

Table of Content

1.	Miteri Recycle - Between Social Service and Business	4
2.	Empowering Women Entrepreneurs - The Story of Kalpavrikshya	9
3.	Anthropose - Serving for Vision	15
4.	Hatti Hatti - Made in Nepal, Made to Change	19
5.	Seeing Hands - A Special Sense of Touch	25
6.	Red Mud Coffee - A Brand Built on Its Roots	31
7.	Danfe - Tailoring Life	37
8.	Solving Water Scarcity Issues of Nepal - The Story of Best Paani	44
9.	Converting Trash into Money - The Story of Khalisisi	51
10.	Making Learning Fun - The Story of Karkhana	58
11.	Converting Agro Produce into Cash - The Story of R&D Innovation	64
12.	Creating the Language of Serving - The Bakery Café	72
13.	A Restaurant for the Social Cause - Mahabir Dai's Restaurant	77
14.	Spreading Belongingness into Service - The Story of Help2shine	82
15.	Bikas Udhvami – Doing Development Differently	89

FOREWORD

Nepal has made tremendous progress in its socio-economic development over the past decades, but still faces many challenges. Where there are challenges, however, there are also opportunities. Social entrepreneurship constitutes a new way of trying to address today's pressing development problems in Nepal through innovative solutions. While it is still a relatively new concept in Nepal, but social entrepreneurship is increasingly gaining ground. In simple terms, social entrepreneurship can be defined as doing business for a social cause. Or in the words of Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, who also coined the term social entrepreneurship: "Social entrepreneurs are the essential corrective force. They are system-changing entrepreneurs. And from deep within they, and therefore their work, are committed to the good of all." Social entrepreneurs have the following characteristics:

- They achieve large scale, systemic and sustainable social change through a new invention, a different approach, a more rigorous application of known technologies or strategies, or a combination of these.
- They focus first and foremost on the social and/or ecological value creation and try to optimize the financial value creation.
- They innovate by finding a new product, a new service, or a new approach to a known social problem.
- They continuously refine and adapt their approach in response to feedback.

In July 2016, we embarked on our own social entrepreneurship journey by establishing Bikas Udhyami. Our organization supports young people to develop innovative and smart solutions that contribute to Nepal's development. One of the key social challenges that we found in Nepal was the lack of access to development data and statistics and quality information in areas such as higher education and entrepreneurship. Data, statistics and information are essential for people to make informed decisions regarding policy, development programming, investment decisions and various aspects of their personal and professional lives. Through our different initiatives, we provide people using technology and social media with the data and information they need, and through the provision of related services we generate capital that we reinvest to expand our initiatives.

A critical part of our mission has been to promote social innovation and encourage other young people to become social entrepreneurs. Therefore, from the start, we decided that it was important to document and share the stories, insights and experiences of other young social entrepreneurs in Nepal who are changing the way business is done. For the past one and a half years, we have been conducting interviews and been blogging via our website about young social entrepreneurs who are working in areas ranging from empowering women to become entrepreneurs selling clean energy products to employing differently abled persons as massage therapists. For this publication, we compiled the first 15 of our blogs and by doing so we hope to inspire others, especially young Nepali, to follow in their footsteps and explore social entrepreneurship.

We would like to thank the social entrepreneurs who agreed to share their journeys and insights with us and we wish them best of luck with their very important work. We would also like to thank Suraj Subedi, program coordinator for youth leadership and communication and Anusha Neupana, program officer at Bikas Udhyami for their hard work in conducting all the interview and developing this publication. We hope you will enjoy reading their interviews and will follow us via www.bikasudhyami.com and www.facebook.com/bikasudhyami for more social entrepreneurship stories in days to come!

Santosh Gartaula Tirza Theunissen

CEO and Co-Founder of Bikas Udhyami Co-Founder





Think about the clothes you have at home that you have worn only once or twice, because they do not fit you properly anymore or you have grown tired of them. You think of wearing them one day, but you never do. You are thinking of throwing them away or donating them to poor people outside holy shrines like Pashupatinath. But did you know that your used clothes could be the best buy for people in rural areas in western Nepal?

Miteri Recycle Nepal is a social business initiative established in 2010, which provides affordable clothes to needy people in the remote areas of Nepal. It collects used, but wearable clothes from people like you. After washing and ironing, it packs them and sells these to rural people at an affordable price. Proceeds from the sales are used to cover the cost of processing, transportation and the volunteers who sell the clothes. Bikas Udhyami sat down with Shova Chalise in charge of Miteri Recycling Center to talk about the company's story.

How did the Miteri's clothes recycling initiative start?

Our founder and president, Radha Paudel, is a nurse who was stationed in Jumla during her government service. Seeing the people suffer from extreme cold due to not being able to afford clothes, she wanted to do something for them. Once she encountered a woman, who was shaking because of the extreme cold. She offered the woman her warm jacket, which she accepted happily. Radha asked her if she would be willing accept more used clothes again in the future, which the

woman affirmed. This sparked her idea to establish Miteri. Now it has become an exemplary initiative with one full time and 5-6 part time female staff members.

How is your business creating social impact?

We focus on the rural areas of western Nepal, targeting people who live in extreme poverty especially children and women. It may sound unimaginable, but many



children in the rural areas in Western Nepal in which we work were not able go to school because their families could not afford to buy clothes for them. In addition, people in these areas have to walk very far to be able to buy good quality clothes. Our distribution is helping them to find a way and so far we have been able to provide clothes to 20 villages. In addition, we also employ disadvantaged women including single and Dalit women as part of our recycling and repacking work. Though part time, it gives opportunities for them to learn new skills and apply these. In the Western region, the practice of Chaupadi whereby a girl is forced stay outside the housing during her menstruation is quite widespread still and sanitary pads are difficult to get. Many women have good tailoring skills, so we engage them by teaching them how to make sanitary pads using the old clothes that we collect after washing them. The women can produce these from home, sell them within their rural villages and earn a small income. By doing so, in the areas in which we work, we have seen a positive impact in terms of reducing the practice of Chaupadi. Furthermore, we also operate a Birthing Center and Child Learning Center in the two districts of Jumla and Kavre. This is how our work combines conventional social work and business.

How is this initiative different to those of other organizations?

There are several other initiatives that donate clothes, which provide assistance like this for free. We also did this during our early days, but it brought inequality in the distribution. When the clothes were given for free, people were taking everything they could get and some of the clothes even went unused because of a mismatch in size. Then we got a new idea to package and tag the



price, sex and age group to every clothing item we distributed. Now, people have to pay a minimal price for the clothing item they want. The proceeds are helping us to sustain this initiative and while we do not make a profit, we can cover our operation costs from it. In addition, out of the proceeds made through sales, ten percent goes to the volunteers, who visit different villages to sell

the items or from our stalls that we set up in local towns in the west to sell the clothes. We do not only sell second hand clothes, we also make bags and dolls from clothing items like jeans and sell them at different colleges in Kathmandu that we visit or sometimes people come to our office to buy them directly.

How do you see the environment for young people to establish a social business in Nepal?

It is still tough. People are not so familiar with novel concepts such as recycling clothes and it takes time for people to change their perception. Other innovative businesses may experience the same. We are not completely



operating as a business either, but are an initiative based on a business model. I think all initiatives should have a business orientation, so that they do not have to operate only on donor funds but can sustain themselves.

What are your key successes and main challenges?

The fact that after 6 years, we are still continuing our recycling initiative is especially noteworthy for us. We have sold our clothes in most of the remote areas in 7 districts such as Jumla, Humla, Kalikot, Dailekh etc. Beyond this, we empowered them to start their own business as Miteri Cloth retailers. They are doing well now.

Apart from this, we are changing the perception of clothes donation. In the past, people used to donate any kind of clothes without washing. But once we show them what kind of clothes can be reused and how we pack them, now they are self-aware. We have some donors now who donate us directly ready-to-package clothes by washing and ironing them properly.

One of the major challenges for us is still how to cover our transportation costs. We cannot put a high price on clothes, so the proceeds hardly cover the cost of transportation. We have requested government and private transportation, but did not get any support. Also finding committed volunteers to go to the rural villages for a long time is hard. Furthermore, the sizing of the clothes



we sell also presents a challenge. A medium size in Kathmandu constitutes extra-large for most people in the areas where we work. Therefore, we have to resize the clothes before packing them, which also consumes extra time and cost.

What kind of recommendations do you have you for other aspiring social entrepreneurs?

It is always challenging to convert innovative ideas into practice. If anyone is in the process to start a new initiative or business that has never been established before, they need to accept the fact that the customers or the targeted group naturally could be unknown to them. Making people understand what you are doing is important. Once they become habitual, it becomes easy thereafter.

If you are inspired by Miteri's work and want to donate your washed clothes, please contact Miteri Recycling Center:

For more information visit: http://miterirecyclecenter.wixsite.com/awon





After Mina Mahato from Kailali got her own business card, she was excited by the fact that finally she had gotten her own identity.

Established in 2012, Kalpavriksha Greater Goods is a business organization that is contributing to building a network of women entrepreneurs in Nepal to promote sustainable clean energy distribution in Nepal. It is run under the umbrella of the global organization called 'Empower Generation'. The major goal of Kalpavriksha is to distribute and sell life-saving clean energy products by establishing the network of women entrepreneurs in the remote areas of Nepal to those who are deprived of electricity and who depend on the traditional system of fuel.

The CEO and Founder, Sita Adhikari, shared her experiences of the social business she started in 2011 with Bikas Udhyami.

How did the initiative start?

The condition of women in the remote areas of Nepal is very critical. They are not economically empowered and decision-makers are only men. So we searched for ideas to empower these young women as businesswomen and entrepreneurs. While doing so, we found that women suffer most in the household using the traditional fuel system. Thus, we decided to make solar products accessible to them. In other words, while trying to identify solutions for the energy crisis of Nepal,



especially for women, we started this initiative. Till Date we have covered 12 districts of Nepal including Kailali, Bardiya, Chitwan, Dhading, Nuwakot, Gorkha, Nawalparasi, Sindhupalchow, Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Siraha and Kaski. We plan to extend our work within these districts creating more entrepreneurs and sales agents under them.

What is your business model?

We supply clean energy products, mainly focusing on portable solar lanterns, metallic improved cooking stoves (Sudhariyeko Chulho), water filters etc. We try to reach those remote areas where people are deprived of electricity and women are our main target groups because they actually suffer most because of the traditional fuel system. We think women are those who can relate to actual problems and can be the medium to promote these products. For distributing the products, we firstly identify the area in which we want to work and then we come up with a notice calling for applications in coordination with local organizations like cooperatives. When the women are listed out, we motivate them and find out who can be the part of our initiative. We train them and provide necessary business and entrepreneurial skills. And after going through the necessary skills development programs, they will start their own business of distribution of our clean energy products. The most important part is that we have small portable products anyone can afford.

These products costs around NPR 1000 and have at least two years of warranty with a replacement guarantee. So anyone can use it and because it costs very little, women are able to sell it properly.

How is this initiative is different from others?

There are several other initiatives which provide solar products for free, and some other

which organizations provide skills and training for women. They are also doing so to benefit society, but we are focused on making our initiative a sustainable business so that those who are associated with us can find ways to earn in order to be able to their support livelihood. We not only teach business skills, but also help



them in running the business. We have a society where women have a hard time competing in the business environment. So we actually teach how business is done practically based on a modern business concepts and train the women of the households for the business. We supply them products, give basic promoting and selling skills, and also provide all the techniques like keeping a



daily account that a small business owner needs for developing them like entrepreneurs. We train creating a them for Business Model Canvas, through which they can come up with their own ideas and a model for how to make their idea work and happen in real context. In this way, we create ownership of the women in their business.

Why do you choose only women?

We choose only women, because they have suffered most in the absence of these products, and the beneficiaries of these products are those who are already suffering. Those who have suffered can explain it better. They first use and test our products and then only agree to sell it. They also can explain the change they found after switching to our products.

Another reason is that this is necessary. It is necessary for women to earn. Unless they have money in hand, women's empowerment won't succeed. They should not be seen as beneficiaries, they should be respected and promoted as stakeholders.

How is your business creating social impact?

Firstly, solar products are beneficial



for society. Before, people were affected by the smoke of traditional fuel stoves, but now they have an improved firewood stove. Not only this, the cost of daily used products like candles that cost on average NPR 20 per day can reach up to NPR 600 per month and NR 7200 per year. Through our business, we are providing solar lanterns starting from NPR 1000 with two years of warranty. This is a welcome change that our products have brought in rural households.

Secondly, women who were inside the four walls are now earning for themselves through these products. It is not only us, but they too are making profit through solar products business. It has given them an entrepreneurial spirit. In addition, the capacity and skills of marginalized women have been developed. The women used to have a secondary status in the family, be it husband, father or father-in-law, but today they have their own identity as the business owner or CEO of their own business. Besides that, they are respected and their family listens to their decisions. The



self-respect of women has been restored and the economic condition of the family has also been uplifted. The leadership capability of women has been increased. For example, in Dhadhing, one of the women entrepreneurs is running as a candidate for the position of Deputy Mayor. Seeing women's success in this way, other women are also encouraged to start their own business.

Also, if you go to Kailali to see the sales agents who have worked for us, you will find that they have established their own business. It means that we are spreading business consciousness in Nepal as well.

What are your key successes and challenges?

We have established 20 registered businesses and have trained 300 women for running their business. We have created visionary entrepreneurs. The main challenge is to identify the needy women entrepreneurs. Who is a real changemaker? Who are passionate about their business? We convince women, who have the ability to be the business owners and bring them into our program. Another challenge is drop out. As we can see, long-term planning is very difficult in Nepal and that is directly reflected in the family. People don't know where they will be in the next five years.

People are living in uncertainty. People want the immediate result from the business, which is not possible. Besides, there are family reasons, migration, and change in priorities, which lead to dropout of entrepreneurs from their business.

How do males respond to this business?

The role of male members especially husbands for doing any business is important. The

households with husbands, who support their wives well have done good in business. Whereas the households in which the husband has exercised unnecessary influence over their wife's business in most cases have also been the ones most often to fail in terms of business.

What are the main challenges for women in establishing their business?

The major challenge for women



in business I see is that women are seen and treated only as a tool of the family and as a person who cannot lead. Very few have decision-making power. Secondly, there is not any trend of taking risk for women in the family. If a male member wants to do business or go abroad for foreign employment, the family manages the money anyhow. Yet, when it comes to women, the families



are usually not ready to invest in her. If she decides to run her business, it's always hard for her to manage the early investment.

What are your comments and suggestions for young people in Nepal?

Nepal is full of opportunities. Nepali must adopt an entrepreneurial spirit if they want to do anything and it must start with the family. Creativity and innovation must be brought

about like a wave. Be creative in thinking about solutions to challenges. The entrepreneurial spirit increases the feeling of patriotism and provides necessary solutions inside the country. Before starting anything think once if you can sustain or not, because doing business in Nepal is just like choosing an uncertain destination to go to.

