that their donation had been put to good use,' Birendra explains. Despite the complexity of the whole situation, Birendra believes that SEBS did an exceptionally good job in terms of transparency and execution.

245A Birendra is a successful yet humble man - a common trait shared by many SEBSers alike. He is quick to argue that while he did help SEBS with the initial seed money, the operation would not have been successful without the hard work and dedication of SEBS and SEBSers.

Birendra also admits that his attachment to SEBS isn't any less today than it was 35 years ago. In fact, he's only growing fonder of the organization. He even goes on to declare that whenever the nation

is in need, SEBS is the 'very' organization that can support the nation. SEBS Earthquake Relief Action Project is only a demonstration of his statement. Reminiscing his school days, Birendra recounts the incidents that transpired on his very first day in BNKS: 'It was around February. The winds were cold and the water, chilly. I shared my dormitory with Pushkar Karki (soon to be Deputy Inspector General). The teacher had sent all the new students to take a bath. I saved myself from the freezing cold water by telling everyone that I had taken a bath at home. However, Pushkar had taken a bath and was lying on his bed, severely shivering. He couldn't even button up his own shirt and my mother had to do it for him! It's really amazing to think today how we've both come a long way since that first day in BNKS.'

Birendra owes his success story wholeheartedly to his education in BNKS. He believes that SEBS is a unique platform where alumni, generations apart, address each other as 'dais' and 'bahinis' and meetings are scheduled at the expense of a single email. He admits that this relationship between SEBSers is 'one-of-a-kind' and should always be treasured and nurtured. ■

Sneedha Mainali's journey from SEBS-Purbanchal to the first female president of SEBS

-6158D SURAKSHYA →

1

36C Sneedha, the first female president of SEBS and a receiver of the Nepal Youth Ratna Award, had hardly even heard of Budhanilkantha School before joining the institution for her O-Levels. Extremely attached to her previous school, she was adamant that she loved her school too much to leave. Still, after entering the gates of BNKS for the first time, she realized that it was the right decision. Today, she strives to give back to the alma mater that molded her into who she currently is.

1. HOW DID YOU START BEING INVOLVED WITH SEBS?

While in BNKS, I didn't even know that SEBS existed. However, during my undergraduate program in BPKIHS, I learned that we were 31 students and 6 teachers who were BNKS graduates in our medical college in Dharan alone. We called ourselves 'SEBS-Purbanchal' and decided on conducting a health camp together. For me, this is how things started. When I joined KIST Medical College as a professor in 2011, I chanced upon many more SEBSers. After gathering up, we initiated

the chapter of 'SEBS-Medicos', an umbrella organization of SEBS. This was around the first time I ever even set my foot in the SEBS office! Eventually, I realized how I loved working with SEBS because I loved meeting people from BNKS and could also pursue further in a field I was interested in- social service. So, I stood up in the election for the next executive committee and was elected as an executive member.

2. PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT THE SEBS EARTHQUAKE RELIEF ACTION PROJECT.

When the earthquake hit Nepal, I immediately went to Teaching Hospital for blood donation. But on the way to the hospital, I realized that the extent of damage was massive. So, the next day, I summoned a meeting with fellow SEBSers to discuss on it. Birendra Dai, the managing director of Buddha Air, chipped in to provide five million rupees for our relief project thus, becoming our very first partner. SEBS-NA became second. Funds were also collected from friends of Buddha Air, SEBS- NA, and other SEBSers. With this, SEBS had over 55 projects for earthquake relief. I, myself went to Sindhupalchowk, Kanpur, and Dolakha for conduction of the relief projects. At

the end of each project, we published an audited financial report with income and expenditure to ensure transparency.

3. SEBS PUBLISHED AN APPEAL IN THE NATIONAL DAILY- 'RS. 2320 HELPS A FAMILY, FIGHT HUNGER AND PROVIDE SHELTER FOR EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS AND GIVE THEM A FIGHTING CHANCE'. HOW DID YOU PROMOTE THIS CAMPAIGN?

When we added the price of one tarpaulin, a sack of rice and the costs for transportation, the total amount came out to be around Rs. 2320. We promoted our campaign by relating to the public that even a one-time visit to the restaurant costs around Rs. 2500. I believe this immensely encouraged the public to donate, with an individual supporting a family or two, for two complete weeks.

4. PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT THE SEBS EARTHQUAKE REHABILITATION PROJECT.

We had a fifteen-day project spread out in Tundikhel, Jawalakhel, Paris Dada and Narayan Chour targeted to make the children of make-shift shelter camps happy. Many SEBSers along with BNKS students volunteered for this cause. Kathalaya Publications provided us with books at a much-discounted price while Sarthak Shiksha provided volunteers who

were good with music, magic tricks, games and loved working with children.

5. WHAT DID SEBS DO TO CATER THE WINTER NEEDS OF THE AFFECTED FAMILIES AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE?

We coordinated the Winter Clothes Donation Drive funded by organizations that had surplus money, too little an amount to be invested in any other reconstruction projects. Nepalese Association of Houston, one of those organizations, helped us with the funds while Sumana Shrestha, Nyano Sansar and Social Service Club of BNKS volunteered for the cause. We also collected unused or old clothes. We assessed the needs of families across various districts and distributed clothes wherever the need arose.

6. HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCES IN BUDHANILKANTHA SCHOOL SHAPE YOU?

BNKS gave me too many platforms to learn from. When you practice anything regularly over a span of years, you realize that you enjoy it and slowly master it. While in BNKS, I regularly visited orphanages as a member of the Social Service Club which made me love children more than I did before. BNKS made me capable enough that today I could help 1.5 lakhs people after the earthquake.

7. ANY PARTICULAR MEMORY IN BUDHANILKANTHA SCHOOL THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

It was a full moon night, during the month of my A-level exams. A senior didi asked me to accompany her to pluck a white rose from the garden. She said that if we slept with a white rose under our pillow on a full moon night, our future husband would appear in our dreams! I refused at first but after much insistence, I finally caved in. When I reached the garden, I

thought I saw a ghost. I knew that ghosts didn't exist; nevertheless I was scared. The next night, I had to somehow solve the mystery, so I gathered some girls and we went to the garden together. We even caught the ghost but it ran away and entered Thapaliya Maam's flat. Eventually, we realized that the ghost was actually her son and he was asked to entertain us because we were so tired of exams!

8. WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST DAY IN BUDHANILKANTHA SCHOOL LIKE?

I was always the relaxed, laid-back girl. It was the Kuch Kuch Hota Hai season and I was obsessed with Kajol's look in the movie. So, I entered the gates of BNKS in a white top, blue jeans and sports shoes, carrying a big white handkerchief. When my head of house asked me to change my clothes, I slipped into my school clothes including a long skirt that came up to my ankles, almost resembling a sari!

9. ANY MOMENT OF GLORY DURING YOUR WORK FOR SEBS?

One of the most wonderful things I witnessed was back in 2014 when SEBS organized a health camp at Manang. It was during my trek there that I almost got lost in a crossroad and came across a boy sitting nearby. I asked him to direct me to Thoche. To my surprise, the boy said, 'Hya Budhanilkantha ko didi, you always come to the school assembly and talk so much and now you are here too!' I learned that he was a ninth grader from BNKS.

Then, no sooner had I reached the hotel, a villager came running to tell us about a kid in the village who was severely ill. Three of us went with the villager, but as soon as the kid saw us, he smiled and started chatting. It turned out that he was also a student



from BNKS. The next day, I was on my own to the venue of the health camp. Suddenly, I heard a girl running towards me calling out my name. I met my good friend 284C Sumana after ten years there in Manang.

Another SEBSer I met during my time at Manang was Diman dai. I had been told by SEBSers to look for him so I asked the villagers to invite him to the health camp. He cried tears of joy when I met and told him that people from his batch had asked me to look for him. He volunteered along with the bhais from the day before. In fact, another girl from BNKS was also in the camp that day. Getting to meet five Budhanilkantha people in a single day in one district was a truly striking moment for me. Now, just imagine how many amazing people BNKS must have produced in all parts of Nepal, during 35 years of time!

10. WHAT DO YOU LOVE THE MOST?

I am passionate about working with children. Truthfully, I became a pediatric dentist because I loved children. The reason why the dental health camp I did at Budhanilkantha School still remains close to my heart is because of all the love I got from the children in the school.

11. ANY WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CURRENT STUDENTS AS WELL AS RECENT GRADUATES?

First of all, Budhanilkantha School gives you too many opportunities, so try to gather them all as much as you can. Secondly, if you ever fail in anything, don't be discouraged. Always believe in yourself. Most of us go to BNKS as caterpillars only to realize after we leave, that BNKS has indeed given us wings! ■

Retracing our footsteps to the earthquake with the School Principal and the CAO of Budhanilkantha School

-6161D MONILA →

The current Principal of Budhanilkantha School, 804A Kesbar Bahadur Khulal was selected from Tehrathum as a scholarship student. His journey in BNKS started from grade 4, back in 1980. His batch was the third batch of A-level students at BNKS.

The British Government was planning to hand over Budhanilkantha school to the Nepal Government since a long time. However, after the Falkland war in 1983, impressed by the great contribution of the Nepalese soldiers, the British Government extended the contract for their tenure at Budhanilkantha School. Nevertheless, they wanted to make sure that there were enough qualified teachers to maintain the standard of the school even after they pulled out. They had already trained several teachers and they wanted to train more fresh graduates as well. As a part of the plan, A-Levels was introduced in 1987. The major purpose of starting A- Levels at BNKS was to take some students to the UK for basic education and training so that they could come back to Nepal

and teach. That was how A-Levels came into existence in Nepal. For the first 3 years, the British Government made a pledge to provide 4 scholarships per year. After the commendable results of the first year students, two more scholarships were added. Mr. Khulal too was selected as a scholarship student to the UK. Owing to the bond, he returned to BNKS as a teacher after completing his undergraduate course.

Even as a student, he was sure he wanted to be a teacher. Thus, in his undergraduate level, he took a subject related to teaching. He has always been passionate about teaching. In fact, after completing his A-levels, he volunteered to teach in BNKS for about 10 months and even prior to that, he taught during vacations and leisure. When he returned to Nepal, he started teaching as a junior teacher. After two years, the Nepal Government changed its policy and thus, he was no longer bound to the contract of teaching in BNKS. But, due to the conducive working environment and his satisfaction in the profession, he continued with it.

From a junior teacher to an Assistant Head of House, a HOH of the middle houses to the HOH of senior houses, then from the Vice Principal to the Principal, his long journey speaks about his 20 years of commitment towards the school.

Talking about his school days, he states that he was an average student. "I hardly participated in sport competitions but learned to play everything" he says. He shares that whenever the english department gave books, he simply looked at the pictures and sent them back. But somehow in grade nine, he realized that he should read more and so, he started with Nepali books. Then, after having a tough time with English, he started reading English books as well. By the time he completed his A-levels, he had read quite a number of them, a habit he continued in the university as well. "I was always more into literature and debates", he says.

He has a different view than others, while comparing the school then and now. He recalls it as a gradual change; from the school going co-ed to the increase in the

population. He says, “We have grown a lot in our infrastructures while also trying to maintain our old buildings. In terms of the quality and facilities, there might have been a few changes here and there, but we are more or less the same. However, academic wise, our educational facilities have increased tremendously. Then we did not have many competitors, but now we are not only competing locally but globally as well. Our competency has increased and although we do not stick out as before we are doing fairly well.”

He recalls that BNKS was always in competition with St. Xavier’s back then, which is why SEBS too came into existence inspired by St. Xavier’s alumni organization-GAA. Activities parallel to the GAA such as awareness campaigns, dance competitions were held then. During the term of Tejsu Malla, SEBS focused more on its main objective, which is connecting and helping fellow SEBSers. Now, in Dr. Mainali’s tenure, the connection has grown a lot stronger than before, successfully fulfilling SEBS’ objective. He states that during the earthquake SEBS had been able to achieve all its targets because it was a lot more driven than other organizations. “The districts were not just unknown places but rather the homes of our friends. Nothing was done for profit, it was the pure will to help others in need” he adds. The SEBSers had done everything they could to help each other out. The entire e-sewa team was dedicated to the cause, Buddha Air helped with the space and staff to coordinate everything while many people helped with monetary aid and

transportation. It was not the work of only one person but the force of the entire team that led the alumni to be successful in achieving its goal.

“I was in the core team”, says 804A. “I was mostly involved with the management of the project, trying to help SEBS with whatever they needed from the school”. He also accompanied the relief team to Melamchi in Sindhupalchowk with Rabindra Maharjan. He states that he could see how dependent we Nepalese had become. “People were just sitting there waiting for the relief; the youths were playing cards instead of recovering and reconstructing whatever they could”, he sadly states. Another problem was the greedy and selfish nature of people, some only cared about their own and not about others. He recalls how people tried to take more than what they were entitled to while sending relief materials near BNKS area.

All BNKS staff and teachers had also donated a week’s worth of salary to the Prime Minister’s fund. Another major challenge for the school was the A-level exams that were scheduled just after the major earthquake. Initially, the students wanted it to be postponed but eventually, they all agreed in not doing so. The 5000D batch gave the exams while the aftershocks shook the ground, sometimes being forced to hide under their tables. The school had also asked for special consideration with the exam board, while checking the papers due to the dire situations in which the exam was conducted.



Talking about reconstruction, the houses were repaired first, then the ceiling and the roofs, the teacher’s flats and finally, the compound walls that were damaged during the earthquake. CAO Rabindra states that total reconstruction took about 3 crores 50 lakhs. It was mostly the roof tiles which were joined by simple interlocking systems and compound walls that were damaged. The school started the reconstruction while help was provided from the FOBS, SEBS as well as the government.

Perhaps, it was much more difficult to manage the school during the economic blockade. Mr. Khulal recalls how he and the CAO had a tough time in getting basic materials and how, sometimes, the

CAO had to wake up at 1’o clock and drive all the way to Dhading just to get a few cylinders of gas. Although many trees were cut down during the blockade, they were not cut down haphazardly. The trees that were weak, bent and those that posed a threat to the students were chosen. After the situation came back to normal, almost 300 cherry trees were replanted in an attempt to save the environment as well. So, when the situation normalized, Budhanilkantha was back on its track.

Mr. Khulal suggests all the new graduates and the school students to be always aware of any opportunities and to be quick enough to grab it. He asks us to utilize our potential and stay alert from people who try to take due advantage of us. ■

'A BNKS Pioneer in North America'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

Kiran Sitoula is a name that all BNKS juniors know, a name frequently heard of in BNKS' Monday Assemblies. The Immediate Past President of SEBS-North America, 268B Kiran's name always came up when talking about the frequent contributions made by SEBS-NA. He, along with his SEBS-NA team, has worked relentlessly for BNKS in numerous projects. And the devastating earthquake was no exception. So this time, we decided to talk to him and learn more about the man himself.

1. COULD YOU VERY BRIEFLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF, KIRAN DAI?

I'm 268B Kiran from Terathum. I finished my A-levels from Budhanilkantha School in 1993. I pursued my undergraduate degree in Ohio Wesleyan University and my graduate degree from the University of Maryland University College. I was the founding President of SEBS-North America in 2000. Currently, I work for the Department of Treasury as an IT Specialist in Maryland, USA. In May of 2015, I was elected as the Vice-Mayor in the Town of Indian Head, Maryland.

2. COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE WORKS SEBS-NA HAS DONE?

Firstly, to build the SEBS network, we made a database using the names and roll numbers of SEBSers. At BNKS, we sponsored the fiber optic cables used for internet purposes and the softball equipment. For BNKS graduates coming to the US, we have provided interest-free loans and for SEBS members suffering from severe diseases, we have also borne their medical expenses. Last year, there was a BNKS student for whom we raised US\$ 50,000 for his treatment in India. Right now, we are also covering the tuition fees of two A-level students.

Most importantly, after the earthquake, we raised US\$ 483,000 that we spent in about 32 different projects run in different locations across Nepal.

This May, we plan to send sports goods worth 12 lakhs to start a field hockey program in BNKS along with a female soccer coach to help female students. We have also started something called Budhanilkantha School Endowment Fund, a quarter million dollar trust fund that is to be used for earthquake infrastructure repair in BNKS.

3. SEBS-NA CONTRIBUTED QUITE A LOT DURING THE EARTHQUAKE. COULD BE BRIEFLY ELABORATE ON HOW THE FUNDS WERE RAISED?

It was a pivotal point in time and SEBSers from all over the world wanted to contribute for Nepal, not just as SEBSers, but as Nepalese too. There was a monetary crisis in Nepal though it didn't affect us because we had our own cash backup in hand. We raised 10 million rupees simply by borrowing locally from individuals. We also got contributions from people in different countries: Australia, China, Japan, England, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Canada and much more. In our website, we can receive money in 7 different currencies, which also made the process easier.

4. WHICH PLACES IN NEPAL DID THE RELIEF REACH TO?

We had such a strong network on the ground. Because SEBSers are from different districts of Nepal, we could effectively carry out the relief work. Our supplies and goods reached almost every affected area. We were at Rasuwa, Kavre, Sindhupalchowk, Makwanpur, Lamjung, Gorkha and so on. And we were also helping other organizations who didn't have the resources, by letting them utilize

ours. We bought furniture for schools. We sent rice sacks through Youth Thinker Society. In inaccessible places, we even used khacchads to send the rice sacks.

5. HOW DID YOU MAINTAIN THE NETWORK OF CONTRIBUTORS AT SUCH A CRUCIAL TIME AND ENSURED THAT EACH PIECE OF INFORMATION REACHED EVERYBODY CONCERNED?

In general, we always keep the SEBS community posted about recent SEBS news via our website sebsonline.org or on our Facebook groups. During our relief operation, we held a global conference call daily at 4 in the afternoon. Every day, we would discuss our activities, our plans and the issues faced. This helped us carry out our operations efficiently. For example, we would send our money online to our SEBSers (students) at Bangalore. They would buy and send goods through the train. From there, these items would be received by our SEBSers at Bhairahawa and they would then send it to our team at Buddha Air in Kathmandu.

6. WHICH ORGANIZATIONS IN NEPAL DID SEBS-NA WORK MOST CLOSELY WITH?

Well, firstly we worked very closely with SEBS in Nepal. But apart from that, we also worked with Youth Thinkers Society (YTS). Also, many other organizations utilized our service and also used our platform to send and receive money.

7. THERE IS THE SEBS-NA SLOGAN, “TIMI AATA, MA PURYAUCHU.” WHAT DOES IT STAND FOR EXACTLY?

In any situation, people always tend to

look for obstacles. But if you have a vision and are persistent, someone will always step up to support you.

For instance, if you tell your parents that you are determined to work hard and study, your parents will try their best to support you financially no matter the cost. With this slogan, we are showing that we will always support determined people. You just need to make your voice heard.

8. DID YOU HAVE A SET TARGET YOU WANTED TO MEET FOR THE EARTHQUAKE CONTRIBUTION PROGRAM?

When you are helping your country, there is never a set target. There is just overwhelming love. We don't have a target on how much we can love our parents. And it is the same with our nation. Well, am I satisfied with the amount of my contribution? Nope. No matter how much I help my country, I always think that I could do better.

9. HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN TRANSPARENCY IN YOUR WORK?

We do everything online. Our monetary transactions are carried out online so they are always documented. Our work reports are also shared online on our website.

10. WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE DURING YOUR TIME AS THE PRESIDENT OF SEBS-NA?

Honestly, there was no struggle. I only had to make myself available; people are always willing to help out. Our team here at SEBS-NA has been excellent. Everyone chips in and helps. I worked with such an amazing team.



11. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS SO UNIQUE ABOUT BNKS' NETWORK?

I think we are the only school in the world that is this closely connected in terms of the alumni network. I can guarantee you there is no such other school so closely interconnected that also comes together to work for common purposes and agenda.

12. DO YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULARLY FOND MEMORIES OF BNKS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

Every day in BNKS is a fond memory. If I had to choose one, it would be when I first entered BNKS. Have you seen Lord of the Rings? Do you remember those beautiful sceneries? In my mind, BNKS was no less. It was a paradise where I got to live in the majestic lush greenery and had a locker-full of stuff all to myself.

13. HOW DID BUDHANILKANTHA SCHOOL SHAPE YOU?

BNKS gave me the choice to be who I am. I could choose to be in whichever club or activity I wanted to be involved in. I remember visiting old age homes since I was in 6th grade and tree plantations on the nearby hill. The essence of BNKS carries on even here. In the US too, I sometimes volunteer at the local library, help the elderly people, support Nepali language teaching. I do what I can.

Also, the most important asset BNKS ever gave, is the network. Really, the books and the exams would be the same everywhere but it's this network of people who will be with you for the rest of your life that is truly irreplaceable. ■

Avishek KC's melody rejuvenates the reconstruction efforts in Gorkha

-6158 D SURAKSHYA 

9

06C Avishek was deep into music for as long as he can remember. Before his ultimate gig as the vocalist of the metal band 'Underside', Avishek played in bands like 'Lost Oblivion' and 'E. Equals'. Today, he runs his own music store chain and a restaurant. It was Avishek who came up with the band name 'Underside'- fitting for a small band from a small third-world nation. Yet, relative to the name, the band 'Underside' serves quite the contrary purpose- it only brings out the finer aspects of Nepal and the Nepalese into the limelight for the whole world to see.

Q. COULD YOU SHARE YOUR OWN EARTHQUAKE EXPERIENCES WITH US, DAI?

A. Few days before the earthquake, my whole band was in London for a tour. After the tour ended, most of them returned home but I decided to stay back for another week on a holiday. The next day, I received a call from my girlfriend about the earthquake. I heard the news about the collapse of Dharahara. As a Nepali outside of the country, it felt like an apocalypse had taken over the country.

