



Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development

A Forum held at the
Nepali National Convention
Baltimore, MD, USA
July 5-7, 2019

Organized Jointly by
Association of Nepalese in the Americas (ANA)
Association of Nepalese in Midwest America (ANMA)
Baltimore Association of Nepalese in America (BANA)
International Nepali Literary Society (INLS)



SUMMARY REPORT OF DISCUSSIONS AT THE FORUM

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We are thankful to e-Nepalese journalist Mr. Bijaya Thapa who covered the discussion in the Forum live, recorded the video of the forum and posted it on Facebook. Thousands of viewers were able to watch the discussion in the Forum through the video he broadcasted and posted.

We are grateful to all the attendees who asked questions and made brief comments towards the end of the Forum, when the floor was opened for question and answers. We are grateful for all the attendees in the Forum, who took time to listen to the discussion and also enrich the substantive talks before and after the Forum.

We hope this summary report will be of value to those who are interested in the topic of diaspora and development of their native lands.

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Summary Report of Presentations and Discussions at the Forum “Diaspora’s Role in Nepal’s Development”

**Nepali National Convention
Baltimore, MD, USA
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Introduction

Four major Nepalese community organizations, ANA, ANMA, BANA, and INLS jointly hosted the “Nepali National Convention 2019” in Baltimore, Maryland, USA during July 5 to 7, 2019. Eight other community-based organizations including Blood Donors of America, Society of American Nepalese Nurses, Nepalese Association of Florida, Nepal Pasa Pucha Amerikaye, America Nepal Women’s Association of Greater Washington, Nepal Education and Culture Center, America Nepal Society, and Association of Nepali Teraian in America were involved as co-hosts of the convention. Several other local organizations participated in support of the convention.

The Forum “Diaspora’s Role in Nepal’s Development” was held from 1:30-3:00 pm on July 6, 2019 at the National Convention at the Red Lion Hotel in North Baltimore. The nine panelists at the Forum were Prof. Durga Dutta Poudel, Dr. Govinda Timilsina, Prof. Udaya Wagle, Dr. Shyam Thapa, Ms. Bandita Sharma Dahal, Dr. Usha Sharma, Ms. Madhavi Basnet Karki, Ms. Prabha Bhattarai Deuja, and Dr. Swarnim Wagle (guest panelist).

The forum was moderated by Dr. Ambika P. Adhikari and Mr. Rajendra Khatiwada. The electronic newspaper e-Nepalese.com broadcasted the session live on Facebook, and recorded a video of the session, which was published on Facebook.

Some sixty individuals attended the session, and many participated in the Forum through questions and answers. In addition, informal discussions between the nine panelists, moderators and several participants took place before and after the Forum.

Background and Objective for the Forum

The size of Nepali diaspora in the world has been expanding rapidly. The diaspora permanently living in the developed world of Europe, Americas, Asia and Oceania alone is estimated to



exceed 800,000 in 2019¹. This group includes tens of thousands of highly qualified academics, professional and business leaders. Most members of diaspora are keen to give back to the native land.

The diaspora is also interested to see Nepal develop rapidly with a robust economy, while promoting social equity. When the native land prospers, and is regarded highly by the peer nations, the diaspora also feel proud as their prestige is directly tied to the reputation of their native land.

One big question currently dominating in policy dialogues in Nepal is: how to accelerate the process of socio-economic development, and realize prosperity while improving the quality of life of the citizens? For several decades, the Nepali government and Nepali intelligentsia have focused their efforts towards this goal. The results have been somewhat encouraging as Nepal exceeded a per capita annual income of \$1,000 (current \$s) in 2018-19. While Nepal still needs many more years of rapid, high and inclusive economic growth to reach a respectable lower middle-income status, it has already become eligible to graduate from the UN-defined status of a Least Developed Country, whose formal process will likely be initiated in 2021.

Nepal has progressed well in its socio-economic arena, with impressive improvements in areas, such as enrollment in primary education, life expectancy, vaccination rates, infant mortality and literacy rates. However, given the rapid progress the Asia region has witnessed in the past decades, and the expectation of the Nepali citizens for a rapid prosperity, this result leaves much room for improvement.

Historically, countries have prospered when they have a large proportion of younger people in their population. Nepal enjoys the demographic advantages of having a large proportion of young residents (*58% of the population is below 30 years go age as per 2011 census*). However, Nepal has not been the primary beneficiary of this demographic dividend, as a total of some 4.5 million Nepali youth remain abroad as migrant workers and, instead, are helping build countries in the Gulf, East and South East Asia. To achieve prosperity in Nepal, it is critical that the young population is retained in the country and employed in productive sectors to support a rapid economic development.

Although the outgoing Nepali workers support Nepal's economy by sending remittances, which account for some 30% of the Nepal's GDP size (2019 data), this kind of remittance-based economy is not sustainable, and in the long run, does not help in realizing Nepal's development potential and aspirations.

Around these issues, this forum will provide an opportunity to discuss current policies of the Nepal government in different sectors towards achieving prosperity. The forum panelists will

¹ Estimate by Ambika P. Adhikari, Forum Moderator



address how the diaspora's contributions can be organized and made more effective to support the developmental efforts in Nepal.

Many professionals and academics in various disciplines are living in US, Canada, European countries, Australia, Japan, Korea and other countries and have gained experience and expertise in their respective fields making them highly qualified to discuss policy options and collaboration programs for the public and private sector in Nepal.

The diaspora group regularly holds informal talks and engagement with leaders and government officials who are involved in Nepali's development policy-making process. Many in the diaspora have also devised formal approach in individual capacity or through some organizational platforms. Many have already collaborated with the resident Nepali experts, political, social and business leaders in promoting appropriate policies and development programs in Nepal. However, formal channels of diaspora-resident collaborations have been limited. This forum can add one small brick in the process of building a long-term diaspora-resident dialogues related to policy.

Summary of Discussion at the Forum

The forum began when the moderators invited the panelists to the dais by their names and institutional affiliations. The moderators expressed that all the panelists were well accomplished in their respective fields and did not need any introduction. The moderators asked the audience to check the panelists biographies in the Forum background paper which was uploaded onto the convention website (<https://nepalnationalconvention.org>). The Forum background paper is also attached in this summary report as Appendix I.

The moderators announced that each speaker would be initially given about four minutes to speak from the perspective of their discipline on one or more of the four questions (see below) that were sent out to them in advance as a part of the background paper.

1. What are the critical priority issues in the policies and programs related to your area of expertise (e.g., education, public health, agriculture, development) in Nepal that need to be addressed?
2. How do you think the diaspora can specifically partner with the counterpart individuals and organizations in Nepal in improving policies, programs and implementation related to these issues?
3. What kind of platforms, avenues and resources will facilitate and improve the partnership between the diaspora members and Nepali counterparts towards the development related objectives?
4. In your opinion and experience, what are the top three priority areas that the diaspora groups can address in supporting Nepal's development related to your area of expertise?



The initial remarks from the panelists would be followed by questions from the audience and response from the panelists. At the end of the Forum, the guest panelist (Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Former Vice Chair of National Planning Commission, Nepal) would summarize the discussions of the Forum, and present any thoughts from his side. The moderators will finally make some closing remarks and end the Forum.

Initial Remarks by the Panelists

Guest panelist Dr. Swarnim Wagle made his initial remarks highlighting the following major points.

Nepal has undergone five fundamental shifts in its economy and society.