For more information visit: http://www.empowergeneration.org/kalpavriksha-greater-goods/





Anthropose is a Nepali Brand of trendy sunglasses established in 2014. It has introduced a line of sunglasses as a means to solve the deep-rooted problem of cataract in Nepal. It gives protection, comfort and style to the user by crafting high quality sunglasses. In the meantime, it also creates a platform for communities to unite, to resolve; the neglected problem of cataract by the government and give the often ignored an opportunity to get their sight restored. Collaborating with Tilganga Eye Hospital, we are providing Cataract service.

How did the initiative start?

While studying business in the US, I came across a campaign by TOMS shoes. The for-profit



company based in California donates a pair of shoes for a child in need for every pair it sells. So, bringing the same business model to the Nepalese context, I came up with the idea of selling sunglasses while giving vision to people.

How is your business creating social impact?

We have brought vision to those who were sightless. Those people who cannot afford the cataract surgery are getting sight. Till date we have organized 2 cataract surgery campaigns and have successfully provided 48 surgeries and 1500 vision tests. It has brought happiness in the family

and the society as a whole.

How your business is different to others?

There are other businesses that are totally profit oriented. We are doing business differently. Our core competency is the social value we provide to the



customer. Our customer not only uses our product, but also at the same time contributes to helping cataract patients. As I already said, "multiplying resources is the beauty of business". Likewise, we multiply the value and satisfaction that the customer gets from our products.



What are your future plans?

Our niche market is the luxury, quality and brand aware customer. And we have segmented our market accordingly. However, we are aiming to expand our business to the price sensitive customer too.

Also in terms of Cataract surgery, we are currently organizing only one

campaign a year. However, we are changing the model to provide cataract services on an continuous basis. We are targeting to conduct 600 surgeries this year and hopefully this number will grow further in the coming years.

What was the most memorable point of time in conducting this work?

My most memorable point was when the first surgery was completed successfully and the old lady who had undergone surgery exclaimed "Now I Can see the Heaven". It was the point when I realized that this is going to work.

How do you see the business environment in Nepal?

Yes, the environment is frustrating. There are challenges, but Nepal is in a transition phase and in such phase there is always havoc. There is a paradigm shift occurring. With technology and internet, a lot of people are being proactive and they are globally aware. Where there is a will there is a way. There are challenges and as an entrepreneur it is your responsibility to figure out how you will solve the challenges.



What recommendations do you have for other aspiring young Nepali entrepreneurs?

Until and unless you are going to take risk you cannot achieve something in life. First identify the problem and be prepared for the challenges. You really need to be sure if you really want to do it. Until and unless you are ready, you cannot. The system does not provide support. Hence, you must be prepared. And you must have a good team and be able to work in a team. It is your team, who will make you successful. Develop your relationship skills, because technical things can be learned. But it is personal relations, team work and willpower that will enable you to achieve what you set out to achieve.

For more information visit: https://anthropose.com/





Two Swedish names, Charlotte Mellkvist and David Geiser should not be forgotten. They laid the foundation and let us flourish. It was in 2014, when they came to Nepal and volunteered in 'Saath' an organization supporting for HIV infected and affected women. After seeing the discrimination against women, they decided to support them and started Hatti Hatti employing one HIV-infected woman.

We at first made Swedish Chocolate Balls and sold these. We used to put our stall at the Farmer's Market 1905 restaurant twice in a month. This raised good funds and inspired us as well. We then started to make Hatti Hatti bags, which sold out really well.



Both our founders believed in sustainability. They were searching something that would sustain us and saw the potential in re-using Saris. Apart from sustaining ourselves, we wanted to be a social enterprise and create other entrepreneurs. Recycling Saris, we produced bags in the beginning, but this was not successful. Then we started to make Kimonos, which became very popular. Then three women from the Under Privileged Children Education Program (UCEP) joined us as an employee. UCEP used to provide vocational training to the women and one of them is still working with us.

How do you design the products?

While making Kimonos, many patches went to waste. In order to use these also, we came up with the bow tie concept. Every new product that we produce appeared as a need. Gradually we added more women. After they cross a one-year period with us, we encourage them to start their own business from the skills they learn from us. We provide seed money and necessary equipment, pay their rent and monitor them for two months and after that they have to be independent. From the early batch, one is working in Danfe Enterprise. Another woman, Padhmam, from the second batch, has her own store at Hetauda. Till now, we have completed 3 batches and 6 women are working with us including ones as production manager here.

How was your early struggle? How difficult was it to work in such a unique field?

Initially, we were not targeting the market in Nepal. Most of our products used to be sold in Sweden. In the context of Nepal, teaching people that the recycled products are hygienic was a major challenge. It was all donation based at the beginning, but that was not sufficient to sustain our supply, so we had to search for alternatives. Then we approached Sari shops near New Road. Convincing them about our motives was challenging, but we won them over because we were not only earning but also supporting women in Nepal.

Another thing is that Nepali people are not used to second-hand clothing. That cultural barrier was a major problem. We tried persuading people that these are not just recycled clothes, but an effort to keep our environment clean.

How do would paraphrase your main message again through this interview?



We strongly believe in using sanitizer. We use only those clothes, which can be reused in a healthy way. So if you have unused saris, donate them to us. Your donation can give a disadvantaged woman employment. We are not only doing business, we are also supporting our society.

How is the present situation? Are people more conscious

now?

Well, it is a continuous process. Because of the emergence of innovative ideas like KhaliSisi (An initiative to collect already used bottles), people are gradually becoming conscious about the importance of recycling. Getting people's support is quite easy nowadays and it is not so difficult anymore to get our message across that recycling can be done.

What criteria do you use in selecting women for employment?

We mainly use 5-6 criteria i.e. family occupation, caste, family background, tailoring skills, educational status etc. We try to choose those who are discriminated, those who are devoid of opportunities.

Why only women?

Because women are discriminated a lot in this male dominated society.



Perhaps in future we have to think of males, but right now our focus is on women's empowerment.

After working at Hatti Hatti, has their family status changed?

Yes, a lot for the better. Before coming here, their confidence was quite low. They were dependent. Now they are coming out of that. They even are able to send money home. Some of them started their own business as well.

How do you evaluate the social impact your initiative is creating?

Firstly, we are creating value by supporting women in a sustainable way. We brand ourselves as a non-profit recycling organization. Secondly, we are transparent, in a sense that we allow customers to meet their tailors. In every tag that we put on our clothes, we provide information of the tailor who made the clothing item. This is rare in the fashion industry and we are redefining the industry in certain ways. Thirdly, we are increasing the confidence of women through different skills



training. Twice a week, we give them education classes in which we teach them and listen to them. They now believe that they achieve something in life and through the platform we provide, they that transform from women with low confidence to entrepreneurs. As already mentioned above, we are serving as a bridge for them

from sewing to selling. Finally, we are also contributing to increasing awareness on the importance of recycling.

What are the thing that makes you proud? And challenges that you still face?

We are not dependent on any proposals till now and are able to sustain ourselves. The more our products are sold, the stronger we become. At the same time, it is also a major challenge to deliver the products on time and sell them. Another major problem is that we can produce just seasonal

clothes. We don't have any products in winter except bow ties.

In how many countries you are selling your products?

Before it was only in Sweden, but now our markets have expanded to Nepal, Finland and the Netherlands as well. We export 50-60 products on average. Our products are mostly bought by young people between 18-30 years old.



Any recommendations that you have for youths who are planning to start a business?

Simron: I am doing this at the age of 20. There is scope to do something in Nepal, but the sad part is that most of the youths of my age are flying abroad every day. They are not searching for opportunities and possibilities. It takes time for people to believe in your unique idea. Make sure you are clear of your goal that you wish to pursue and you will not be disappointed.



And to those who are studying social work: boys and girls, the things that you are studying are good theoretically but they are not practical enough. Do an internship every year and do it not just to obtain your marks, but also to learn something. It will help you to work on your future unique ideas. If it is possible, do part time work next to your study. It helps you gain experience,

which will help you to get better employment opportunities after your study.

For more information: http://www.hattihatti.org/





When you touch a body, you touch the whole person, the intellect, the spirit, and the emotion."

Are you thinking of relaxing your mind and body after a tiresome workweek, after a long journey, hike, or trek through hills, and have been looking for a place that provides a body to rejuvenate your body and soul? Then "Seeing Hands" might be the perfect choice for you! A massage clinic led by visually impaired persons, "Seeing Hands" has branches in Pokhara, Thamel and Patan. "Seeing Hands" provides three types of massage treatments for relaxing the body and mind. "Seeing Hands, means that, though we are not able to see through our eyes we see through our hands," says Chiran Poudel, the founder of Seeing Hands and the first visually impaired therapist in Nepal.

Bikas Udhyami talked with Mr.Chiran Poudel to find out more about this initiative.

How did the initiative start?

Rob and Susan Ainley, a British couple, which used to visit Nepal in the 1990's realised the enormous possibilities of massage Therapy. In 2005, the couple found out that there is an

organization Cambodia working on massage therapy and run by visually impaired people. Thus, bringing the same idea back to Nepal, Seeing Hands established was Pokhara in 2005 with the support of a local person, Mr. Bahadur Acharaya. I was the first student and visually impaired therapist in Pokhara.



After working as the trainer and professional therapist there, I thought why not establish my own enterprise? Searching for my own identity, I established Seeing Hands Clinic in Thamel in November 2010. Likewise, after the success of the Thamel clinic, we established another branch of the clinic in Bakhundol, Patan in 2014. In the coming months, we are also expanding our business to Bouddha and, we are planning to expand it to Chitwan in the future years to come.

What is your business model?

We are a social enterprise and run on a business model. We do not depend on foreign aid or anything like that. We sustain on ourselves. Our main operation, the massage therapy is the only source of income. We divide the revenue generated from the services to our clients into three parts:

- 1. Operational Cost: This covers all the operational activity.
- 2. Therapist Fee: This includes the salary of the therapist. We are the best salary provider to visually impaired people in Nepal.

3. Reserve Fund: The money besides operational cost and Therapist fee are included in the reserve fund. We provide trainings to visually impaired people through this fund. The food and accommodation throughout the training period is compensated through this fund. Similarly, if any of our trainees wants to establish their own organization we use that fund. We establish the Bakhundol, Patan Branch with the funds generated from the Thamel Branch and the Bouddha Branch is being established by our trainees as a franchise of Seeing Hands.



How is this initiative different from others?

Unlike, donor dependent organizations for visually impaired people, create opportunities in a sustainable wav. provide training visually impaired people in massage, develop them professional therapists, and prepare them for leading independent life business. We not only

provide free trainings to visually impaired people, but also bear all the expenses incurred like food accommodation during their training period. We have created 27 professional visually impaired therapists till date and 23 are working with us in different branches.

How do you find the probable visually impaired therapist?

We locate the probable therapists from educational institutions where visually impaired people are studying and other organizations, which have accessibility to visually impaired people. However, word of mouth is the most powerful tool to spread our message. As Ι have already mentioned, we are the best salary provider in the sector for visually impaired persons. We are also able to create a notion that visually impaired persons cannot only pursue a teaching career, but that there are



other jobs too for visually impaired people that they can do very well.

What kind of changes do you see in the lives of therapists?

First of all, our business has provided a good opportunity to visually impaired people by opening the door to an enormous array of possibilities for them. We have been able to make positive changes in the life of visually impaired persons. It would have been best to ask some therapist working here. However, if I have to say as an employer, I would say that they have gained independent living skills, the ability to support their family, a sense of self respect, trust building and self-confidence within themselves. Likewise, the way other people look at visually impaired

persons is changing, which has brought positive motivation to the lives of the visually impaired.

Who are your major customers and what is their feedback after your service?

Our major customers are foreigners, who come to visit our country as a tourist.



Almost 97% of customers are foreigner and 3% are Nepali local people in our Thamel Branch. Talking about Patan Branch, the ratio is almost 70:30.



We visually impaired people have a good sense of touch, thus we are getting good feedback from customers. We are at the top position at trip advisor.

As we say our customers "don't come only, because of the noble cause but also because they look for quality. Word of mouth communication spreads so fast that there are customers visiting our clinic, because of other customers. Therefore, we are

lucky in terms of customer feedback.

What are your key successes and challenges?

Opening the door for possibilities for visually impaired is what I see as a major success. We have been awarded the "Surya Nepal Social Entrepreneurship Award", which was one of the happiest moments for us. I think it is our success for being able to gain that trust and recognition from the society. We have been able to create a separate identity in the visually impaired sector as well as doing business. The way society sees us has changed.

Talking about challenges, establishing the clinic in Thamel was a major challenge itself. It was like going against the wind. People started pinpointing negative comments. Why Thamel? Why not any other place? What kind of service do you provide in Thamel? We received lots of negative comments over the word Thamel. Obviously, there were financial challenges at the beginning.

Talking about the Patan Branch, there are challenges from competitors. There are many such clinics around Patan, but I accept challenges and I think that competition increases quality.

What are your future plans and long term goals?

We have a vision to employ at least 100 visually impaired within 10 years. We are planning to get recognition for this training from CTEVT. Likewise, I want to create awareness in terms of the



massage sector. There is a lack of people, who can massage well in villages. In every house, there is a need for massage. So, if we can reach the nooks and corners of the country, many visually impaired can get employment in their households. Similarly, by transferring the skills of enterprise development, I want to expand more of such clinics in various parts of the country.

What suggestion do you have to

other youths?

Not just wait for government jobs or teaching jobs. There are millions of other opportunities lost while waiting for government jobs. Identify your skills and ability. Take the necessary training and be prepared and develop your own enterprise based on your skills and ability. Don't only blame Government, NGOs, INGOs, or any other sector for not doing anything, think once what have you done for yourself? Whatever you do, be honest, passionate and do it with dedication. At the end of the day, your hard work will really pay off.

Anything else you would like to add about your enterprise?

Don't exercise random judgement. Massage is an alternative medicine therapy. Come with us, take the massage, if you like it share your experience with your friends and family. If you don't like give us feedback, so that we can improve quality. Thank you Bikas Udhyami for this wonderful opportunity.

For more information visit: http://www.seeinghandsnepal.org/contact.php





Aashish Adhikari, the founder of 'Redmud Coffee' is among the most successful young entrepreneurs in Kathmandu Valley. He owns his own coffee brand, sells it abroad and runs his own chain of coffee shops. In his own words, he is cultivating the habit of drinking coffee among Nepali people. This interview uncovers the story behind his journey.

How you define what it is that you are doing?

Despite having answered this question many times, it is still challenging to answer this question. I own a coffee brand named 'Redmud Coffee' and sell it here as well as abroad. I am taking the initiative to promote our own coffee in our own name and bring it to our own people to sip.