I was worried, obviously. I couldn't contact with anyone from home for hours. Fortunately, my whole family was safe in Pokhara.

Q. HOW DID THE EARTHQUAKE AFFECT YOUR BAND?

A. 2015 had been a very good year for us. We did more than 20 international shows, travelling across the globe from Hong Kong to Australia to Europe in the process. We were on a promotional tour for our new album EP. We toured 11 cities in 11 days and concluded our tour in London. Unfortunately, it was all for nothing once the earthquake hit. Our plan to release a full-length album was put on hold. Hopefully, we'll get to release the album this year. We plan to go on tour next month.

Q. HOW DID YOU START YOUR RELIEF PROJECTS? DID THE CAMPAIGN BEGIN ONCE YOU RETURNED TO THE COUNTRY?

A. I pleaded for help in our official page on Facebook. Slowly, the donations came in and within a week, we had raised around 9000 USD. I was still stuck in London; there were no flights. However, I managed to transfer some of the amounts to one of my band member's account. With that

money, the boys began the relief work before I even arrived in Nepal.

Q. COULD YOU ELABORATE ON YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE BENEFIT GIG SERIES 'METAL FOR NEPAL' AND 'NO SILENCE FOR NEPAL'?

A. We had just finished touring with the metal band 'Voice of Ruin' when the earthquake hit. The vocalist of Voice of Ruin, Randy Schaller initiated the 'Metal for Nepal' benefit gig series. It took place in more than 22 countries and with the participation of more than 130 bands. Randy started it and the news soon spread and suddenly, people from around the world were organizing 'Metal for Nepal' concerts and collecting funds for relief. All the proceeds from the 'Metal for Nepal' concerts went to the non-profit association 'No Silence for Nepal'. A good friend of mine, an amazing drummer and a tattoo artist, Guido Wyss and Ben Pluss were the pioneers for 'No Silence for Nepal'. I had also tied up with a Czech based INGO called PIN- People in Need. PIN provided us with data and we used the resources that we had gathered according to their plan. Our primary plan as a part of 'Metal for Nepal' and 'No Silence for Nepal' was executed. We helped build around 306 houses and

provided food and medical supplies to more than 1000 families. We provided each family a package of blankets and Rs. 25000 worth of zinc sheets (including other building materials). PIN had provided us with a limited number of small rechargeable lights and we distributed them mostly to lactating mothers and pregnant women. It was the joint effort of our band, our fans, our followers and the whole crew. We spent 22 nights in the Gorkha's Kerabari-1 and Kerabari-7 during our relief work.

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR HUMANITARIAN PROJECT HAS, IN ANY WAY, HELPED TO CHANGE THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WIDER PUBLIC TOWARDS THE METAL COMMUNITY?

A. I'll be honest. For me, Underside is larger than life. We've always been doing things that no one should have done in Nepal as a metal band. I like to think that this already gave us a different perspective. On top of that, after doing this, I believe that our fans and well-wishers think of us the way we always wanted people to.

Q. WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS FOR UNDERSIDE?

A. We plan to do what we cannot. But mostly, we are trying to grow as a band and as individuals.

Q. WHO ARE YOUR INFLUENCES? DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE BANDS THAT YOU ADMIRE?

A. Slipknot is no. 1. Slipknot will always be there. Besides that, I would also like to mention Metallica and Pantera.

Q. HOW DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR SCHOOLING IN BNKS STEERED YOU IN THIS PATH?

A. It always had something to do with the school. As a fourth grader in BNKS, I liked to listen to the seniors play their music. Yes, I always loved music but after I came to this school, I became more encouraged to play my music.

Q. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE ANY PARTICULAR MEMORIES FROM BNKS WITH OUR READERS?

A. We did camping in the school grounds itself. We would go to the temple area, create a hole in the ground, eat all the kitchen supplies we stole and spend the night there. No one ever found us.

Q. WHAT WOULD YOUR MESSAGE BE TO YOUR JUNIORS IN BNKS WHO WANT TO PURSUE MUSIC IN THE FUTURE?

A. The most important thing is to do your own music. Write your songs. You will realize gradually if it's just a phase or if you are really into it. If you really want to do it, follow your dreams. You need to make lots of tough choices in life. So, it's up to you if you want to stick to what you love or give in to life. Please, be honest with yourself and believe in yourself. Do your best and always love your music. ■



Bloom Nepal School and Ram Rijal together with, and for earthquake victims

-6158 D SURAKSHYA

The chain of events that led 708C Ram to the magnificently black front gate of Budhanilkantha School from a gateless remote school in Rukum makes for quite an astounding tale to tell. A scholarship student in Budhanilkantha School, Ram went on to achieve a world class education and a job in the World Bank that he eventually left. In our conversation with him, the man talks more about himself, his brainchild Bloom Nepal School and school life in alma mater, Budhanilkantha School.

Q. COULD YOU VERY BRIEFLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF, RAM DAI?

A. I studied in Budhanilkantha School till grade 10 and later, got the opportunity to study International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) in the UK. After that, I went to the US and joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Currently, I run Bloom Nepal School, a secondary school located in Lubhu that caters students from grade 1 to 10.

Q. HOW DID THE IDEA FOR BLOOM NEPAL SCHOOL OCCUR TO YOU? DID YOUR EDUCATION IN BNKS INSPIRE YOU SOMEWHAT?

A. Surely, I drew a lot of inspiration for Bloom Nepal School from BNKS itself. However, the bulk of my inspiration comes from my social background. I hail from a remote village in Rukum where it was extremely difficult for children of low financial status to access quality education. So, we were trying to come up with an alternative that provides opportunities to such children at an accessible rate. Similarly, we want to create motivated and talented individuals out of our students by identifying their passions and creating an environment for them to nurture them. Bloom Nepal School was established, simply, to fulfill these objectives. Similarly, in the long run we are planning to provide financial and technical support to children who have developed adequate skills in a particular field so that it can have an impact on the development of the country.

Q. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RETURN TO NEPAL, LEAVING BEHIND A WELL-SETTLED LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES?

A. I graduated in 2012. However, I didn't look up for jobs in the US afterward and returned to Nepal. The idea for Bloom Nepal School was always close to my heart and I saw a great potential in it, so I wanted to give it a try. I wasn't sure if the

idea would work but I consoled myself that in case it didn't, I should still be proud enough of the fact that I tried.

Q. WE'VE HEARD THAT BLOOM NEPAL IS SOMEWHAT BASED ON YOUR ALMA MATER MIT, WHAT VALUES OF MIT HAVE YOU INCORPORATED IN BLOOM NEPAL SCHOOL?

A. Upon inquiry with my friends from MIT, I learned the secrets to their success. From their childhood till adulthood, they were motivated to pursue their passions without restrictions. They believe every child to be unique and with an inherent ability that needs to be identified and polished. Instead of being 'average' in many sectors, my friends tried to be proficient in one or two skills that they were extremely interested in. That way, they were both happy and successful. I would say that we are trying to develop this example of passion based education in Bloom Nepal as well.

Q. HOW HAS THE SITUATION BEEN FOR BLOOM NEPAL FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS?

A. I would say that the ride has been rocky for Bloom Nepal. We were well and good and once upon a time, located in Ekantakuna. However, the big shift came in 2015 when the earthquake took down

everything we held dear. The parents were not comfortable with the idea of putting their kids in tents and a drastic reduction transpired in the number of students. Eventually, we ended up here. We leveled up to what we had initially. Now, we look forward to seeing it grow. We are in a much better position now and things are definitely looking better for us.

Q. UNFORTUNATELY, THE EARTHQUAKE IN 2015 CAUSED YOUR SCHOOL BUILDINGS TO COLLAPSE. HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO KEEP CALM IN SUCH A SITUATION?

A. The primary driving factor for us was our dream because we wanted to make it happen at any cost. It was motivation and the coordination of our staff who worked day and night. However, our determination would have been useless without resources and I think that the network of BNKS helped us immensely with that. SEBSers from all over the world supported us financially.

Q. WHAT DID YOU DO TO REDUCE THE MENTAL FEAR IN THE STUDENTS WHO MUST HAVE BEEN AROUND THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS WHEN THE DISASTER STRUCK?

A. We thought of and tried simple ways to adjust the children to the environment, especially during the aftershock period. We never left the children alone, accompanied them at all times. We motivated them and gathered volunteers who came, talked and played games with them. For children that were extremely perturbed, we even asked for help from counselors.

Q. HOW DID SEBS HELP YOU IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SCHOOL?

A. SEBS NA channeled the funds that we had raised from our network to Nepal from the United States. They communicated with donors, supported us with the tax break procedures by providing the required documents and acted as a platform in the United States for the collection of donation. They were very responsive at a time when we were desperately in need. They played a positive role and we are extremely thankful to them.

Q. DID BLOOM NEPAL SCHOOL CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEPALI COMMUNITY DURING THE EARTHQUAKE, IN ANY WAY?

A. We tried to help in our own little ways, considering the fact we were also facing the dire consequences of the disaster. We provided full scholarships to limited students from the most affected districts like Sindhupalchowk, Gorkha, and Dolakha. Unfortunately, we weren't involved in any relief projects because we had our own school to rebuild and students to take care of. But I believe that we became a beacon of hope and inspiration to the rest of our community by remaining strong in desperate times.

Q. WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS FOR BLOOM NEPAL SCHOOL?

A. We plan to expand our services and grow bigger. We want to construct schools and secondary branches of Bloom Nepal in various parts of Nepal.



Q. HOW HAVE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN BUDHANILKANTHA SCHOOL SHAPED YOU?

A. The environment in BNKS was highly competitive. It always made feel like I should have the courage to not think less of myself in comparison to others and work hard to grow as an individual. My schooling in BNKS helped sharpen my leadership skills and developed a sense of community in me. Most importantly, I learned to motivate myself and others to always strive for better things in life.

Q. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE ANY OF YOUR MEMORIES FROM BNKS WITH OUR READERS?

A. It was the swimming competition. I had to do four strokes in the medley. Although

I wasn't very proficient in butterfly, I participated in the medley. Somehow, I managed to complete it as well. We won the competition. The happy image of my house holding up the trophy always cheers me up.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOUR JUNIORS FROM BNKS?

A. My suggestion for them is to pursue their passion because passion adds meaning to life. The struggle is a part of life and things don't always turn out the way you expect them to but try not to give up on what you love. If you are persistent in your efforts, success will head your way. Be a good human being because that is what counts. ■

Storyteller Subina projects Nepal in the world sphere post-earthquake

-6158D SURAKSHYA →

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Subina Shrestha is a journalist and a filmmaker from Kathmandu. Her films have been recognized with several awards, broadcast on Al Jazeera, BBC, ITN, and Arte and screened at festivals worldwide. She started working in TV news after Al Jazeera English was launched in 2006 and has worked in several countries including India, Thailand, and Myanmar. An affectionate mother of two kids, Subina is currently in the US and plans to return to Nepal soon.

306B Subina was puzzled. A girl had died, a 12-year-old girl and nobody bothered. She goes to the police station and they tell her, rather nonchalantly, that the 'girl' committed suicide because she was doing badly in school. She visits the school and ironically, they tell her that the 'girl' was at the top of her class. All the while, one question burns bright at the back of Subina's mind: 'Why is it that just because the person in question is a 'girl' and a 'Tharu', nobody stops to even wonder why she died?'

Eventually, this question leads Subina to seek out former Kamalaris and record

their heartbreaking stories. 'This one girl only has the childhood memories of being curled up and asleep in a pot she was supposed to clean because she's so sleep-deprived,' Subina says, angrily. 'She's an eight year old girl being tortured to this level, in what world would you think that's acceptable?' Revisiting the lives of some Kamalaris who were abused, raped, tortured or even killed by their employers, Subina's documentary on 'Kamalaris: Nepal's Slave Girls' won her the Women's Empowerment Journalism Award in 2014.

After the destructive earthquake shook our nation in 2015, Subina took the narrative of the incident in her own hands. For about a year, she covered the stories of the earthquake and its aftermath from Kathmandu. As the only international correspondent from a major news agency, her response to the incident was immediate. 'It was definitely the most challenging thing I ever had to do. When a disaster hits your backyard, your response becomes heightened because people you know are being affected by it. But, as a journalist, I had to form an objective opinion about an incident of which I happened to be a subject as well,' she tells us. In fact, for her coverage of the earthquake, Subina was also nominated

for the 2016 International Emmy Awards, becoming the first Nepali to be nominated for such a prestigious honour.

Subina also won the Concentra Award for 'Outstanding Video Journalism' in 2009 for her coverage of the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Nargis. Cyclone Nargis caused the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar during early May 2008. Subina was the first journalist to reach Myanmar's worst-affected Irrawady Delta. As they were not allowed to be there, Subina went undercover, posing as a Buddhist from Nepal delivering food aid. She visited Myanmar several times after the cyclone and spoke to the survivors who had no food or help, even a week after the cyclone.

Subina believes, as a journalist, it is her duty to report the issues that she feels, are important. In 2010, Subina, five months pregnant herself, set out to find out why so many mothers die in childbirth. As much as it saddened her to learn the harsh truths of maternal deaths in Nepal, things slightly cheered up for the women in Accham when the dismal health services in Far-Western Nepal gradually changed for better, after the broadcast of Subina's



short film 'Birth in Nepal'. 'Journalism might not bring immediate benefits, but in the long term, it really does make a difference to the world,' Subina says, beaming.

Subina always loved telling stories. She liked going to places and hearing stories about other people and their lives. 'I have always liked asking questions, I have always loved travelling, so that's what inspired me to become a journalist. I would be a writer if I weren't a journalist,' she shares. Today, hundreds of women look up to Subina as their role model and tell her that they want to be a part of journalism because her work inspires them. This only keeps Subina going.

For Subina, inclusion in news room is extremely important because the way a woman sees a story can be very different from a man. She notes that, all over the world, the inclusion of not only women but minorities is so limited that their views tend to be sidelined and the story fails to be represented as it should be. 'Girls deserve the same opportunities as boys. If a girl has a curfew at 7 pm, boys should also have the same,' she says. 'One gender should not have to grow up thinking – Oh, we have to have a curfew!' These little things can really have a lasting impact on how we think of ourselves as girls', she concludes.

As a young girl in Budhanilkantha School, Subina would walk up and down the lovely paths of the school. She would sit around this tiny room with her girl friends and talk about all the things they liked to think about as 15-year-old teenagers. For Subina, these are the memories that stand out – the bonafide friendships and the comforting reassurances of always having them in her life.

To the current students and the recent graduates of Budhanilkantha School, Subina relays the message to keep dreaming, and not to give up on their dreams. 'In our entire struggle to prove that we are good enough, we sometimes tend to forget that we have a life to live, and experiences to have. To be honest, these are the experiences I wouldn't get now, even if I wanted to. So, you should all try to enjoy these experiences as much as you can, while you can,' she tells us. ■

Expanding SEBS' global network, Tejsu Malla's perseverance since 2008

-6158D SURAKSHYA →

The Immediate Past President of SEBS, 248C Tejsu has made us all proud in countless occasions. As an International Student at the Southeast University (SEU) in China, he created history to become the first Nepalese student to win the 'Outstanding Student Award'. As an International Student Ambassador at SEU, he has endorsed the good name of Nepal and the blazing spirit of BudhaGraduates for years. Devoted to SEBS, Tejsu plans to return to Nepal soon and continue his contribution to SEBS.

1. HOW DID YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH SEBS BEGIN?

My involvement with SEBS began in 2008. I was back to Nepal from Bangladesh when I organized the Binod Memorial Dance Competition. In 2009, I joined the SEBS Executive Team. Since then, I have been a part of the SEBS Executive Team.

2. COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT SOME OF YOUR WORKS AS THE PRESIDENT OF SEBS?

My team helped me deliver all the promises I had made as a presidential candidate in the election. We were

able to build a stronger alumni network through social events and gatherings. We coordinated the Dashain get-together and felicitation of the then Chief of Army Service- Gaurav Shumsher JBR as well as the Deusi-Bhailo program. My tenure marked the beginning of Ten Past Six (TPS), a bimonthly SEBS networking event. We re-introduced programs such as career guidance counseling sessions, the Binod Memorial Dance Competition and the I.P. Memorial Art Competition. For the first time in the history of Budhanilkantha School, a dental screening camp and an oral health education program was conducted inside the school, with the support of SEBS.

As a partner organization of Himalayan Family Healthcare Project, we organized a two-day health camp offering free medical and dental evaluation and treatment in Thoche Village of Manang District. We converted all the past publications of AASTHA magazine into soft copy and made it available for SEBSers worldwide in sebsonline.org. We updated sebsonline.org with minutes of meetings, events, and activities. My team also ensured financial responsibility with more emphasis given on fund transparency. We revived our associations with different chapters of SEBS such as SEBS-NA, SEBS- UK. All in

all, I would say that my team was one of the most active ones!

3. COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR CONTRIBUTION AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE?

I was the official representative of SEBS and SEBS-NA in China. With the help of fellow Nepalese students, I was able to collect significant funds to buy essential medication and relief materials. These medicinal supplies were sent to different parts of Nepal through SEBS. Even though I wanted to help Nepal and SEBS physically, I decided I could make a greater impact by staying back in China and helping in collecting funds.

4. HOW HARD WAS IT COLLECTING FUNDS IN CHINA?

The support of Chinese people was warm and overwhelming. I still remember my encounter with two Chinese people. One of them drove a luxurious car and the other was a fruit seller. Regardless of their economic status, both of them donated.

5. HOW DID YOU RAISE THE FUNDS IN SUCH A SHORT SPAN OF TIME?

At the start, fellow Nepalese students from my university contributed 200 RMB each, raising around 12,000 Yuan (Rs. 1,

92,000) to our cause. After that, we set up a donation box with posters and assigned volunteers. Through the donation box, we received around 20,000 RMB (Rs. 3, 20,000) within 3 days. Some of this fund was utilized to buy essential medication and relief materials. The rest of this fund was distributed among the 10 students who returned to Nepal to volunteer in different organizations.

6. WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE DURING YOUR TIME AS THE PRESIDENT OF SEBS?

As the first president from the C batch, the majority of my team members were from the C and D batches. So, I had to balance the relationship between the senior and junior batches. Similarly, the scarcity of funds to sustain office expenditures and the uncooperative National Scholarship Program (NSP) team added to our problem.

7. DO YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULARLY FOND MEMORIES OF BNKS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

My first year in BNKS was rather tough, but the fact that I made some great friends and a lifetime worth of memories makes me happy. Looking back, I can recall two sports incidents with particular fondness. The first incident happened during the class football tournament in grade 9. My house Kanchenjunga was the underdog of the tournament. Yet, in the first half of this tournament, we scored the first goal. News travelled fast and soon

enough, everyone was there to support us. We won. The second incident took place during the softball and handball tournament in grade 10. I was assigned to be on the softball team, but due to the sudden injury of the keeper, I was asked to fill up his place. Considering that I was given a last-minute crash course of rules and regulations, I did exceptionally well, much to everybody's surprise! In fact, we won the entire tournament.

8. ANY MOMENT OF GLORY DURING YOUR WORK AS THE PRESIDENT OF SEBS?

Throughout my presidency, I was able to meet many SEBSers. From some of them, I received encouragement and from others, I accepted constructive criticism. So, my whole tenure was glorious for me!

9. HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCES IN BUDHANILKANTHA SCHOOL SHAPE YOU?

Besides good education, confidence and leadership are qualities that are essential to becoming an all-rounder. To be honest, Budhanilkantha School gave me only a very good education. I attained leadership qualities during my bachelor's which were further strengthened by my work in SEBS. Personally, I feel that the school should do more to encourage students to take active leadership roles. Leadership has traditionally been preserved for bright students. I feel that this tradition should be broken and students with poor grades or less confidence should also be given an opportunity to lead.



10. WHAT WOULD YOUR MESSAGE BE TO CURRENT STUDENTS AND RECENT BNKS GRADUATES?

For the current students, my message is to use the facilities properly and stand your ground, because you are one of those lucky few who has been given the opportunity to study in such a prestigious

school. Reach out to your teachers. For the recent BNKS graduates, I would like to first congratulate them on being a part of the SEBS family. We feel the lack of female participation, and encourage girls to play an important role in SEBS. Contribute to the SEBS. All of you have played an important role in BNKS and now you should try to do the same in SEBS. ■

Ujjwal Shrestha's successful coordination and diligence

-6158D SURAKSHYA →

1

60B Ujjwal decided early on that 'social work' would be his primary route, his way to give back to the alma-mater that defined him for who he was and entrusted its best values on him. And unquestionably, that's exactly what he has been doing, ever since he left his second home- Budhanilkantha School- to set out for the world ahead. 160B Ujjwal was commended by SEBS-NA for his excellent contribution to the society post-earthquake and rightly so, for he, single-handedly coordinated four of the relief missions supported by SEBS-NA along with two of his own individual projects. 160B Ujjwal hails from Chitwan, where he currently resides and works as an entrepreneur.

1. COULD YOU LET US KNOW MORE ABOUT CHITWAN YUWA SAMUHA AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN IT?

Chitwan Yuwa Samuha is a group formed unanimously by me and my friends in order to help out the community in Chitwan. It is currently unregistered, but we are planning to register it soon. We support many schools in Chitwan and Tanahun. Recently, we constructed a library for Rastriya Primary School

in Chitwan and distributed stationery and sports materials as well as other educational goods to another school in Bandipur.

2. WHAT ABOUT YOUR INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE?

We carried out an independent relief mission in Jaubari, Gorkha. 25 volunteers, including doctors and a team of clinical workers, went to Jaubari, Phinam and nearby remote villages in Gorkha. We were able to hand out relief supplies to 120 families benefitting 800 residents. When an aftershock hit us on our way to Jaubari, it caused many of our volunteers to leave. However, we still decided to move ahead, with or without the volunteers. In another relief mission, I went to Harmi village in Gorkha. The earthquake had caused total devastation, but no help had reached them even after a week. 70 houses in the area were either completely collapsed or declared unfit to live in. We were one of the first ones to get there. Our relief was handed over to around 800 households, benefitting 460 residents.