- 1) **Demography:** Demography in Nepal is quite unusual. Some examples are: 23 years as median age (Nepal is a young country), rapid decline in fertility, and steep out-migration of youth and talent to foreign lands. Nepal is a young country but not much is time available for economic prosperity with a potential danger that Nepal may become an old society before the it becomes rich.
- 2) **Migration:** Not only the migration to outside the country such as to the Western world or in Gulf countries emptying out Nepal's skilled manpower reserve, but population movement within the country is also deserting the villages. The impacts from the internal migration could likely be seen more pronounced when surveyed in the 2021 census. The country is also being rapidly urbanized, as 60% of Nepal's population already lives in municipalities. However, many of these municipalities are urban areas in name only, as they lack proper urban infrastructure, amenities and services.
- 3) **Atypical Structural Transformation:** The normal trend of transformation during development is that a section of population from agriculture would be absorbed by industries specially by manufacturing firms. This is typically followed by service sectors upon much progress in the economy. In case of Nepal, outgoing population from agriculture is directly joining low-end service sector positions due to the dearth of manufacturing jobs. Lack of meaningful structural transformation, coupled with the rapidly increasing population in the cities without adequate urban infrastructure is a real concern for the economic and societal development.
- 4) **Connectivity:** Physical and digital connectivity in Nepal has drastically increased. For example, the number of cell phone subscription is estimated to be about 130% of the number of people in the country. Road connection, although often of poor standard, has increased from 6,000 kilometers to 90,000 kilometers since 1990, when democracy was ushered. However, Nepal's economy is not well connected with the regional and global economy.
- 5) **Federalism:** With the new constitution, the country has now moved rather abruptly from the 250 years long unitary government system to federalism. The impacts of new and



sudden practice of federalism on rural economy are also major issues of concern, as the adjustment process will take some time.

These five-fundamental departures in our existing society and economy produce a few major concerns/phenomena such as:

- Society is getting old before getting rich,
- Urbanization is happening without the needed infrastructure
- Slow and inadequate industrialization to absorb surplus labor from agriculture, and
- Dramatic connectivity within the country and abroad without being engaged in global economy.

Panelists Shyam Thapa, Govinda Timilsina, Udaya Wagle, Bandita Sharma Dahal, Prabha Bhattarai Deuja, and Madhavi Basnet Karki spoke on their respective areas highlighting how diaspora can play a meaningful role in supporting development process in Nepal.

Bandita Dahal spoke about the issues related to the life of the diaspora members in the US, and emphasized that it was important to ensure safety and peace at home. This is vital for the diaspora members to enable them to contribute towards working with the Nepali counterparts. She narrated her experience related to legal education in Nepal and the US, and opined that the many individuals engaged in legal profession in the US can work with the Nepali educators to discuss applicable lessons for Nepali legal education.

Usha Sharma spoke about the need to have robust policies related to science education in Nepal. She highlighted the importance of quality education that our younger generation deserves in order for them to compete with ever advancing world. Ms. Sharma also pinpointed the need of closing the gap of quality education provided by the private and public sector in Nepal. Her work in the US in research and pedagogy in science can be useful while working with the Nepali counterparts concerned with science education. She spoke about her experience of teaching science in the USA, and the need to make education more experiential in Nepal

The speaking notes and extended abstracts of the presentations from Shyam Thapa, Durga Dutta Poudel, Govinda Timilsina, Udaya Wagle, Prabha Bhattarai Deuja and Madhavi Basnet Karki are provided at the end of this summary report.

Audience Questions and Panelists' Response

The audience in the Forum listened to the presentations from the panelists with keen interest.



When the moderators opened the floor for questions, many hands went up and a vibrant discussion ensued. The following paragraphs provide a glimpse of the question and answer session.

Kedar Neupane (from Switzerland) asked that rather than seeing the migrating population as a problem, it can be viewed as a part of solution. Migrating individuals contribute well to the economy. The real concern should be the lack of investment on agriculture, restrictive investment law and protectionism in Nepal.

Panelist Durga Poudel responded in affirmative, and stated that private sector investment is now critical if we want to save Nepal's agriculture. For example, agriculture can no longer be run by public sectors only.

Urmila Panthi (from Missouri, USA) asked: can domestic violence against women be quickly addressed by the Nepal judiciary? And how can Nepal and Nepalese in diaspora can act as bridge in women's and youth's empowerment?

Panelist Bandita Sharma Dahal responded that domestic violence is prevalent both for men and women in USA, only the number is higher for women. The social support alone is not enough. Institutional support system is available for domestic and immigrant victims such as through a hot line number. She stated that in Nepal, several INGOs (International Non-governmental Organizations) are working on such issues.

Panelist Prabha Bhattarai-Deuja stated that some diaspora groups are providing a platform for kids to solve each other's problems. For example, young kids could be helped by students in higher grade.

Khem Shedai (from MD, USA) asked how the diaspora could be made to feel positive towards Nepal in terms of financial as well as skill/knowledge investment.

Guest panelist Swarnim Wagle stated that there is a need to maintain the emotional/sentimental connection of diaspora with Nepal. In the symbiotic relationship, it is important to also consider a diaspora member's self-esteem, new identity, and culture in the adopted lands. Nepal should be welcoming of the diaspora's involvement in its development process, and diaspora should be willing to support Nepal to develop its internal capacity. Nepal government can play an intermediary role in Nepal for the investor diaspora as the commercial market in Nepal is a high risk and high reward.

Gopi Uprety (from Virginia, USA) asked how the panelists envision achieving sustainable development (e.g., in agriculture, industry, economy) in Nepal considering the difficult field conditions including challenges of physiography and economy in Nepal.



Guest panelist Swarnim Wagle stated that there is already a roadmap of sustainable development outlined in Nepal Planning Commission (NPC) plan 2016-2030. NPC's plan includes UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, 69 targets, 400 annex/indices, stages of progress in different years 2019, 2022, 2025, 2030 and onwards. Quantitative benchmark is already set up with global study of economic development indicators. Towards achieving the goals, Nepal will need significant investment coming from government, private and public sectors, and the community to support financial need for such development. Any financial shortfall needs to be made up by international society, diaspora, agencies etc. Economic, societal and environment factors are all integral part of sustainable development, but in Nepal the environmental suffering (flooding, landslide, deforestation, melting of glacier, arable land use, hydro power projects, black carbon pollution) is of more concern due to their immediate adverse impact in people lives. Nepal needs to tackle these on a broader level such as through regional and global cooperation to solve the environment issues. Nepal should be ready to develop in all three fronts in tandem rather than just looking at the economic facet only. However, implementation is a bigger problem in Nepal than making a plan and policies.

Panelist Durga Poudel opined that resource management revolves around eight main elements called "Asta (8) Ja": Jal, Jalbayu (climate), Jadibuti (herbs), Jameen (land), Jungle (forest), Janasakti (person-power), Janawar (animals), Jarajuri (plant roots). The problem as well as solution comes out of these eight elements and Jalabayu (climate) drives all other elements. The framework of sustainable development should encompass management of all eight elements. Community Resiliency Development is of prime importance for sustainable development, and for conservation, and utilization of resources. Sustainability issues must be tackled at local or grassroot level and also beyond the national level. Developing national competitiveness can include product uniqueness and competitive price in context of Nepal. Organic agriculture can be a low hanging target towards achieving a competitive edge in the national and international market.

Several more attendees wished to ask questions, but the moderators had to close the discussion session due to lack of time. The moderators advised that the audience would have an opportunity to discuss their questions with the panelists informally after the session.

Guest Panelist's Summary of the Presentations

Guest panelist Swarnim Wagle summarized the points made by each of the Forum panelist. He found the session very useful as he heard how interested the diaspora members are to work with their counterparts in Nepal towards socio-economic development of the country. With his experience in senior policy making positions in Nepal, he expressed that he will keep in his mind the ideas he heard at the Forum from the diaspora members while working in his role as a development economist in Nepal.



Dr. Wagle appreciated the opportunity to share his thoughts, experience and ideas on how the diaspora members can be engaged in Nepal's development. He further opined that Nepal is at a critical juncture of transformation towards prosperity, and many factors seem positive at this point. Diaspora's role will be very important in that endeavor, and interactions and dialogues like done at the Forum need to be maintained to further the goals of collaboration.