When did you decide to start your business?

I was in the U.S. eight years back. I was in a dilemma for two years what to do and where to go. Many suggested me to apply for a Green Card, but that was never my intention. Working as an employee in many places, I tried to find job satisfaction, but never found it. I wanted to do something new, but I didn't know where to begin and what to do. Then without any plan, I returned back to Nepal. Started a business named 'Dignity dot.com'. I used to produce T-Shirts



with my own prints, but that too didn't last long and I dropped it after six months.

Then, seeking new ideas, I went to Pokhara where one of my friends had recently started a coffee shop. After talking to him, I saw

good potential in coffee and started a coffee wholesale in Kathmandu. However, as a new guy without an established market, nobody believed in me. I was just able to send some samples abroad. Now, I believe that this laid the foundation for my business idea as I taught me to understand what the actual demand for coffee in the market is.

Then I started a coffee shop at the Trade Tower in Thapathali in 2012. Though I failed to sell the 3000 kg I used to sell as a wholesaler, I was happy because at least I was able to sell 300 kg as a coffee shop. This early investment of around 20-22 lakh brought me to where I am now.

How did you come up with the name? How is important is branding?

I visited various coffee shops around Kathmandu valley and found two common factors i.e. the tag "Himalaya" or "beans". I wanted to try something more unconventional. I am from Kavre district where my ancestors lived. It is in the Hills, so I know how the mud functions and what it is that coffee plants enjoy the most. In Nepal, our most fertile mud for coffee is red and therefore I incorporated my roots into the branding. I have always believed that branding is about the statement of our products. The brand carries our geography, hence a good brand makes a country famous. However, in Nepal, we are not brand conscious. When I was in London last time, they were selling Sikkim and Darjeeling tea, whereas a large portion of this tea is exported from Nepal. Our tea is sold as an Indian brand abroad. So why can't we do that ourselves? Branding is a kind

of story to which every individual in the world should love to listen. Unless we create our brand, we cannot tell our story.



How were the early years of running your business?

There are always new challenges arising. We have four stores and three seasonal stores. Still, it is the same. The type of struggle evolves, but it remains the same somehow.

How is your business creating social impact?

In Nepal, there is a tendency to rely on aid, but it supports you only for a temporarily. It just gives momentary progress, but investment provides long-term economic benefit. I am proud that startups like us too contributed to Nepal's recent growth rate increment of 7.5 percent. We started with two people and now have 77 staff working with us. This is definitely creating social impact. We are happy to be the part of their progress.

We process 1 to 1.5 tons of coffee every year, which means many farmers are attracted to coffee farming. We pay them a good price. I frequently visit them and ask what I could do to make things easier for them. The money we make here also goes back to our own coffee



producing belts in Nuwakot, Sanjya, Palta, Gimdi, Lalitpur etc. Big international projects started them, helped people to harvest coffee and we are giving them a market. They have now believed that, if they produce, they will get a market. We are giving them our own Nepali branded name.

Last year, I went to Sanjya, where one person named Gangadhar Adhikari, who started his coffee firm with the help of JICA. He had 50-60 coffee plants, but now seeing the market he is thinking of adding 200 more. Before farmers were delivering to international companies, now we Nepali too are their consumers.

Farmers can't do branding and marketing and we can't produce coffee. So the gap has to be fulfilled by someone like us. Dhakeshwor Ghimire, who was the President of the Nepal Coffee Producers Association had a dream to have his own brand. And he hoped his son would do that

for him, but he went abroad. Now I am fulfilling his dream and he is fulfilling mine. I am providing a market for his products, he is providing coffee to my market.

Are you involved in any other social engagements?

Yes, from our part we are conscious about the career progress of people who are working with us. We have collaborated with the Young Thinkers Society and worked with their youths during the earthquake. Not only this, we frequently organize campaigns like giving free barista training to 10 underprivileged youths and employ 5 out of them. From our first batch, 2 people are still with us. They are now the store managers.

We also worked with Maiti Nepal. Two girls who are packing Momos for us were taken from high-risk areas to human trafficking with the help of Maiti Nepal. Three other guys who worked with us started their own business, which is now progressing well.



I am also enticing people who have land to consider using it for coffee farming.

How did Rockstart (An accelerator program that helps startups to be more successful) promote you?

The success I have achieved is due in large part to the contribution made by Rockstart. They changed the way I used to think. Previously, my plan was to start as a coffee vendor as well as to have my own coffee firm. However, they pushed me to take coffee farming out of my business model. I was in their first batch and they gave me various insights. They helped me to refine my business model and develop it further.

How can others benefit from Rockstart?

It is an initiative supported by 'One to Watch', a team from the Netherlands. They themselves come and support. To apply for their support, a business has to be established at least for two years. It should not be in the idea phase, rather it should have created a customer base already. They only give a platform to those who have a track record. I already had build my customer base before applying and was the first person to receive their support.

What are your recommendations to those who are think of starting their own business?

The one and the only thing I can say is to be ready with a proof of concept. Anyone can dream and create a concept, but you will get funds only when you have proof. You have to prove, be it at a small scale, that your idea works. Sell and show at 300 square feet, then you can aim for 3000

square feet. Nowadays, ideas only won't be funded. Proven track record or concept is what attracts investment.

Be ambitious, but never be disappointed. To reach a certain level, you have to work hard at the



beginning. I used think 100 customers per day as being the highest attainable, but nowadays we have 500 to 700 customers average. So gain experience learn how to deal with failure, because you will be repaid in the end.

For more information visit: https://redmudcoffee.com/





In the aftermath of the earthquake in 2015, many organizations were established to help victims. However, Danfe did something different, by finding a sustainable way of supporting earthquake victims focusing on disadvantaged women and girls aged 18-25.

Kritishma Karki, Executive Director, and Bijeysh Ranjit, Director of Development and Administration, sat down with Bikas Udhyami and shared the story behind the establishment of Danfe and how they are empowering women to become self-employed.

What is Danfe?

Danfe is a social enterprise working for the empowerment and development of girls in earthquake affected areas. It basically trains disadvantaged girls aged between 18 to 25 to establish a tailoring business. When they are fully trained, they start a business and the products made are sold through the Danfe outlet and different e-commerce sites.

How did the initiative start?

We had an organization called Saath, a social organization working with marginalized communities established in 2006. and Danfe was the livelihood project for earthquake affected young girls. The



motto Danfe was to help earthquake victims in 2015 supporting them in reconstruction. After working for a few months, we realized that while the work was going well, we were not able to find any long term solution or impact of our work. Thus, while thinking about long term solutions, we

sat together in a group and discussed what could be done to achieve long term impact. Through that discussion, we came up with an idea and started our tailoring project with earthquake victims.

As a pilot project, we brought 5 girls from earthquake affected areas and gave them tailoring training for 6 months. At first, we did not work like a social business, but while searching for a sustainable way to make a difference and impact in society we came up with this idea.

After 6 months, the project started to create positive impact. The difference in the lives of these girls was remarkable. Along with the work, they learned different life skills including working as a team, and increasing their self-confidence.

At the end of 2015, Caritas Canada, approached us, saw the pilot project and liked it. So with their support, we brought together more than 30 girls from Sindhupalchowk, Makwanpur and Kavre and gave the same tailoring training to them. We chose these districts because they are earthquake affected areas and because they are most prone to trafficking in persons.

How do you choose the beneficiaries?

We basically select beneficiaries from 18 to 25 years of age. We are focusing on these girls, because at this age they are in high risk of being subjected to trafficking, sexual harassment, violence and so on. We are increasing the awareness of the girls of these risks as well as coping strategies while empowering them to make an independent living.

We coordinate and partner with local organizations. First, we conduct a need assessment which includes what type of skills do they need, what type of girls can really benefit from our project and so on. After that we then set criteria to choose the girls. Some of the criteria are: age, girls who are willing for the positive change on their own, economic Status of the family and other relevant criteria as per the situation. The girls that meet the criteria, are brought to Kathmandu. Until now, we have been able to empower 54 girls.

There are several other organizations providing tailoring training. How are you different from them?

For many girls, it is the first time that they visit Kathmandu and it is a big change for them coming from a rural setting to an urban setting. We try to create a comfortable environment for them and make them feel at



ease. Hence, we provide lodging for them at a girls' hostel so that they don't have to worry about accommodation and food and can fully focus on training only.

As we are from social work background, we wanted to support the girls in their overall development too. So we provide them with drama and informal classes, counselling, recreation and other workshops. In addition, we also equip them with knowledge on different social issues like gender equality, gender-based violence, dowry etc. Furthermore, we also provide separate weekly education classes for the girls. As most of the girls are school dropouts and for tailoring basic mathematics is essential, we provide them with mathematics classes and other basic education classes. Finally, we also conduct recreational activities, like outings and picnics functions. All these additional activities, have helped the girls a lot. We find that combining the tailoring training with such additional models and education provides a holistic model for their overall development. Thus, since the early establishment of Danfe in 2015, we are still continuing our work in the same way.

What sustainable business model does Danfe use?

In next 5 years Danfe envisions to establish itself as an independent enterprise. So while searching for the model of sustainability, we came up with the idea for a store. Our plan was to start selling the products through the store and then start marketing of our products and selling them through ecommerce sites. As per our target, the store was opened on December 23, 2016. After our first

tailoring training was completed, out of 30 girls, 24 returned to their home and 6 stayed behind to work for our store so we were able to create a job opportunity for them. At present we have one store in Lalitpur and we sell our products through ecommerce sites like Thread Paints, Sasto Deal, etc.

The store is helping to sustain the project. We don't spend the money generated from the store, but we put the money in a Danfe Endowment Fund. This allows us to use these funds in future for further training and development of other beneficiaries.

What are the positive changes in lives of the girls?

Changing a person's life is an ambitious goal. At Danfe, we don't say we can change the lives of the girls, but we are able to create a positive impact on their lives. After our training and workshops,



they learn many new things, but it is up to them whether they want to implement the things they have learned or not. We cannot force them.

We can only show them the way and provide a platform for them. We try our best in supporting them. We believe selfrealization is very important. Before

Danfe, many of the girls believed that they could not lead their life independently. After the training, they feel that they are now independent and can make a living on their own. Their level of confidence has increased and our trainings and workshops have helped them to face the challenges of real world.

What were the major challenges you faced in Danfe's journey?

As we did not have a business background, we faced many challenges. However, in a way, not having much business knowledge, it made us more resourceful in finding opportunities. When you don't have any ideas, you are more willing to try out new things. While we experimented with new things, there were of course other challenges related to pricing, production and gaining trust from customers.

There were marketing challenges too. In Nepal, the idea of buying a product made in Nepal is still very new. When people think of a "Made in Nepal" product, they usually only think of handicrafts and locally made products, which are sold to tourists and foreigners. There are many enterprises that sell "Made in Nepal" products, but we still have a long way to go in terms of attracting Nepali customers.

Similarly, an initial challenge was to train the girls, as they did not have basic idea of tailoring and this took time. Even selecting girls from village areas was challenging. People were not convinced to send their daughters with us, but with the involvement of local organizations we were able to gain their trust.

We are taking these challenges in a positive way. We are in learning process. To sum it up, the whole system and process is challenging. Starting from scratch is always a challenge but very rewarding at the same time.

How is the reaction from the families of the girls you work with?



Firstly, there was a trust issue. Some parents came to see the hostel, the lodging, food and so on. They visited from time to time to see their daughter. However, after the training was over and the girls returned to their homes, they appreciated the project. And they were happy to see their daughters being able to

sustain themselves.

Out of 54 girls enrolled till date, 7 started their own tailoring enterprise, 6 are receiving on the job training on Danfe, 16 are working for other enterprise, there are 6 home based workers and 19 are on training currently.

What are your future plans?

We have many future plans, but to be specific we are planning to increase our outlets and making these self-sustaining in future. In addition, we also want to create a home based working system in our organization like a network of people working from home like a chain. Creating awareness on "Made in Nepal" products. We also have a plan to create a specific niche for our products in the market and we want our customers to come for the quality of products rather than to support the cause. Furthermore, we are Kathmandu based training centre till now, but we are planning to create community-based training centres in the various districts where we work. We want to see NGOs sustaining themselves, rather than being donor dependent and Danfe has started the initiation of this process.

What are your comments and suggestions for young people who want to start a social business?

Start with your idea immediately. Unless you start doing things you cannot achieve anything. Things will grow continuously. There are challenges, but you have to mitigate and overcome all these challenges along the way.



For more information visit: http://saath.org.np/danfe/

At the same time, you should be very clear about your intentions. You must think first of the issue you want to address and how you want to address it. You should also have long term goal, since when you add "social" to your work this comes with a responsibility. If somebody is benefiting from your work, you cannot quit like some many other regular enterprises do in Nepal.





If you are a resident of Kathmandu, you have probably stood in line to get water either early morning or late night. Or waited for the water tank that promised to reach your home on time. This is not an uncommon tale in Kathmandu Valley, where majority of houses suffer from water scarcity. Most have to depend on weekly and irregular water supply and resort instead to pulling water via electric motor pumps. As the water pressure rises up, your electricity bill shoots up. But do you know that there is an easy solution to this problem? Best Paani is a social enterprise that provides the solution to the existing water scarcity and increasing demand of water through rain water harvesting and filtration technologies.

Sajal Pradhan, Co-Founder of Best Paani, shares her experiences of dealing with these challenges. Perhaps, after reading this interview, you may be her next client.

How did Best Paani start?

Our co-founder Gokul Dangal, a water engineer by profession, started installing rain water harvesting systems in his own capacity 10 years ago. At that time, the government was struggling to supply sufficient water and Nepal was (and is still) facing a severe water crisis. Gokul began

experimenting with rain water systems for family and friends. Afterwards, people advised him to pursue it as a business. That was when Gokul tried to standardize the pre-existing practice of rain water harvesting for drinking purposes.

How long have you been at Best Paani?

Since 2014. I was doing my Master's in Sustainable Development and working at



ICIMOD's SERVIR data mapping project when Gokul approached me. I had volunteered making wells after S.L.C., so I was vaguely familiar with the technology and as a student of sustainability, I understood the impact clean water had in Nepal. Although I hadn't yet decided to focus on specifically water issues, I knew I wanted to be part of the solution, not the problem. Gokul convinced me that this was a great opportunity to create tangible impact and our assertions were confirmed after the earthquake when we were able to create access to clean water for thousands of victims, preventing water-borne diseases and epidemics in earthquake impacted areas.

And what influenced Gokul to start Best Paani?