3. HOW DID SEBS-NA HELP YOU IN YOUR EARTHQUAKE RELIEF MISSIONS?

We had been contributing funds ourselves until SEBS-NA contacted us and decided to support us financially. So, with the

support from SEBS-NA, we carried out a relief and reconstruction mission in Katunje-7, Dhading; Selle, Katunje-4, Dhading; Darechowk-3, Chitwan and Dapcha, Kavre.

4. HOW WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN KATUNJE-7? WHAT DID THE PROJECT ACHIEVE?

This mission targeted 100 families, benefitting 575 residents in Katunje-7, a very remote village in Dhading. Getting there required 6.5 hours of driving from Narayangarh, including 3.5 hours of off-road driving. We were a team of 26 volunteers including doctors and a medical team.

5. HOW DID YOU COORDINATE YOUR VISIT TO SELLE, KATUNJE-4, DHADING?

In Selle, we handed over the relief materials to 150 families from 5 villages, benefitting 700 residents. Our volunteer team included a medical practitioner and few police personnel. As for coordination, we approached the police first to find out if the plea for help is genuine. Then, with the help of Nepal Police and Nepal Army, we contacted the villagers and extracted data about the number of families and houses affected, along with what needs to be distributed the most. After that, we bought the goods and distributed it to the affected villagers directly.



6. WE HEARD THAT YOU COLLABORATED WITH THE NEPAL ARMY FOR YOUR EARTHQUAKE RECONSTRUCTION AND RELIEF MISSION IN CHITWAN. HOW DID THEY HELP YOU?

Yes, we carried out an earthquake reconstruction mission in Darechowk-3, Chitwan in coordination with the famous Mahendra Battalion (Nepal Army) of Bharatpur, Chitwan. Our primary goal was to reconstruct the village. A team of soldiers under Major Sameer Gurung worked in the village, repairing and rebuilding damaged houses. Our team also included a doctor, Col. Prashant Bikram Rana (Nepal Army), a media team from Kantipur TV. Besides that,

our team also distributed relief packages to the villagers. This project helped 20 households with a total of 129 residents.

7. WHAT WAS YOUR PROJECT IN KAVRE PRIMARILY ABOUT?

We undertook another Earthquake Relief Reconstruction mission in Dapcha, Kavre. We distributed tin sheets to 25 families and a community shelter. We distributed stationery and a water tank to Shree Krishna Higher Secondary School. Similarly, we provided surgical equipment, medicines, cement poles and barbed wire to a community health post.

8. BESIDES SEBS-NA, WHAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED YOU, EITHER WITH FUNDS OR VOLUNTEERS?

Besides SEBS-NA, we were supported financially by Bhukampa Pudit Sahayog Aabhiyan, Israel; Namaste Nepal Helping Himalayan Children, USA (NNHHC); and friends and families from the US, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Nepal. Most of our volunteers were from Chitwan Yuwa Samuha.

9. HOW DO YOU THINK BUDHANILKANTHA SCHOOL STEERED YOU IN THIS PATH?

I believe that the students from Budhanilkantha School have a very diverse brain. We do not limit ourselves to academics and appreciate that academics

is not the only important part of a school. Honestly, Budhanilkantha School trained me to work for the betterment of my society. It made me feel that I should not let the investment done to me by the school and the society to go to waste. So, whatever BNKS invested in me, I have tried to give back through social service.

10. DO YOU HAVE A PARTICULAR MEMORY IN BNKS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

To be honest, most of my favorite childhood memories happened in Budhanilkantha School. For instance, I usually went to junior houses at night to steal fruits from the teacher's garden. Unfortunately, one night, I got caught - the teacher saw me. Hoping that the teacher hadn't recognized me, I hurriedly left and managed to find my way back to my house without him following. Then, I went straight to my bed and pretended to be fast asleep. Minutes later, the teacher found me in my bed. He saw right through my act and whispered in my ear, 'I know that you are awake.'

11. WHAT ARE YOUR MESSAGES TO THE CURRENT STUDENTS AND THE RECENT GRADUATES OF BNKS?

First of all, I would advise my juniors to study well and be ambitious. However, other things aside, it is also very important for our youth to be socially active. So, I encourage them to engage in social service, because there is no satisfaction equal to social work. Budhanilkantha School was established with the intention to create leaders of Nepal. So, I believe that the students should strive to become just that! ■

From Nationwide Scholarship Program to Shanti Education Initiative, Rabindra Maharjan is opting to provide quality education

-6158D SURAKSHYA

2

55B Rabindra saw more to his classrooms in Budhanilkantha School than the unplastered brick walls and the white-painted plywood ceilings. Behind the sheer simplicity of the classroom design, he saw a well-devised plan. He had discovered, long ago, that Budhanilkantha School was not distinguished for either its infrastructures or its breathtaking panoramic beauty but rather, for the hardworking and well-trained teachers who strive to deliver their best to the students. Thus, as the Chairperson of Shanti Education Initiative Nepal (SEIN), he still models his reconstructed schools after this very plan.

The formation of SEI Nepal goes back to Rabindra's youth. Originally, SEI was a part of Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students (SEBS). While working on the Nationwide Scholarship Program (NSP) in SEBS, Rabindra and his team were offered a chance to overlook the construction of a school. However, after the then SEBS decided to dissolve NSP, Rabindra and his

team decided to branch out from SEBS. And thus, Shanti Education Initiative was formed.

The main goal of SEI Nepal is quality education. It rebuilds schools in the most cost-effective and durable way, trains teachers and mobilizes national and international volunteers. Most importantly, it ensures that there is no disparity between private schooling and community schooling, and provides equal opportunities to everyone.

After the 2015 Earthquake, SEI Nepal committed to reconstructing 23 community schools. Currently, they are working on their 20th school. SEI Nepal has invested more than 2 crores 72 lakhs in these projects. They are funded by various donor agencies. Until now, there has been very positive support from the public towards the reconstruction projects handled by SEIN. Recently, SEI Nepal appointed Miss Gaurika Singh, youngest Olympic athlete, as its goodwill ambassador. Gaurika has raised funds for SEI Nepal's school rebuilding projects and also donated her prize money that she won for setting national records in Nepal.

In the next ten years, Rabindra targets for SEI Nepal to be a self-sustained organization. Currently, they are working in only four districts: Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Kavre, and Dolakha. However, in the coming years, he hopes that this organization can expand its services to all the 75 districts in Nepal.

During the earthquake, Rabindra was on the fourth floor of his house himself. After fleeing to an open space, completely safe, the first thought that crossed his mind was that it was his duty to go for a relief project himself. Considering himself extremely lucky that he was not seriously maimed or injured, he set out to help others. Thus, he became one of the frontrunners in the SEBS Earthquake Relief Action Project. In fact, nothing but the purest feeling of ownership towards his country could have led him to leave for the target area immediately few days after the major earthquake.

'After the earthquake, the best thing that SEBS did was to publish an appeal in the National Daily Newspapers,' he says. The appeal was called 'Rs. 2320 helps a family, fight hunger and provide shelter



for earthquake victims and give them a fighting chance'. The money was donated through e-sewa or could be deposited at any one of the Agricultural Development Bank branches in the beneficiary of SEBS. Through the funding from Buddha Air, various SEBSers, and the national daily appeal, SEBS collected about 2 crores 60 lakhs for their relief project.

Rabindra and three others left for the project area while the rest of the volunteers helped out in SEBS base camp in Buddha Air. Rabindra and his team planned to distribute 90 tonnes of rice in the Sindhupalchowk district. They started out with Barabise as the distribution center, serving 9 other VDC's.

They sought to provide 1 sack of rice and 1 tarpaulin to each family. However, during the relief project, a political party leader from the area held back the distribution. Furious that he was not consulted beforehand, he demanded that his constituency gets all the sacks of rice and all the tarpaulins. However, Rabindra and his team refused and insisted that they will equally distribute the goods, no matter what. After being downright rejected, the leader even threatened to break his leg and to not let him cross the border of Sindhupalchowk district. Still, Rabindra and his team remained resolute. Finally, the leader declared that they no longer needed the rest of their goods.

Still, amidst the tremendous political resistance, Rabindra and his team set out to provide the remaining 60 tonnes of rice to Melamchi, risking their own well-being in the process. Luckily, they succeeded without any personal harm to themselves.

At the end of their relief action project, SEBS was the only organization to publicly present their audited report, income and expenditure report in the national daily papers, ensuring absolute transparency. According to Rabindra, SEBS was very successful in their relief action project. He was delighted to add that SEBS had actually distributed more goods than they had initially expected.

255B Rabindra confesses that he takes most of his ideas for SEI Nepal from Budhanilkantha School itself. For him, Budhanilkantha School is not just an academic institution; it is his inspiration.

Sharing his favorite memories from his alma mater, he mentions that his victory at the Ratna Shield, Dipendra Shield, and Valley Champion were the proudest moments for him. However, above everything else, he values having gotten to know people from all of the geographical regions in Nepal. Staying in a residential school, both the rich and the poor were subjected to equal treatment. Growing and learning in same conditions, he had formed the deepest bonds of trust and fraternity with them. As one of his fond memories from school, he shares that on every long vacation he had, he went to one of his friend's village and stayed there for a complete week!

Finally, he urges current Budhanilkantha school students to make the best use of the opportunities provided to them. He advises them to be socially active and volunteer as much as they can. After all, their experiences as a student in Budhanilkantha School can only be described as the 'Golden Era' of their lifetime! ■

The Helicopter Relief Mission: A New Concept

-7177 'D' SHREETI →

It is of no doubt that the upbringing in BNKS produces unique, innovative and yet, humble mindsets. 267'B' Rastra Bhusan Khadka is one of them. As we sit across the coffee table and have a conversation, his courteousness definitely makes it an interesting and lovable experience. He has truly been able to spread the values that his alma-mater has inculcated in him.

1. COULD YOU BRIEFLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF, RASTRA DAI?

I'm 267 'B' Rastra from Dolakha. As a scholarship student, my journey in BNKS began from grade 4 as an 11th batch student. Then, I was able to make it up to O-levels. I was an average student in my school. Talking about my profession, I am basically into software development. I have completed my Masters in Computer Science. I have also been involved in education sector. Currently, I am a director at the National College of Computer Studies (NCCS) affiliated with the Tribhuvan University.

2. COULD YOU SHARE YOUR PERSONAL EARTHQUAKE EXPERIENCES WITH OUR READERS?

I was at home when the first quake hit on April 25. We stayed in the open sky for 3

nights and 4 days. Then, news came from my hometown about the poor condition and scarcity of food. As a vice-president of the family guthi, Chilankhe Khadka Achal Santati Samaaj (CKASS), I was trying to help my brothers and sisters in Dolakha. Meanwhile, the second quake occurred, and around 15 local people from my own VDC lost their lives and several got injured on their way to collect relief materials from Singati. When I saw the people and families so close to me suffering, I realized the need to get deeply involved.

3. DAI, HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE UNIQUE IDEA OF HELICOPTER RESCUE MISSION?

Whatever materials were collected by our guthi, we were planning to take those materials by bus. But, after the second earthquake, roads were blocked due to landslides. And then, we were in need of a chopper. I tried everything I could. Then, I posted a request for a chopper on my facebook profile as well as our in 200'B' facebook page. My friend 222 B Bal Krishna suggested a place where he knew someone who could help. I went there, and luckily, there was this international organization named Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) that supported relief programmes through aviation. I talked

to them and there was one flight going to Solukhumbu to pick up an injured foreigner. Then, we negotiated to drop the relief materials from the chopper to Dolakha and then go to pick up the foreigner. This was how it all started.

4. SO, HOW WAS THE CONDITION WHEN YOU REACHED THERE?

Well, the view was heartbreaking. People were running after the chopper. They would all gather around the chopper in hopes of getting some relief goods. My ground-time was just about ten minutes. So, I could not interact with them, nor could I empathize with them. The goods taken for the first time were not sufficient, but I told them to distribute it on a priority basis. Promising to return back again, I left the place.

5. HOW DID YOU DISTRIBUTE THE MATERIALS? WHAT WAS THE CHANNEL OF DISTRIBUTION?

People were not willing to trust the VDC Secretary and the political parties. There were complaints of biased distribution. So, I actually instructed them to make a small committee so that they can distribute goods fairly. However, the reporting must be done to me. I did not go through the administrative channel as they would definitely kill time. It would be a lengthy

process to communicate with them and give them time to find the needy people. It was my own village. So, I knew those people very well. And they also had faith in me and in my opinion, the distribution was done fairly.

6. DID YOU FACE ANY HURDLES DURING THE RELIEF MISSION?

We lost some materials once when we went through the administrative channel. Then, I made the best use of my contacts. I had also allotted people to list down families that had received the relief, along with the amount they received.

7. HOW MANY TRIPS COULD YOU MAKE?

Luckily, we got flights from MAF at a discounted price. They did not charge any cost for my first trip. Through my contacts, we also had the opportunity to fly in an army helicopter, Mi 17 which helped transport much more goods at once. We did 3 trips in Chilankha, 1 trip in Khopa Chagu and 1 trip in Bigu. We also did a trip from the bus to Dolakha.

8. HOW WAS SEBS INVOLVED IN THIS PROGRAMME?

Pretty much. Firstly, 222 B Bal Krishna helped me with my first air drop. And then, later 268 Kiran provided me with the information about Nyano Sansar, which was much appreciated. From there, I got around 100 tarpaulins. We were in dire need of money to buy relief materials and cover our expenses for the flights although we got a discounted price from MAF for several flights. Then, SEBS-NA came in to help. They provided us with around NRs. 2 lakh 60 thousand for our expenses.

9. ANY OTHER FRIENDS OR ORGANISATIONS THAT PROVIDED SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT, EITHER WITH FUNDS OR VOLUNTEERS?

I won't forget to mention Bibeksheel Nepali. They provided around 60 sacks of rice and some tarpaulins as well. Likewise, two ladies from an organization named Nepal Women Foundation, Miss Reenu Sharma and Miss Rama Budhathoki accompanied us on 2 of our trips. The Foundation also contributed blankets, clothing and sanitary pads. Dr. Kamal Khadka, an eye specialist also donated NRs. 30,000 and some relief materials. 220 Soham, 292 Paras and Kanchan dai also contributed sacks of rice, other foodstuffs and many more. NCCS also contributed various materials for relief. We used to write names of donors in the sacks of rice or other packets of relief materials to acknowledge the efforts of our supporters. Some of my friends and colleagues also wanted to go to the spot personally and we took them, if possible. So, after we initiated the idea, a lot of people came to help, directly or indirectly.

10. ANY OTHER PLACES YOU WENT TO FOR THE RELIEF MISSION?

Actually, I was way too focused in helping my hometown where road access was cut off after the landslide. However, I helped to make arrangements for the relief programme in Gorkha. I was basically facilitating the choppers in case of Gorkha but, I would myself visit Dolakha. As a part of the NCCS, I went to Changu Narayan area for relief too.



11. AS YOU SAID YOU'RE INVOLVED IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR, WHAT WAS THE MENTALITY OF THE STUDENTS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE?

After such a massive shock, it is no surprise that anyone would be afraid to go to the tall buildings. At NCCS, we have seven-storeyed buildings and students were quite afraid in the initial few days. However, we invited professional counselors to help the students get rid of their fears. I think the counselors were good enough in that purpose.

12. WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE THE MOST ABOUT BNKS?

The diversity that you find in BNKS is amazing. Many reputed schools have students coming from the same background. However, at BNKS we have students from all the 75 districts and hence, it is like mini Nepal. We get to

know people with different family and social backgrounds. The culture and environment of BNKS is very unique. The roll no. system itself is something to be proud of. BNKS helped me develop a feeling of solidarity and a sense of responsibility towards my school, family, society and the nation as a whole. The networking and communication between BNKS alumni is very wide. I am still in touch with many of my batch mates. Even in the relief programme, the SEBS network was quite helpful.

13. ANY FOND MEMORIES IN BNKS?

Well, every day in BNKS was amazing. But the most memorable day would be when I was in Annapurna house. Me and my friend went to observe the teacher's garden during the day so that we could steal some vegetables. Then, we went to steal a so called cucumber from the teacher's garden at night and found out that it was a sponge gourd when we reached our house.

14. ANY MESSAGE TO THE JUNIORS OF BNKS?

BNKS is a lot more than just a book house. So, to all the juniors, I would like to suggest them not to get too much bookish, but to also explore other opportunities available there. Maintain good relations with your Head of House and respect them. They are your saviours. They'll guide you in every step you take. ■

Satellite Communication: An amazing network service

-7177 'D' SHREETI →

A

man who believes that trail running is a journey from crooked, dangerous roads to beautiful destinations. He, who has spent years of his life exploring steep hills and dense forests. He, who runs with a purpose. 896 'C' Sudeep is a Budha graduate who has his own unique ways of giving back to the society.

Sudeep started his journey in BNKS from grade 9. Although he initially found the BNKS environment and culture very different from what he was used to, he eventually bloomed in the BNKS circle. He describes Budhanilkantha School as an 'Open Jail'- a place where he could explore many opportunities and shape a better future for himself.

Talking about the earthquake and its aftermath, Sudeep recalls the chaos and the dreadful situation of many Nepalese brothers and sisters. The most vivid memory, he recollects, 'When we were walking past a house damaged by the quake in Sindhupalchowk, we smelled something foul. Was it a dead animal or a dead person?' We didn't know.' He had no clue whose dead body it was inside or for how long it had been buried there. He shares that initially, he was confused about where to go to help or through which

channel would it be most effective. Amidst the immediate chaos after the quake, he got a message that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) needed a satellite communicator. During his interaction with them, he found out that IOM had planned to go to rural areas for data collection and need assessment. However, some places were inaccessible to them. That was the opportunity for him to help. In his gutsy voice, he says, 'We, as trail runners, go to new places on foot. We can go miles without a jeep or a bus.' So, he thought to go to remote places with the satellite devices and a data collection sheet prepared by the IOM to collect the data required by IOM for the relief programme. The long journey started from Melamchi in Sindhupalchowk and eventually ended in Sarmanthan in Langtang. It took about 2 days. Then, they returned to Kathmandu. With the help of this task, he and his team could report exact places where landslide had occurred or where the devastation was extensively detrimental. He further adds, 'I don't know how effective we were, but we tried our best.'

He was a part of a company named Satellite Renters Nepal in 2015. When the earthquake hit Nepal, the company rented satellite phones and satellite communicators. Well, such a unique idea

must have an inspiration. Since 2014, every year, he and some of his friends have been organizing Annapurna Fast Pack. Back then, one of his partners brought a satellite phone and a satellite communicator. They used to communicate using those devices where the mobile network was unreachable. The best thing about satellite phones and communicators is that it directly connects to the satellite and so, one does not need a network tower nearby. 'You can use them where there is no network- from the top of Mt. Everest to the deep gorge of Kali Gandaki.', he says. He shares that those devices were of great help during the fast pack. Every day, they did a satellite update. The team used those devices to update their followers, friends and families of their participants regarding their tracks and exact location. In case of emergencies, they had a doctor on call if someone got sick or injured. They had some extra ones too that were just idle. He says that they weren't thinking of starting a business or so. However, after the earthquake, he realized that the communication sector in our country was very poor. In village areas, there used to be no mobile network available. In places where it would be available, it would be quite unreliable. And so, he came up with this idea. Renting those devices to organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Dhulikhel Hospital and

World Food Programme Nepal, he and his team helped to overcome the large communication gap between different parts of the country. Moreover, keeping in mind the dreadful situation, the company also provided the devices free of cost to some organizations in dire need.

A little later, he re-visited Sindhupalchowk through SEBS. With the aim of reaching out and providing some aid to all the houses in Sindhupalchowk, he and other SEBSers set out on their journey to Sindhupalchowk with materials like tarpaulins and sacks of rice in three trucks. His main role was to take the trucks safely to the destination and check if all the materials had reached. He shares how, due to some hindrances, they were informed to stop the trucks and halt the relief programme. 'I guess the environment was a bit sensitive, because the political parties were too intrusive,' he says. The political parties demanded that all the support and relief materials be sent through their channel. At that time, he even got a call to stop the trucks from reaching there because the environment was not very conducive. After some time, the condition was less severe and he continued.

Sudeep is the country director at Wide Open Vistas (WOV). WOV is a non-profit organization dedicated to support the educational and health needs of children in Nepal. It conducts programmes like Youth Scholars Program for underprivileged children, whereby they get financial support for their tuition fees. With the motive of building and nurturing self-confidence and self-efficacy among young girls, it

conducts another major programme namely 'Girls in Action' to empower school girls. Through this programme, Sudeep and his team offers hikes and trail running trainings to interested girls. The girls are also encouraged to participate in the local 5K and 10K races. WOV also provides awareness on cleanliness, menstrual as well as reproductive health to girls. One of the co-founders of WOV reported that Hewa VDC of Solukhumbu was still in too much grief after the April 25 earthquake. So, the team from WOV including Sudeep went to distribute relief materials to the needy. They collected money and bought relief materials. They were able to collect 115 tarpaulins. Then, they hired a jeep and went to Phaplu. After that, they walked for a day and reached Hewa. 'And thankfully, we'd got mules to carry the materials!' he exclaims. Also, WOV with the help of Himalayan Map House and other donations helped with more than 300 bamboo structures in Sisneri Village in Nuwakot. Sudeep was the representative from WOV in this project.