He thanked the panelists, organizers and the audience for the opportunity to present his thoughts and also for the chance to summarize the ideas from the presentations of the panelists.

Moderators' Closing Remarks

Moderator Rajendra Khatiwada thanked all the panelists for their insights into important elements related to diaspora, Nepal and development. He appreciated their taking time to attend the conference, and share their expertise with the attendees. He also thanked all the attendees for their interest and patience during the 90-minute session. He noted that the forum was well attended with the hall in full capacity. He also advised everyone that a summary report of the session will be created and published so that it can become a record of the event.

Moderator Ambika Adhikari also thanked all the panelists and made a special note to thank the panelists and guest panelist Swarnim Wagle, who travelled all the way from Nepal to attend the convention. He reminded everyone that a report of the summary of the presentations and discussion at the forum will be made and widely circulated so that any interested individual can use it a reference. Before pronouncing the session being closed, he thanked the convention organizers, and the attendees.



Extended Abstracts and Notes from Some Panelists

Extended abstracts, remarks and speaking notes were received from the following panelists.

1. **Shyam Thapa**
2. **Govinda Timilsina**
3. **Udaya Raj Wagle**
4. **Durga Dutta Poudel**
5. **Prabha Bhattarai Deuja**
6. **Madhavi Basnet Karki**

These documents are provided in the following pages.

Note: The panelist's remarks and notes included in the report do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the convention organizing committee, the sponsors or the organizations where the panelists work. Each panel member is responsible for the content of their presentation.



**Brief Remarks by Dr. Shyam Thapa on the Theme
Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development
Nepali National Convention, Maryland, July 6, 2019**

The theme of this panel, "Diaspora's role in Nepal's development," can obviously be approached and discussed from various angles. However, the moderators have made the task easier for us – the panel members – by specifying four interrelated questions to address. Further, in view of the time constraints, the moderators have suggested responding to any or all of these questions from the vantage point of one's own professional expertise and interest. Given these parameters, for my own remarks I have decided to focus narrowly on one question, and that is, what, in my opinion, are the high "priority areas" that the Nepali diaspora can address towards expediting development in Nepal.

Following the completion of higher education at one of the esteemed universities in the US, I worked at a US-based research organization. This afforded the opportunity to work in many developing countries around the globe, including several years spent in Nepal. I then worked at the World Health Organization (WHO) at its headquarters and at USAID in Washington DC. Over the last three years, I have tried to spend at least 50% of my time in *pro bono* service, working mainly with public health universities and colleges in Nepal. In my remarks below, I draw largely from the *pro bono* portion of my professional experience, although my response may certainly be influenced by my previous work and experiences as well.

I should also point out that of the two broad areas of the diaspora's support – capital investment and knowledge/skills sharing – my commentary focuses on the latter. Unlike capital investment, the sharing of knowledge/skills is largely "invisible," in that it is often difficult to define and measure the effects or impacts. Perhaps due to the invisible nature, the knowledge/skill sharing efforts remained mostly in the shadows until very recently when the very first *Global Knowledge Sharing Conference* was held in Kathmandu, in October of 2019. In my view, this conference brought the knowledge sharing agenda to the forefront and highlighted its importance in contributing to Nepal's overall development and prosperity.

By way of pointing out what I consider to be one of the priorities, first I would like to sketch the outline of the context as I see it.

The Context

Over the last several years, the number of Nepali professionals educated and trained, residing, and working in the US has increased by many folds. According to one estimate, the total number of Nepalis in the US could be as many as 300,000 individuals. This represents the many individuals who have made the US their second home through the country's Diversity Visa



program, students who have come on their own and settled here in the US, as well as other professionals engaged in diverse work areas, including at academic institutions. Yet others made the US their second home on account of having been pushed out of Nepal due to the political upheaval of the 1990s. These multiple channels have resulted in creating a reservoir of well-educated, well-trained, and experienced professionals of Nepali origin here in our second home, the US.

The Nepali diaspora is already a high-quality human resource in the US, and the majority of this community is also keen to ‘give back to their community.’ Surely, some are already making significant contributions to their families and communities back in Nepal. Still, many others possess a high level of interest and the intention to contribute to development in Nepal. Happily, on the Nepal side, there is growing appreciation and recognition that the "invisible" force (provided by the Nepali diaspora) can make a significant contribution to diverse fields of development in Nepal. A strong testament to this sentiment is the convening (jointly by the Government of Nepal and the Non-Resident Nepali Association) of the *Global Knowledge Sharing Conference* held in Kathmandu in October of 2019. Recently, the Government of Nepal has also established a "Brain Gain Center" at the Foreign Ministry in Kathmandu with the objective of facilitating and harnessing the expertise of the Nepali diaspora. These are certainly positive milestones.

The Challenge

Given the availability of knowledge/skills and interest in giving back to Nepal on the US side, and the recognition of the need and receptivity on the Nepal side, the next step is determining how to realize this common goal – accessing the skills and expertise of the Nepali diaspora. At the moment, a variety of different approaches/models are currently in practice. To mention a few:

One approach that has been in practice since the early 1960s between the US and Nepal is government to government assistance in areas of mutual interest and priorities. Some of members of the Nepali diaspora have been engaged through this approach over the years. Global organizations based either in North America or elsewhere have become another important source, particularly because increasingly large portions of the Nepali diaspora are engaged in and working for Nepal's development. This form of engagement may go through the government or through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Academic institutions have been another important source wherein members of the Nepali diaspora identify and develop priority projects and contribute to various areas of development. This modality of expertise could flow through academia, government channels, or the private sector. Finally, the private sector remains an important source for accessing and utilizing the expertise of the Nepali diaspora in Nepal. This particular modality could include contributions from an individual member of diaspora to individuals or organizations/institutions in Nepal. Additionally, this could also be assistance



from an institution/organization to individuals or organizations in Nepal. My own *pro bono* work for and in Nepal over the last three years falls in this particular modality.

Aside from these approaches, there is probably a large segment of the Nepali diaspora, particularly here in the US, who are not only highly educated and well-experienced, but are also willing to share their knowledge and experience in Nepal. However, many of these individuals may not be in a position to travel to Nepal for knowledge/skill sharing or may not have any organizations willing to sponsor their expenses. In my opinion, unless and until we are able to identify and develop a pool of financial resources to access the diaspora's expertise, the idea of mobilizing a significant portion of the diaspora to engage in Nepal's development will still be limited largely to rhetoric. Therefore, it behooves us to find a mechanism for translating this rhetoric into action.

To this end, I feel the time has come to advocate and establish a fund that might be called something like the 'Nepali diaspora knowledge & skill fund'. Such a fund could be set up on a bilateral or multilateral basis. In the case of the US, a small portion of the fund that goes from the US government to Nepal could be earmarked specifically to access the expertise of the Nepali diaspora. A joint committee/board could be set up to review and allocate funds for priority projects. Under this scheme, if a member of the diaspora can, and is willing to work on a *pro bono* basis on a priority project, then such a person's salary time and other expenses could be credited to the Fund, and the Fund can then use that credit to sponsor another member of the diaspora. This is also one way to continue to replenish the fund.

With the establishment of the "Brain Gain Center" at Nepal's Foreign Ministry, the development of the Fund seems to be another essential building block. Further, in view of the schemes like the Millennium Development Challenge that recently provided some \$650 million for Nepal's development work, in addition to the millions of dollars that flow from USAID to Nepal's government every year, putting aside say, \$1 million is not really a large amount. The US government spends millions of dollars through the Fulbright program already. What is required to expand the horizon and explore new possibilities?