At that time Kathmandu residents were struggling to meet their water demands. Empty taps, long waiting lines and irregular supply. Even today, 60% of the water from the source is lost to pipe leakages. As a water engineer, he saw that the centralized water system was failing the public, while their resultant extraction of ground water was exhausting, dehydrating and weakening Kathmandu's soil. After having experienced it himself, he felt it was wrong that people's lives were limited due to the constraints of water scarcity, and given his technical expertise in water engineering, he felt this was the area where he could create societal value through his skills.

How does Best Paani's system work?

In a typical Best Paani system, we collect rain water and make it drinkable. Rain water is collected from roof tops, directed to tanks and filtered through different layers of sand-filtration depending on the usage purpose. These filters require neither electricity nor any chemicals as they are intended to be compatible in rural and urban landscapes. We install different types of filters according to the size and quality required for the water usage. For instance, drinking purposes would require an advanced filtration versus gardening or showering purposes. In all systems, we encourage people to recharge the ground water by sending the extra water underground. We discourage people from send the collected water through drainage, because the drainage joins the river and that water will create floods that claim lives down South in the Terai. Rather, pour it back into the soil and you will get that water back through your own water well.



Why rain water harvesting?

Take audio communications as an example. First, we got centralized telephone wires all over cities, and then we invented cell phones which has now replaced most telephone lines in Kathmandu.

Initially, the government was trying to copy the centralized wired communications model in rural areas as well but now they've scrapped such plans because they realize now that it is far more effective to simply leapfrog to buying cell phones.

Similarly, it does not make sense for the Nepali government to waste billions of rupees connecting every house to a central water piping system when it is far cheaper and far more efficient for everyone to have their own decentralized rain water harvesting systems. No leaking pipes, no shortage of water, no waiting for rationed water supply hours and no waking up at 4 am like my parents used to while living in Patan, to turn on their water pump.

What kind of social impact have you created?

It humbles me when I think about the impact our team of now 10 people has created within 3 years of operations. We have created clean water access for 300,000 people. Our work has reduced the societal costs of water and given back an estimated 1.7 to 19 crores (according to WHO's calculation method). We have recharged 3.3 million water under ground and prevented female student dropouts largely in rural Nepal.



In urban areas, such as Kathmandu, many people use water provided by water tanks, but no one knows where that water is sourced from. I don't use tank water but I have seen in restaurants that do, a high presence ammonia, Sulphur and iron. A recent study even claimed that 92% of even bottled water in Nepal

has shown presence of Escherichia Coli bacteria. In contrast, the water filtered by our systems is guaranteed to meet WHO global standards for drinking water.

We have also lobbied for rain water harvesting policies. Last year, we were pleased to learn that Kathmandu municipality made rain water harvesting mandatory for constructions of large footage. We continue to lobby for efficient implementation of that policy and for introductions of similar policy in Lalitpur and other areas.

Tell us about the impact of water outside the valley.

80% of hospital beds in Nepal are attributed to water borne diseases. Majority of drop outs in schools are attributed to water scarcity.

Access to water in a school determines how likely a girl is to study after menstruation. This also determines how likely her children are to be taken care of by an educated guardian. I believe that if Nepalese mothers were



more educated, we would not lose 50,000 children under 5 each year to preventable conditions.

Best Paani's work not only enhances the quality of person's life but also increases the chances of their children's survival. In other schools we've worked in, children are sent to fetch water from far away locations rather than to school, sometimes leading to child abduction or molestation. In the day to day life scenario, safe water at homes ensures that working individuals can provide for their families without falling sick or losing the family's income source, or even their lives, to a preventable water born disease.

We understand the vast impact water has in people's lives. Safe water should not be a barrier for a person's wellbeing, and we are working on this problem so that it doesn't.



How much does the system cost, how long it will sustain?

Since Kathmandu receives rainfall at least once in 2 months, we make 3-month backups for our systems and they ensure all-year-round usage. Our filter doesn't need electricity and we do not use any chemicals. We use slow sand gravitational filters that have different layers and is available in different sizes. The

cost depends on the size you buy. While our smallest portable filters costs NPR 12,000, a large full-scale system ranges in general from NPR 40,000 to NPR 200,000 and lasts for at least 25 years.

What have the challenges been until now?

We have struggled, as I think most social enterprises do, in defining their middle ground between capitalistic and social approaches in doing business: from creating fair salary structures, equitable

payment structures and to balancing the trade-offs between creating impact and maintaining margins. As an industry, the social enterprising community struggles to lobby for policy changes. I think things are getting better as the government better recognizes the importance of sustainable social enterprises, particularly over and alongside corporate social responsibility (CSR).



As social entrepreneurs, we like to believe that we can create efficient systems through which people will invest their personal money to create social goods such as ground water availability. However, we have struggled and continue to struggle in designing a financially sustainable model for ground water recharge.

And, of course, there's the gender dimension. Given that the majority of entrepreneurs, technical staffs and office workers are male, I admit there is a degree of isolation and differentiated treatment a woman in business is likely to experience, particularly in Asia. That said, I think it is important to ignore such noises, in order maximize your productivity.

What recommendations do you have for newcomers?

Perhaps the first is that when you think you have only half the knowledge you need to start your project/business, trust me, that's enough to start. Take it from the initial idea and just do it.

The second would be to not get disillusioned with the romantic notion of seeing social entrepreneurship solely a passionate endeavor: it's mostly decoding operations and setting up systems, just as it is in any other form of entrepreneurship. And it's okay if you do not feel passionately about saving the world in dramatic fashion through social enterprise since day one. It



has taken me months, and I'd say even years, to truly appreciate the impact we have created in peoples' lives. It's enough that you are a well-meaning individual simply trying to do what is right by your values, or even trying to simply avoid doing what is wrong given your values.

It also helps if you check in with yourself

occasionally to figure out what you enjoy about the process: whether you are passionate about the operations, rural development, public speaking. A lot of it has to do with combining your existing skills and passions with wanting to create value in society. Figuring out yourself, helps you realize how you want to be placed within your organization for the benefit of your team.

Finally, the single greatest thing you can do is to get yourself a great mentor. I cannot highlight the importance of a mentor enough that understands and cares for your growth.

Website: http://bestpaani.com/





A bottle of whiskey being used as a water bottle. A white sack filled with empty Pepsi bottles ready to be dispatched. A scene that you usually don't see in an office. But this story is being narrated from an office. Sitting at a desk, Ms. Aayushi KC is talking with a person, planning how they can collect trash. Aayushi KC is a woman from Kathmandu, who made recent headlines in some of the national newspapers for leaving a job at a bilateral development agency and starting a trash collection business. After reading news about her initiative, Bikas Udhyami decided to learn more about her story and her thoughts on social entrepreneurship.

When did you decide to start Khaalisisi? What was your early motivation?

Honestly speaking, I was working on this idea for almost one year before I started. I was working on a USAID project at that time. It was a kind of stable and secure job. I had an idea of solid waste management company, but could not do two things at a time. So the time came when I had to



RAM SAGAR

18 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

FATHER OF 7 CHILDREN, HE IS ONE OF THE KINDEST PERSONS ON EARTH, ALSO VERY AMBITIOUS, HE ONCE ASKED US TO HIRE HIM AS A MANAGER AT KHAALISISI.COM. WE'RE STILL THINKING..

decide, which way I wanted to go. My idea kept coming back to me and my inner voice was saying 'let's not be limited to thinking of it only, but go for execution.' Then I registered the prototype of Khaalisisi in February and launched Khaalisisi in June 2016.

You said you were preparing for the idea. What were the things you were preparing?

I am not from a technical background, so I used to think that I was not ready to start a waste management company. But as soon as I made my mind up to do this, I started to read more about the different aspects of solid waste management i.e. what are the kinds of waste we have, how we can classify these, what impact does recycling create

etc. These aspects demanded serious reading. I planned to research and study everything beforehand, but that didn't work out because learning takes place always in the middle. One has to start and learn. My team members also helped me in this journey.

Any incident you remember that brought you to this field?

Because Kathmandu is a huge mess. If you look around at the streets and your home, we are so brutal with our waste. Our cultural mindset is one of the reasons. We don't know that we have to separate waste. Though the government has dictated through laws that we have to separate the waste at source, this is not implemented either by the government or by us as citizens. It is because we don't know how to do it and why to do it. There are some people who try separating waste, but ultimately the metropolitan truck comes and puts all the different type of waste together. Seeing this, people's motivation to separate waste goes down.

This is the traditional problem we have. If you visit the landfill, you will see how unmanaged it is. So we decided to find an innovative solution to this traditional problem. And here we are as Khaalisisi.com, a digital platform for waste management.

How is the business going?

We have been very fortunate that people have been supporting us from the very beginning. This shows that people actually are interested in new innovative ideas. They are happy to be our customers. When we launched in June, our target number of Facebook likes was just 5000, but we were able to reach this target within a month. This shows how people are curious about new innovations and in a way about environmental issues. There was no service earlier, but when we started to provide this service they were interested to use it.

How do you operate?

Everyone has trash, but we collect only recyclable dry wastes. We take dry recyclables such as paper, plastic, metal, aluminum, electronic waste, steel, bottles, and others. However, we do not collect wet/organic waste. Interested clients can schedule pickups of contact us for queries through phone, email, our website, or our Facebook page. People do not call our KSFs directly, the pickup is scheduled through us. We give our Khaalisisi friends Khaalisisi issued ID cards and a notepad for record keeping. People can either sell or donate their trash. If they donate, we separate 10 percent of the money for the welfare of our Khalisisi friends. For example, recently we provided

an education scholarship for one of the sons of one of our Khalisisi friends.

Who are the Khalisisi friends? How do you choose them?

They are the ones collecting waste in the traditional way, but we are supporting them to do their work differently. Now they don't have to go to every house saying 'Khali Sisi Purana Kagaj'.



Our platform is providing them with a smart solution. The houses in Kathmandu are getting higher. Their voice doesn't even reach the top. Because of this, their business is declining. Hence our idea is not to replace them, but include them in our platform. Till date, we have 20+ Khaalisisi friends and we are expanding.

What were the early challenges?

Challenges came from the very beginning when we went for company registration. The kind of objectives our company had, caused problems in registration because they were completely new. It was very hard to make the officials understand and we were registered as Kabadiwala. I am happy about that, but it tells that our government is not prepared to welcome innovative ideas in Nepal. We really need more openness towards innovation from the government side.

Recruiting trash collectors in our network was also challenging. They are very tied to their own circle. For a girl to go and talk to them was difficult. One of them even asked if we have any men in our office. At that time, I was little nervous. Telling them about the digital platform was also difficult. It took time to trust us. But as they joined, they started to make some extra money through our network. The same thing applied to our clients at the beginning. They were asking us how we were different from the regular 'Kabadiwala'. But we were able to explain them our purpose.

Any economic problems?

Not much. Our main challenge was people's mindset. Otherwise, this field is fertile for business. Behavioral change is always tricky. The generation gap plays a vital role. Hence, we work with kids. We make them understand why these things are necessary. We don't take the traditional route of organizing awareness camps etc. We simply link children from different schools and Khaalisisi friends. They know the important task they are doing and this will make them think. We organize waste tours named 'School to the scrapyard.' This was really fruitful. In our cultural setting, generally parents keep children away from 'Kawadiwala'dais, but they should know how waste is managed and the role these common men play. Now they are able to talk straight, because they know their work and world. The kids of one school even made a small drama out of their visit



visit the client's location to collect the waste.

experience. Khaalisisi friends are also happy with this interest and to be able to share their stories.

How can people contact and sell their waste through your network?

There are multiple ways. They can message us on Facebook, call us or even schedule the pickup from our website at the time of their availability. Our Khalisisi friends then

Do you keep anything except organic waste?

While working we got to understand that Nepal lacks a full-fledged waste management industry. There is no transparency in waste. Because of this reason, sometimes we can't take things that cannot be recycled properly. What we take depends on what big collectors are taking from us. So, there are certain limitations even within waste. But we are working on that. Some types of wastes are very difficult and expensive to send to India. Sometimes the vendors lack economic sense and avoid certain products.

How do you manage these things?

When we collect waste from the people, all the collected waste goes back to the scrap collector. Then it is categorized into different types. After adding some value additions like labeling, folding etc., they are sent to respective places i.e. wholesalers and retailers.

How are you different from other traditional system then?

Right now, we are working as a digital platform, but we aim to become part of the waste management industry. We have seen many weaknesses in the current system and we try to work on those. There are no clear criteria on pricing or priority on management. The middlemen take all the profit. These things are to be addressed. We are focusing on building the ecosystem. Many people ask us why we don't recycle ourselves. The reason is that recycling is a completely different business. It is the last step I say. Before this, we need sufficient waste. But the waste supply is not regular. As I said earlier, we are fighting against cultural barriers. The root of the problem is the mobilization of trash and we are working on that.

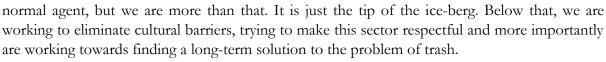
How do you earn? How you will it sustain economically?

We take commission from our Khaalisisi friends and it is subjective in that we take according to the nature of the trash and sometimes dependent on the quantity they collect.

We give them an ID card that increases their options opportunities of getting more trash. They don't have to roam around here and there for the whole day. There are some places like business houses, offices, apartments etc. where there are huge amounts of waste such as old electronic devices, but they are not allowed to enter. Our card gives them access to those places. So, it is a three-way benefit for all. In the return of this access and other benefits, they pay us the commission.

What are the impacts do you think Khalisisi is making on society?

Many people consider us as a



You can see the changes in our Khalisisi friends whose economic condition has improved close to 30 percent in a month when they started working with us. Another impact is that they are now called by their name. Previously they used to be called as 'Bhaiya'. This may seem like a small thing, but it has a greater impact on our society where we often fail to value low-level workers.

From the waste seller's perspective, they now believe that something will happen if they separate their trash. Now they see the potential even in waste. This motivation is also linked to environmental solutions. One glass bottle takes one million of years to decompose in the natural environment, whereas we are able to collect them in order for them to be recycled. We are diverting waste away from the landfill, where it was destined to end up previously. We are trying to work with the government to make the landfill more sustainable and technology friendly.

You earlier said that you had a problem in dealing with the government system. What do you think the government should do to make the environment good in Nepal?

I don't want to blame government alone. It is not the time to complain all the time. It is the time to work. The government may have some limitations. For example, they are yet to attract experts in this field. Filling that gap, through public private partnership between government and the private sector is still a novel thing. This is the time when we should work with the government. We should give them innovative ideas and help them to implement these. Let's tell them what we want to do, how we want to do, how much does it cost and how long will it take. I think the government is open to these kinds of things. We need to have a collaborative mindset. The government has many problems to tackle, so there are opportunities for us.



Any suggestions do you have for the upcoming young social innovators?



In Nepal, most of us still live with our parents. This has made our lives easier, but all at the same time has made us dependent. They provide us with a secure option. But let's not take these things for granted. Let's be a bit aggressive, try to do something and stop complaining. We often search for excuses for what we cannot do. We should leave this attitude behind us and should be determined in our work. Success doesn't come overnight.