'It's all about communication.' He adds. 'Our friend's hometown was near to Hewa and so, it was comparatively easy and we were able to offer help at the right time.' Sudeep states how his friends and family were always there to support him in his endeavours. Even in the relief programmes, he got a lot of help and support. His sister and his friend Siddharth collected some money with their individual effort. With that money, Sudeep bought around 150-200 tarpaulin and then, headed to Manthali, Ramechhap. Since he did not have that close network with people in



Ramechhap, he handed over the materials to the Municipality so that they can effectively assess the needs and distribute it fairly to the needy than he could.

896 'C' Sudeep feels grateful to the BNKS community for it has linked him with one of the strongest alumni networks. He smiles as he recalls his bittersweet memories during his first few days at BNKS. 'Although I stayed in hostel before coming to BNKS, the culture and the working environment here was a lot different. It took me awhile to get accustomed but now, I am grateful that I had a lifetime experience at BNKS.'

He states, 'The biggest asset of BNKS is the level of exposure it gives you.' According to him, when you hear about your seniors getting into different colleges and universities,

you are convinced that your turn is soon to come. So, there is an environment where you get to know how to apply or you get at least the basic knowledge.

Reminiscing his school days, he claims that every day spent in BNKS was a memorable experience. All of us can relate very well when he says that BNKS has taught us to appreciate the fast food that we eat outside. However, he is thoughtful enough to mention his favourite meals. He says, 'Breakfast was the best. Chicken days are obviously the best too.'

To all the juniors in BNKS, 896 'C' Sudeep urges to explore the opportunities BNKS has to provide, while they can. He also advises them to get out of their comfort zones and socialize with people and learn new things. ■

Where there's a will, there's a way

-7177 'D' SHREETI →

They say, circumstances cannot prevent you from achieving anything you strive for if you are determined. Although far away from his land, he tried every possible way to help his nation at the time of sorrow. Yangmali Sabadev Rai is a social entrepreneur and a businessman. Above all, he is a fellow BNKS graduate. Starting his journey at BNKS from grade 4, 021 'C' Yangmali is really grateful to the 8 year-long finest moments of his life.

Yangmali is currently involved with Paths Education- an educational hub that not only creates opportunities for students, but also provides them with a platform where they get the help they need to realize their potential. He is also the founder of the Yang Ward Foundation (YWF). Yang-Ward Foundation is a US-based nonprofit organization that seeks to empower underprivileged single women in Nepal by engaging them in revenue-generating activities such as cash crop production, poultry farming and goat farming. The project was first started to help single women in Bhojpur. Currently, there are 15 ongoing projects in four districts- Bhojpur, Dolakha,

Ramechhap, and Sindhuli. YWF also works for the betterment of schools in villages. It donated electronic devices and different sports materials to schools in eastern and northern parts of Nepal. It has also donated 5000 books to the local school where 1200 students are benefitting from these books, and now offers 5 scholarships for underprivileged girls.

Recalling the disaster back in 2015, Yangmali shares that he was in London when the quake hit Nepal. He soon came to his home country to help the brothers and sisters who were in immense grief. Initially, through his software company, he and his partner donated money to OXFAM. Until that point, he had no plans of raising money through YWF, as earthquake relief was not the main agenda of the foundation. However, hearing stories of grief of the Nepalese brothers and sisters, he concluded that the country was in dire need of help. So, the YWF decided to provide immediate aid relief packages to earthquake victims in different parts of Nepal. It was able to raise \$15000 US dollars in a short period of two weeks. Then, the foundation used that fund to serve 266 households and affected families in Dolakha and Gorkha. The volunteers from his



foundation also went to Sindhupalchowk and Kavrepalanchowk for the relief work. Majority of the volunteers were Nepalese. 'With the fund that had been raised online, we bought some clothes, mats and tarpaulins. Then our volunteers reserved a bus and went to those places', he says. Rajani Maharjan and Arun Khatri from YWF made several trips to Sindhupalchowk and Dolakha, while Madan Ghimire was engaged in relief programme in Gorkha. Although Yangmali himself could not go to the affected areas every single time, he advised the volunteers to gather all the information about the fund needed and then, helped them by sending the fund and relief packages. Currently Yang-Ward Foundation has implemented 5 different goat farming projects in the northern part of Nepal which is also one of the regions hardest hit by recent earthquakes.

Yangmali feels lucky to have been successful in reaching out to the affected families in due time. When asked about any hurdles he and his team possibly faced during the trip, he says, 'We did hear a lot about materials getting stolen. However, we were lucky enough to reach our destinations with proper safety of the materials.' When they went to Dolakha, one of their volunteers was originally from there. So, he knew people there and they could directly connect with the locals.

Yangmali realized that raising money through a website would cost a huge fee to the user. To use their platform for fundraising, websites like Indigo and Gofunding charged a huge service fee. So, he founded a company called Fundprovo



where people could raise money at a minimal service fee. His intention was to create a platform where people could raise money for a genuine purpose, without having to pay shocking bills. 'Whatever amount of money is raised, all of it must go for the cause', he believes. He joyfully states that there were surprisingly many users than he actually expected. People raised about 15-20 thousand US dollars for the earthquake contribution.

To juniors and fresh graduates of BNKS, Yangmali suggests that going overseas does not guarantee success. One must be prepared to work hard. At times, even after several attempts, one doesn't succeed. That does not mean they are a failure. 'Good things take time', he says. 'When people doubt your ability, use that as an energy. An energy that could motivate you to achieve all the success that you desire', he says. He advises all the juniors to reach out to the BNKS alumni and not to hesitate to ask for help. He also suggests to make the best possible use of what BNKS has to give.

A graduate with immense love and respect for his alma mater, o21 'C' Yangmali shares that he has been hearing students complaining about BNKS. He has been trying his best to convince them that they would appreciate their alma mater later in their lives. 'It prepares you really well for real-life circumstances', he says. He further adds that the education that BNKS provides is incomparable. While he recalls how he hated arts and music in his school days, he now realizes the importance of vocational and recreational activities in a student's life. When he casts his mind back to his schools days, everything to him seems as a WOW moment. 9 years since he left BNKS, but even today, when he hears the word Budhanilkantha, he gets reminded of all the fond memories. Asar 15 was his favourite. He says, 'I don't think there is any other place that nurtures this special student-teacher interpersonal relationship.' He is grateful to have been a part of the BNKS family. 'Had I not studied there, I would not have been where I am today', he concludes. ■

School Rebuilding: SEBS' Reconstruction Project

-7177 'D' SHREETI →

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Society of Ex- Budhanilkantha Students (SEBS) has been well known for the solidarity and unity among its members. After the relief programmes post the April 25 disaster, the remaining fund was planned to be utilized for a school reconstruction project. SEBSers from different batches came together to offer their help and support.

KOMAL KARKI: TEAM LEADER

A civil engineer by profession, 132 'A' Komal is truly a leader. His confidence is reflected in his gutsy voice as he speaks. While working for the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), he is still driven by the culture of giving back to the society, which his alma mater had instilled in him long ago.



1. COULD YOU TELL US HOW THE IDEA OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT CAME UP?

After the earthquake, SEBS did major earthquake relief programmes to help affected families in different parts of Nepal. When the planned relief programmes were over, SEBS still had some funds remaining. Hence, to make good use of the available funds, the SEBS Executive Committee decided

to use it for educational purposes. Then, it was decided to be used for a school reconstruction project. Soon a Reconstruction Committee was formed and I was entrusted with the responsibility to lead the SEBS Reconstruction Project.

2. DID YOU SET ANY TARGETS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT?

We had the funds sufficient to reconstruct a school and so, we started. However, we anticipated that if the project was conducted successfully, there was also a possibility that we could get more support with funds and volunteers for reconstructing more number of schools. For the time being, we have aimed to reconstruct only one school.

3. DURING THE SCHOOL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME, WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES IN DECIDING WHICH SCHOOL TO REBUILD? ON WHAT BASIS DID YOU SELECT A PARTICULAR SCHOOL FOR RECONSTRUCTION?

School buildings suffered major damages due to the earthquake and its aftershocks. Nepal Government formulated a very strict policy that made it difficult for any non- government organization to carry-out school reconstruction activities. As several national and international

organizations including the government were involved in reconstruction of the school buildings, it was a challenge to select an appropriate school for reconstruction. The government had its own plans for reconstruction of the damaged school buildings through the use of its own resources and with the support from major donors. Government also introduced new building bylaws and standards to ensure seismic resilient school buildings. Several available alternatives were discussed and finally, we selected Shree Devi Primary School in Bhaktapur for reconstruction.

4. WE HEARD THAT THE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE DONE IN A DIFFERENT SCHOOL INITIALLY, BUT IT WAS LEFT IN LIMBO. WHAT MADE YOU DO SO?

Kanpur School in Kavre was the first choice of SEBS for reconstruction. The selection was based on the extensive damages caused by the earthquake. The school was being managed with a temporary arrangement in the open space with hardly any facilities. Based on the dire needs of the school and request from the local community, SEBS decided to take up this school for reconstruction. All initial preparations including site survey and concept

designs were completed. However, as the reconstruction committee was initiating the formal approval process from the government, we learnt that the same school was also selected to be reconstructed by the government with the support from the Government of India. It was unfortunate that the Kanpur School Management Committee had never shared this information with the SEBS. Once this information was confirmed with the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, it was decided to find a suitable alternative. The reconstruction committee, in coordination with District Education Offices in Kavre, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur evaluated several potential options. The committee also reached out to Teach for Nepal and Child Reach Nepal for their advice. Finally, after several visits and discussions with the School Management Committee, SEBS-Reconstruction Committee decided to select Shree Devi Primary School in Bhaktapur district.

5. WHAT WERE THE REACTIONS OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE AND STUDENTS REGARDING THE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT?

Instead of doing everything from our side, we included the locals in the reconstruction too. On doing so, we believe that they would have a sense of possession for the school and would take proper care of it in the years to come. They have agreed to complete the dismantling of the damaged buildings and clear the site for construction by themselves. So far, they have been cooperative.

6. WHAT IS THE PROGRESS AND CURRENT UPDATES ON THE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT OF SEBS?

The SEBS-Reconstruction Project team has completed all the legal requirements and has obtained approval from the relevant government entities for reconstruction. A Memorandum of Understanding has already been signed. The school design is approved and ready for construction. As per the understanding with the School Management Committee, they will complete the dismantling of the damaged school building and do the leveling of the construction site. Once these activities are completed, construction of the new building will be started soon. Considering the ongoing monsoon and festival season, the construction activities will start immediately after Tihar. The estimated cost of construction is USD 100,000.

7. ANY WORDS OF ADVICE YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE TO CURRENT STUDENTS OR FRESH GRADUATES OF BNKS?

While deciding on your future career and subjects, listen to the advice from your teachers, parents, friends and your relatives, but decide based on your own judgment and interests. Listen to your heart and decide, rather than to please others. You will succeed only when you have feeling for what you really want to do in your life. No career is less important than other. You can be happy and successful only when you do what you enjoy doing. ■

BHARAT NEPALI: PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

'My journey in BNKS has been a great opportunity to re-define myself', says 201 'D' Bharat. He is a fellow Budha graduate whose journey in BNKS started in 2003 when he entered the gates of the school in grade 4. He is the project co-ordinator for the SEBS Reconstruction Project.

1. COULD YOU SHARE YOUR PERSONAL EARTHQUAKE EXPERIENCE WITH OUR READERS?

That day, I and my friends were in a cinema hall for a movie. It was about to start. Suddenly, the lights started swaying and there was hustle and bustle all around. Everyone was helping each other get out of the hall. After much trouble, we finally came out and headed to an open space. We stayed under the open sky for 3 days in an open ground in Naxal. A club managed the shelter for everyone there. Next day, we negotiated with a restaurant nearby who wanted to help. We cooked ourselves and served the community people.

2. HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE SEBS RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME?

Bishwas dai, the former project coordinator, had to go abroad for his studies. So, the place was vacant. I really wanted to be involved for such a good cause. So, I reached out to SEBS, and became a part of the project.



3. WHAT ROLES DID YOU HAVE AS A PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR?

My role was basically to facilitate the project. I had to go for field visits and do reporting. I also worked with the legal requirements to make the project approved by government entities. I needed to make an efficient communication between the stakeholders- SEBS, SEBS Reconstruction Project Committee and the School Representatives. I coordinated the project by fulfilling the tasks the Project Committee had assigned me.

4. ANY CHALLENGES YOU FACED AS A PROJECT COORDINATOR DURING THE PROJECT?

The major disappointment was when we came to know that the Kanpur School was already under the reconstruction programme of the Government with the support from India. Then, we were hassled about what to do next. However, with constant support from SEBS, we soon selected another school in Bhaktapur. ■

A different approach to collecting funds by Bijay Gurung

-6161D MONILA →

8

18B Bijay Gurung was one of the SEBSers who used his skills in collecting funds in creative ways rather than directly asking for donations. One of the makers of the famous game 'Angry Birds', his story makes us realize that all of us can help in the time of need if we learn to correctly utilize our potentials.

1. HOW DID YOU START YOUR GAMING CAREER?

After my A Levels, I went to the UK to study International Baccalaureate under the Pestalozzi Scholarship scheme. Then, I moved to Finland for University in 1999. Since then, I have been working in the mobile gaming industry for the past 12 years and in the Rovio Entertainment for the past 6 years.

2. FROM WHERE DID YOU GET THE IDEA OF USING YOUR GAMES TO COLLECT FUNDS?

I was on a business trip to the US. When I heard about the earthquake, I was shaken by the destruction. I contemplated on a few ideas to approach our top management for help. After my return, I got a green light to form a working group to come up with an idea to make this happen in a short time. Together with my colleagues, our goal was to create

awareness globally among millions of 'Angry Birds' players through our games and to collect sizable funds. Within a week, we managed to get Red Cross International on board as our global partner and designed and created a dedicated week-long game tournament called 'Help Nepal Tournament'.

3. WAS THE GAME ALREADY MADE BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE OR DID YOU MAKE IT AFTER?

The game was already there with millions of players using it globally. The game has a weekly tournament cycle in which we created a special tournament dedicated to this cause.

4. HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO PUT YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION?

From the idea phase to the launch, it took 2 weeks. My colleagues were super motivated to put their hearts and minds into this campaign. A lot of coordination was needed with the Red Cross International, in terms of integrating their brand and a fund collection mechanism.

5. CAN YOU BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR GAME?

'Angry Birds Friends' is a social game that is available on Facebook and mobile phones. There is a weekly tournament

where you compete against your friends or anyone globally. Based on your progress and achievement, you move up various levels. At the end of the week, you will rank against your friends and also against other players globally. Angry Birds Friends is a unique game where we have partnered with many charitable organizations for a positive cause.

6. HOW WAS THE FUND COLLECTED?

Our management decided to donate the majority of the fund that we earned through the game. The second part of the fund was raised via Rovio employees. I was touched by the number of donations given by my kind colleagues. The third part of the fund was collected via the game with the Red Cross International's donation program.

7. HOW MUCH OF FUNDS DID YOU COLLECT?

Altogether, we collected about 120000 Euros which in today's exchange rate amounts to over 141 lakhs.

8. HOW WAS THIS FUND UTILIZED?

Together with the Finnish Red Cross, the money was given to Nepal Red Cross, who then used it to fund a winter drive that benefitted over 1000 homes. Unfortunately, I didn't have the time



to visit any of the places, but I was well informed with a report of the contribution that was made through funding by SEBS and also by Red Cross Nepal.

9. DID YOU COLLABORATE WITH SEBS/ SEBS-NA IN YOUR WORK?

I separately ran a private campaign to collect funds from my friends and family to contribute to SEBS winter drive. I also encouraged few of my business relations to channel their charity fund to SEBS.

10. HOW MUCH OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRACTION DO YOU THINK YOUR GAME WAS ABLE TO MAKE IN THE MINDS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS DURING THE TIME OF THE EARTHQUAKE?

Children, adults, mothers, and fathers play our games. Not everyone is aware of what's happening in the world. Sometimes, games can be a perfect medium for delivering a message. Our goal was not only to raise funds but to create awareness of the natural calamities that can be so disastrous. This kind of unfortunate events can have an adverse impact on children, as well as adults.

11. WHY DID YOU THINK THIS WAS THE BEST WAY IN WHICH YOU COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIETY?

I was fortunate enough to work in a place where the message can be passed to millions of people through a game. I was also fortunate to have an extremely supportive management team and colleagues, who went an extra mile to make this project happen. The Red Cross

International was awed by the speed of this project. They embraced this as an exemplary case to share with other corporate partners.

12. HAVE YOU BEEN CONNECTED TO SEBS SINCE LONG?

Yes. I have been connected pretty much since I left Budhanilkantha School in 1997.

13. HOW EFFECTIVE DO YOU THINK SEBS WAS IN ITS WORK?

As far as I know, SEBS was one of the most recognizable organizations who worked tirelessly in their relief efforts. It was not one-time work, but a continuous arduous effort.

16. ANY FAVOURITE BNKS MEMORY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

So many to share. One of my favourite memories is playing football in garden pitch all afternoon and then, jumping into the swimming pool.

17. ANY WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CURRENT STUDENTS AT BNKS?

We are such a fortunate bunch. SEBSers are probably one of the most successful alumni in the world. This is not a coincidence. We all have this amazing opportunity to do great- in our career, in our community, and for our country. You just have to keep working hard, and in no time you'll be an inspiration to the next generation. ■

'Bibeksheel Thoughts, Bibeksheel Actions'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

C

Chairperson of Bibeksheel Nepali political party, 552B Ujwal, is a rising figure in the Nepali political scenario. But he is also so much more. He is an IT developer, an entrepreneur, an artist. Equally important, he is a BudhaGraduate. And he truly carries the spirit of being one. At one edge of the conference table inside the office of Bibeksheel Nepali, we sat together as I saw this very flaming spirit reflected in his personal values, political views and his talk on why every BNKS student must invest in Nepal.

Q. IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN ONE OR TWO SENTENCES, HOW WOULD YOU DO IT?

UT. By background, I am an IT entrepreneur but I also have a small coffee farm in Syangja. My dream is to transform my village into a coffee tourism village and retire there.

Q. WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG, WHAT WERE YOUR DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

UT. If you look at my senior year profile in Bhanjyang, you'll see that I wrote I wanted to be an Astrophysicist. But in college, I took many interesting courses and slowly, I felt that although Astrophysics was (and still is) a big passion of mine, I am also an artist. I majored in Multimedia Arts/Design.

Q. WHAT DID YOU DO PRIOR TO BIBEK SHEEL NEPALI?

UT. A year after completing my degree in the US, I returned to Nepal because I felt the need to explore myself back home. I landed home with nothing but two luggage that had a big computer in one and a CPU in the other. With that computer, in my room, I started my IT business called Digital Max Solutions (DMS). Working in DMS, I later began realizing the need for more confident Nepali youths starting their own businesses and creating opportunities for others. So, I started a network called Entrepreneurs for Nepal (E4N). It has more than 56,000 members on Facebook right now. The network is helping people create opportunities to make Nepal a sovereign, self-reliant nation.

Q. WHY DID YOU BRING BACK ONLY YOUR COMPUTER AND NOTHING ELSE?

UT. It was the only thing I really cared about. I was in such a state of mind that I perceived the computer as an extension of myself. It allowed me to express myself, to create magical things.

Q. YOUR LOGO OF BIBEK SHEEL NEPALI IS THAT OF A SIMPLE SMILEY FACE. WHAT KIND OF SIGNIFICANCE DOES IT HOLD FOR YOU AND FOR BIBEK SHEEL NEPALI?

UT. We felt that our logo should represent Nepal in its truest diversity while signifying hope and prosperity. We wanted something that could be used by anyone from the rich to the poor and something everyone

understands, be it a 90-year-old woman or a 6-month-old baby. That symbol is what we want every Nepali to be like.

Q. HOW HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH SEBS BEEN?

UT. Back in 2001-2002, I volunteered for SEBS for about 18 months after I came back to Nepal. We managed to revamp the NSP (Nationwide Scholarship Program) so that more students in the villages could get scholarships, especially girls. I also helped start networking in SEBS. Now, this network has helped me rekindle my friendships with people I hadn't met for 20 years.

Q. HOW DID BIBEK SHEEL NEPALI HELP DURING THE EARTHQUAKE?

UT. On the day of the quake, 30 minutes after disaster struck, I went to Teaching Hospital. Our team managed the hospital arena so that patients could systematically get treated. In a day or two, we built our Earthquake Immediate Response Task Force. We established an earthquake relief center to communicate and compile information for donations, resources, and volunteers. We dispatched multiple medical teams in the valley and to Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, Gorkha, Rasuwa, and Dhading. We used helicopters to reach places that didn't have proper road access. We worked with over 16 organizations and with local people in every district. We managed

to reach 17 districts and had over 1500 volunteers. In Bibeksheel Nepali, we built a meritocratic system where anyone, member or not, could work with us and lead their own campaigns.

Q. DID YOU FACE ANY OPPOSITION/ RESISTANCE DURING YOUR RELIEF CAMPAIGN?

UT. With our practice of leadership which integrated values of humility, empathy, transparency, and integrity, I feel like our members were better equipped to deal with desperate groups wanting to take credit for our work. Being a political party helps too because you don't get bullied as much by such groups. We created a lot of partnerships, worked with the locals and also notified the security agencies while we worked. Also, our members always worked in large teams.

Q. THE GOVERNMENT EVEN CREATED A SHORTAGE OF CASH FLOW. SO HOW DID YOU MANAGE THE FUNDS?

UT. As a Nepali political party, we couldn't get help from a foreign organization and people were also quite reluctant to offer financial help to political parties. But our party does have a large network outside the country which was immensely helpful. Mostly, we received help in the form of medicines, supplies, and tents.

Q. APART FROM BIBEK SHEEL NEPALI, DID YOU ALSO COLLABORATE WITH SEBS FOR THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF? COULD YOU ELABORATE MORE ON THAT?