New challenges call for new possibilities. I believe, the time has come to think of approaches "outside the box". The experience gained from such a support mechanism could be applied to make it better and more effective down the road. The establishment of the fund seems imperative to access and mobilize the vast reservoir of the highly educated and skilled Nepali diaspora in the US and elsewhere. I might also mention here that I have raised this issue, informally, with the incumbent Foreign Minister in the presence of Nepal's foreign secretary and Nepal's ambassador to the US during the Foreign Minister's recent visit to the US.

Finally, the diaspora experts' database currently being compiled by the NRN Association with the active engagement of Nepal's Foreign Ministry is certainly a welcome step; and it must be appreciated. However, it is just the first step. Another important milestone is to explore how a



system may be developed and introduced wherein who and what contribution a person or an institution made is appropriately recorded. And, an even bigger challenge is being able to answer the question "so what"? That is, it would be important to assess the effect or impact a particular set of knowledge exchange or skillset transfer brings about. In this context, in my opinion, it would be important to be able assess the immediate, medium term, or longer-term effects or impacts of the contributions of the diaspora. This remains a key agenda item for the future, especially as the Nepali diaspora's engagement in Nepal's development continues to expand both in depth and breadth.

Conclusion

The availability of ever-increasing numbers of highly educated and well-skilled Nepalis in the US, the diaspora's readiness to contribute towards Nepal's prosperity, and welcoming policies and steps recently implemented by the Nepali government, are all essential ingredients for mobilizing and harnessing the diaspora's expertise and skills for Nepal's development. This new era has also raised a new challenge – that is, to identify ways in which a financial resource base could be utilized to facilitate accessing the available expertise and skills of the Nepali diaspora on a timely basis for specific priority areas. I have suggested one approach for addressing this challenge, and other alternatives may exist as well. It behooves us all to rise up to this challenge and explore the possibilities so that increasingly more of the diaspora could be engaged in the collective task of contributing to the prosperity of Nepal and Nepalis.



Notes from Dr. Govinda Timilsina
Senior Economist, World Bank, Washington, DC
Prepared for the Forum
Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development
Nepali National Convention, Maryland, July 6, 2019

1. Introduction

Diaspora has played a significant role in the development of many countries through investment, remittance, knowledge sharing, business and economic activity facilitation, and many other channels. From the early 19th century to now, the diasporas have played a role to contribute to their countries of the origin or the places from where their ancestors migrated out. Houseman [1] notes that Greeks, Phoenicians, trans-Saharan traders, the Hanseatic League, Jews, Armenians, overseas Chinese, and the Dutch and British East India Companies organized much of the world trade through diaspora networks. Israel is the country built by the diaspora; so are Armenia and modern Lebanon. India's advanced technology sector, especially the Information Technology (IT) sector, has been flourished on the strength of diaspora.

Countries differ in their opinion/perceptions and policies towards diaspora. Some governments (or departments) consider diaspora is a loss to the country of origin and discourage their population from out-migration (South Africa, Moldova). On the other hand, some governments encourage out-migration and focus on fighting their rights in the destination countries (Philippines, Senegal) [2]. Some countries such as Albania, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, and Romania have ministries of diaspora affairs to engage the diaspora in their economic development [3].

The potential contribution of diaspora in the economic development of originating countries is not only a perception. Nor it is based on some limited anecdotal evidence only. There exist quantitative studies showing the clear linkages between the diaspora engagement and economic development (see e.g., Analyzing the relationship between the diaspora originated from Sub-Saharan Africa and the economic development in the region, Gnimassoun and Anyanwu (2018) show that diaspora has significantly contributed to economic development in Africa). The main sources of impacts are coming from two channels: the intensity of human capital and total factor productivity [4].

Nepal's diaspora has relatively a short history, about three decades only. It's only after the emergence of democracy in 1990, Nepalis started to migrate out of the country for economic and professional opportunities. Nepalese diaspora is building up gradually. So does its potential to contribute to Nepal's economic development. This brief paper aims to highlight the potential role of the diaspora to contribute to Nepal, particularly to its electricity sector.



2. Channels for Diaspora's Potential Roles

Diaspora can contribute to the economic development of a country through various channels: investment, trade, skill and knowledge and remittances.

2.1 Direct Investment Opportunity

Diaspora can play a big role in foreign direct investment (FDI). For example, half of the FDI in China during the 1990-2000 period came from Chinese diaspora [2]. Diaspora's role would further be important in countries where foreigners perceive too risky to invest (e.g., countries with civil wars, low level of public safety). In Somalia, for example, most FDI in Somalia comes from Diaspora [2].

Diaspora could channel their investment through special financial institutions. For example, Senegal has established an investment fund for Senegalese abroad, which has funded US\$40 million in 804 projects. Liberia is also trying to do so. India has attracted NRI investment through Portfolio Investment Scheme (PIS) of Reserve Bank of India where NRI can open accounts, such as non-resident external rupee (NRE) account, non-resident ordinary rupee (NRO) account or foreign currency non-resident account (FCNR). As of March 31, 2019, NRI deposits in RBI account for US\$130.4 billion, which is almost one-fourth (24%) of India's total external debt [5].

Since diaspora has a potential of more easily connecting to the local policymakers, it can provide business background (sense of local markets, knowledge of the sites), and local language services; it promotes project assurance and reduces risks to foreign partners. Thus, it enhances foreign investors' confidence to invest in Nepal.

Although we do not have a database, NRN has invested in hydropower projects through the various channel (sole-ownership, joint ventures, equity participation). Development of a number of hydropower projects by the Sanima group is a diaspora initiative. Diaspora can enhance its participation in hydropower business. It can develop a few hydro projects by itself (ownership) or can provide equity participation in existing projects which are waiting for financial closure. A large number of hydropower projects with combined capacities of about 2,600 MW that have already signed a power purchasing agreement (PPA) with the Government of Nepal are waiting for financing. Assuming US\$2,500/kW investment on average, it provides an investment opportunity of US\$6.5 billion (or 7.15 Kharb NRs.) in a guaranteed hydropower market [6]. Another 2,600 MW projects are at the stage of signing PPA with similar size of investment opportunity [6]. The efforts making by the Government of Bangladesh aiming to import 9,000 MW of hydropower from Nepal can significantly reduce market risks to export-oriented hydropower to be produced in Nepal [6]. The potential energy sector projects include hydropower projects; electricity driven transport services, electricity-driven recreation services



(e.g., luxury hotels in the Himalayas, cable cars for scenic views, theme parks); manufacturing of supplies to electricity using vehicles/machines/devices/processes/appliances — for example, manufacturing of electric cooking stoves.

There exist many successful stories of how diaspora contributed through knowledge as well as finance for service sector development in various countries. For example, an Indian cardiologist, Dr. Pratap Reddy return from the United States to start 150-bed private hospital in 1983 in Chennai, which has been developed as Apollo Hospitals group in many parts of India. It is one of the largest health-care groups in South Asia [2]. In Nepal too, Upendra Mahato and other NRNs have opened the Medicity hospital in Lalitpur district, which is the largest private hospital in Nepal (700 plus beds). The diamond-cutting industry around the world is mostly run by the Indian diaspora (mainly in Antwerp, Belgium).

2.2. Potential Role for Knowledge Support

Considering the heavy brain-drain or economic migration over the last two decades, many Nepalese with the highest academic degree and significant professional expertise are residing outside Nepal. Most of them update about Nepal through the media (Nepalese TV, Newspapers) and criticize the incumbent government. Instead of doing so, diaspora intellectual could do evidence-based research (knowledge) and manage to communicate with policymakers. Intellectual could also share overall development or sectoral development experience to policymakers and the general public. There is no lack of medium for the communication of knowledge. Intellectual can do the knowledge production by themselves or through the organizations they work with (or for).