For more information visit: http://www.khaalisisi.com/





Education plays a vital role in the overall development of our country. Many people talk about modernizing the education system, which is primarily based on textbook learning. In this context, bringing fun and excitement to teaching is a welcome change. Karkhana, originally established as a product design company, is now designing school curricula and selling those as a co-curricular program to complement the existing education system. Besides that, they also run an innovation lab, which provides a learning environment for the people who are interested in learning. The exciting thing is that these are all things done by a bunch of young entrepreneurs. Talking to us, Sunoj, co-founder, and Anamika, a storyteller of Karkhana, shared with us the story of their journey of becoming one of the leading young social enterprises in Nepal.

How did Karkhana start?

Sunoj: We were engineers involved in several robotic initiatives. Me, Pabitra and Suresh had an NGO named Robotics Association Nepal. . We used to run trainings for several engineering colleges. We opened that NGO, because in college life was too boring. There was nothing to do. Robotics gave that platform and made us engaged. All the departments of the college joined us, but later we wanted to something of our own. Then we met Sakar Pudasaini, who returned back

from America. He too was bored of his work there and wanted to do something on his own. He was attending several tech events in Nepal searching for ideas and like-minded people. At that time, were in the Google Developers Group and organized an event there named 'Tech Fest'. In 'tech fest' we had a session, where anyone can pitch their ideas. Sakar was there as well



and presented his 'Galli' idea. It was an idea to map the traffic routes in Nepal. We found that interesting and he found our idea interesting. That evening, I compiled a note on our idea and emailed this to Sakar. He liked the way we responded with an email, because everywhere he went people would tell they will email back. However, we were the first doing so. He invited us to his home. After 6-7 months of discussion, we planned to establish a company. And in 2012, we established Karkhana.

How were the early days?

Sunoj: It was just a product design company at the beginning. We used to design products for Nepali use. We made a vending machine for eSewa, but realized that these products are not scalable. We couldn't have made 100 machines even if someone would have given us the money. The supply system is not good and we needed someone to make the necessary parts. Precision in the work was not there. We felt our weaknesses as well. We didn't know how to think and plan a product. These problems came, because of our poor education system. We tried to identify these lacking skills. Idea generation, communication etc. were the major problems. We aim to give these skills to children. Then it went from product design to education design.

The early days were experimental. We tried many things. Pedagogy was not what we learned. The thing we learned was only robotics, where there is a problem which we need to solve. We tried to take this approach to the education field.

After introducing that new idea, what were the challenges that you encountered?



Sunoj: There were lots of problems, but the major one was that the field was completely new. Making learning fun was a challenge because parents used to think learning should be something serious. Obtaining marks was the first priority for them. Another challenge was convincing the schools. They also saw what we are doing as an extracurricular activity like dance and football. Finding the manpower was another greater challenge. Nobody wanted to

be the teacher, because teaching is considered as a last option for anyone to pursue as a career. We too were struggling to find ways to improve the learning experience and were looking for mentors. Fortunately, many people helped us.

Any breakthrough you remember when you were trying to overcome these challenges?

Sunoj: Interestingly, our first customer was a parent who came by himself. He heard of our work. He said he wanted to bring his son to us. He said he could bring other people, but requested us to start. It was the best moment. From there on, things spread kind of by word of mouth and we were successful in offering the course to one school. We saw the teacher's performance and the students' response to it, which helped us to make further improvements.



You did not try to work in government schools?

Sunoj: We tried, but not in collaboration with government. Our aim is to create impact. It is not just for private school students. We also conducted our program in some schools like Janauddhay, Bal Byabashy for 3 years. Still, we are working with 3-4 other schools. For government schools, we provide the service for free, but we take money from donor organizations who are supporting such schools. Children will get the program for free through the donor-funded programs. In case of private schools, we talk, show our products and persuade them to buy iur curriculum. Many schools are happy paying for our courses.

Why did you develop the cross-disciplinary curriculum for the children? Why in the Nepali context?

Anamika: I think we should not differentiate it as Nepali context. It applies anywhere. In school, there are separate classes like science, math, art. One of the main purposes of education is to get the students ready for work. In class, we solve math problems for 45 minutes, but in reality, a

problem doesn't present itself as being purely science or math. Hence, we tried to bring everything together. The problem should be handled logically. We try to teach students where these subjects come from and why. We encourage them not to see the subject as subject, rather see it as a small part of a bigger thing. We try to connect every discipline to bring real learning based on real-life situations. The duration of the program depends on the choice of the school. We have several packages on subjects like science, math, sociology etc.

How do you persuade the concerned bodies like parents and teachers? Did they not see it as an extra burden?

Anamika: For our Be Creative' we brand it as a cocurricular program. Students will read the curriculum, but we add the extra value. What thev get in school necessary, but we enhance that. Our main objective is to make them curious about what they read. If they read about the motor, they will search more. We approach schools in that way.



On what other things Karkhana is working now?

Sunoj: Right now, we are doing only one thing, which is designing a learning experience middle school student. Other activities include content generation, teacher's development, train teachers. We have storytellers, who persuade the schools by visiting them.

How do you select the content? How does the content generation team work?

Anamika: We have a separate team, who make the content based on the TMPI method. Think, make, play and improve. We believe in the process more than in the product. We research and see what is lacking in existing textbooks and make it accordingly.

How do you think you are creating social impact?

Anamika: 'Be Creative' is 2 years old. 'Karkhana Innovation Club' is 4 years old. We run this in our office where any interested student or youth can come and learn innovation practically. Anyone can reach us through this. There are many small classroom stories that serve as a testimony to our success. Till now we have reached to 2300 children and have shown them how much fun reading is like. Many children have joined our innovation club and believe on what they are learning. We are making studying fun as well as practical. We have created an environment in the classroom, where children can be openly curious. They see us as an organization where they can learn.

We give a chance to children, who are curious. We are creating contents and kits covering things like communication, storytelling etc. We are encouraging them to be dynamic and are producing small leaders through our 'Maker Mentor' program. We are trying to say learning can happen outside of the schools also.



Sunoj: In many of the classes they arrange seats according to students gender. Many students are shy to speak. Our teachers with friendly behavior make them talkative. We also run teachers sharing sessions once a month. Teachers are tired of being trained. We try not to train them, but to motivate them to be sincere in their profession.

Lastly, we can proudly say that we are making the job of

teaching glamorous. We somehow converted it into a learning and earning the opportunity. People who used to shy away from teaching, are now in the teaching field. Karkhana is doing what people have thought of for the reformation of the education system in Nepal. When they see our effort, they appreciate it. Karkhana is doing the thing which many teachers, principals are willing to do. We are showing them how these things can be done. That's why we are trying to go inside the schools and change the system from bottom to the top.

What is your business model? How is it sustainable?

Sunoj: the first thing is that we develop a content package and kits to sell. These packages are available in our office. The kits cost from around Rs. 4,000 to 10,000. Recently we have launched a web store for our products where people can see the products and price attached. People can access this at the following link https://store.karkhana.asia/). Not only this, we make our products available in several stationary stores around Kathmandu valley. Likewise, we choose special occasions like a new year to celebrate and promote our products. Last time we did water rocket launch. Children came, made the rocket and launched that. They had to pay Rs. 1,000 entry fees. We also organize several camps in Karkhana and such camps cost Rs. 7,000 to 10,000.

How do you see the current landscape in Nepal for social enterprises?

Sunoj: The landscape is quite favorable. There are various opportunities. Seeing the opportunity and converting that into an earning business is another challenge. So, all the things are connected together. One needs to have a strong team. Vision and mission should match. I think Nepal can produce globally competitive companies. The thing we are lacking is role model companies, but soon it will come we guess. In 5-10 years, we want to reach outside and sell our products there.

Lastly, what do you want to suggest to other people?

Both: Be persistent. Continuity is the major problem. Hard times come with lessons from which one should learn. Do not go for other's problems, but try to solve your problem. People who can associate with that will come to your side. Come with the value-driven idea first, and then convert that into a business. Coming with high ambitious business ideas is not so good for startups. Where do you see the company going? How do you see it create impact? Take it from there!

For further information visit: http://www.karkhana.asia/





We call ourselves an agriculture-based country because according to Ministry of Agriculture Development, more than 65.7 percent of the total population earn their livelihood from this sector. But despite of that, farmers are facing a lot of challenges to dig things out of the limitation. They are short of subsidies, required information and market facilities. Sunita Nhemaphuki, founder of R&D Innovative is trying to solve this problem and is making an effort to convert agro-products into cash. Bikas Udhyami talked to her about her motivation and the journey of her success.

How did R&D initiative start?

I was a communication student and was running an advertisement agency. Then I went Bangladesh for my study. I was interested in doing my thesis in the area of public service, but talking with friends I decided focus on agriculture. One of my friends had started a cattle farm. But he was not getting any information. So, he came to us and told us why don't we do something in this field. While doing research, I found that agriculture news was getting a lot of attention in newspaper but there was no source to find practical information in this field. Most of the articles were not

informative in a sense that they could not cover the needs of small farmers. News of earnings in Lakh was published but small farmers were not getting profit, because of lack of information. Journalists are eager to report news, but they do not care about that information gap. They don't even know what



type of information is needed for farmers. Information on a business plan, insects, seeds, methods were lacking. Some research was published, but this was mainly in English and very difficult to understand. That encouraged us to do something on this.

We primarily thought of starting with a mobile application, but later decided to go with the magazine because that will be easily accessible to farmers and they can learn from the pictures and associate themselves with the articles well. People who are really in agriculture don't know how to use smartphones properly. Message to be delivered through simple communication methods works better. We published our first magazine in 2002 AD and provided the farmers with the contents relevant to them and the phone numbers where they could call and ask. That worked really well, because we Nepalese love to talk in person and get information.

What were the early challenges? How did you cope with those?

After the establishment, we encountered a distribution problem. Reaching the farmers was difficult. To solve this problem, we started a club of people, who were interested in agriculture. We used to invite experts and moderate the discussion. It was only in Kathmandu at that time, but the crowd was huge. After one year when we did a business review, we found that though we successfully ran the discussion series and connected thousands of people but the actual work was not properly done. We reached the same people time and time again. Then we left that idea and started a consulting service named Krishi Udhyamsala. We provided ideas on what to start, how

to start, how to make a business plan etc. and we also provided this information in our magazine. We started to write articles on how to start animal husbandry, or hatchery etc. including the estimated cost calculation, wages, operation cost etc. That went really well and this is continuing till date. We have a consulting wing as well. Now we have 2 Chartered Accountants and other MBA graduates working. In collaboration with other NGOs and INGOs, we organize financial literacy training.

Why is your business is unique in comparison to other businesses in this field?

Our business is aimed at solving the problems of a particular society. We are innovative and solution oriented. After three years, people who started their business after consulting us, found it



difficult to sell their products. To solve this problem, established small around outlets Kathmandu Valley collect their products. Where they can sell their products to us and search market. They choose if they want to sell themselves or sell through our company. There were 24 outlets, but

due to the earthquake and followed by the blockade, we are now reduced to 6. But they are working fine. The major problem with agriculture nowadays is that activities are scattered. It is not easy to collect things. And there is an inconsistent supply in agricultural products as well. Then we found that unless we have our own regular farmers, they cannot follow our business plan. Even though if we come up an innovative solution, if is not sustainable, it won't work.

From last year, we started something new. We started to do production of goods from a particular pocket area. We started this from Bhaktapur Gundu, and we want to convert every farmer into an entrepreneur by reaching to their locality. We provide capital to the farmers not in cash form, but in the form of infrastructure investment. We help them building farms, where labor and land will be his/her responsibility. They will invest 20% and for the rest we provide an interest-free loan. But they will not get cash in hand. When the production begins, we buy a guaranteed 35 percent of the production. We provide them the wholesale price of Kalimati. This is how we are working. After they pay back the loan, after two or three years, the whole farm will be their own. Now we are targeting 500 such agriculture entrepreneurs. We are also investing in a cold room for the storage facility of unsold vegetables. While we are focusing on agriculture now, we are also working to recognize other pocket areas.

Any other things that R&D is doing recently?

Another part is that we have established a promotion center. After working with farmers, what we learned is that not all farmers can produce in the long term. They will have small-scale productions

and they need a place to sell those as well. In this promotion center, they can come with their product and sell from here. To benefit the rural farmers, we have also given them storage facility here where they can store their product and search the market. There is one farmer from Jumla, who is taking our service now. He had a problem with minimum scale sell, where people won't pay in time etc. He was storing his goods in a paid room. We provide that opportunity free of cost. He also can't find the place to sell and potential buyers may not find him. Our center works as the meeting platform of these two interests. We have 6 stores here that farmers can use for free for 6 months. If they want to sell by themselves that is ok, if not we sell through our channel partner. We even help them in branding their products. We do this through our AgriNepal. This way we are helping the economic activities of agriculture farmers.

You already talked about some of the challenges earlier. What were the economic challenges in building all the system and investment? How does it function?

The economic problem arises when you start something at a large scale. I began these things only

in 50,000 rupees. That was my scholarship amount. Then we grew gradually so the foundation was strong enough to sustain. The main problem for women entrepreneurs is to persuade both of their families, especially fathers. I am so lucky that my husband works for me. But this is not the case for many other women who want to be entrepreneurs but



simply couldn't convince their families.

In agriculture, it is hard to get any loan at the beginning. When we promise to farmers, we have to buy their goods. Sometimes the market goes down, sometimes a strike happens. Those past years saw a lot of hardships, but now we are in the position to help farmers strengthen their position. We have another bad habit in thinking that everything comes free. Especially in agriculture, people take things for granted. We had to work hard to sell our magazine. Getting sponsorship was another huge challenge. We used to visit different places to sell our magazine, but people used to demand to get it for free. It was very hard for us to tell people that we are not running any donor-funded project, but are making a business out of that. In the discussion program as well, when we used to tell people to pay for the monthly edition, they used to be surprised. If it has worthy information, then why they fear to pay for that? If I teach others to do economic transactions, then how can I not follow the same rule? Government too was not very open and we didn't have good experience. Now, there are many NGOs, which sponsor our magazine and we send it to various villages. We even send it via the post office. When I look back at our journey then yeah, it's been a long one with many ups and downs. This is what every startup goes through at the beginning. Those who persist, will climb.

There seem to be two problems we are having: one of having to go through middlemen and another is of lack of education to digitalize the agriculture world. You have been trying

to solve these problems. Why is that necessary? How hard is it to transform the already established system?