A. We worked independently but very interdependently. For instance, once as we were bringing tarpaulin from the far west, we got a phone call from SEBS regarding the need for some tarpaulin. They were at the Chepang basti and so, on the way we dropped it there because of the mutual trust that we had. We collaborated with

BNKS too. Another time, I remember Khulal sir contacted us about tents needed in Dandagaun and in certain orphanages; we provided whatever help we could. In this manner, SEBS, SEBS-NA, BNKS and Bibeksheel Nepali worked in good faith.

Q. YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A LOT OF THINGS. COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THAT AND HOW THIS EXPERIENCE HELPS YOU LEAD AS A BIBEK SHEEL NEPALI?

UT. Because of my experience in DMS, we are probably the most technology-savvy political party in Nepal. Also, from E4N, I learned the need for our whole society to be entrepreneurial in nature. After a decade or two, I will no longer be in politics but I hope to still be helping build entrepreneurs and IT industries in Nepal. I never studied politics, and most people in Bibeksheel Nepali haven't either, but we have all learned by doing. Politics is not as much about ideology as it is about delivery. In my past, with my products and service, I had to satisfy my customers. Politics is about satisfying your citizens.

Q. COULD YOU ELABORATE A BIT ABOUT YOUR COFFEE COOPERATIVE?

UT. Shangrila Coffee is a small coffee cooperative of farmers who grow organic coffee in Syangja. We are trying to transform the whole village into a coffee tourism village with homestays so that the original houses and the original village fabric is protected. We hope to build a brand too so that people from far away come to experience the coffee and the village lifestyle.

Q. HOW DOES THAT LINK UP TO YOUR WORK HERE IN BIBEK SHEEL NEPALI?

UT. You see, 4 out of every 5 Nepalese people live in rural areas. So, in that context, every political leader should know how to build both a village and a city. Right now,



Bibeksheel Nepali is trying to transform Kathmandu into one of the most beautiful cities in the world. But, we also want to build what a prototype village in Nepal looks like.

Q. HOW DO YOU THINK BNKS SHAPED YOU?

UT. Bibeksheel Nepali carries a lot of essence of our past and my past is BNKS. The values of integrity, excellence, and humility that I carry now, initially developed since my time at BNKS. Also, it gave me a safe environment to experience how beautiful our diversity is, and how to tackle it in the best way possible. I feel privileged to have been a part of something so wonderful.

Q. I READ THAT YOU LIKE TO THINK ABOUT THIS A LOT. SO, I NEED TO ASK THIS: WHAT DO YOU THINK THE WORLD WILL LOOK LIKE 50 YEARS FROM NOW?

UT. Nepal is going to be between the two richest countries of the world. So, Nepal is going to be the center of the world. People from all over the world will want to live

here and experience this environment, this diversity and this wonderful chaos that we have here. The future is in Nepal.

Q. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO CURRENT BNKS STUDENTS AND RECENT BNKS GRADUATES?

UT. Students should learn how to handle their finances wisely. Also, learn how to start things on their own (be entrepreneurial). As BNKS students/ graduates, we have a bigger obligation towards the Nepalese society because they invested in us the most. BNKS is a school built with contributions from the public. It is a utopia that provided us all the knowledge and skills we need so that we could collectively lead this country in various disciplines. So, are we not going to lead our tole, our gaun, our sahar? Nepal invested the most in us. What are we going to do about it? ■

A doctor's perspective on the aftermath of earthquake

-6161D MONILA →

5

Dr. Bishwo Raj Dawadi rushed to Teaching Hospital as soon as he managed to bring his family on safe grounds. Even though he himself suffered property loss due to the collapse of a nearby wall, his sense of duty took him to the hospital to work in saving the lives of others. As a member of NMC (Nepal Medical Council), he understood that only treatment for the injured was not enough, thus, he focused more on managing transportation for victims to hospitals, providing water and medicines for them and assisting in finding lost people.

After the patients started streaming in high numbers, he, with the help of his batch mate Ujwal Thapa, the founder of Bibeksheel Nepali, immediately went to help in the hospitals for smooth management of the patients. With the excellent planning and well preparedness of Bibeksheel Nepali, they managed to register the names of the patients so that they could be reunited with family members, gave them monetary support for medicines personally, and also teach volunteers into giving first aid to people who were not very seriously injured.



Even in such a rush hour for medical personals, and in fear of their own lives and that of their family members, proper treatment was provided to victims. "This is due to the emergency action plan that each hospital has," says Dr. Dawadi. "Each major hospital has an action plan with coding: black, red, green and yellow where patients are categorized and treated accordingly. The hospitals stay ready for such situations and the doctors are trained for it, medicines and all necessary equipment are stored accordingly." Even though not all emergency action plan

operated well due to the damage in hospitals themselves, the majority of them were said to be successful in their mission.

After the first few days, Bishwo Raj Dawadi while working with NMC planned on sending basic relief materials to major affected areas like Lamjung, Kavre etc. He and a group of 20 volunteers went to these places to provide basic relief materials like tents, food, and blankets and to aware people of sanitation as an epidemic was predicted to cause even more health problems. Special consideration was given to pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers and were provided with lanterns and oil to keep themselves warm. They were involved with this project for nearly about 2 months.

Even though Kathmandu is more developed than other places as the capital of Nepal, it had the third highest death rate after Sindhupalchowk and Kavre. He states that this was due to overpopulation, weak and old building structures and most importantly, inaccessible roads. Only after the earthquake he says he realized that roads were the starting point of development, whether it was to transport

relief materials or to rescue people. Maximum people had died just because cranes and ambulances were not able to reach them through the narrow, almost inaccessible roads. Understanding such situation, he states that it is better to have a small houses than small road.

He further says that panic was another important cause that contributed to the high death rates and the main reason for it was the lack of preparedness. 'Even after knowing that we live in an earthquake zone, we were not prepared with adequate measures', he says. As earthquake is never completely predictable, he suggests a 'Go back Kit' which includes basic medicines, torch lights, radio, tent, emergency food and water purifier must be ready in every household. To control panic attacks, he suggests that awareness about such situations must be given from school level whereas earthquake drills, fire drills etc must be made compulsory in all institutions. Again, the drills must be according to the situation of the country as we cannot apply the same precaution measures which are applied in countries like Japan due to the geographical and structural differences. Houses in Japan are a lot lighter as they are made of light materials in comparison to Nepal, due to which the usual duck and hide technique works in favour for them. A thorough study must be done and then the safety precautions should be taught in accordance to the situation.

Another major problem was sanitation, as stated earlier. While sleeping in crowded areas, and open spaces one must be always careful of his eating habits as diseases such as fever, diarrhoea can easily be transmitted. He also suggests that one should always keep a stack of basic medicines ready for emergencies as any sort of disaster can immediately cause shortage of them.

Dr. Dawadi has been an active member of SEBS. He also started SEBS-MEDICOS, a platform for medical personnel and students within SEBS, which helps SEBSers in gaining information and help from their experienced seniors. 'This program will be restarted soon,' he says. He also stresses that the most important lesson that Budhanilkantha School teaches you is adaptability. 'Being able to mould in any situation without hesitation and making the best use of it is one of the most important life lesson that BNKS has taught us,' he concludes. ■



Reviewing the logistic department of SEBS

-6161D MONILA →

7 *33A Mangesh Thapa was preparing to go to the UK that very evening the earthquake struck our land. Cancelling all his plans, he and his team in Buddha Air decided to do something for the nation. With Birendra Babadur Basnet and few other SEBSers in Buddha Air, they decided that SEBS was the best platform through which they could help people in need.*

First of all, they started with collection of funds. With Buddha Air's initiative, a huge amount was collected for doing something at national level. The planning started only a few days after the earthquake. Using the network of SEBS, money was collected batch wise and help was also asked with the vendors that supplied materials to Buddha Air. It was Buddha Air that pledged the amount of NPR 5 million which was the first stone in the path that was being paved by SEBS. With enough monetary support, the relief work started immediately. Mangesh Thapa oversaw the logistics in the whole project. In Buddha Air's hanger, 733A Mangesh overlooked the supply and distribution of the materials that came for SEBS. While the listing and ordering of materials was done by Sneedha Mainali, Mangesh Thapa coordinated the storage and transport to different places and Rabindra Maharjan oversaw their distribution in the field.

'We had two destinations, Biratnagar and Bhadrapur', he says. 'When the aircraft comes back empty, we utilized the free space and

brought the relief materials that were ordered by SEBS. Whatever space was empty in the aircraft we filled it with tarps.' As everything was brought through aircraft, the materials were available easily and on time. Then, all the materials were stored in the hanger of Buddha Air at the Tribhuvan International Airport. This gave security to the relief materials as it was inaccessible to a lot of people. With the help of 3 to 4 SEBS volunteers and the Buddha Air staff, the logistics was handled perfectly. The people kept a record of everything that came and went, some of them writing the names of the materials and the people who they were sent from, while others overlooking the transportation and distribution of the materials from the hanger. Some of Buddha Air's own transport was used in delivering these materials. Even despite lot of political pressure, they were able to smoothly run the operation.

The management was done in such a way that the relief materials arrived throughout the day almost filling the hanger by the evening and were distributed early in the morning rendering the hanger completely empty. Money was not handled by them but rather shifted directly to banks. Rice was directly brought from the dealers and sent to the required areas in order to avoid overstuffing in the hanger. 'While doing any kind of social work we have to make sure that there is some quality in it', he further states, 'All the materials that was brought to us were checked for their quality and then distributed.'

The initial plan by Buddha Air was smaller than what came out to be in reality. 'We never thought things could go in such a large scale', he exclaims. 'Our initial plan was to relieve people in the valley, mostly around BNKS area as per the request of the school, but one thing led to another and by the end of it we were handling really big projects.' When asked about when they thought of ending the project, he states that they only stopped when they realized that things were starting to get out of their hands. He states, 'When you do such work you have to take liabilities. As a non-profit organization, we had to be very careful to check the sources of the funds that was received, but when the donors start to dictate where the money was to be spent, we backed out.' Furthermore, he says 'I am more or less satisfied with my work, my only guilt was that we could not do as much for our school. BNKS is the base that unites us so it was also our responsibility to do something for it during such times.'

Mangesh Thapa is also one of the past presidents of SEBS. He opened the current SEBS office in Putalisadak. When asked about how to bring the newer batches of SEBSers closer to the older ones, he suggests career counselling sessions which will not only bridge the gap but also be helpful in choosing career paths for the new batches. His favourite BNKS memory was playing football one day before the exams and getting away with it. He suggests that the students in BNKS, rather than establishing libraries, must do something for the long term sustainability of the clubs, money must be saved in banks so that the clubs become self-sustainable rather than depending on donated money. His life lesson from BNKS was the realization that people who participated in sports were found to be much more successful later in life than people who didn't. Thus, he also suggested everyone to utilize the opportunities in BNKS as much as they can. ■



Giving Back to Your Community

-6161D MONILA →

Bishwas Chepang came from the traditional Chepang communities in the North-East of Chitwan. His journey to Budhanilkantha started when the members of the Awareness Club came to visit his school 'Shri Antyodaya Adhibasi Bidyalaya', where they found that children from Chepang community studied there as well. Almost immediately, they proposed to the school management that a student from this community must also be provided with a scholarship to study in BNKS. After that, a few students including him were taken to Hetauda for entrance exams in which Bishwas Chepang won the scholarship.

In school, he wasn't much of an extrovert but the strong sense of responsibility to give back to the community forced him to connect with the SEBSers worldwide and present them with proposals to help the Chepang people. Even before he joined his undergraduate studies, when people only worried about applying to colleges, he first started his social service work. During his gap year, he volunteered in different organizations. Taking morning classes, he used daytime to teach in UCE (Unprivileged Children Educational Program) in Sano Thimi, Bhaktapur. He also went to Pokhara where he



volunteered to work in 'Juvenile Jail' for a UNICEF project.

His first project in the Chepang community was poultry farming; he distributed chicks to the community so that they can take care of it and sell them in markets when they mature. With the help of SEBS, around 40 to 50 thousand was collected for this project. This was done with the vision that, from this small effort, people may be economically stable

in the long run and able to live life a bit easier. He absolutely disliked the way his village was visited by NGO's and INGO's to donate food and clothes because in his view it made them dependent and lazy. Thus, to stop this trend and make them independent he started poultry farming.

As nobody in his village was literate to use computers and technology, he started to find agricultural solutions to his problem and hence, he started pork farming. He

gave the community 20 piglets, some to families and some to schools so that they too can be used as source of income. Unfortunately, not all pigs could make it, but it brought awareness among the people. Realizing the need of electricity in his village, Mr. Chepang again collaborated with SEBS to buy solar lamps. Solar lamps cost Rs.12000 each and had the capacity to light three bulbs and charge a small radio. This ensured that the people in his village could work on nights as well. He has also started one child sponsorship where families sponsor the education of at least one child. Not only this, in order to empower the women in Makwanpur district, he started the 'Sisno' powder project where the women turned the wild plant into powder form and sold them in the markets. This project was very successful as 'Sisno' is a very good medicinal herb. They sold about 30 kilos of this powder. His new project is teaching the people of his village to use solar mill so that they can use it to grind flour and generate more income. This project is being planned with Gham Power Sanstha.

During the earthquake, his immediate response and self initiation of going for relief work merely 3 days after the natural disaster, earned him an award from SEBS-NA. He went to relieve people in Makwanpur, Chitwan, and Dhading with a small team. SEBS-NA trusted him with funds of NPR 2 lakhs from which he bought the basic

materials like rice, daal, tents, beaten rice and medical supplies. In Makwanpur, he relieved 90 families and 99 more families in Chitwan. He went to places which were neglected by others because of their difficult location. For Dhading, he was given relief materials by AAYON sanstha and transportation expenses by SEBS-NA.

He states that the main obstacle was the interference of political parties in his journey where he was constantly asked about his affiliation to any of the parties. He says it was really hard to convince them that he came of his own free will and was not affiliated to any of them. He found that the public response was ambivalent; some people praised him and thanked him for his work while some doubted him for working superficially. But ever the positive person, he states that while doing social work we cannot ever expect everyone to be happy with us. 'Without SEBS, nothing would have worked', says he. Staying in contact with SEBS-NA every day he was able to relay about the situation here and ask for help. He states that after BNKS, he took every step with the help of SEBS which is why he is very thankful for the organization and is always enthusiastic in helping the young SEBSers.

His favourite memory in BNKS is crossing the wall to buy balloons for Holi and getting caught by the then principal himself. He advises everyone to participate in all activities and to expose ourselves to the outer world as well. ■

Acknowledgement to the first person reaching the villages of Sindhupalchowk

-6161D MONILA →

S

amten Lama (372 B) was first to reach the villages of Sindhupalchowk, one of the hardest hit districts by the earthquake. His whole project was based on the relief work for the villagers living there. A team of his volunteers distributed food materials and tents to about 200 families rendered homeless in the village. Even after four days of the earthquake, no government aid or media had arrived in these forgotten villages.

372B Samten quickly mobilized his resources, gathered volunteers and relief materials and took command of the situation. He efficiently delivered his services in Sindhupalchowk and coordinated yet another project for SEBS-NA. He coordinated many additional projects with other organizations and generously donated his personal time and money to help the disaster victims. He and his team of volunteers represented the gold standard in terms of providing relief services to the earthquake victims. Since his health is not in a good condition right now, we wish to see him doing well soon and also wish him all the best for his future. ■

A sneak peek of the material providers from India

-6161D MONILA →

The first thing that hit us really hard after the earthquake was the lack of materials. The 000 batch of BNKS decided to do something in this regard. 083D Nitish Karki was also one of them. Nitish Karki has studied in Bangalore, India for 6 years and is currently living there. It was him and his group of 12 volunteers that made it possible for SEBS to get materials from India.

SEBS was very systematic in its work: SEBS-NA sent the fund, SEBS Nepal sent the list of requirements and SEBS India utilized the fund in buying the materials and sent them to the Nepalese border for SEBS Nepal to pick it up, which was then airlifted by Buddha air to Kathmandu and then sent to the required places.

The materials were transported through the Nepal-India border, which in itself was not an easy task at those given circumstances. The materials were sent via train from Bangalore to Gorakhpur which took about three hours. Then, it was again sent by van or truck to the Sunauli border from where the SEBSers picked up the materials to be sent to Bhairawa for airlifting. This whole process took about three to four days. These consignments

included mostly materials like tents, tarpaulin, food materials, clothes, diapers and special baby foods. The SEBSers collaborated with the company 'Golden Snacks' Bangalore to generate more funds and with another company 'Decathlon' (a French sports equipment company) that donated big tents and jackets, who were convinced with the help of 1066D Joshan. They also collected cash from the local people who also helped them generously. The local people helped the SEBSers from a personal level; medical stores provided them with medicines, general stores provided them food items and the people donated cash, rice, lentils and buckets. Another SEBSer from Kerala was able to mediate in sending a truckload of relief materials like clothes, biscuits, Horlicks etc to them. About 1500 kg of rice was collected and sent by SEBS India.

There were many challenges to overcome while sending the materials. One of the major problems was difficulty in passing the materials from the border. All the consignments had to be recorded before they were sent to Teku for registration and verified by the Chief District Officer (CDO) karyalaya. A lot of SEBSers had to work in order to minimize the time and the procedure required for this. Starting from the high transportation charge to

lengthy verification processes, everything managed to become an obstacle in itself.

The team in India could not function independently as they were not officially registered and the 'RBI (Reserve Bank of India)' was very strict in its procedure. All the funds that came from SEBS-NA needed to be verified, the source of the fund and the place it was going to had to be specified and as SEBS India was not a registered organization, the fund collected would in official terms be regarded as 'personal funds'. This led the RBI to hold the funds from reaching the SEBSers and thus they had to contact SEBS Nepal for verification which in itself took about two to three days. Many companies required a letter of appreciation too, which could not be granted by an unregistered organization for which SEBS-NA was called to help. This caused the overall process to become a bit slower and less effective.

Another problem was the transportation: the train went from Bangalore to Gorakhpur only twice a week, which would further delayed the process. The packaging of the materials was compulsory to guarantee its safety and sometimes the volunteers spent sleepless nights in order to complete the packaging.



The materials were not always handled with care inside the train, so the packaging also demanded utmost care and attention. With that, there was also the fear of theft. The train had to be further checked for space in order to fit the consignments.

The basic required material i.e. tents, were not so freely available in India. He states that tents were made according to the order given by the customers and not more than 5 to 6 tents were made in a week, thus finding tents was another major challenge. On top of those, requirements from Nepal changed every week. Thus, finding the required items, convincing dealers about their relief work, collecting them and sending them in the given short timespan was another major challenge.

Collaborating with 'Golden Snacks', SEBS India hosted an event where the event manager and photographer of 'Golden Snacks - New York' were also present. This was to raise funds and help twenty-five schools in Nepal with \$400 worth of materials each ranging from white boards, colours, colour papers, books, volleyball, football, volleyball nets and other sporting equipment after the earthquake. This was done in order to distract the students from the ongoing aftershocks and encourage them to go to school. The list of the schools was handled by the principal of BNKS Mr. Keshar Khulal himself where a plan was formulated to send the materials to the affected rural areas along with the BNKS students to their home districts. Along with that, reconstruction materials were also collected to be sent to Nepal but unfortunately, because of

the economic blockade that followed the quake, the materials were stopped at the border. The materials required donation taxes and other lengthy procedures which SEBS-NA is still helping to minimize. But only after the Ministry of Education is convinced and all other identifications completed, can the projects be further proceeded. Thus, SEBSers are again coming together to help in the completion of their projects and hopefully with the help of everyone, the reconstruction target will be as successful as the relief was.

During the earthquake relief project, our SEBSers in India faced various challenges unique to their circumstances and surroundings that hindered their noble efforts. As o83D Nitish talked about his experiences, we realized how dire the situations they faced truly were. But what he did also mention in-between was how Budhanilkantha had prepared him to face the world, and that is what our SEBSers from India reflected in this difficult situation. If there is anything to learn from this, then it is that SEBSers have the willpower to persist through all tough times. Through the years, SEBS has prided itself in having a strong network among BNKS alumni that have scattered across the globe. Now, with SEBS India also actively participating and contributing, another part of the world is connected in SEBS, working alongside it with a common cause and a shared value of betterment of our school, our communities and our nation. ■

A new way of reconstruction

-6161D MONILA →

A

fter the earthquake, 097C Sujay Hada understood the need of time and responded to it accordingly. He, along with his group of friends from KUSOM, used their connections, knowledge and funds to not only relieve people, but help them in the long term for rebuilding as well. A path bit different from the traditional method of donating food items, tents and clothes, they modernized their techniques in helping people and created an example of the work that can be done by the youth.

First of all, he and his group of friends raised funds from their relatives and neighbours to send it to the Sankhu and Bhaktapur areas. Using their college as a collection centre, they started to collect even more contributions in both cash and kind using their networks. After a significant amount was collected, they started giving it to the people who were going to the affected areas to relieve them. One of their friend who was a helicopter pilot agreed to dispatch the materials to other places, free of cost.

But this was all short term and they wanted to do something that would create an impact. So they all decided to sit and plan something big. One of their teachers





belonged to a VDC in Kavre district named Kolanti which was completely destroyed. Thus, they planned to help rebuild this village. Using the Indigo website, they raised about \$5000 and using Shutter Corp. photography, they raised even more funds by charging people for the photos that had strong messages with them. During the annual eco-carnival in their college, they collected warm clothes for winters and collected books for the rebuilding of a library in the KUSOM Annual Fest.