In the case of the energy sector, there are a large number of issues to be answered. Some of them are: (i) what is more appropriate for Nepal from the perspective of overall economic benefits for the country: direct export of hydropower or domestic utilization of hydropower for import substitution and export of electricity intensive goods; if both what would be their optimal mix (ii) what are the innovative uses of electricity for economic growth and welfare improvement, (iii) to what extent electricity can substitute LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) for cooking and petrol and diesel for transportation in Nepal; (iv) would it be economically feasible and environmentally sustainable to have electric cable cars for transportation in mountainous regions instead of construction of roads which are expensive, environmentally damaging and prone to accidents? Answering these questions is critical towards the long-term and strategic development of Nepal's most important natural resource base, water resources. It is considered one of the two (other is tourism) main resources for boosting the country's economic development and uplifting the welfare of her population.



2.3 Facilitation of business /economic activities

It is not necessary that only those members of the diaspora who have strong financial capacity can contribute to Nepal's economic development through investment. They can also contribute by facilitating foreign investment through networking, connecting them to the appropriate authority in Nepal and providing basic information to potential investors. This is critical to building foreign investors' confidence in investing Nepal's hydroelectricity and tourism sectors. They can also invest in Nepal in other sectors, such as building material sectors, cement sector, mineral water, organic farming, etc. As a potential foreign investor knows little about the business opportunities in Nepal, informing him/her about this opportunity and providing basic information even in informal meetings, get together etc. might attract them and eventually come up with business ventures.

2.4 Productive use of remittance

An unfortunate phenomenon is that most of the remittances get locked in soil in Nepal. This is the main barrier to channel the remittance to productive sectors. Instead of waiting for the government's policy to discourage this trend, the diaspora could take the lead to channel their remittance on productive sectors. However, the investment of remittances would not move from the real estate sector to other sectors unless there exists a business case in the other sectors. An emotional business decision may be only short-lived, and in fact may invite loss.

3. Conclusions

Diasporas have contributed to economic development of many countries. The main channels through which diaspora contributes include direct investment, remittance, knowledge support, facilitation of trade, business and investment. Nepali diaspora does not have a long history, but it is gradually growing. Although Nepalese diaspora does not yet have much strength to significantly contribute Nepal's economic development, the potential to contribute exists. In the energy sector, for example, diaspora could invest in the development of Nepal's hydropower and other renewable energy sectors. Diaspora could also provide knowledge support to address some critical questions related to the energy sector. They could lead initiative to divert remittance from unproductive real estate sector to productive energy sector.

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Notes from Prof. Udaya Wagle

**Professor, Western Michigan University
Prepared for the Forum
Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development
Baltimore, MD. July 6, 2019**

1. What are the critical issues in the policies and programs related to your area of expertise (e.g., education, public health, agriculture) in Nepal that need to be addressed?

As a student of public policy with a specific focus on political economy, I would like to point out two different aspects of policies in Nepal.

First, public policies in general: Policymaking is always important as it directs “limited” policy resources to the problems that the society prioritizes for solving. Now that the country is attempting to institutionalize the federal structure of government, questions such as how policies are made, by whom, for whom, and using what process set the practice for future. The government is struggling to operationalize these basic public policy making questions at all levels: federal, provincial, and local. What is the process like? Whether and how are the key stakeholders engaged and how much inputs are they allowed to provide? Whose interests are being represented? While the legislature and executive agencies make formal decisions at the federal, provincial, and local levels, how are policy proposals generated and vetted? These procedural issues are important to promote democratic policymaking that ensures proper representation of plural interests.

Second, social policy as one substantive policy area: Reducing poverty has been a persistent policy problem in Nepal. While poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90/day declined from 62% in 1995 to 15% in 2010, 51% of the population lived on less than \$3.20/day in 2010 (values in 2011 PPP dollars). Poverty headcount ratios following the national poverty lines are much more stubborn as the poverty lines themselves tend to be adjusted over time (as well as geography). Using the national poverty lines of NPR 19,261 (in 2010), the poverty headcount ratio decreased from 42% in 1996 to 25% in 2010. But the real story is that about one-half of the population did not have consumption equivalent to NPR 73 per day (or NPR 26,500 in a year) in 2010 (\$1 PPP NPR). It's not that the government is not investing. There are many initiatives to reduce poverty and the money going to social protection policies (income maintenance and health) constitutes around 10% of an increasingly bloated government budget (close to 50% of GDP in the 2019 fiscal year). This does not even include the many area-based, targeted programs and infrastructure investments from which the poor and low-income groups are expected to benefit.



Overall, while the economy is doing fine, thanks to the remittances sent by many in the Nepali diaspora that is close to 30% of the GDP of \$29B currently, the poor and low-income sections of the population are not benefiting from growth.

2. How do you think the Diaspora can partner with the counterparts in Nepal in improving policies, programs and implementation related to these issues?

3. What kind of platforms, avenues and resources will facilitate and improve the partnership between the Diaspora members and Nepali counterparts?

Response to #2 & #3 combined: The diaspora-leading organizations can develop a database of experts in various policy areas and coordinate with the NPC, the Prime Minister's office, the specific ministries, United Nations, World Bank, and even leading think-tanks in Nepal to have proper dialogue, exchange, and inputs. Prime examples include general conferences, thematic training/workshops, and sponsored projects focusing on policy analysis and program evaluation on specific areas and initiatives. These inputs can also come in the form of expert testimony at legislative committees focusing on specific policy issues. In case of the specific policy analyses and program evaluation, however, thematic experts will look for proper recognition and impact of their inputs in making formal policy decisions. Also, while most experts may not be looking for direct payoffs, there needs to be proper logistical apparatus by coordinating with the appropriate counterpart(s) from Nepal. It will even be possible to write foundation grants on behalf of the coordinating organizations.

4. In your opinion, what are the top three priorities that the Diaspora groups can address in supporting Nepal's development related to your area of expertise?

Nepali diaspora includes diverse groups of people from Nepali descent. They have varied interests and capacities to contribute when it comes to Nepal's development and policies. As pointed out in #1 above, my proposed priority areas include:

- Promoting democratic process of policymaking through a systematic analysis of the existing policies and practices and targeted and general-purpose initiatives on public affairs education (for lawmakers, bureaucrats, advocacy organizations, and think tanks).
- Contributing to the development of social policies by incorporating evidence-based understanding of the role of extant policies and programs in reducing poverty and inequality (i.e., policies on social security, pensions, labor market protections, targeted allowances, and health care).
- Exploring appropriate policies to streamline foreign labor migration and effective use of remittances to strengthen economic security and resilience.



Notes from Prof. Durga Dutta Poudel
Professor, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana, USA
Prepared for the Forum
Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development
Baltimore, MD. July 6, 2019

**Cooperatives, Corporate, and Organic Farming: Asta-Ja for Grassroots-based
Agricultural Development**

Almost 68% of Nepal's nearly 29 million people depend on agriculture for livelihoods. Nepalese agriculture contributes about 33% to national GDP. The National Sample Census of Agriculture 2011/12 showed a total of 3,715,555 households engaged in crop production (having > 0.01 ha land) and 115,538 households engaged in the production of livestock only (having < 0.01 ha land) in Nepal. About 90% of agricultural land is devoted to the production of cereal crops and remaining 10% under cash crops; and, the Terai, Hills, and Mountain regions contain, respectively, 70%, 26% and 4% of total agricultural land.

Nepal's agricultural productivity is at a very low level. In order to increase agricultural productivity, timely availability of improved seeds and other agricultural inputs, access to sustainable technologies and practices, and presence of required infrastructure for agricultural development is necessary. Conversion of agricultural lands to other uses is another major problem in Nepal. In 2015, total agricultural land area dropped to 4,228,548 hectares, which was less than 142,262 hectares as compared to 2001. Widespread degradation of agricultural lands due to soil erosion, compaction, depletion of plant nutrients, acidification, soil pollution, destruction of soil structure, loss of soil carbon, and decline on soil biodiversity is another major concern. Land degradation is also occurring due to landslides, debris flow and deposition, sedimentation, river cutting, overgrazing, and deforestation.