The problems exist, because our country has geographical challenges. In agriculture, right now it is almost impossible to supply things without a middleman because bank and government are not that strong to intervene the process. Middlemen too may have their own problems. But what I think is, either profit or problems, that should be transparent so that their contribution also counts. Transparency in the process is very important. In other countries, farmers decide the price, but here the middleman does. We pay 67% to farmers and play on the rest 33 percent. That is what everyone should do. If any consumer pays 100 per kg, then we assure that 67 should go to farmers. This is what an ideal system should be. Why we want to digitalize this transparency is because of our geographical reasons. We cannot travel to every place but at lease mobile network has. So that they can know the price of their goods and deal by themselves, know about plant diseases and solve etc. But despite that, we cannot work to each and every farmer, therefore, we work with lead



In one of your interview you said that farmers should be independent then only they can earn a profit. What do you mean by this?

farmers.

In Nepal, one of problems we are seeing is that there are various collection centers, groups and saving cooperatives. There are various grants open for this, but only certain people apply to these grants. What we focus is on

individuals and output oriented. If you produce this much amount, then you will get this much grant. This model will encourage farmers to invest in the output-oriented field. Those who are interested can apply and get. This will sustain the farm as well. If it is a group, then people wait for someone to do the part. In this way, everything fades out. If we give to individuals, they will be motivated to do well and entire risk also will be their own. But the grant should not be given in the form of money.

Government and NGOs are often blamed for distributing fish rather teaching fishery. What is your view on this? What should be done to solve this?

Dumber (Her husband): NGOs motive and farmer's needs do not match in Nepal. Farmers agree on everything they get for free and NGOs distribute whatever they have got the project on. The government has one program to increase the productivity and they have a certain thing on their mind in terms of chemicals and fertilizers. Most NGOs are against such fertilizers in the name of organic productivity. I am not against or support this, but I am talking about the general tendency. These things are confusing the farmers, because there is a clear difference in government and NGO priority and the priority of the farmers. What should be done is to evaluate all these priorities and their actors and streamline the entire investment accordingly. The more this conflict expands, the weaker the agriculture field will be. Investment in agriculture should be need-based.

What has social impact R&D Initiative created to date?

The main impact is that we are simultaneously developing new entrepreneurs in this field. Another thing is that we are working with small farmers and observe the changes in their day to day lives.

After their own their greenhouse, their economic status has changed. Now they are investing in the education field. They are their livelihood. Through collection center, we have saved the time of various farmers. In our agro center, people even come to sell their product worth of Rs. 20 only to buy shop for them. That used to go to waste before. We welcome everyone and help to convert their product into cash. We have been able to prove that agriculture is itself a business. Hence, we should think about various aspects before investing in it. We have more than 10,000-piece circulation. Those who can't buy these from the shop, we send every edition via mail. Government agencies and NGOs are also helping us to spread these pieces through their channel. Till date we have reached up to 650 farmers directly and more than 90 percent of them are women. They are now able to earn small money for their livelihood.



As the new federal system is coming, we have been focusing on the adjustment of agriculture in the new system. Since the last 5 editions, we have been publishing things related to these issues. We have been raising issues like digitalization, contract farming, seed banks, plant clinic, chemical fertilizer awareness etc. We have been writing contents on the things they are capable of doing. We have been focusing on how government, we, farmers and consumers collaborate together and solve the problem.

You have been working with various startups. Being the part of Rockstart etc. What are the major problems with agro-based startups of the current time? What do they need?

First, they should not have the feeling that they are the only ones. This field needs a collective



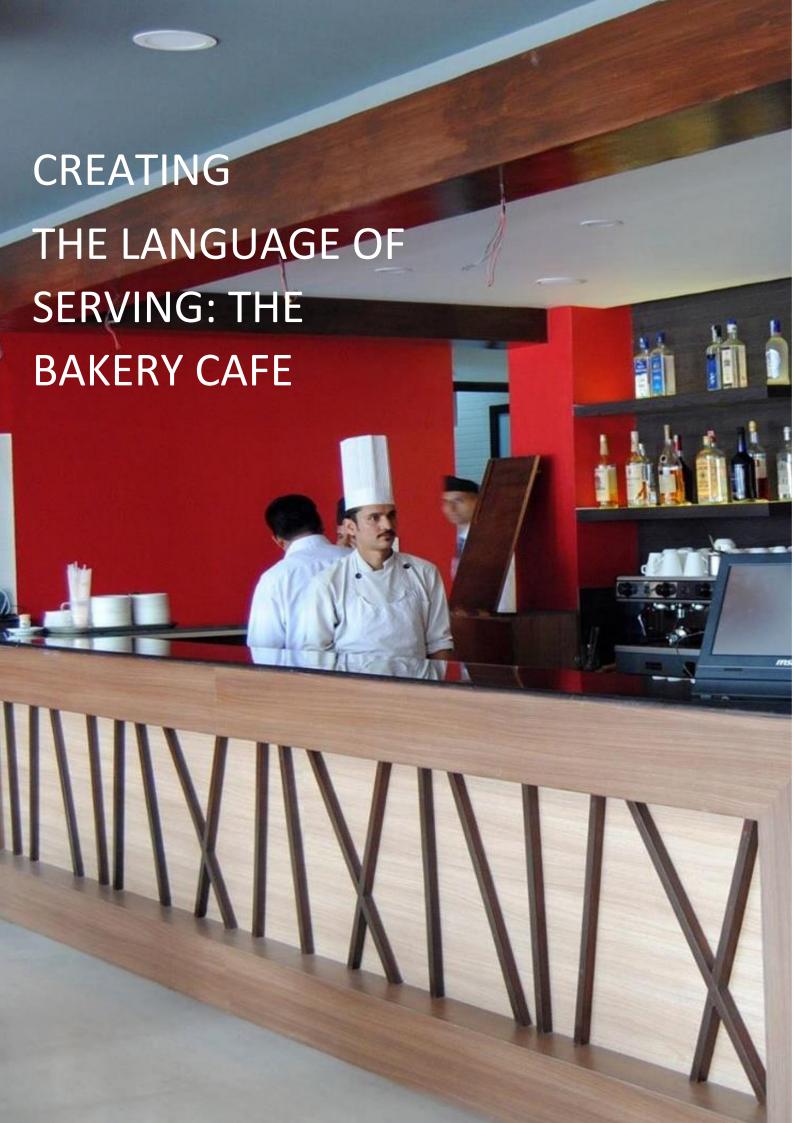
effort. I often see startups saying this is my unique and innovative idea. The context of Silicon Valley doesn't apply here. We need to contextualize our ideas. I say there is nothing left to be innovated. It is all about finding compatibility and redefine ideas in our own way. When you leave that I feeling, you start talking with people, mentors and even with your competitors it actually helps. This reduces the repetition

of work and hence helps us to avoid mistakes. People say focus on only one area of work. But I say, focus on one sector, but go multiple ways. That gives you the option when you fail in one. This is the problem among startups as well. Their idea is innovative, but when someone incorporates their idea as a small portion in another field they will go out of competition.

Dambar: Talking about agriculture sector, this is not the sector where you will get immediate profit. It takes time. One needs to understand the crux of the business and play in real figures. We need to be very strategic while planning to visualize the potential hardships and different plans. Investment is a crucial thing rather than emotion.

Another mistake is that startups soon go lack of capital investment and the one reason why they can't get bank loans is the lack of documentation of their transition. There are banks to invest in your idea, but you at least should build a strong foundation with proper record and documentation.

For more information visit: http://www.rndinnovative.com.np/#page-top





Since 1991, "The Bakery Café", has been redefining the Hospitality Sector through its unique way of serving people. Its uniqueness lies with its employees. Along with the quality food, accessibility and excellent service, The Bakery Cafe, while introducing Fast Food Culture in Kathmandu, has been known for accepting and employing hearing and speaking impaired people. Bikas Udhyami sat down with Mr. Sulav Lal Kakshapati, the Marketing Manager to talk about how The Bakery Cafe is promoting and serving the social cause of differently abled people in Nepal.

What is the idea behind employing differently-abled people in such a service sector?

After working with differently abled at some public event, Mr. Shyam Sundar Lal Kakshapati, the Chairman of Nanglo International, was impressed by their dedication and professionalism. As in most professional settings, they are not considered eligible for work, he got the inspiration to employ them. So, in 1997, he started by hiring 12 young bright candidates, who had no previous work experience and no training in food and hospitality industry. Currently, the company has employed more than 50 speaking and hearing-impaired people as well as persons with physical disabilities such as dwarfism.

How do you find persons for employment? What is the process of selecting these employees?

When we need more employees, we announce a vacancy for these people. We coordinate with



different organizations working in field of differently abled people and find probable candidates for our organization. Candidates go through a selection process as any other person. We provide selected candidates with training and necessary communication skills for the job. In addition, every week, we meet and share about the changes in the industry and listen to their grievances and try to address these.

What changes have been brought in their lives?

Employment at 'The Bakery Cafe' has brought positive changes in their lives and therefore is motivated to work with us. The most important thing that it has brought them is empowerment. They are successful in their personal as well as professional lives. They are able to sustain themselves. For example, recently one of the employees successfully organized the wedding of his son. Similarly, one of the employees got an award in an international competition of disabled persons. Some employees are Futsal players. These are I think wonderful achievement made by our employees and these are examples of the changes that are brought by The Bakery Cafe in their lives.

What kind of training do you provide to these employees?

In the hospitality sector, the most important thing is communication. For maintaining effective service and quality, we provide communication training to all our employees. For coordinating

with each other, every employee should understand sign language and the symbols. We provide training for communicating about the food and beverages, the way of serving and all other necessary issues needed in this industry.

Do all of your branches have such employees? What kind of service do these people provide?

We have altogether 9 outlets, and all outlet have these employees. They involve in direct interaction with customers. They are involved in Waiting, Delivery, Cashier, Catering and also Playing with kids (dwarves).

What is the feedback of the Customer after receiving the service from these employees?

As these people are loyal their work are commendable. We receive variety of reactions from customer. Because of the good customer feedback and the service quality offered we are being able to sustain in the market for so long. If some miscommunication occurs, there are our other people who will handle the situation.

What are the challenges faced for hiring such employees and for business?

The employees are our strength. Our challenges do not lie with them, but more in the communication area.

Talking about business, we used to be the only ones in the market. However, today competition has increased. Nowadays, there are a lot



of fast food companies in Kathmandu Valley and increased competition is a challenge we have faced lately. However, as we value our customer and being a brand itself, we have been able to maintain our standard and have earned the loyalty of our customers.

What are some of the main reasons why differently abled persons are hired by so few people in Nepal?

Still there is discrimination between peoples. I think people don't realize their inner capability. People believe that they are incapable of doing their job. And also due to lack of interest to train these kind of staffs. But if we do not judge people on the basis of physical abilities then certainly we can create more opportunities for these people inside Nepal.

What can youth who want to start such business learn from 'The Bakery Cafe'?

Passion is the most important thing for achieving success. For a business operating in the service and hospitality sector, the business should not compromise on the quality of the service provided. Healthy food and quality Service can be the mantra for achieving success in this sector. Pricing should be in accordance with the service and quality.

What are the future plans of 'The Bakery Cafe'? Have you thought of providing a Franchise license if anyone is willing to obtain one?

We have the plan to expand our branches and outlets in different parts of Nepal. However, we have not thought of expanding internationally till today. May be after the coverage inside Nepal we could move towards establishing "The Bakery Cafe" as an international brand.

We highly value the quality and service for our customer. To be able to maintain this high quality

in the business, we don't have such provisions for franchises. If we want to expand, we would go for new branch rather than a franchise model.

How do you see the landscape of Nepalese Business Environment?

The Nepalese Business environment is growing. The private sector is doing incredible business, but for effective business environment, government support is lacking. If there is proper coordination between the private and government sector, economic prosperity for all that we dream of is not too far away.

For more information, please visit: http://www.thebakerycafe.com.np/







If you have ever been to Thamel or are you planning to go Thamel? Then you must have encountered Mahabir Dai's Restaurant 'Nepal Connection Centre'. Mahabir Pun is not a new name for most Nepali. He is one of the Nepal's leading social entrepreneurs and education activists working to connect rural Nepal digitally. For his contribution, he has been awarded many awards. Established in 2011, Mahabir Dai's restaurant is one of the ventures established to contribute towards his work. In this issue, we are featuring the restaurant as the Social Enterprise. We talked with Mr. Hupen Pun, Manager of Mahabir Dai's Restaurant.

What is the idea behind the Restaurant?

The main idea of the restaurant is to earn for social work. It's the information center to get to know about the projects of Mahabir Pun. To know about his work and to meet him in person. Likewise, being a restaurant it's a business hub, and moreover, it's a good hangout and work place. The idea is for it to be a sharing place. We provide free high-speed internet and also a laptop if someone wants to come and work in the areas. Along with the business, it is providing services to people in different ways. Different events can be organized like interaction programs, video presentations and so on. To sum up, it is a business with a social cause. And it is the first and only a restaurant with a social cause in the Thamel area.



and started Nepal Connection in 2012 September formally.

How did the restaurant get started?

Mahabir pun always thought to generate money by himself to support his social cause. In 2000, he had tried to establish the restaurant in Denver, the USA for generating money for community development project in Nepal. In 2011, Mahabir Pun along with 4 board members, came up with the same idea to initiate the restaurant

What are the Services provided by the restaurant?

Nepal Connection works as a platform for bringing like-minded people together, who would like to work and improve their community not only by donations but by sharing ideas and volunteering in various social works carried out around the country. Thus this restaurant also serves a platform to meet like-minded individuals and currently serves as the promotion centre and contact point for the community managed the eco-trekking program. At the restaurant, one can learn through the slideshow about various social projects. One can find the following services:

- Annapurna Dhaulagiri Community Trekking Routes Managed by Local Communities
- Great Himalayan Trail and Guerrilla Trails
- Volunteering opportunities in rural Nepal
- Products made by the women in the rural areas
- Sharing your Ideas & Organizing talk programs

• Connection with organizations or individuals of your interest in Nepal

What have your achievements been till date?

Talking about achievements, supporting to connect Nepal Digitally is the main achievement of this Restaurant. This restaurant is the effective tool for supporting social causes and enabling these to be sustained is the main achievement. Moreover, rural people are connected to the digital world. School Children learn different Origami Paper Crafts trough YouTube, Prepare the craft and when done we put those crafts on the Display. So, connecting these small creative minds to the digital world is the main achievement. Likewise, there are huge changes on health sector as well.

How many do you have in the restaurant? Is the income from this Restaurant sufficient for providing a great variety of services?

There are currently 8 staffs in the restaurant who get their salary from the restaurant. The restaurant is the profitable business. The restaurant is able to cover its cost and also support the social causes from its profit too.

What are the peak hours of the restaurant?

The restaurant is open from morning 9 am to 9 pm in the



evening. The peak hour in the restaurant is after 2:00 pm. It is mainly because of two reasons: Mahabir Sir generally comes here after 2. If someone wants to meet him in person, they come after 2 pm. Other customers also start to enter from the mid-day.