After the fund was collected, some of them went for site visit and to plan the village reconstruction accordingly. One of their friends, who was an engineer came up with the plan of building temporary tin houses. A new idea in itself, it proved to be the most economical and sustainable idea. As everybody was searching for tents, finding tin was not very hard. The tin structure was easy to build, could sustain heavy winds and rainfall and could keep the residents comparatively warmer. Thus, this was voted as the best value for their money.

Then, a 5-hour long and dangerous journey was taken to the village of Kolanti. A group of 20 students with a few teachers left for the village. In the village, they constructed 20 temporary shelters made of folding tin. While making them, they made sure to use the help of local people. First, teaching them and later, supervising their actions. This was done so that maximum public support could be taken and the work could be done sooner.

This also ensured that the people knew how to rebuild these structures in case of damage. One house at least took 4 pata of tin which were bent and nailed together to form a shelter with compartments as well.

The only school in the village was destroyed completely too and the students were studying in the open on cold grounds. So, another project was started to remake the school. Instead of a temporary structure, a permanent concrete structure using 500 sacks of cements was created for the school. 'Shree Janata Madhyamik Bidyalaya' was then given the books and other study materials collected beforehand. Right now, the school functions properly without the risk of falling apart. Thus, a whole village of Kolanti was rebuilt by the will and combined efforts of 20 students.

097C Sujay believes in not stereotyping people because everyone is born equal. His favourite memory of BNKS is playing games in the corridors of Nilgiri and Gaurishankar house. He says that the most important thing he learned in BNKS is to judge people by their talent rather than their identities. His suggestion to his juniors is to enjoy every moment in BNKS. Furthermore, he also suggests his juniors to try to explore what their interests truly lie in, as BNKS is the perfect platform for it, and later apply it to their paths in order to stay happy and successful. ■

The View of a Problem Solver

-6161D MONILA →

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84C Sumana Shrestha is more than a social activist, she is a problem solver. During the earthquake period and even after it, she has been actively working to change things for the betterment of the society. With projects like Medication for Nepal(MFN) and Carpool Nepal, she has established in the society that things work if we will it to. In June, MFN was one of the eight participants from Nepal at the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Summit hosted by President Barack Obama. The president gave the organization a shout-out in his speech. Shrestha also received praise from Daymond John, FUBU founder and 2015 Presidential Ambassador for Global Entrepreneurship in a blog published on the White House website.

Q.WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO RETURN TO NEPAL?

A. I was in the US during the time of the earthquake and only came back after a month. My company 'Boston Consulting Group' sent me to support a UN organization 'World Food Program' where I worked for 3 months. I only started my work as an activist once I left my company. Actually, it was the earthquake

that motivated me to return to Nepal. Even when I was in the US, I took time off to send tents over to Sindhupalchowk. I collaborated with my batch mate Utsav Shakya, befriended a guy whose father lived in Janakpur and could cross the border to bring tents. I also raised funds and sent it over to Utsav who distributed them in Sindhupalchowk.

Q.WERE YOU HELPING OUT SEBS-NA DURING THE TIME OF EARTHQUAKE?

A. There was DC Gorkhali group whom I was supporting. Then, I was trying to convince my company to give free help to Nepal. Basically, I was not directly SEBS but supporting everybody who was trying to do something for Nepal.

Q.AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE, THE REACTION OF SEBS WAS VERY QUICK, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE REASON FOR SO

A. If you think about Budhanilkantha, it picks the best and the brightest it can. These are people who have stayed in a hostel with each other for years so the connection is a lot deeper. We had friends from the affected areas as well, so the districts don't simply become places but rather homes of your friends. Thus, the need to help becomes a lot stronger. Our alumni are well established and

can coordinate really well. We have the numbers and resources to do anything we set our mind to.

Q.HOW DID YOU GATHER THE RELIEF FUND IN SUCH A LIMITED TIME?

A. I have been in the US for a long time. People knew that there was an earthquake in Nepal. When they heard that I was trying to help, it wasn't that hard to collect funds. In fact, random people were sending me cash.

Q. FROM WHEN WERE YOU INVOLVED IN SOCIAL WORK?

A. I don't see my work as social work. Rather, it is something I do to solve a problem. It's more like I see something I don't like and I am driven to fix it or do it differently. It is something I have always tried to do. I did intern in my sophomore year in 2005 in a children's home and I have always managed to come back to Nepal to keep in touch with the things going on here. So, from that perspective, yes I have been doing this for quite a long time.

Q.WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES A GOOD LEADER IN STRESSFUL TIMES?

A. Being true to yourself and your work makes a great leader because you know you want to genuinely help and not just

for the glory of it. We are just driven a lot more if we remain honest to ourselves. It was much more stressful to be in the USA, not knowing what's happening in Nepal than to stay here and be stressed about things left to do.

Q. MANY PEOPLE STOPPED THEIR RELIEF WORK FEW MONTHS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE, WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO GO ON?

A. Charity work is not sustainable and don't be surprised if it stops. We should never make money out of someone's misery. Thus, I made sure that I was always in a position where I don't have to rely on the donation money. A few months after the earthquake, the economic blockade happened which was a different hurdle in itself. During the blockade, there was a problem I saw that needed to be solved, and things that needed to be changed. So, I continued my work.

Q. WHAT WERE SOME OF YOUR COMMON OBSTACLES?

A. Finding people who will continue to work despite difficult situations was an obstacle in itself. I find that people are very quick to give up as soon as the going gets hard. I feel that everyone needs to have that BNKS trait of coping well with any kind of situation. Like in school where we had to focus on our grade tests, cultural programs, sports activities simultaneously and yet, manage our time either by staying late or missing a meal, I feel people need to be able to multitask by accepting and adapting to the situation.

Similarly, I found it difficult to constantly motivate my team. At times, we were

headed nowhere and rather than keeping a calm head and thinking about the situation, people started to sit and complain. For example, we had gotten information about the epidemic that broke out in Humla but there was confusion since the District Health Office (DHO) denied it whereas the local people kept asking for help. It took us almost 2 weeks to confirm the news and by that time, the team was already disheartened.

Another problem was that everybody wants to leave Nepal and not just for educational reasons. It takes time to know the type of work you are doing and to finally get the hang of your job in the team and when that happens, the volunteers were gone. This made it very hard to work here.

Q. HOW DID YOU RECRUIT MEMBERS FOR YOUR PROJECT?

A. I called for volunteers mostly through social media. I try to seek out people who are passionate about the same topic and then, we form a team.

Q. IN ESTIMATION, WAS THERE MORE YOUTH SUPPORT OR ADULT SUPPORT IN THE VOLUNTEERING WORKS?

A. A lot of young people showed up but there were people in the middle ages as well. Age did not affect their capacity or enthusiasm to help.

Q. COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT NYANO SANSAR? FROM WHEN WERE YOU INVOLVED IN NYANO SANSAR?

A. Nyano Sansar is an organization that donates blankets and clothes to remote



and cold regions during the winter. A friend approached me last year to become one of the board members. I liked the approach they had and agreed. I mostly overlooked the donation of relief materials, and helped generate funds.

Q.HOW DID NYANO SANSAR REACH TO SUCH REMOTE PLACES? HOW WAS THE TRANSPORTATION MANAGED?

A.Transportation was very expensive and Nyano Sansar did a lot of work post-earthquake. World Food Program was providing logistics to anyone who wanted to help, so Nyano Sansar utilized it. Helicopters were used and as people were very passion-driven, the transportation was managed too.

Q. COULD YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT MEDICATION FOR NEPAL?

A. When the land was completely blocked, patients were most affected. With no medicines to treat them, death rate started to rise. Medication for Nepal was an attempt to solve this and it started with asking the people travelling to Nepal to bring medicines with them. After that, we tried to buy medicines from wherever we could to send to remote districts. We sent at least 9.5 tons of drugs to the needy areas.

Q.WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START MEDICATION FOR NEPAL?

A. I started Medication for Nepal with a single belief—basic health care should be accessible to everybody. People didn't seem to realize how bad things were and

I am not talking about remote areas, but in Kathmandu itself. The doctors didn't have anything to treat their patients with. I incorporated Medication for Nepal while working in Nyano Sansar, realizing the extreme importance of it.

Q. HOW DOES IT WORK?

A.We have a very active group of people making health infographics in order to educate people about the health facilities. Since we were a small organization, we could not take the initiative to supply medicines all over Nepal but we tried everything that we could by importing medicines and supplying them.

Q.HOW ARE THE MEDICINES DISTRIBUTED IN THE HEALTH CENTRES?

A.The medicines are sent with someone going to the required district or help is asked from the DHO for its distribution. Most of the time we carpooled it with other people and asked for received confirmations from the doctors.

Q.HOW DID YOU COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT THE PLACES WHERE THESE MEDICINES WERE REQUIRED?

A.It is very important to stay in touch with the local people and you shouldn't always rely on the information that comes to you. We had a couple of people recommended by doctors who had really good track record of helping the public. The medicines were sent directly to these people when they sent the information.

Q.HOW WERE THE VILLAGERS TAUGHT ABOUT THE EXPIRATION DATES?

A.We always tried to send medicines that had expiration dates ranging from 12 months to 18 months. Also we gave it to the DHO where they sorted out the expiration dates and worked accordingly.

Q.HOW MANY PLACES HAS MFN REACHED TILL NOW?

A. MFN has reached 16 districts. In far western, we reached Baitadi, Darchula,Humla, and Achham. We also reached Nuwakot, Nawalparasi, Dolakha and many others.

Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE A LITTLE ABOUT CARPOOL NEPAL?

A. Carpool Nepal was another vision that started due to petrol and diesel shortage in the country. Only few could afford the rising prices, but the rest had to walk. Carpooling was a new idea in the country where one could hitchhike with another person going to the same destination.

Q. HOW DID THIS IDEA OCCUR TO YOU?

A. Then, I did not have a scooter and I was walking everywhere with blisters on my feet. I saw people in private vehicles that had the capacity to carry more than one person going in the same destination, so I thought why not! If it works in the west, why can't we try it here?

Q.DURING THE ECONOMIC BLOCKADE, HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS THIS PROGRAM?

A.It was very successful; I saw the good side of people then. There were people

messaging me to help them find rides for their sick relatives and people who were ready to give lifts or even their vehicle to complete strangers. Some of them with electric cars even left their contact information in cases of emergencies.

Q.HOW DID YOU MEDIATE BETWEEN PEOPLE GIVING RIDES AND PEOPLE ASKING FOR THEM?

A. I did not mediate between people, I simply created a platform where they could arrange it for themselves.

Q. HOW WAS THE SAFETY OF THE PEOPLE ENSURED?

A. Once again, I did not ensure it but people came with all types of ideas like informing their family members about the number plate of the vehicle, taking the phone number of the person. Few girls came up with the idea of taking a picture and posting it on social media with the reason stated, some even posted the departure and the arrival time. Also, there was a public record kept in the website.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW PROJECTS?

A.I am making a travel app that helps tourist to know which places to go in Nepal during their stay. We have festivals being celebrated in every nook and corner of the valley that we ourselves don't know about, so it basically gathers information from the local people and relays it to the tourists in various audio visuals.

Q. FEW WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOUR JUNIORS AND FELLOW SEBSERS?

A.Be positive! There are many people who will want to drag you down and situations where you feel frustrated but never let that bring you down. For my juniors, there are many opportunities in BNKS, be ready to grasp it. The things that feels useless right now help you a lot in the future so take part in everything you possibly can. 🟡



Tracing Kanchan Jha's footprints and 'Sano Paila' during post-earthquake phase

-6158D SURAKSHYA →

In 2006, 118C Kanchan came home from the United States on what was supposed to be a short trip, and never went back. While Kanchan wanted to return eventually, settling back wasn't on the cards for him anytime soon. What changed his initial plans and instead made him brainstorm and form new plans was the ongoing Terai Madhes conflict. The inspiration for Sano Paila followed.

118C Kanchan is the founding member of Sano Paila, a non-profit, non-governmental organization that thrives to build the nation through the building of communities. The founding philosophy of Sano Paila is based on the idea that it takes 'a little step' to serve the community and induce change.

The central focus of Sano Paila is on the welfare of the children and the youth. The team conducts drug and criminal rehabilitation for youth and works against child-trafficking. As of now, Sano Paila has rehabilitated more than 500 youths and managed to rescue more than 300

children from the circuses in India. The rehabilitated youth are trained to become leaders and 'agents of change' for more to follow. They work as the counselors for the 'fellowship counseling' sessions conducted by Sano Paila. 'We trust the rehabilitated youths with everything, even tons of money,' Kanchan adds.

Sano Paila believes that significant changes can begin even from the example of a single individual. 'Once, we tried to convince this so-called drug lord to quit for six months. This created a wonderful ripple effect. We sent the message that if a hardcore drug user can discard drugs after 45 years of practice, anybody can,' Kanchan explains.

While working on a documentary for Al Jazeera called 'Children for Sale in Nepal', Kanchan learned about the rampant trafficking of children and decided to fight against it. 'We reintroduce the trafficked children to their families. Then, we work with the parents for the children's education through income generation schemes. In case the child is not accepted back into the family, we take them in and fund their education and provide

them with skill-based training,' Kanchan elaborates.

Post-earthquake, Sano Paila was very active in its humanitarian projects. They initiated a project called 'Resilient Nepal' and distributed temporary relief and medical supplies to over 15000 families in 11 affected districts. They dispatched about 400 volunteers for this cause among whom most were former drug addicts. They were the first organization to reach to Sirandanda and Makwanpur for the relief. In their 'Project Jeevika', Sano Paila built over a hundred temporary shelters in one of the worst affected districts- Gorkha. They began various income generation programs related to beekeeping to make the community self-dependent. They also built a zero energy cool chamber (cold storage) for the storage of the agricultural products.

Kanchan believes that their immediate response was possible only due to the established network of Sano Paila. 'We also raised huge funds through my connection to SEBS,' he says. 'We talked to the Nepal Army, CDO, local people and collected the goods for distribution.'

After that, it was the 10 hours journey from Birgunj. We also coordinated with the Birgunj Customs Office by involving our volunteers in the checking of goods so that logistics would reach the destination without delay.'

Sano Paila also devised ways of psychosocial support to the affected. They dispatched doctors who talked to the families while in disguise. They also provided women with sanitary napkins and cosmetic products to distract them and make them happy.

Sano Paila believes that the function of non-governmental organizations is to reach out to the areas where the government cannot reach and thus, focuses on the most remote of places. Thus, in this way, Sano Paila focuses not on a single sector but tries to build the community by working in multiple sectors.

118C Kanchan describes himself as a passionate and contagious human being and confides in us that equality and bonding are the two important life lessons he grasped from his schooling in BNKS. In fact, he founded Sano Paila based on equality and inclusiveness and believes that his relationships with his seniors, juniors and batch mates helped him develop his own personal and public relationships.

Reminiscing his school days, Kanchan laughs and shares the story about the time he and his friends ordered food from the infamous Black gate, without realizing that



their teacher was right in front of them on the other side. As someone who regularly arrived late to school, Kanchan shares another one of his experiences which made sure he became more punctual- 'I used to arrive late at school, all the time. This one time when I was in grade 8, I came to school, three weeks late. Sports day had already begun and my name was included in the 100m race. I had brought a prescription from home (an excuse for my absence) but as soon as I reached my house my seniors forced me to get ready

for the run. I lost the match, obviously. After that, as a punishment, I had to run hard. I promised myself I wouldn't come late after this.'

Finally, Kanchan urges current students and recent BNKS graduates to step out of their comfort zones. 'Yes, we don't come from the best of families, but we all have this fire in our bellies to change the world. So, you should go out, learn more about the world and come back,' Kanchan tells us. ■





Three decades and counting: A BNKS Journey'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

3

55C Bijaya Shiwakoti formally ended his journey in BNKS when he graduated in the summer of 2003. Little did he know, his journey outside of the walls of BNKS was only beginning. He tells us, he was not a part of SEBS back then but was involved in Nationwide Scholarship Program (NSP), a program that provides scholarships to study in BNKS to young, brilliant students living across Nepal. In fact, he was involved in NSP right from his senior year in BNKS when he served as the President of Social Service Club. He started working in NSP as the District Coordinator for his village of Dolakha from where he was required to select two deserving students to be the recipients of the scholarship. He worked as the Secretary of the NSP program until 2005 and later, became the head of this project.

During the mid-2000s, SEBS along with SEBS-NA had recently started its Doko Dai Mobile project, which had its base center in Barabise, Sindhupalchowk. Bijaya had quite some experience supervising this project as a part of NSP. After the Doko Dai Project, NSP's major focus shifted to the Shanti School Project which also initially sowed its seeds in Sindhupalchowk. NSP, along with other parties, had exploratory discussions

and had set up their first school, 'Santi Primary School' at Ramche village in Sindhupalchowk. Needless to say, Bijaya and SEBS as a whole had woven deep ties and connections in Sindhupalchowk.

So, when the quake struck and SEBS received the news that the relief in the Sindhupalchowk area was not sufficient, it only made sense that their foremost efforts be exerted in that area. 'Since we had done a few projects there in the past, we had already established credibility there', Bijaya explains, 'and so because of this relationship, we could get right and adequate information about how the relief could be best taken up to that point.'

When the quake struck, Bijaya was in Kathmandu. Shiwakoti is one of those SEBSers who served during the earthquake directly as part of SEBS' relief project, rather than an independent project. Bijaya was in the small team of 3-4 people who went for the initial field exploration of the place before the relief was brought to be distributed. As he recalls, SEBS started the talk about its earthquake relief project on Wednesday, reached the site on Thursday, and had already planned a system on how to equitably distribute the relief materials by

Friday. With the chaotic situation in hand and various parties trying to influence their system, relief in Sindhupalchowk was not an easy task. The project was not without political disturbances; political representatives who had agreed on a model for relief distribution expressed dissatisfaction mid-relief, which could have impeded the team's whole efforts. But the whole SEBS team including Bijaya were always focused on following the right procedure throughout the project. They did not deviate from that model. They were not buzzed from that.

The first consignment of relief materials was quite a huge one with tarpaulins and rice distributed to a total of 7 Sindhupalchowk VDCs. Later, other consignments went to Melamchi in Sindhupalchowk that consisted of four trucks of relief materials. After Shiwakoti's initial venture in Sindhupalchowk, he also went for relief management and distribution during the second consignment sent to Barabise. He then also went to Dolakha for the delivery of one consignment consisting mostly of tarpaulins.

Of his time at Sindhupalchowk at that period, he shares his peculiar experience of staying so close to the epicenter of the

quakes that whenever it would strike, he would hear the distinct sound similar to that of canon bombings, from inside the earth. Bijaya admits he witnessed the dire situation where people were somehow trying to make their ends meet. And while he definitely found it inspiring to see how relief workers maintained such dedication and attitude, he also acknowledges that a lot of people were trying to profit out of this tragedy, both donors and recipients alike. As Bijaya puts it while talking about his personal experience, 'The best part was that, as a society, we helped each other and I commend that. But if we are going to review the earthquake, I also have to mention about the dark side of our attitude and conduct.'

While talking about the earthquake, it also seemed that he would feel the conversation incomplete without expressing his deep, heartfelt appreciation for fellow SEBSer, Birendra Dai and his institution, Buddha Air. 'Without Buddha Air, we would not have achieved this sort of efficiency. In terms of cash and logistics, Buddha Air was the main player on the ground. Firstly, they provided the seed money of NPR 5 million needed to fuel the operation. During the initial phase of the relief, Buddha Air ordered all the rice and tarpaulin for the immediate relief. Then, they also made it really easy to bring the materials from India. We didn't need our own people going there to receive it; we ran those operations through mere phone calls. They also did not take any charges for transporting it all the way up to Kathmandu. Staffs from



Buddha Air accompanied the trucks of tarpaulin for days from Biratnagar through Bhadrapur to Kathmandu. Also, when SEBS put out an appeal in the newspaper to make people donate money enough for one meal in one family, we did it through Buddha Air, which made things quite easy.' Shiwakoti also mentions that excluding all that, Buddha Air also helped in many other ways that perhaps are not quantifiable or very easily expressed in physical terms.

After the earthquake, Shiwakoti has also been involved with Santi Education Initiative Nepal (then known as Santi School Project) in renovating 22 of its schools harmed during the disaster. Even though Shanti School Project, later on, grew into a much larger project of its own (SEIN) and thus, became a separate entity from NSP, Shiwakoti has continued his involvement in the project as one of its board members.

Shiwakoti talks about his life during his school years quite modestly. As with most boys in BNKS, Bijaya spent a substantial amount of his time in BNKS playing sports. He emphasized that it shaped a lot of his good memories and has been a crucial part of his time living inside BNKS. 'It kept me focused; I did not get distracted and I would say, overall, it played a positive part in my life', he further adds to this topic. When asked about any advice he would give to his juniors, he says, 'The systems of BNKS have been designed with the best intentions though they may not always make sense. So

please do appreciate them and go a step beyond and try to understand what the logic behind them may be.'

In his own words, he says that BNKS is an experiment which, in the context of Nepal, feels pretty successful. In our country's present scenario and the political direction of segregation it has taken, the beautiful mix we grew up in BNKS with gives us an experience of being open to newer ideas, opens up our biases and ultimately lets us come out of our comfort zones. There could not have been a description of BNKS pieced together more beautifully and sincerely than this. ■

'The Science of Earthquake Proof Homes'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

9

78A Hemendra Bobra, the founder of Matoghar Builders, has always been an environmentally conscious person. He even graduated from the prestigious Harvard University with a degree in Environmental Engineering if that is any indication of his interest in the sector. When he returned to Nepal, his focus began to drift more towards business and other fields of works. Nonetheless, his ties with the field of environment remained rooted deep within him. 'I always wanted to live in a sustainable house, with sustainable surroundings, made of sustainable materials', he says, which is how Matoghar Builders originally began. In fact, he never even envisioned to start such a company.