Nepal's agricultural trade indicators over the past four decades show a very alarming trend. Nepal had an agricultural trade balance of US \$14.3 million in 1979-80 which turned into a negative agricultural trade balance of US \$151.6 million in 2002, and an import of agricultural goods worth over US \$2 billion in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. There is a widespread concern among local communities, national media, farmers, agriculturists, intellectuals, policy makers, and other stakeholders in relation to increasing agricultural imports, food safety and security, agricultural unemployment, outmigration of farming communities, land abandonment, and the conversion of agricultural lands in the country.

About a decade ago, I published a groundbreaking framework of Asta-Ja meaning eight *Ja* in Nepali letter, *Jal* (water), *Jamin* (land), *Jungle* (forest), *Jadibuti* (medicinal and aromatic plants),



Janashakti (manpower), *Janawar* (animal), *Jarajuri* (crop plants) and *Jalabayu* (climate) as fundamental resources for economic development and socio-economic transformation in Nepal. This publication has been followed by a series of other publications on Asta-Ja Framework, which include, policy framework, strategic framework, capacity building framework, management of Asta-Ja system and the focus of Asta-Ja on national planning and development. Asta-Ja Framework suggests “*Jalabayu*” as the driving force for all other elements (*Jal*, *Jamin*, *Jungle*, *Jadibuti*, *Janashakti*, *Janawar*, and *Jarajuri*) and require full consideration of all eight elements while utilizing Asta-Ja resources for economic development. For example, for sustainable crop production (i.e. *Jarajuri*), all other seven *Jas* must be well utilized, conserved and developed. In other words, no sustainable crop production is possible without conservation of land, forest, water, availability of appropriate *Janashakti*, and adequate consideration of *Jalabayu*. Medicinal and aromatic plants could be incorporated in agricultural system. The eight principles of Asta-Ja Framework: community awareness, capacity-building, policy decision making, comprehensive assessment, interrelationships and linkages, sustainable technology and practices; institutions, trade and governance, and sustainable socio-economic transformation and community development provide practical guidelines for design and successful implementation of policies and programs relating to Asta-Ja resources at the grassroots level.

Asta-Ja Framework along with Michael E. Porter’s Four-diamond model can guide us in developing agriculture as a vibrant and sustainable enterprise. Competitive price and product differentiation are critical elements for national competitiveness according to Porter's model. Nepalese agricultural produce should be cheaper than foreign produce and there should be clear differentiation between Nepalese agricultural produce and the foreign ones. Nepal has competitive advantage on organic agriculture. High hills in Nepal are best suited for off-season/in season fruits and vegetables, vegetable seeds, and other high-value agriculture. Smallholder farming coupled with favorable agroecological conditions put Nepal in exceptionally advantageous situation for organic agriculture. Organic production will increase the competitiveness of Nepalese agriculture especially fruits and vegetables, dairy, poultry, pigs, goats, spices, and fish. For cereals, an increase on agricultural productivity could be the short-term goal, while organic cereal production could be the long-term goal.

Nepalese agriculture could be very competitive internationally if handled correctly. There are five drivers of agricultural development in Nepal. They are: 1) Smallholder mixed farming system, 2) Incentives, 3) Pro-poor market, 4) Infrastructure, and 5) Policies and programs. These five drivers of agricultural development must be the focal points while designing agricultural development strategies and programs in Nepal. Just like the Dutch are implementing "Circular Agriculture" to enhance sustainability of their farms and agriculture, Nepal must promote mixed-farming system for sustainable agriculture and competitiveness. Negative aspect of open border especially in agriculture is a major challenge for development. Obviously, various policy measures including strict border control and restrictions, product certification, eco-labeling, and community awareness would be necessary.



The cooperative movement has become the top national agenda of the Government of Nepal since the 1950s. Currently, a total number of 34,512, with a total membership number of 6,305,581 operate in Nepal. These include: savings and credit (13,578), multipurpose (4,371), agriculture (10,921), milk (1,658), consumer (1,423), fruits and vegetables (193), tea (108), coffee (155), *Jadibuti* (184), bee keeping (93), communication (143), health (128), sugarcane (48), *Junar* (45), and other coops (999). Agricultural cooperatives can take part in production agriculture at the local level. They can also take part on local level agri-marketing (input supplies, output collection, small-scale processing/packaging). Price guarantees and support, crop and livestock insurance, value-chain, branding, capacity-building, and farm machinery would be some of the key areas that cooperatives need help from the government.

Supply chain management always has been a major challenge for efficient production and marketing of agricultural commodities. Many farmers are struggling for better prices for their produce, governmental support, and marketing of their commodities. On the other hand, the rising urban population is resulting in increasing demand for food and other commodities. Small cooperatives formed in rural areas are not capable of undertaking bigger roles in processing, packaging, storage, and marketing of agricultural products primarily due to their limitations on capital and human resources, smaller volume of produce, lack of knowledge, and lack of necessary infrastructures. Therefore, regional and national marketing initiatives need to be undertaken by corporate or private businesses, corporations, or other joint venture entities who can invest in the necessary logistics, transportation, storage, and human resources. This brings an opportunity for vertical integration of cooperatives with corporate or private businesses, corporations, and similar other companies in the agricultural supply chain.

Nepalese diaspora can contribute to agricultural development through joint ventures together with Nepal's financing agencies and local investors on agribusinesses. They can invest on a wide spectrum of agro-industries, value addition, water harnessing, irrigation, agri-tourism, laboratory facilities, and local business. Nepalese diaspora has high potential for small, medium, or even large investment. Appropriate policies, rules, and regulations and possibly some incentives should be in place in order to attract private investments from Nepalese diaspora.

(Note: This paper is based on the author's remarks as a panelist and responses to the questions from the floor at a panel discussion forum "Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development" organized by Nepali National Convention (NNC) Baltimore, MD, USA 2019, on July 6, 2019. For live streaming of the panel discussion, please click at <https://www.facebook.com/enepalese/videos/327891528116192/>. References will be provided if needed.)



Notes from Ms. Prabha Bhattarai Deuja
IT Professional, Community Leader
Prepared for the Forum
Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development
Nepali National Convention, Maryland, July 6, 2019

What are the critical priority issues in the policies and programs related to your area of expertise (e.g., education, public health, agriculture, development) in Nepal that need to be addressed?

I have experience working in Information Technology, otherwise known as IT, for over 20 years. Every time I see, read, and/or witness anything related to Nepal, I always wish people invested more time in preparing policies and strictly enforcing them. Now what I see to be a critical priority in Nepal is educating the youth in schools and colleges. This civic education should cover the cost of the frequent closing (Bandhs) the city, state, and country, and its impact on ordinary people. I'd like to share an example, an experience of my last trip to Kathmandu in December of 2018. Clean bathroom/ washing of hand/ clean area is very simple thing, but we are struggling to teach students to follow these. The health benefits of sanitation are enormous.

Additionally, I think the infrastructure of Nepal need to be renovated and built better, to avoid accidents, and create a safer community for everyone. I have witnessed roads being built, but when I went back after 6 months the road was still with trenches. The found again that the cables and utilities needed to be put underground. These are the things we can avoid easily.

How do you think the diaspora can specifically partner with the counterpart individuals and organizations in Nepal in improving policies, programs and implementation related to these issues?

The reality is, like many other nations, Nepalese immigrants are also scattered in many countries across the world. The more fortunate ones, typically in developed Western countries, are also part of this particular demographic as coworkers and leaders. As a result, there are numerous resources within the Nepalese diaspora who would be glad to take part in Nepal's development. I believe the government should create a department or team within its Ministry of Foreign Affairs who will coordinate various resources globally and consult the respective identified resources on a regular basis. This will help the government stay informed on what is happening in the developed world, and how they can learn and implement possible solutions locally to better and resolve it. I appreciate Nepali Foreign Minister Pradip Gyanwali and his team, as they are already working on creating a database of diaspora resources in a variety of fields.