What are the challenges of your business?

Being a service-oriented business, providing the wide variety of service is itself a challenge. Keeping track of everything is a big challenge. We have to focus not only the restaurant, but other services too. The food quality maintenance is another big challenge.

What is the competitive scenario of your business?

We are registered as not-for profit sharing company. As we are not only for profit. We are here to support the rural community through the profit. We have our own identity. We have our competitive advantage through our image and our wide variety of services. Every bite of food one takes in this restaurant goes towards the social cause. Thus, we are not in a business battle. So the competition has not made our business tough.

You have such a limited space. How do you manage different events and walk-in customer at the same time?

Though we have limited space, we manage the events in such a way that walk in customer will not go back outside. In our limited space, we do partition and arrangement of the tables in such a way that there is enough space for the event and walk-in customer simultaneously. But sometimes if there is the big event with a large number of people we have to close the restaurant for the event.

This restaurant has taught me personally that with limited resources, you can make and create an impact in the life of people.

Is there any seasonal trend in the restaurant business?

Yes, certainly there is the seasonal trend. This post winter is the offseason for the Tourism in Thamel. Being the Tourist area, there are not many tourists nowadays. There are few walk-in customers.

How does this restaurant support youth who want to start their own venture?

If somebody wants to start their own work, learn and do something, they can use our space. We provide a laptop along with free internet. We provide this facility free of cost. They need not order the food compulsorily of the restaurant for



taking these services. It is a free platform for the youths.

Being the Manager of this restaurant, what are your recommendations for the youths who want to start such business?

The restaurant business is the service-oriented business; You have to focus on the service you provide. The main thing I have learnt from this restaurant and Mahabir Sir is to 'Be hungry for your dreams'. Your commitment and hard work will really pay off eventually.

Is there anything you want to add lastly?

Thank you for this opportunity. It is a pleasure to share these things about this restaurant.

For more information visits: www.nepalconnection.org.np





How do you imagine a young man who has just completed a MBA? Maybe like someone who is searching for a job or working somewhere. But <u>Prakash Basnet</u> has a different story to tell. A recent MBA graduate from Kings College, he is the CEO of a company that is providing direct employment to more than 600 domestic workers. He started his company named 'Help2Shine' in July 2016 and now has established himself as one of the youngest successful social entrepreneurs in the town. Read his story through this interview done by Bikas Udhyami on his journey from a student to successful entrepreneur.

How did Help2Shine start?

It was 2016 July when started as one of the brands of Help Solutions Pvt. Ltd, which had registered in 2015 December. We did some logistics work at the beginning and meanwhile saw a huge gap in the market. Women who work at home were not getting any respect. Their dignity was not prioritized. The problem was with clients as well. They were not getting any reliable source from where they can hire someone for domestic work. We saw an opportunity there. And I thought it could have huge social impact.

You were doing MBA at that time. There are many youths who are doing the same but most of them don't have any idea of what they do further. How were you able to find your career path?

We are 4 co-founders. Bikash Neupane, Kismat Pandey, Bhisan Raj K.C and me. Talking about how we found gap in the market, we used to sit and discuss with our friend circles. We wanted to do something new that could solve a problem. We had this idea since a very long time, but didn't know how to execute it properly. After sharing the idea with friends, they used to warn us not to



work on it further because this is such a low-level type of business to be done by a MBA graduate. The thing that inspired me the most was seeing my neighbours treating their domestic workers badly. I used to wonder what the reason was for them to not be treated well. As I said earlier, there were very few, who were giving that dignity, respect and pay scale to their workers that they deserved. That inspired me advance my idea. We

talked to some mentors. Then we knew that this business was already attempted by many people, but failed miserably. That was the huge challenge, because it was already an unsuccessful business model.

What you did you do to make yourself unique and do something different to sustain well?

Before starting the business, we evaluated all the previously failed business models. We found that they approached both landlords and domestic workers, we are doing the same here. But where they failed was that they immediately sent workers to home without enrolling them in their own system and standard rules of the company. That made them just a matchmaker and so they became only on the second choice of both landlords and workers. We do the same thing, but before matchmaking, we enroll them in our system. We appraise what their interests are and where they can fit best. If they need skills, we provide them. We measure the amount of their workload and

estimate the wage accordingly. We in that way have standardized the service so that the expectations of both ends meet. We tried to be the primary choice on this field. We at first researched on whether we as a company are required at the current time or not. We did pilot testing in Buddhanagar and the response was amazing. We found that the major expectation on both sides related to the time schedule. Domestic helpers had no holidays. They were paid less than promised. We addressed this and developed our system. We try to spread a feeling of belonging among service providers and service takers.

You talked earlier that already started businesses couldn't build the primary trust. For a social enterprise, why gaining the trust is necessary?

The main motive of our business is to foster trust. We are trying to create an environment where trust is the major priority, because a business runs only when we trust. A person invites an unknown worker in their home and gives the entire key. They trust an agency like us for this. If we could not guarantee that the person we send is reliable, we cannot sustain. For that reason, we

have to build our foundation on the legal ground that bounds us, service giver, and service takers together.

Through which process you enrol the workers?

We mainly target women domestic workers who are working elsewhere in the city. They have their job through informal channel. We try to incorporate them in our



formal system so that we know what their strengths are and where we can fit them best. We try to give them best option available. To work with us, there are certain criteria. The first thing is that, our employees should be above 20 years with a citizenship. They should have minimum job knowledge, if they haven't, we render them certain skills. Then the office decides where to send them according to their skills and expertise.

You had already started this business before completing your MBA. You must have done various project works on MBA and BBA itself. What are the things in your views are important to evolve from a project work to a successful entrepreneur?

A lot depends on which environment you are studying. Had I not been studying at Kings College, I would not be leading this business right now. I got opportunities to nurture my knowledge there. I had an idea and I find a suitable environment to flourish through the incubation process. I even got the seed money of \$ 1500 for my early investment. That encouraged me to trust on my business model and its viability. I believe that earning while studying is a good idea. It keeps you on your feet and prepares for the future steps. If you have a good idea for your project work, it is not like that you should do that immediately. You can keep that with you and study further to accomplish it later. Talking to mentors is important to improve your idea and keep working on it. 'I am not ready so I won't start' is never a good excuse.

What were the early hardships? How did you overcome these?

The first difficulty came at the very beginning, because we were working on an already tried and failed business model. Finding out the answer to the question whether we should do it or whether we should not do it was the major challenge. After starting the company, we faced a severe challenge in the first six months. The first thing was that no one was ready to work with us. They used to ask why they need to go to our office if they are getting enough work through personal contacts. Clients were not believing in us, because we were new and some of them had already had bad experiences due to the failure of previous companies in this field. We kept trying and continued reaching out to multiple people. We had the bitter experience that people were not even ready to



register their name with us. Some of the workers we approached used to smile at us when we said we would give the job to them.

I want to share an incident. When we were just started, one uncle from Buddhagar came and asked for one worker. At that time, we had hardly 8-10 registered

sisters in our database. He paid us Rs. 8,000 in advance and requested to send one the next day. We confirmed a sister, persuaded her to go but she didn't appear to his house in the next day. We tried some others but got the same results. Then we went to his house and returned our first income cheque.

Then we didn't take money in advance from the second client. We first sent the worker. That worked. We received our first income. And after one year, we are providing service to our first client, whose money we returned earlier. We have now 1600 listed names and around 600 plus are working with us.

How do you earn? What is your business model?

We mainly provide four kinds of services available. They are domestic service, babysitting, caregiving and postnatal care. We have fixed the salary of the workers who go through us accordingly. They get that salary according to the nature and skills involved in their work. We charge a certain amount from the client for doing that. If they pay that for once, we give them service for one month. Another package is client directly pays the company and we decide the salary to be given to them.

How does one have to pay if they want to keep a worker in their house?

It starts from 3500 per month, but that depends on the kind of service as well. For a home, the general fee is 3500, for babysitting it starts at around 10,000, if caregiver it starts from 12,000 and if postnatal care it begins from 17,000. Our main core focus is domestic workers. If the costumer directly pays the salary to them, for 8 hours per day, they get minimum 10,000 per month. This is for the full-time provision. If they work for 2 hours per day, they get 35,00 per month.

But if the costumers pay all the amount to our office, we pay them 9,700 per for full time after deducting the tax. The benefit for them is, they have company benefits like leaves incorporated in this system.

What are the impacts do you think Help2Shine is having on society?

Social enterprise is a calling for me. I want to share a story. We have one worker named Yesodha Giri. She is working in Handigaun now. There is one madam living in a home alone. Her children are out of the country. Her foot doesn't work properly and she has to go to the hospital in Thailand on the regular basis. We placed Yesodha didi there before 6 months. When I called the madam after sending Yesodha didi to get her feedback, she said she found a new daughter. Then I called Yesodha didi who cried at first and thanked me for sending her to homelike home. She said she would never want to leave this house in which she works, because she got new parents.

I think this story is sufficient to tell you that we not only are providing not only service, we also spread human belongingness. Through the medium of professional trust, we are joining the emotions together. Those women who used to earn a limited amount from a single house, we have

given them multiple options to earn from. This has increased their income and given them better livelihood option. They are providing education to their children. And especially women are being able to do family decisions because of their economic independence. Those who didn't have holidays, have these Those who didn't have respect and dignity in the place they



worked, now work in a professional working environment. We are creating such stories together.

Those who are working with us, they are not giving their full time. They are free to work elsewhere before or after giving time to us. This helps them to gain extra earning through extra employment according to their time schedule. They should not have to leave their job to work with us. All they have to do is fix the time when they want to go through us. If they are working outside happily, which many of them are doing, our platform functions as extra earning platform.

What are your further plans in this field?

People generally see us as a matchmaking business, but we are more than that. There are lots of areas to work on. We have to simplify the service. Now clients have to visit us in person and we have to send the workers in person. We want to simplify this. There are multiple expectations for this level of business and we have to meet that as well. We are sustained now, so I think it's time to make our services more simple, familiar, and create a welfare environment for those all who contributed to lifting us here and those who will be joining us in the days to come.

Still, there are perceptions that agencies are there to fraud. We need to prove those wrong and be the example or footmark that future entrepreneurs could learn from. We have to continue doing this. I think we will now be more focused on service and process innovation. We are also expanding our offices within Kathmandu valley soon.



What suggestions do you want to give to future aspiring social entrepreneurs?

After MBA, expectation rises. Society and family will try to pressure you up to do something. Real life is very different than we read in the classes. If you have a

dream to start your own business somewhere in the future then you must target working in startups rather than other bigger companies. What I am saying is that start-ups offer you better learning opportunities. You will not bound to certain departments. You will know how to struggle in crisis, overcome the challenges, do decision making at a strategic level and to build the system as well. Start-ups teach micro- management practically.

What do you want to say to those who used to laugh at you for choosing such a low standard type of business?

What I say is work is never small or big. What matters is the impact that you can achieve with you work for society. Looking for a cause and purpose is important. I am not negative towards the people who used to say these things. Maybe I could not persuade them of what I was doing. Now I am proving them the scope of it. Now they believe. I think we should not be demotivated after listening to what people say to us rather we should go on to prove what we see.

For further information visit: https://www.facebook.com/help2shine/





In the development sector, we tend to hear mainly about the stories of well-established organizations, but not that often of newer organizations that are led by young people trying to break away from conventional approaches in order to promote innovation in the way development is done in Nepal. Bikas Udhyami (in English "Development Entrepreneurs") is such a new organization. It is comprised of a team of young Nepali professionals, who combine social innovation with social entrepreneurship to develop practical solutions that help address some of Nepal's pressing development challenges. For our last blog in our social entrepreneurship series, we wanted to tell our own story and what led us to establish our organization to encourage and inspire other young people to work on social innovation and to become social entrepreneurs. Hence, we sat down with Santosh Gartaula, the CEO and Co-founder and Tirza Theunissen, Co-Founder to learn more about Bikas Udhyami's journey.

You both have worked in development for many years. What were your personal motivations to choose this line of work?

Santosh: I grew up in the SOS Children's Village Itahari, an organization dedicated to the welfare of the parentless and abandoned children. I have seen and experienced patterns and stages of life as I started my early childhood begging in the streets. Society has taught me, and its members who supported me, to be at this juncture of life – and as a result giving back to society and its members is core to my thinking process. My academic degree in development studies from Kathmandu University and economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University helped me to understand the logical process of development of human civilization and fostered my imagination of a better place where peace, justice and harmony prevail. After my Master degree from Delhi, I worked as an enumerator



for a Canadian PhD scholar for six months, later at the Institute for Integrated Development Studies as an Economist. In 2015, I started working at The Asia Foundation as a Program Officer. I learned about development dynamics, needs of different people and development planning processes.

Tirza: In my case, I have always been aggrieved by social injustice in the

world and I have been passionate to find ways to address this. Being half-Asian but growing up in Europe, I have naturally always been drawn to this part of the world. After my Master's in Law and my LLM in Human Rights, I worked in Bangladesh for five years including three years with UNICEF focusing on strengthening laws to protect children and supporting children in detention and on improving the situation of Rohingya refugee children in the refugee camps in the south. This experience has really shaped my outlook on life, because I used to regularly work in slums, prisons, social homes and refugee camps and hence have witnessed people in the most basic living circumstances imaginable. The resilience and kindness that people showed despite possessing almost nothing has been a very humbling experience and has always stuck with me. After Bangladesh, I moved to Mongolia where I worked for The Asia Foundation and had the chance to develop a large urban governance program, as well as various other programs, which directly

addressed the needs of the poorest. Development in Mongolia is very dynamic and fast paced and there was a lot of space for creativity and exploring new ideas. It was great to work in such an environment as I have a new idea every day and I am a person who likes to immediately put ideas into action. It has always been a dream for me to work in Nepal, a country where my husband has family. When the opportunity came we jumped at it and have been here now for over 2 and a half years. I don't really see the work that I do in Nepal or have done in other places a as a being part of a specific career. It is something I care and have always been passionate about.

What led you to establish Bikas Udhyami and what does it seek to achieve?

Santosh: We established Bikas Udhyami as a social innovation hub in 2016 for young people to contribute to Nepal's development through innovative and smart solutions. However, after working in development for some time, both of us found that it was difficult for young Nepali to make their voices heard and get their innovative ideas implemented. Nepal can be at times quite a hierarchical society and there is a tendency towards top-down management. There are many young people who want to support our country, but it is difficult to find an entry-point in an organization. There are few internships and jobs available and you need to have connections in many cases to get in. We wanted to change that dynamic and show that young people are capable to come up with their own ideas and implement these successfully. We used to work together as colleagues and discuss over lunch our common dream to establish our own organization and to develop our own ideas. At one point, we were both free so we decided to team up and go for it.