When he started his initial research into what would be the most suitable material to build his home with, he had unintentionally already laid the foundation of Matoghar Builders. He found numerous old homes made of sun-dried mud bricks in various corners of Kathmandu, which in his opinion, is not quite strong. After some exploration, he finally concluded

that 'rammed earth', a building material consisting of sand, clay and other ingredients compressed within forms, would best fit his vision of a sustainable house. As he explains about the rammed earth, he says it is actually quite popular in Mustang, Dolpa and such cold and dry places of Nepal. Throughout the world, it is used in deserts and in South Asia, it is used especially in Tibet and Bhutan. His interest peaked when he found out that Thimphu, which is not as dry and is similar to Kathmandu, used rammed earth to build even multi-storey buildings. It felt suitable for the climate of Kathmandu. In terms of strength too, he knew it would be stronger than those sun-dried bricks and that it would require no additional finishing like brick houses did. One crucial aspect of rammed earth is that it delays the heat transfer. For one inch thickness, the heat is delayed by 1 hour. So in 18 inches, it almost acts like an insulator. The fact that rammed earth homes look quite beautiful was an icing to the cake.

When he thought of this idea, no one in Nepal had yet attempted to build homes of the rammed earth using modern techniques. So, with the help of his batch mate, Gyanendra Pandey, and his construction company, he trained some



laborers while simultaneously learning new things himself. 'The whole house was built pretty much with the trial-and-error technique', he puts in casually which was quite amusing since he was talking about the house he planned to live in with his family. Right from the beginning, his focus was to use local materials for construction and make it earthquake-resistant.

The procedure while building a rammed earth home starts out as that of any brick home. The foundation is laid of stone and above it lies the concrete tie beam. The rods are fixed upright upon it. The difference is that, in the formwork, about 5 inches of mud is poured and then, crushed and compressed or 'rammed'. This compresses the 5-inch layer of mud into 2-3 inches, after which another 5-inch layer of mud is added above and so on. In the end, the whole wall becomes monolithic like a single block, unlike brick homes which are in little, separate pieces. For the L shape of the wall corners and the T shapes in between two rooms, the earth is poured and rammed all at once so that it becomes one singular chunk of wall and that also makes a difference in terms of earthquake-resistance.

When he started this 'project', one of his key focuses was also to build an earthquake-resistant home. The first factor, he tells us, to make a building earthquake-resistant is its design. This includes the placement of the windows and doors and sizing of the rooms. Another factor is the compressive strength of the materials used to make the walls of the building. It depends on the strength of the materials used in the wall. When asked how much the materials affect a building's resistance to quakes, he says that the principle of building earthquake resistant homes is more or less the same in every home. For example, no matter what material is used, the windows should never be placed on the edge of the walls. The corners of the wall, windows, and doors, a building's vulnerable parts,

should use L shaped wooden blocks, bamboo or rods to bind and provide it strength. The walls need to be tied together, resembling a cardboard box, so that they do not move individually. It can be tied up using any simple materials like wood or concrete or bamboo. Bohra repeatedly also states that such factors actually makes a lot of difference in the overall strength of the house.

In Kathmandu, one way to make houses earthquake-resistant is 'the pillar system'. In this system, the pillars have brick walls in between. Another way is called 'Load Bearing' in which the walls are typically as thick as 18 inches, such that the load of the house is sustained in its walls. We asked him about the many earth houses in the hills of our country that were destroyed by the earthquake. To this, he reiterates the principles of a resistant house; the corners are not bound together, the walls are not tied up and many of those earth houses are lacking a vertical element of support like wood or bamboo in between their walls. Apart from the factor that these houses do not even use 'rammed earth' but only 'raw earth', those are the lacking aspects that could have helped the houses remain whole during such devastating quakes. Between a home with and without cracks, the difference can be as simple as putting up a few pieces of wood for support.

His own 'Matoghar' situated in Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu was the first completed project of 'Matoghar Builders'. Now, the company is currently working on to build another such building, a school this time, for BlinkNow Foundation's Kopila Valley School in Birendranagar, Surkhet. This organization is run by CNN Hero Maggie Doyne while the Principal of the school is also a fellow SEBSer, 448A Naim Chaudhari. Hopefully, this idea grows on the people of Kathmandu so that the future of our city holds much more of these beautiful, sustainable and healthy homes made of rammed earth. ■



‘Teach- from the mind, the heart, the soul’

-6047D PRAKRITI →



With 33 years of experience in the sector of education, 448A Naim Chaudhari may be one of the most experienced educators anyone can find around. His schooling at BNKS ended in the year 1983 and his career as a teacher began a year after, working at Bhotebahal in a school called Mira English Boarding School. Fueled by a fragile economic situation, he dropped out of Tri-Chandra College to start that job, beginning with a Rs.500 salary. Throughout the years, he has taught in many other schools as well, namely Sunrise Boarding School in Lazimpat, Kantipur School at Maharajgunj and Shuvatara School in Sanepa. After 9 years in Shuvatara, he moved to Bright Horizon Children’s Home in Matatirtha, which was handled as a Swiss project. He had already worked there for 6 years as a director and principal when he met Maggie Doyne in early 2015, who invited him to join Kopila Valley in Surkhet. With his lack of a higher degree finally catching up to him, alongside his job, he also studied and received his I.A. B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees as a private candidate. Though he entered this profession due to financial constraints rather than interest, with time, he developed love for children and teaching became his passion.

When the earthquake struck, he was transitioning from his job at Bright Horizon to being a Principal at Kopila Valley. The earthquake didn’t cause much damage in Surkhet but he did help his children living back in Matatirtha. At Matatirtha, the school selected 26 children annually from the villages and made a case history on the reason for their admittance, their background and family history. Then, the Swiss organization would connect up some sponsors for those children and the sponsor would commit to financially help them study until class 12. So, he had to regularly update the whereabouts of the children at Bright Horizon with their Swiss sponsor families. Sponsors wanted to help the children from Ramechhap, Dolakha, Gorkha, Chum Valley, Helambu. So, he facilitated regular communication with 200 such children from Bright Horizon. With his associations to Swiss and American friends and organizations, he got to direct a lot of people to places that needed funds. He actively encouraged many such enthusiastic contributors to donate money to SEBS, BNKS, Bibeksheel Nepali and other such ongoing earthquake relief projects.

While talking about his current place of stay, he talks fervently, ‘The weather is too hot, and the place is culturally very different. When I was just starting out, I wouldn’t even understand half of the things people from Kalikot spoke because their Nepali dialect is so different from ours!’ But none of these were ‘deal breakers’ because what really made him take this job in Kopila Valley School was the fact that with this project, he could cater to more needy children. In Surkhet, he could reach out to more children who needed education. At Kopila Valley School, there are 350 children from 8 districts. In the other places, his job was only to educate children but here, they have other projects running parallel. He is involved with their women’s home that provides single, needy women basic skills to empower them, establish a shop, their children’s home as well as a health clinic. He says he has more work satisfaction now than ever before, and perhaps that was the only thing that mattered in the end.

Compared to previous schools, he hears much more of sad children stories here and sometimes this takes a toll on him.

But whenever the need to retract himself from the situation arises, he comes back home in Kathmandu. He does talk about different challenges here. 'Where there is very little education, people will start making up stories to gain benefit or admit children. The image here is that Kopila Valley is Maggie Doyne's school and if you show your sorrows then they will help you. I didn't have to deal with a lot of challenges because I have a lot of experience and I studied educational planning and management. Sometimes, because we have to work with a lot of foreigners, due to the cultural differences, sometimes they do not understand what we are trying to say. I am trying to build a manpower base right now, so I advertise a lot,' He says. Right now,

it might have been financial hardship that brought him to this sector, but it was his passion for his job, love for children that made him stay. Being a teacher was not his initial plan but the more he worked in this profession, the more he grew a liking to it. All the challenges he has faced in his line of work throughout the years has hardened his exterior. He works harder to solve every problem and the more he works, the more he learns to love it. His 3 decades of experience has taught him so much that he claims there is, in fact, no problem he cannot solve. From being a teacher to an administrator and a principal, Chaudhari has held almost every kind of position there could exist in the education sector, and as one would expect, has fought numerous difficulties along the way. 'To be a teacher, you



need a kind heart. You need to be ready to sacrifice.' And his persistence has definitely been rewarding because his children love him and he has become one of their family members. They look up to him with admiration and respect and are attached to him with unyielding love and affection. 'Wherever I worked, I didn't just take my body but my mind and heart as well. For my children, I work hard and use all my resources, my caliber. I give them everything to help them. Because once

they stand up on their feet, I become the happiest person knowing that I touched their life.' He is a humble, kind-hearted and positive person but he does lament about all the skilled people leaving abroad that have now created a vacancy of good teachers in Nepal. 'If everyone goes out of the country, who will take care of Nepal?', he puts up a rather unresolved question.

When talking about BNKS and its influence in his career, he talks about the teaching methods in BNKS. He reminisces about the 'learning-by-doing' approach that BNKS had. 'People talk about thematic teaching, hands-on experience and involving the students as modern teaching but to me, this is almost ancient. Things I learned in 4th grade, I still remember today. I had a Biology teacher called Sam Badan Shrestha in 10th grade and she taught us so thoroughly that even when I missed classes during my ISc. years, I did just fine in exams.' After BNKS though, he faced some pretty tough times. Once he even skipped an exam, because he had a job interview on the same day. At that time, the job became more important to him. He says he doesn't want his students to face the same difficulties and make the same mistakes he did. 'All my students, I urge them to make short term goals. I teach them to formulate objectives and focus them on their career and future goals. I observe their interests and look into their strengths.' ■

'Daayitwa- your duty towards your motherland'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

A

After living over a decade of his life in the USA, 718B Pukar Malla always did aspire to return back home to serve his country, Nepal. But especially after the devastating earthquake, he felt he had no purpose staying back in the States. Now, he runs 'Daayitwa Abhiyaan', under which there are three separate entities namely, 'Daayitwa', a registered NGO, 'Nepal Leadership Academy', a non-profit company and 'Nepal ko Yuwa', an organization based in the US. After the earthquake, 'Nepal ko Yuwa' started a separate campaign that worked exclusively for earthquake relief called 'Nepal Rising'.

1. WHEN DID YOU FIRST THINK OF STARTING THE PLATFORM, 'NEPAL RISING'?

The earthquake created a sense of urgency in all Nepalese people living abroad to do something for Nepal. But because they lived so far away from their country, it was difficult for them to distinguish between which organizations or platforms were productive and which were not. Also by 2014, I had lived in the US for quite some years and through the Daayitwa Abhiyaan, we had also frequently organized the Walk for Nepal

campaign in various cities in the USA. We had already built a system to support the NGOs doing good work in Nepal through the money raised in WfN. So, we had a good grip over those cities as well and built a good rapport as well. So, for Nepalese living abroad who felt the lack of a trustworthy platform that they could find proper information through and contribute to, we started 'Nepal Rising'.

2. WHAT IS YOUR IDEOLOGY BEHIND IT?

By using our experience of Walk for Nepal (WfN) and the dire need we faced to help Nepal in that crucial period, we started this campaign as not only a way to provide the resources collected in US back to Nepal but also a way to join US and Nepal and show that Nepali people are truly resilient. We wanted to develop a mentality that we Nepalese people could rise through any kind of difficulty with our hard work and unite all the Nepalese people living outside Nepal. From what we had envisioned, we had mobilization in other countries and dispersion and implementation in Nepal.

3. COULD YOU BRIEF ABOUT ITS ACTIVITIES AND HOW THAT CHANGED OVERTIME?

In the beginning, we focused most on immediate relief. We spent a lot on food items. About after two months, we

focused more on the sector of education and health. We covered most of the 14 districts that were heavily impacted on these two sectors. We provided medicines to the hospitals and helped in the school reconstructions. In Ramechhap, we also started working on 'Economic Rebuilding'. Lots of youths gain skills while reconstruction work and to make use of that, we chose 10 dynamic youth entrepreneurs, affected by the earthquake and provided them seed funding, training, networking, and mentorship. Many of them have started 'community farming' to help their neighboring farmer's farm more productively and commercially. We have also built some schools in Nuwakot. Recently, we have collaborated with the NRA (National Reconstruction Authority) to extend such entrepreneurial development in other districts and focus further on economic rebuilding.

4. HOW IS DAAYITWA NGO INVOLVED IN EARTHQUAKE CAMPAIGN?

We have started a Summer Fellowship program for 3 months that takes place during students' summer break. The selected Daayitwa Fellows go to earthquake-struck places to assess what Nepal government can do for their economic boost. They assess the needs and the most effective ways for



life maintenance of the villagers. Next, they come back to Kathmandu with their statistics and prepare a detailed analysis with the experts and authorities on the situation of the place and brainstorm ideas for its economic enrichment and empowerment. Then, they go back to the place again to verify if their ideas would work or not. 60 volunteers from Daayitwa got involved with various other organizations and in that way, we got involved with Nepal's Government.

5. WHY DID YOU PARTNER WITH SO MANY ORGANIZATIONS?

To fully understand what needs a certain place has, one needs to understand that place from the root. It was a sensitive time and trust was really essential. So, we promoted organizations that were working in their respective districts and provided them financial support. They used to submit us their reports accordingly. The implementation aspect of it was conducted by those local organizations but we also monitored them closely.

6. HOW DID THE FUNDRAISING OCCUR? HOW WAS THE SITUATION THERE IN THE US? HOW WAS THE SITUATION OF THE NEPALI PEOPLE THERE?

After the earthquake, we organized WfN walks in cities like Dallas and Denver. Nepal's contribution there was massive. For all the Nepali people, it was a situation of great sorrow and it felt like everyone was united towards a common goal. I personally felt more solidarity and compassion in walks that we organized after the disaster because there was this urgency and need to collectively raise money for the victims.

Apart from that, we also had students fundraising in 8 different cities and 4 educational institutions. People organized concerts and hosted dinners, children sold momos and juice for this cause. Just recently as well, in the 2 year anniversary of the EQ, we started a 'Made in Nepal' challenge. Its concept is that people click pictures of themselves with a product made in Nepal and post it in social media. In the description, they provide information about this fundraiser and potential ways people can donate to this campaign.

7. IN WHAT WORKS DID YOU MOSTLY INVOLVE YOURSELF WITH IN THIS PLATFORM?

I was in the US trying to set up this platform there for until 3 months after the earthquake. But after that, I came back to Nepal. I went to Ramechhap and got involved in the economic development and then we went to the homes of those

youth entrepreneurs of thirty people and chose ten of them.

8. ON WHAT BASIS DID YOUR PLATFORM DECIDE WHAT SORTS OF PROJECTS NEEDED FUNDING?

In the reconstruction phase, people became inclined mostly to contribute to the education and health sector. I personally felt that the government and development partners had collected enough money in those sectors. After the earthquake, not even 5% of the total NGOs working for earthquake relief were working for economic reconstruction, which is also a vital aspect of our society. Hence, we decided to concentrate our efforts in that sector.

9. SINCE STARTING YOUR WORK IN THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF PROJECT, WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

The birth of this sort of platform is in itself a big step. Not just in a natural disaster like earthquake, but in political disturbances or unofficial Nepal Bandas, the message that Nepal is rising is important. For it to spread its wings in various places like that is important. Personally it was also important for me because I did want to come back to Nepal but especially after the earthquake there was absolutely no reason for me to stay back there because my identity here in Nepal was a question mark. ■

'An activist, a motivator, and an achiever'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

1

61A Surendra Shakya is the founder of EduVision, an organization based in Hetauda that conducts motivational and educational programs for mobilization in the sectors of education, environment, and entrepreneurship. He received an M.A. degree in Political Science from Arizona State University in 2002 and an M.A. degree in Communications from Angelo State University in 2007. Since then, he has been working in Nepal to transform communities with social activism through EduVision. After the earthquake, he joined SEBS in its project, coordinating its relief efforts at Dillipur and Basantapur Handikhola VDC of Makwanpur.

1. HOW WERE YOU INVOLVED WITH SEBS DURING THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF PROGRAM?

I was involved in two relief programs. One was with Uttam Chuke from Bharatpur who, as a SEBSer, sought help in finding affected community in Makwanpur. They had a great package for relief through his Rotary Club and EduVision had just surveyed and identified the community

in need of help. The inquiry had come from Biswas Chepang and SEBS President Sneedha Mainali. So even though SEBS had first sought information, once we had the information, we were able to channel other relief through the efforts of other SEBSers into Handikhola VDC. Second relief was just tarpaulin distribution to about 170 families in two different areas of Handikhola VDC that had not been visited with Rotary.

2. WERE YOU IN THE USA OR NEPAL DURING THE EARTHQUAKE? ALSO, DID YOU CONTRIBUTE FROM THE SIDE OF SEBS NEPAL OR SEBS-NA?

I have been back in Nepal for 10 years and been involved in SEBS. SEBS Nepal was instrumental in linking us with SEBS-NA. Miss USA Khusbu Mishra was the one who raised funds in the USA and wanted to distribute the much-needed tarpaulin. A SEBSer in Biratnagar had links to import tarpaulins from India and ship them to Hetauda, and we were able to take them to affected Chepang villages for distribution. Youths from EduVision were involved in its logistics.

3. HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH YOUR RELIEF WORK AT DILLIPUR AND BASANTAPUR HANDIKHOLA VDC,

MAKWANPUR? HOW BADLY WAS THE VDC AFFECTED BY THE EARTHQUAKE?

We were involved only in Handikhola VDC, in three different areas. The areas were poor and lacking education to begin with and the natural calamity actually was able to focus attention on their plight. EduVision youth have visited the areas again and are developing future projects for Chepangs.

4. HOW MANY PEOPLE WENT FOR THE RELIEF ALONG WITH YOU? ANY OTHER SEBS MEMBER? AND WHICH ASPECT OF THE WORK DID YOU HANDLE/ LOOK OVER?

I was the only SEBS member in the tarp distribution in two locations of Handikhola and 18 EduVision youths, a SEBSer founded NGO affiliate, joined the mission in travelling to the village on a tractor through very rough terrain and across a swollen Rapti river. In the Rotary Club partnered relief, Uttam Chuke was also involved. He was the main person, we only assisted in giving the information and taking them to the village. Biswas Chepang bhai was the one who linked us with a local Chepang youth for us to locate these villages.

5. WERE THERE ANY POLITICAL DISTURBANCES DURING YOUR TRIP? OR DID YOU FACE ANY EARTHQUAKES OR ANY LIFE-THREATENING SITUATIONS IN THE TRIP? WHAT OTHER DIFFICULTIES DID YOU FACE?

There were no difficulties in particular but the terrain was very difficult and travelling on a tractor with goods was like experiencing a ten-Richter scale earthquake every second.

6. HOW AND WHERE DID YOU GATHER THE RELIEF ITEMS? WERE THERE ANY OBSTACLES IN THE PROCESS?

Uttam Chuke bhai arrived with relief package already ready to be distributed. Tarps were sent through a truck from Biratnagar to our Hetauda office. We rented a tractor to take them to the affected areas.

7. WERE YOU ALSO INVOLVED IN THE FUNDRAISING ASPECT OF IT?

Miss USA Khusbhu Mishra handled the fundraiser for tarps and Sneedha Mainali was responsible for hooking us up for local effort.

8. HOW WERE YOU FIRST INSPIRED TO START EDUVISION? WHAT ARE YOU FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES BEHIND IT?

After returning to Nepal in 2007, having spent 14 years in the USA, I was motivated to do my part to give back to our country. I started visiting schools and started filling in as a substitute teacher to learn about the educational condition of my



community. I also organized Explore Nepal program for Lincoln School from 2009 - 2011. I had started mentoring some 30 children from grade 6 and below in 2009. In order to get funding for their program, I had to register EduVision Foundation.

EduVision is focused on elevating educational standard, and ultimately overhauling the education system in Nepal. Currently, its environment project for youth has been honored as top three youth sustainability project in the world from 177 countries by Energy Globe Award in 2016. Our main principles are helping each individual become competent and give back to the community by taking responsibility and solve the problems creatively along the way to make Nepal a better place to live in.

9. IN WHAT WAYS HAS EDUVISION HELPED CHILDREN WHO WERE AFFECTED BY THE EARTHQUAKE?

I was in Kathmandu taking a course to be able to help children. It was called NOVICE course (Nurturing of Values in Children Everyday). It was hard to get out of valley but I managed it somehow and then after arriving in Hetauda, Eduvision youth were mobilized to survey the damages in Hetauda. They also collected relief materials from the community and distributed them to needy people. There were some EduVision children also who were affected.

10. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY LONG TERMS PROJECTS FOR SUCH STUDENTS?

There have not been any long term projects for such students, however, we are aware of the plight of the backward community and we see possibility of sponsorship for some children and the possibility of managing schools in such villages. We are particularly inspired by the bambook school project that has started in Nepal as a vision of Uttam Sanjel.

11. HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED WITH SEBS AND ITS ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO THE EARTHQUAKE? IN WHAT WAYS AND IN WHICH PROJECTS?

I was involved in reviving SEBS after returning in 2007 along with such illustrious SEBSers as Suresh Acharya, Gyanendra Raj Pandey, Bolaram Pandey, Upendra Bom, Tejsu Malla, and others.

12. IN WHAT WAYS HAS YOUR TIME IN BNKS SHAPED OR INFLUENCED YOU?

My DNA was shaped by BNKS and I am repaying to Nepal out of deep gratitude I feel for the privilege of receiving a great education there.

13. ANY MEMORABLE EVENTS OR ANECDOTES WHILE YOUR TIME IN BNKS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

I remember our two-day hike from school via Tokha to Kakani carrying our stuff in a doko. We slept in the school yard the first night. I learned to carry a doko, adjust a namlo, and play madal.