The advancement of technology has made it possible to schedule a conference call globally, thus allowing workers and business partners alike conduct meetings without the need to travel. Through technology platforms, it is entirely possible to meet with people all across the globe about any topic, whenever desired. Avoiding the cost of surmounting the distance, advanced technology has allowed people of all ages and in all locations to make time for each other and truly connect, and help in development policies and programs.

What kind of platforms, avenues and resources will facilitate and improve the partnership between the diaspora members and Nepali counterparts towards the development related objectives?

The Nepalese counterparts and identified immigrant groups overseas should hold a regular discussion on contemporary issues; frequent meetings like this will help share knowledge and experience with people everywhere, and can ignite conversations and generate plans to make improvements in Nepal-- this will save Nepal's resources and time. Educating and sharing knowledge with counterparts will not be enough. The government and political party workers, and students in colleges and schools can benefit from '**knowledge and experience sharing**' exercise. The resulting transparency and involvement of a third party may also help prevent corruption, and may also help avoid some development delays.

In your opinion and experience, what are the top three priority areas that the diaspora groups can address in supporting Nepal's development related to your area of expertise?

Top three priorities in my opinion are: Education, Infrastructure and Modernizing of Bureaucracy. Education will remain a key factor in the development of any country. Without good education, the foundation for development will be weak. The kind of education, how it is delivered, and what areas we need to focus on, all depends on the country's national interests.

Infrastructure is another key factor in the country's development. Efficient movements of goods and services are only possible with good infrastructure. Especially in a country whose economy is largely dependent on tourism, infrastructure is vital. Maintenance of roads and airports have, until now, remained the national priority for every government, but possible transportation via train and waterways are also being discussed these days. Environment is also a key factor when planning to onboard a new avenue of infrastructure.

Modernizing Nepal's bureaucracy is long overdue. This must be a top priority for a government that envisions a new Nepal. Working in the IT industry, I feel that there are several things that can be implemented to make the life of our common people simple, especially for those who come to government offices for services. I will acknowledge that there are cases where IT infrastructure has been utilized to provide some services, but in today's rapidly changing world, we can't deny Nepalese people the benefits others are enjoying already.



Notes from Ms. Madhavi Basnet Karki

Educator, Legal Scholar

Prepared for the Forum

Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development

Nepali National Convention, Baltimore, MD, USA. July 6, 2019

Traditional Education vs. Trade School:

Landscape of education in Nepal has changed. We need to focus on trade schools than traditional school/education only. Method of teaching, learning and engaging our students should help to the students get a livelihood right away. There is a need to reshaping of the deep-rooted idea that not every child should aim to become doctor, or engineer. All disciplines are important. We need to rethink this stereo type aspirations in education in terms of the societal need, and what works and is needed in Nepal.

Climate Change:

Climate change is already a big issue globally and in Nepal. In this light environmental technology will be very important. There should be brainstorming among the resident experts and diaspora members about how to incorporate environmental thinking into all forms of education. If there are government programs and economic initiatives with the environment in mind, educational programs can flourish better. This will not only improve tourism, but support sustainable development efforts. What if someone in Nepal will be a pioneer on the global climate change challenges, as Nepal has unique geography to support climate change related research? How do we tap that kind of opportunity for knowledge?

Networking, bridging the gap and implementation:

Many of us have migrated to the Western societies which often place emphasis on individual competence and achievement. Several diaspora members have excelled in their disciplines. How can we be united to transform that knowledge to our native country? The diaspora talent is dispersed, and that is a challenge for coordination. We must develop mechanisms and platforms for channelizing that expertise/knowledge to help Nepal. How do we coordinate and form networking systems, is a big question.

Keeping youth in country:

There should be initiatives and programs to keep youth in the country. How can diaspora help in this regard? Maybe more investments should be made in job programs, superior educational opportunities in country and creating upward mobility opportunities for all young persons. To help in this area too, the diaspora groups needs to be united not divided. As education and economy go hand in hand, investments in education will help propel economic development in Nepal.



APPENDIX I: Short Biographies: Panelists, Moderators and Report Editors

Guest Panelist



Swarnim Wagle, PhD, is an economist who served as the 24th Vice-Chair of the National Planning Commission (NPC) in the Government of Nepal. He led the NPC from August 2017 to February 2018, prior to which he was a Member of the Commission for 28 months between 2014 and 2017.

From a position with a rank equivalent to a minister, Dr. Wagle headed the Government’s apex policy advisory body, and guided the formulation of national development strategies, coordinated policy across the public sector, monitored major national projects, and led several ministerial delegations on the international stage. In the aftermath of the Great Nepal Earthquake of 2015 and the Flood of 2017, he co-led the Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) and helped garner substantial assistance.

Dr. Wagle worked as an international development professional for more than 15 years on policy assignments in over 20 countries, most recently as Senior Economist at The World Bank in Washington, D.C. He has published several flagship reports and papers in areas spanning public finance, trade and investment. At the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), he co-authored the global 2013 Human Development Report titled “The Rise of the South.” From 2002 to 2007, he co-led the UN’s Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Initiative.

Dr. Wagle serves on the Senate of Kathmandu University. He chairs and advises several non-profit organizations, including Baliyo Nepal, a nutrition initiative co-funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He has undertaken short-term assignments at the Asian Development Bank (Manila) and the International Trade Center (Geneva). He is a past South Asia editor of Harvard Asia Quarterly (1999-2000).

Dr. Wagle holds a PhD in Economics from the Australian National University, an MPA in International Development (MPA/ID) from Harvard University, and a BSc (Econ) from the London School of Economics.

Bios of the Panelists (In Alphabetical Order by Last Name)



Bandita Sharma-Dahal, Esq. is an immigration attorney based in Virginia. Ms. Sharma-Dahal received her LL.M. from Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center in New York on 2008. She received her first law degree from Nepal Law Campus, Tribhuvan University on 2000.

She is the first Nepali female attorney holding license both in Nepal and New York. She was admitted to practice law in Nepal as a pleader on 1997 and as an advocate on



2000 and in New York since 2009. She is also admitted to District of Columbia, and United States Court of Appeals for the Third and Fourth Circuit.

Ms. Sharma Dahal is currently presenter of Immigration Corner by monthly program on Global Television Network, FOX 5. Her interest in community work and pro-bono services are exemplary, as she has been actively involved in various community organizations and has been an active pro bono attorney for the Pennsylvania Immigrant Resource Center. She is a Vice President of America-Nepal Women's Association of Greater Washington (ANWA) since 2016. She was the chief election commission of NRNA in 2016.



Ms. Prabha Bhattarai Deuja, is a Sr. Engineer, Oracle Corporation, Centerville, VA, USA.

She has been working with non-profit organizations for the last 25 years and is the president for America Nepal society (ANS), one of the oldest organizations in the United States. Ms. Deuja is honorary representative for the tourism board of Nepal, and is an active volunteer for the Fairfax County Juvenile Detention Center.

Ms. Bhattarai Deuja is Vice President for my local home owners' association, and the founder of the Tenderhearts foundation. Active in community organizations, she works towards empowering youth, promoting of Nepali culture in the USA.



Ms. Madhavi Basnet Karki, LL.M, began legal journey starts from Tribhuvan University, and Institute of Social Studies, Netherlands to American University – Washington College of Law, where she completed LL.M in 1997. She is former Academic Dean, Vatterott Educational Centers, Inc., Associate Dean, Strayer University, VA, USA – Legal Education and Policy Prof. Karki is also a former Associate Campus Dean of Strayer University, and Advisor to Nepali Women's Global Network. She brings substantial experience in developing and delivering distance courses in law, and in managing and administering distance education campus of a university.