Tirza: In establishing Bikas Udhyami, we also felt quite strongly about trying out a different development model that is entrepreneurial and self-sustaining in nature rather than the more classic model which depends on funding for specific projects. Given the complexity of many of the challenges and the rapidly changing context, problems do not lend themselves easily to projectization. Possible solutions only emerge over time rather than at the outset of a project. In

addition, we felt that traditional in a project dependent model, most organizations are funded to implement with little room to introduce thinking innovative activities. While in certain areas this may be needed and works, we found that in many cases important



opportunities are lost and when a program ends, the activities are not sustained.

In our model, we focus, with few exceptions, on developing and on working on our own ideas instead of implementing those of others. When we started, we did not have any specific thematic focus. Instead there were various social issues that we cared about and we started by exploring those and conducting research to better understand their nature and possible innovations that could contribute to addressing some of these issues. Once we have an idea that we believe in, we work on developing it and subsequently keep refining and expanding it using our own investment.

Over time, this is how our areas of work have emerged and now we work in data and statistics; higher education; entrepreneurship and youth leadership for which we employ a team of 22 young Nepali professionals. We were very clear from the beginning that we must be self-sustaining. Our



business model therefore based on working towards becoming a selfsustaining social business by providing services under our various initiatives and reinvesting the funds generated through these services into new or ongoing initiatives that are helping the common good. Still, we are not yet self-sustaining, but we are making good progress.

A key focus of the work that Bikas Udhyami is doing is

around technology, data and information. How did this focus emerge?

Tirza: We were keen not to duplicate the work of others and quite quickly it became apparent that technology provided ways to innovate as it is still very much underused to leapfrog development in Nepal. We also recognized the power of information to empower people and help them in very practical ways in their lives, be it to prepare for their studies or to set up a business. We saw the potential of social media to act as a platform and as a tool for development allowing us to reach a much wider audience on a daily basis than in most traditional development interventions. Across all our initiatives, we now focus on leveraging technology, data, information and social media as tools to empower people in their respective areas of work and in their lives.

Differently from many other organizations you choose to work with government? What led you to make this choice?

Santosh: A key element of our approach is that we focus on working in partnership with government for all our products and initiatives in order to support national systems and to facilitate scale-up. We believe that rather than complaining about things that are not being done, it is more



useful to support government in doing things. Hence, in all our initiatives, we try to involve government in one way or the other, by seeking their advice and regularly consulting with them. This way of working is very much appreciated, because surprisingly government does not get consulted in many instances and people can see that we are serious and actually deliver on promises made in ways that help them in their work. We now work or have worked formally and informally with various organizations including the National Planning Commission, the Central Bureau of Statistics, the National Youth Council, the Ministry of Agriculture and so on.

One of the areas that Bikas Udhyami works on is data and statistics through its Nepal in Data initiative. What led you to establish this initiative and what does it do?

Santosh: Nepal in Data was our first initiative and the one that we were most clear about from the outset. As a student, I noticed how difficult it was to get data and statistics about Nepal. There was not a single place where you could find data and instead you would have to visit many different



websites and places. Most of the information on the websites was outdated and in PDF format, making it difficult to use. To get the data, you would have to visit many different government offices, which was time consuming. However, I did do this and over time built up a big personal repository of data. I always thought of one day of creating a portal where the data would be freely accessible to interested anvone in understanding Nepal's development progress. It is only if we look at data and statistics, that we can fully grasp the economic political, and social development context of Nepal. This is

how the www.nepalindata.com started.

We launched the portal in January 2017 and now almost one year later, we have grown into a much larger initiative than just the portal. We share daily data related news through social media, develop daily infographics to increase the understanding of data, conduct trainings on Excel, Stata and SPSS, and provide guidance and support on data to various organizations seeking to develop data management systems and websites. It can be used by those that want to collect or analyze data and others that want to visualize data. We still continue to work on improving our portal adding new features such as a data calendar, resources tab and soon a geo-profile page with provincial and municipal data.

How do you assess the current level of data literacy and use of data in Nepal?

Santosh:I think that there is still a long way to go. People are slowly getting excited about data and statistics. We try to make data more understandable and exciting for people by developing on a daily basis infographs that



try to explain data and statistics on key issues in an easy to understand and exciting way. We also share data related news through our social media accounts so that people start seeing what is going on in Nepal more from a development and data perspective. Furthermore, we also conduct outreach among young people by visiting colleges and organizing engaging events like Nepal In Data Evening: Connecting Nepal's Development Dots that was held on November 13 for which we partnered with the world renowned Gapminder Foundation. As part of Gapminder's guest

lecture, they presented various misconceptions about the world in a very fun and engaging way using polling devices to seek people's views before explaining the misconceptions. They also showed how people with different incomes live around the world based on their dollar street initiative, and they used the polling devices to test people's preconceived ideas. Such types of events are very effective in getting people excited about data. We still meet many new people who attended the evening and who said they started to follow us afterwards. Now, we want to make more young people outside Kathmandu excited about data and statistics.

Another area that you work in is Higher Education through your Padhna Jane initiative. There are more than 1,400 higher education institutions in Nepal and many students are going abroad for higher education. What do you seek to achieve with this initiative?

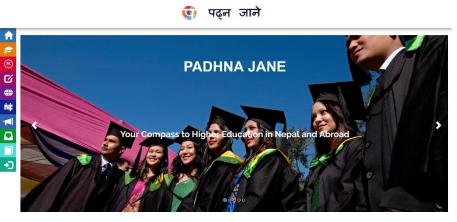


Tirza: We established the Padhna Jane initiative (www.padhnajane.com) to support students to make informed decisions about their studies in Nepal and abroad. We found that there were no real platforms that provided students with quality information and helpful tips about studying in Nepal or going abroad for free. Instead students would have to contact colleges on their own or rely on expensive educational consultancies to help them prepare to go abroad. Hence, through our platform, we have sought to

address this by connecting young Nepali with diverse higher education opportunities. The platform facilitates the ease of applying for higher-education and scholarships in Nepal and abroad. Furthermore, the platform also better prepares them for student life and promotes their safety and well-being, and it prepares them for work after graduation.

Apart from the platform, Padhna Jane initiative has been organizing ENGAGE College Tours at various Nepali universities and colleges to increase students' awareness about its initiatives and how it can help in planning their higher education in Nepal and abroad. In the last six months, we reached over 700 students with these tours. We also conduct various Professional Development

Workshops ("Skills Labs") for a wide student audience including topics like improving resumes, acing interviews, public speaking, research and report writing, These etc. skills labs are very much needed because many students do not get taught such skills



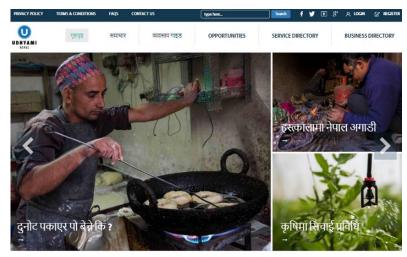
in a proper, professional way in college. We meet many students who cannot use power point and don't know how to use excel. Hence such skills labs are very much needed and having done several of these now in Kathmandu we are keen to go outside and teach students.

One of the key challenges in Nepal is the lack of employment opportunities for young people. You are launching soon a new initiative called Udhyami Nepal. How does this initiative help young people in Nepal?

Tirza: Udhyami Nepal aims to support aspiring entrepreneurs to start as well as existing ones to manage and grow their business. In Nepal, many people start a business without much planning and without having the relevant knowledge and information to run their business. As a result, many businesses collapse over time as they cannot attract sufficient customers and ensure a steady supply chain. The www.udhyaminepal.com platform provides users as well as its followers on social media across Nepal with relevant, high quality information in easy to understand Nepali regarding the various aspects of the business process including business plan development, rules

and regulations, management, financing etc. thereby serving as a one-stop business guide. The platform connects those who want to become an entrepreneur to entrepreneurship support services and networks and existing businesses to potential customers.

In addition, the platform aims to increase employment opportunities for unemployed and underemployed skilled workers such as electricians,



plumbers and gardeners by connecting them directly to home service seekers in Kathmandu Valley and vice-versa. The Government of Nepal invests a large sum of money into skills development and quite a significant number of people graduate from skills training institutions every year. At the same time, many people leave their country every day to go for foreign employment. On the other hand, when a homeowner needs to repair a broken electrical circuit or install a new hot water heater, they often have to find service providers through family and friends and hunt for a local shop that offers these services. There is a lack of a centralized system in Nepal where one can access contact information of un/under employed-skilled graduates. The Udhyami Nepal platform aims to address this issue as well as to connect un- and underemployed skilled workers to skills development opportunities.

Another key challenge in Nepal seems the lack of leadership. Are you optimistic that young people can make a difference and what is Bikas Udhyami doing to contribute to that?

Santosh: We are optimistic that young people can make a difference and this is why we established Bikas Udhyami. We firmly believe that in order to achieve change you should not wait for others, but you should start with what you can do yourself and what you can do for society. In today's world, there is a lot of focus on the individual, but if you only invest in yourself society will not benefit and nothing will change. It is important in life to try to help other people and to contribute to a social cause in society.

Tirza: Bikas Udhyami is trying to encourage social activism among young people. As part of our initiative, Catalyst social changemakers (www.bikasudhyami.com.np/index.php/blogs) in which we feature stories of young Nepali who

are making a different in different spheres of society. We hope that the journey of these persons and their insights will inspire others to follow in their footsteps. In addition, through our social media pages, we also share tips about leadership Nepal opportunities in to strengthen leadership and other important skills.





SOCIAL CHANGEMAKERS BLOG ISSUE NO.6: SABITA ACHARYA, PROGRAM PRODUCER, SAATHI SANGA MANKA KURA: GIVING VOICE TO NEPAL'S KONTHOIS Bikas Udhyami (Aditi Rai)

The recent problem that most of the youth and adolescents are facing is harassment/ abuse. These days, most families are busy. Working parents cannot give much time to their children, so children spend more time with friends/ peer group.

Read More

SOCIAL CHANGEMAKERS BLOG ISSUE NO. 5: RAJAN LAMSAL, CEO, LIVING WITH ICT-FROM NEWSPAPER PAGE TO IT MAGAZINE

Bikas Udhyami (Lokmani Subedi)

I agree that due to the advancement of technology, media are being digitized. The online market has grown, but despite that print media has value in the market. It is maybe hard for the daily newspapers, because of the short-term value of hard news but magazines are different. They are

Furthermore, we have been running a social entrepreneurship blog series in which we feature 14 young social entrepreneurs who are changing the way business is done in Nepal. We wanted to create a platform in order for more of their stories to be shared with the outside world. We strongly feel that social entrepreneurship is the way forward for Nepal and that we need more businesses that are oriented towards achieving social impact. We have completed the first series and are turning this into an epublication that we will be launching soon. We plan on continuing this series as there are so many more stories to cover!

What have been key factors of your success for far?

Tirza: Definitely our team of dedicated young professionals who are the heart and soul of Bikas Udhyami. Through our team's dedication and hard work, we have been able to launch 4 initiatives in less than 2 years as well carry out a myriad of activities. We have various loyal staff who have been with us from the very beginning as well as many others who have joined later but have been with us since. They are very talented individuals and bring a wide range of different experiences to us as an organization. We attach great importance to strong work ethics, pro-activeness and commitment, because we work at a high pace and there is a lot to do. We try to have a relatively flat office structure and let people take things forward with support from us when needed. Both of us have busy schedules so we cannot always as much time in individual persons, but we trust



our staff to take things forward and try our best to be supportive. It is great to see people taking a sense of pride in their work and work hard to take the initiative they work greater on to heights.

Another factor probably an emphasis on quality and reliability. We do not just do things for

the sake of doing but we try to do them well and consistently. Hence, a lot of time and investment is spent on preparations and on working to improve our work. All of our initiatives were based on several months of research and development and in some cases more than that before we launched them.

What has been the impact of your initiatives?

Santosh: As all our initiatives are have a strong digital component, impact is not as easy to ascertain as, for example, building a school but this does not mean they are less impactful. In the case of Nepal in Data, definitely more people are now able to easily access data and statistics on Nepal

and more people are gaining interest in data. We can see this from the user statistics of our portal which has been visited by more than 67,000 visitors in one year and from the comments we get via facebook and twitter accounts which are steadily growing and when we meet people at our events and trainings. In the case of Padhna Jane, through skills labs we



have enhanced the skills of more than 1,000 young people. Our Udhyami Nepal initiative is launching this month, so it is too early to tell, but our facebook page has already more than 24,000 followers and the comments we get on the articles we post are very positive and appreciative. Regarding the Catalyst, we are now developing this into a full-fledged leadership initiative so we cannot yet talk about impact.

What message would you like to give to young people in Nepal?

Santosh: First, of all, if you have an idea or feel passionate about doing good, pursue it! While the journey to realize your idea may not be easy, there is only one way to find out which is by trying and by being persistent. Growing up in SOS Children's Village Itahari, I could not have become the person that I am today without drive and passion for my work. My personal circumstances have shaped me. I learned the core values of life from an early age. However, my perseverance and constant effort to contribute my best to society has made me successful. When we started talking about Bikas Udhyami, many people did not believe we would actually do it or that we would be able to make it a success. However, we never stopped believing in ourselves, and just did it. Now we have a great team in place and many people who are supportive of our efforts.

Tirza: Another key message that we have for young people is the importance to be prepared to work hard and remain humble. It is critical at the beginning to get work experience and to be open to do various practical tasks and learn from those. We meet many young people who want to become a manager straight away after graduating, which is not necessarily a good thing because you won't be able to relate to the tasks of the people you supervise. I used to distribute newspapers when I was young and when I became 16 used to work during school holidays cleaning offices of large companies. When I was a student at university, I worked for a call center selling insurances and later for a legal service provider. It was only much later that I entered a management position

and even when I did, I still worked with my staff to carry out routine tasks instead of delegating

everything. It is important not to let things get to your head and develop an ego or attitude, because in the long run that will backfire. If you work hard, remain humble and try to be supportive towards others, good things will come your way for sure!

For more information visit: www.bikasudhyami.com



Bikas Udhyami is a Social Business Supporting Young People to Contribute to Nepal's Development through innovative and smart solutions. A critical part of our mission has been to promote social innovation and encourage other young people to become social entrepreneurs. Therefore, from the start, we decided that it was important to document and share the stories, insights and experiences of other young social entrepreneurs in Nepal who are changing the way business is done. This publication compiles the interviews we have conducted and blogs that we have written and published over the past one and a half years about young social entrepreneurs who are working in areas ranging from empowering women to become entrepreneurs selling clean energy products to employing differently abled persons as massage therapists. We hope that their stories will inspire others, especially young Nepali, to follow in their footsteps and explore social entrepreneurship.



www.bikasudhyami.com