14. ANY WORDS OF ADVICE FOR YOUR JUNIORS?

My 24 years of searching for an answer has brought me to understand that Nepal used to be great at least until 300 years ago. We lost our cultural heritage and education system and went into the descent to the point that now we are basically enslaved by Western education. Our solution is actually discovering our heritage and reviving those principles that could transform the whole world. I have been meaning to visit BNKS and share my findings and motivate the new generation to work for Nepal. ■

'Give Back Selflessly'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

A

civil engineer by profession, 477B Sagar Onta is also one of the founding members of SEBS North America. SEBS NA would not have been such a successful and well-achieving organization today if it weren't for the persistence and hard work of our SEBSers Kiran Sitoula, Sagar Onta and the likes of them. Similarly, after the massive earthquake struck Nepal, he worked for SEBS' earthquake relief project while also conducting his personal relief efforts alongside.

1. COULD YOU PLEASE BRIEFLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

I am 477B Sagar Onta. I was in the 13th Batch of BNKS. I currently live in Washington DC, working in the field of Transportation Engineering.

2. WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE EARTHQUAKE STRUCK?

During the EQ, I was in Nepal for a 2-week holiday. But in my first week, the EQ struck and I extended my stay for another two weeks. So that's where I got involved with Kaushal, Birendra dai and everyone here.

3. COULD YOU BRIEFLY TALK ABOUT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT?

Gorkha is my ancestral village and I worked in this relief mostly in the Baguwa VDC of Gorkha. I created my own team of people and used the trucks of APF army. So we went there with one truck of goods: 3 dozen sacks of rice, 1 dozen sacks of dal, foam mattresses, and 100 tarpaulins. We stayed there for about 2-3 days and then we did a program and arrangements and distributed them. In the Baguwa and Khanchowk bazar, we stayed in tents and the surroundings were not good at all. Everyone was in makeshift tents and the houses and shops were all destroyed and flat on the ground. Save the Children was very active, they didn't stop by in my village but they were passing through.

4. HOW DID YOU FUND YOUR RELIEF EFFORT?

I personally contributed about half the amount of money used. The rest was contributed by family and friends and apart from that, I also received some tarpaulins from SEBS and 10-15 sacks of potatoes from the Nepal Army Police which helped as well.

5. WHAT KIND OF DIFFICULTIES DID YOU FACE IN THIS PROJECT?

One of the difficulties we faced was separating out the families or individuals that were in dire need of those materials from those who weren't. Assessing the level

of their needs, we would have distributed a number of materials accordingly and made our efforts more efficient. Coordinating how the relief materials should be distributed in the affected areas was also another challenge we faced.

6. APART FROM YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL RELIEF EFFORTS, YOU WERE ALSO INVOLVED IN SEBS' RELIEF PROJECT. HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH SEBS FOR THE EQ RELIEF?

Birendra dai was a very critical person and without him, a lot of this would not have been successful. We used the Buddha Air's hangar. They flew cargo without any charges from Biratnagar. Meetings would happen in Buddha Air. Rabindra dai and Bijaya Babu, they led the relief project mostly.

7. SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN SEBS AND HOW HAVE YOU DONE SO?

I was actively involved from the early 2000s. After I came to the US, I helped establish SEBS NA with Kiran Sitoula. I have worked since in SEBS NA under various capacities. I worked in the executive committee member and then later served as President as well. I was also majorly involved in the establishment of SEBS NA, annual meetings and the administration. The reason SEBS NA became so successful is the proper

conduct. We also started a program for monthly giving which is still in continuity. Basically, one could contribute about \$10 which in the US, is not a lot of money. At one point, I think there were 20-30 people giving money on a regular basis.

8. COULD YOU ALSO BRIEFLY TELL US ABOUT MAJOR ACTIVITIES THAT TOOK PLACE DURING YOUR TENURE AS PRESIDENT?

During 2005/06, we were involved in getting Doko Dai campaign started. The concept was to use the traditional Nepali 'doko' to take books to the villages that did not have road access. The idea was to establish a regional center in the main zonal district and then take books in dokos to different villages. We also won the World Bank grant of US\$ 161,000 for this project, which, before the earthquake, was probably the biggest grant SEBS ever won.

9. WHAT MADE IT SO SUCCESSFUL THAT YOU GOT THE GRANT?

First of all, it was quite a unique set up as we were a high school alumni association doing this voluntarily while all the other grant applicants were organizations serving in this field of work. We had a strong partner on the ground which was SEBS and we also had a financial sustainability component to it. I think it was also quite apparent that this project came to exist from genuine concern and emotional attachment to Nepal rather than with any motive for financial gain.

10. COULD YOU ALSO PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT INVOLVEMENT IN SEBS' PROJECTS?

Right now, we are working on establishing the BNKS Endowment Fund. We have about nine people who are working on this project; I serve as the Secretary of the group. Our goal is to raise US\$ 250,000. From this, we want to provide money for the repair of the buildings, for buying teaching materials for the classroom, training teachers or providing scholarships to BNKS students.

11. IN 2008, YOU ALSO STARTED 'PURNA-PRASHANT MEMORIAL FUND'. HOW DID IT START AND WHAT WAS IT ABOUT?

Purna and Prashant were two of our classmates from school. As I recall, during that time, Prashant was even the most active SEBS member from our batch. When they passed away, we decided to start a fund in their memory. Everyone from our batch contributed about NRs. 15,000 or 20,000. So, we had about 5.5 lakhs rupees in the fund.

We would use the money for different types of initiatives. Ashish Shrestha, a batchmate of mine, and I were co-signers in this. We would take advice from all the batch members and decide which upcoming program the fund would be best-made use in. We started this in 2008. Since then, we have donated money from this fund for Rabindra Dai's Santi Education Initiative Nepal (SEIN) which establishes schools in various, rural areas of Nepal. We have donated some portion of the fund annually to SEBS' health camps and AGM meetings throughout the years. When the earthquake occurred, we contributed all of its funds for SEBS' relief effort. Currently, it isn't quite active but soon, we are going to hit the 25th year mark of our SLC and for



that, we are trying to raise 25,000 rupees per person and donate it to BNKS.

12. YOU HAVE MAJORLY BEEN INVOLVED WITH SEBS' ACTIVITIES SINCE QUITE A LONG TIME, WHAT SORT OF ROLE HAD SEBS PLAYED IN YOUR LIFE?

I always felt that contributing to the community is why we do things, it has been a big part of life. I'm always involved in different things. Even after my dad passed away, I started a foundation. I would say without SEBS I wouldn't be where I was in terms of community service. It gave me an opportunity to serve the community and then I realized that it is my passion. Without SEBS, I wouldn't have realized it. It opened a door for me to contribute to the community and make me realize that.

13. HOW DO YOU THINK BNKS SHAPED YOU?

The main thing is camaraderie with your classmates and your friendships. I have friends in different places. It has been 25-30 years but we are still in touch and even in different cities, we still look for them and connect.

14. DO YOU HAVE ANY WORDS OF ADVICE FOR YOUR JUNIORS?

Try to know more about the world beyond the textbooks. In our school system, we get a lot of good education in terms of theory and background and it is needed but also, you need to experience other social aspects which is very important. Emotional Intelligence- basically understanding what other people are feeling is very important to be successful. ■

'No age barriers'

-6047D PRAKRITI →

W *Most of SEBS's earthquake relief project may seem like the relentless efforts of experienced and wise SEBSers. But for SEBS to have had its wheels in full motion, its youngest members (at the time) had an equally crucial portion of work to perform. So, we talked to a few of them about their assigned jobs and their personal experience during this work to learn their perspective which, in fact, was quite unique from that of other SEBSers.*

On what responsibilities were handled:

4046D Samikchhya Bhusal: "One of my works was to handle the accounting section of SEBS earthquake relief. I made entries of transactions, kept track of the eSewa portal that was set up for online donations and managed back-of-office expenses (transport, stationery, meals of volunteers). I made sure that all these transactions were well recorded, with receipts. Meanwhile, I was also involved in contacting several SEBS members by phone call depending on the work that was going on. Once the relief work came towards an end, I sat down with an

independent auditor to help him reconcile the accounts, working with many SEBSers involved as well, to make sure everything was correct."



4001D Sagyan Malla Thakuri: "During this project, I was mostly involved in assigning tasks to respective volunteers for effective execution of the project. I was required to gather responsible, efficient and trustworthy volunteers and convince them for field visits and relief task. I was mostly at the Buddha Air's office."

4065D Bhushan Suwal: "I worked in the hangar of Buddha Air and managed the logistics of the inventory. I kept track of the number of materials in the storage. I recorded the names of donors, the amount of donations and the volume of materials SEBSers took for each relief work. We regulated the back room."

4122D Nimish Adhikari: "My responsibility was logistics so I kept track of the donation items that came and went, with proper proof of each transaction along with a record of all transactions. Also, I was at the office so I received in-office donations too."

On what they learned and experienced:

4046D Samikchhya Bhusal: "Overall, I recognized the strength of the bonds that SEBSers share through this experience. Also, the emphasis that senior dais and

Sneedha di made on making sure that we learn about how to do things was also important. I got to understand how relief work takes place through this exposure. Not only that, I have made great connections with SEBSers through this experience, and I have learned a lot from their stories. Every time we had a meeting, I was amazed to see how much everyone on the table wanted to make the work happen in the best possible way, and this observation made me realize the strong sense of working for a community that BNKS instills in us. One of my funny experiences was realizing how as a BNKS student we just call them our dai's and didi's no matter their age and the seniority of their position. My parents once told me that one of our SEBSer was the age of my uncle, and yet I was calling him dai. This is a very BNKS trait!"

4065D Bhushan Suwal: "We worked with lots of SEBSers, I remember working with Samrat Dai, Bijaya Dai, Sneedha Di, Kaushal Dai and so many others and it definitely was an enriching experience. In the urgency of the situation that those relief efforts were being conducted, I learned how such efforts can be made on a grassroot level leading to such a large-scale operation. I learned how disaster relief projects are to be conducted in such urgency disaster situations especially from people who had never worked in the field. Also, being recent A2 graduates, we did not have a lot of experience working on such large-scale projects but we tried to be as diligent as possible. Our goal was to make every transaction transparent. I

learned quite a lot about SEBS as an organization as well and it was quite interesting. It was almost funny how we would call Mohan sir, our "sir" but his batchmates, our "dais". The SEBSers could have been 50 years old but they were still our "dais" which was quite amusing."

4001D Sagyan Malla Thakuri: "I was mostly involved in volunteer management so I really had an amazing experience working with the other SEBSers and volunteers. I learned to be more humble and to work as a team for the betterment of the society. I learned an ability to make



everyone feel heard and special in their own way. It made me realize and believe that everyone's work is equally important for an effective execution and higher productivity. Working with the SEBSers has urged me to try my best to help and inspire people around me to live life to the fullest. Everyone had a common mindset of serving towards the society so the relief project was operated and executed properly as a team where every SEBSers were part of it. I urge my juniors too to develop a positive attitude of learning and working with SEBSers would urge you to get determined and focused at your dream and makes you realize to work harder and inspire you to get the tasks done more promptly in a smarter way I guess."

4122D Nimish Adhikari: "I met a lot of helpful and interesting people. I learned how an organization functions, how to work as a team with each part playing an important role, with every person being important to the process. Well, I don't have any specific anecdotes, but I was the youngest one there and since it was SEBS, there were a lot of dais and didis interacting the same way we did. Like friends from Man sir's batch would still call each other nicknames and tease one another. It was fun to see. I got to work with experts and leaders of the community and got to learn a lot. Also being a part of something after the earthquake was very fulfilling, and I felt like I did something, however small, for the society." ■



SEBS Earthquake Events Timeline

2015

APRIL

- Call for volunteers and a meeting for strategy formulation
- Partnership with Buddha Air - Birendra Bahadur Basnet (245 A) of Buddha Air pledged NPR 50,00,000/- for the SEBS Earthquake Relief Action Project.
- SEBS Preliminary Survey Team (consisting of 6 people) left for Sindhupalchowk for observation, data collection and local liaison arrangements. They distributed around 20 sacks of beaten rice as immediate relief to the people of Ramche and Maheshwora.
- The team of 9 volunteers from SEBS successfully distributed 1000 sacks of rice and 1020 tarps to the people of Sindhupalchowk.

MAY

- SEBS published an appeal in the national dailies- 'Rs. 2320 helps a family, fight hunger and provide shelter for earthquake victims and give them a fighting chance.'
- SEBS North America activated for Relief Campaign.
- eSewa powered SEBS donation portal (eSewa-Nepal's First Online Payment Gateway) initiated with the help of Mr. Samrat Dahal at <https://sebs.esewa.com.np/>
- SEBSers and Nepali students from Southeast University (SEU) in Nanjing of China led by Tejsu Singh Malla (248 C) packed their medical relief supplies and headed back home to Nepal.
- Bishwas Chepang (125 D) coordinated SEBS's project for Chepang Community in Chitwan.
- Dhiraj Shrestha (118 B) treated 400 patients in Sarki Gaun near Lubhu.
- SEBS delivered 4 (21'X12') tarps to Pabitra Samaj Sewa Nepal, an orphanage for 35 children and few elderly people.

- SEBSer Sagar Onta (400 B) coordinated relief distribution to 70 families around Budhanilkantha School. Keshar Khulal (800 A), the principal of Budhanilkantha School, along with other SEBSers, teachers and students from Budhanilkantha School distributed the relief.
- 4 trucks with 2000 sacks of rice (30 kg per sack) and 2000 tarps ((15' X 18', 90 GSM) dispatched to different VDC's of Melamchi, Sindhupalchowk. A team of 11 volunteers including Rabintra Maharjan and Bijay Babu Shiwakoti (Field Coordinators) and Keshar Khulal (Principal, Budhanilkantha School) successfully handed over the batch of relief.
- SEBS president Dr. Sneedha Mainali (100 C) and Treasurer Kaushal Sapkota (000 C) went to Kanpur, Kavre with a team of doctors, medical supplies and relief materials (mattress, tents, sleeping bags and blankets).
- Young SEBSers of 3000 D (32nd batch) carried out their relief efforts in different places as a part Apar Foundation's relief actions.

- SEBS delivered 70 tarpaulins to Nepal Relief.
- SEBS delivered 2,000 tarpaulins and 300 blankets to Barda Bahadur Gadh, of Nepal Army in Dolakha. 500 tarpaulins and 300 blankets were for Sundrawati and Kshrawati while the remaining 1,500 tarps were handed over to District Relief Distribution Centre of Dolakha.
- SEBS dispatched 200 tarpaulins each to Okhaldhunga and Dhading as part of the Earthquake Relief Action Project 2015.
- Fundraiser campaign by SEBSer Bijay Gurung called 'Angry Birds Friends Help Nepal Tournament'.
- SEBS and Kathalaya Publications worked to make children of make-shift shelter camps happy and entertain children at KIST hospital, Ama Ghar and a shelter in Pulchowk.
- SEBS delivered 480 tarpaulins, NPR 400000 worth of food items, utensils and sanitary goods to Syapru Besi, Rasuwa under the coordination of Mr. Samrat Dahal.
- Teaching and Non-Teaching Staffs of Budhanilkantha School donated Rs. 7, 11,040 (seven lakhs eleven thousands forty) in the Prime Minister Disaster Relief

- Fund to aid the earthquake relief program.
- Sudeep Kandel ran from Heywa to West Jiri to update relief workers on the status of people across the trail using a satellite phone.
- Field Coordination Team completed relief distribution. In the span of about a month's time, they distributed more than 10,500 tarpaulins and 90 tonnes (30 kg sacks of rice), along with several other relief materials like tents, blankets, other food materials, medicines, sanitary pads and other essential relief materials.

AUGUST

- Society of Ex-Budhanilkantha Students (SEBS) published its financial report of the Earthquake Relief Action Project in different national dailies of August 11, 2015. Buddha Air sponsored the publication.

SEPTEMBER

- 041 C Kaushal went on a trip to the United States to share the financial details of the SEBS Earthquake Relief Action Project with donors of SEBS and to gain nonprofit experience with different organizations.

2016

JANUARY

- Winter Clothes Donation Drive: SEBS sent consignments to Rautahat, Kavre, Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha and Sindhupalchowk. The project catered the winter needs of over 4,000 families.

MARCH

- Winter Clothes Donation Drive: Last distribution to Phaplu, Thateng and Surki village of Solukhumbu.

APRIL

- The formation of SEBS reconstruction committee in the leadership of Komal Karki (100 A). SEBS also appointed Biswash Chepang (100 D) as the Project Coordinator.
- The SEBS Reconstruction Team selected Kanpur School in Kavre for reconstruction. However, Kanpur School was also selected to be reconstructed with support from Government of India. Then, SEBS team decided to find another suitable alternative.
- SEBS Reconstruction Committee selected Shree Devi Primary School in Bhaktapur as the school to work for reconstruction. By August 2017, the school's design was passed by different government authorities. Constructions will begin from December. Bharat (200 C) is working as the Project Coordinator after Bishwash Chepang went for his higher studies.
- SEBS contributed in the dining hall extension and post-earthquake reconstruction efforts of Budhanilkantha School.

2017

2017

- SEBS North America contributed in the post-earthquake reconstruction and strengthening of Nilgiri House and Learning Resource Center.

Kaushal's shutter snap brings warmth to earthquake victims in Laprak

-6158D SURAKSHYA →

Kaushal Raj Sapkota (o41 C) is a student of Nonprofit Management at the University of Oregon. He has served the Executive Committee of SEBS for the past eight years and is the outgoing Vice President (2nd). A photographer by passion and an avid traveler, Kaushal is involved in different philanthropic projects on a regular basis.

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION FOR THE FIRST EDITION OF YATRI?

A. The trigger for Yatri 1.0 was this tragic news - seven people had died due to cold in one of the earthquake shelter camps in Gorkha. I wanted to contribute to a winter drive immediately. So, I contacted my artist and photographer friends for a charity exhibition but due to various reasons, they were unable to collaborate with me. I was not very confident about my photography skills at that time but wanted to do something for the cause. So, I decided I would try to find something worthwhile in my collection and went ahead with the idea.

Q. WHAT DID YATRI 1.0 ACHIEVE?

A. The 10-day Yatri 1.0 exhibition was held on January 2016. More than 50 frames were sold. We were able to multiply the sponsors' gift of NPR 75,000 to a donation

of NPR. 255,000. The proceeds went to the Winter Drive of Nepal Share's Nyano Sansar Project at Laprak, Gorkha. I am indebted to SEBSer Sudip Acharya dai from Dish Nepal for sponsoring us in this event.

Q. WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF YATRI 2.0?

A. Yatri 2.0 was a travel photo exhibition held on January 2017. With Yatri 2.0, we were trying to fund cataract surgeries of more than 100 patients at Sagarmatha Chaudhary Eye Hospital at Lahan. In fact, we were successful to fund surgeries for 122 adults and around 11 children. We collaborated with the project 'Make Me See' and were able to collect more than NPR 273,000.

Q. ARE YOU PLANNING ON DOING MORE PHILANTHROPIC PROJECTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

A. Definitely. I plan to devote one month of my time every year to support an important social cause.

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE AS THE TREASURER OF SEBS DURING THE SEBS EARTHQUAKE RELIEF ACTION PROJECT?

A. My role as the treasurer of SEBS was collecting funds, dispatching funds and recording the dispatched and surplus funds. Birendra Dai, the managing director





of Buddha Air, chipped in to provide 5 million NPR and was the primary reason for the energy we had in our relief program. Besides that, we collected funds from various batch drives, SEBSers, friends of SEBSers and Buddha Air, individuals from other organizations and the appeal from the national daily- 'Rs. 2320 helps a family, fight hunger and provide shelter for earthquake victims and give them a fighting chance'. In total, we collected around NPR 30,000,000. Half of this amount was used in the SEBS relief project with an administrative expenditure of about 3 percent. We were probably the first organization to publish our accounting information in all national dailies. The rest of the amount is currently being used in the SEBS reconstruction project in Bhaktapur with an administrative expenditure of about 10 percent. E-Sewa and Fisoft International, with the help of Samrat Dai, helped us in tracking the funds and donations through a live online system. I would really like to thank all the volunteers who supported us during this time, especially the field coordinators- Bijay Babu Shiwakoti dai and Rabindra Maharjan dai. Later, I got the opportunity to go to the United States to share about our project beneficiary with our donors in the US. I personally want to thank SEBS-NA and Kiron Sitoula dai for this glorious opportunity.

Q. APART FROM SEBS, WHAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WERE YOU INVOLVED WITH FOR THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF PROJECT?

A. I was also involved in the Ullens School relief project with Sushrut dai. We supported 8 families from Dhading and Darechok through this relief campaign.

I also did a T-Shirt for Relief Campaign with my mentor, Mr. Sohan Khatri. We sold t-shirts with innovative artworks and designs. The proceeds went to the Prime Minister Disaster Relief Fund.

Q. HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCES IN BNKS SHAPE YOU?

A. Right from the very first day, living in BNKS was a beautiful learning experience because of all the students that came from different parts of Nepal. Besides that, BNKS has taught me how important it is to give back to your roots. I would say that my involvement in the Nepal Scouts during my BNKS days taught me to take initiative and responsibility.

Q. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE ANY PARTICULAR MEMORIES FROM BNKS WITH OUR READERS?

A. As most students from BNKS already know, seniors in BNKS have this tradition of drenching juniors in the stream on the day of Holi. To avoid this, I went to the shower fully-clothed and lied to them that I had already been drenched. Unfortunately, they decided to drench me anyway.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR OUR READERS?

A. From our current SEBS executive committee, we wanted to issue this earthquake special edition of Aastha Magazine to show to the world that SEBSers from all over the world have contributed in their own little ways to the country and the world. I myself believe that we should be proud of our alumni and should always try to follow their inspiring examples.

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