Prof. Karki was a Human Rights Attorney at Supreme Court of Nepal and Director at South Asian Forum for Human Rights. An active public personality, she frequently appears on community-based radio stations to discuss the human rights situation in Nepal. She is also the founding coordinator and life member of America Nepal Women's Association (ANWA) in Washington DC. She also brings experiences from her fellowships and internships in NATO, EU, French International Relation, and International Court of Justice, Hague.



Durga D. Poudel, PhD, is a Professor of University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, LA, USA. His research has focused on water quality and nonpoint source pollution control, water quality modeling, climate change adaptation, soil erosion, soil development and productivity, sustainable agriculture, organic farming, roadside vegetation and highway enhancement, waste water recycling, and farming systems. He teaches soil science and water quality courses at UL Lafayette.

Dr. Poudel is the Founder of the Asta-Ja Framework and the Co-founder of the Asta-Ja Abhiyan Nepal.

The Asta-Ja Abhiyan Nepal (<http://www.astajanepal.com/>) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization and is founded on the basis of the conceptual framework of Asta-Ja meaning eight ja in Nepali language that includes Jal (water), Jamin (land), Jungle (forest), Jadibuti (medicinal and aromatic plants), Janashakti (manpower), Janawar (animals), Jarajuri (agricultural crops, fruits, and vegetables), and Jalabayu (climate) for sustainable development, natural resources conservation and socio-economic transformation of Nepal. Dr. Poudel is also heavily involved in several community organizations.



Usha Sharma, PhD, has more than 20 years of teaching and research experience in USA and Nepal. She holds a doctorate in Environmental Engineering (Interdisciplinary) from Tokyo University, Japan. After completion of her Post-Doctoral Research at University of Massachusetts, Boston, she continued her research and teaching at the same university for few years. Currently, she works as an adjunct faculty member at several area colleges including Bunker Hill

Community College, Boston.

In Nepal, Dr. Sharma was working as an Environmentalist in International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Nepal and Researcher in Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) for more than five years. Dr. Sharma's research papers have been published in peer reviewed journal such as Atmospheric Environment, Journal of Geophysical Research.

Dr. Sharma has been actively involved in Nepali community in Boston for last 20 years, working in different capacities. She currently holds a position of a women coordinator in ANA. She was the president of INLS Boston Chapter from 2012-2014. She is an advisor in different organizations in Boston such as Greater Boston Nepalese Community, INLS Boston Chapter, Pashupatinath Buddha foundation, Boston.



Shyam Thapa, PhD (Brown University), is an Adjunct Professor and Consultant at several universities and colleges and lives in Vienna, VA, USA. Dr. Thapa specializes in public health research and evaluation. He has more than 25 years of experience working with public, private, and multinational organizations in multiple countries.

For several years, Dr. Thapa served as a resident technical advisor to Nepal Government's National Planning Commission, Ministry of Population and Environment, and Ministry of Health. He has also worked as a scientist at the World Health Organization's (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, and as a global health fellow/senior advisor in research and evaluation at USAID in Washington, DC.

Dr. Thapa has authored and co-authored many articles and co-edited books. He currently divides his time primarily between the United States and Nepal.



Govinda Timilsina, PhD, is a Senior Research Economist in the Development Research Group at the World Bank. He holds a masters and a doctoral degree in energy economics from the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok.

He has more than 15 years' experience across a broad range of energy and climate change economics at the international level. His key expertise includes general equilibrium and input-output modeling; project-based mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol; climate change science, impacts and mitigation; GHG market; energy sector modeling and electricity economics and planning. Prior to joining the World Bank, Mr. Timilsina was a Senior Research Director at the Canadian Energy Research Institute, Calgary, Canada where he was engaged mainly on climate change policy analysis, economic impacts assessment and electricity issues.

Dr. Timilsina served as a member of the Small-scale CDM Panel and the Registration and Issuance Team (RIT) of the Clean Development Mechanism Executive Board (CDM-EB) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



Udaya R. Wagle, PhD Dr. is professor and director of the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Western Michigan University (WMU), Kalamazoo, MI. He holds a Ph.D. in public policy (University of Massachusetts), Master's degree in nonprofit management, and Bachelor's and Master's degrees in business administration.

Author of two books and over three dozen other academic and professional publications, he remains very active in the larger scholarly and professional community. His research interests include social policies, underdevelopment, and comparative studies. His multicultural background, academic training in public policy, and experience and expertise in social policies



and development have taken him to Myanmar, Nepal, and Uzbekistan for high-level consulting and research assignments.

Before joining WMU, Dr. Wagle managed economic development programs at a premier nonprofit organization in Nepal and taught at University of Massachusetts Boston and Marist College. He currently serves on the editorial boards of Poverty & Public Policy and Social Indicators Research.

Moderators, and Report Preparation Team



Ambika P. Adhikari, DDes., is a Principal Planner at City of Tempe, AZ, USA heading its long-range planning division. He obtained Doctorate in Urban Planning and Design from Harvard University. He is a Sr. Sustainability Scientist, a frequent Faculty Associate, and a former Program Manager, and Research Professor at Arizona State University (ASU).

In Nepal, Ambika was Associate Professor at Institute of Engineering, Tribhuvan University, and Country Representative of IUCN (International Union of Conservation of Nature). He is a Fellow of American Society of Nepalese Engineers (ASNEgr), and Member of American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). He holds certifications as Project Management Professional (PMP), and LEED AP ND (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), Accredited Professional - Neighborhood Development. He is a Fellow at STAR Scholars Network.

Ambika has authored one, and co-edited five books related to planning, environment and development. He is active in many community organizations.

He is active in many Nepali community organizations including in ANA, Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA), Nepalis and Friends Association (NAFA) and Canada Foundation for Nepal (CFFN).



Rajendra Khatiwada, MSME MSIE, MBA, is a Quality Manager, Consulting Engineer for automotive Industry living in Georgetown, Kentucky, USA. He provides services in Engineering and Technology and is a keen student of economic development in Nepal.

Mr. Khatiwada has been active in several Nepali organizations, and has led many efforts to support programs in Nepal. He is a former president of Association of Nepalese in Midwest America (ANMA) and a current Vice President of the Association of Nepalese in the Americas (ANA), and was one of the core members of the organizing committee of the Baltimore National Convention 2019.



Diwakar Dahal, PhD is Analytical Research and Development Scientist at Neshor Pharmaceuticals (USA) in St. Louis, Missouri. He obtained his PhD in Biochemistry and Plant Biology from Leibniz Universität Hannover in Germany, and a Masters in Agricultural Sciences from University of Bonn. Prior to his work in the industry, Diwakar was a post-doctoral research scientist at University of Missouri.

He is General Secretary of the Association of Association of Nepalese in Midwest America (ANMA), and was one of the key members of the organizing committee for the Nepali National Convention, Baltimore.



APPENDIX II: Some Images from the Forum



A View of Forum Attendees



Forum Panelists



Moderator Rajendra Khatiwada and the Forum Panelists



Forum Panelists and the two Moderators



Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Some Forum Participants and Moderator



Prior to the Forum, Informal Discussion with Dr. Swarnim Wagle



ANA Executive Members and Forum Moderators



Journalist Mr. Bijay Thapa takes a Selfie with Dr. Swarnim Wagle and Some Attendees

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Diaspora's Role in Nepal's Development

A Forum Held at the
Nepali National Convention
Baltimore, MD, USA
June 5-7, 2019

Organized Jointly by
Association of Nepalese in the Americas (ANA)
Association of Nepalis in the Mid-west America (ANMA)
Baltimore Association of Nepalese Americans (BANA)
International Nepali Literary society (INLS)



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AT THE FORUM