



Asta-Ja USA Newsletter

April 2021, Volume 3, Issue 1

Message from the President

Greetings!

It is my great honor and privilege to present the fourth newsletter from Asta-Ja USA. As the mission of our organization is to promote sustainable development of natural and human resources through education, capacity building, charitable activities, applied research, policy decision support, and environmental conservation, Asta-Ja USA is continually striving for excellence in generating funds and implementing research, development, and community awareness programs for sustainable environmental resources and community development in Nepal.



*Dr. Durga D. Poudel
President, Asta-Ja USA*

Asta-Ja is a theoretically grounded grassroots-based planning and management Framework for conservation, development, and utilization of natural and human resources. Asta-Ja means eight of the Nepali letter "Ja" [Jal (water), Jamin (land), Jungle (forest), Jadibuti (medicinal and aromatic plants), Janashakti (manpower), Janawar, (animals), Jarajuri (crop plants), and Jalabayu (climate)]. Asta-Ja promotes accelerated economic growth and socio-economic transformation of the nation. It is a scientific, holistic, systematic, self-reliant, and multidisciplinary Framework for the conservation, development, and utilization of Asta-Ja resources. The eight elements of the Asta-Ja system are very intricately linked and strongly connected. Hence, it is important to have sustainable conservation and development of each of the eight elements of Asta-Ja for better functioning of the entire system. This issue of the newsletter focusses on human resources. As human resources development does not occur overnight, it is important to plan for it ahead of time considering current and future needs of the country. It is impossible for a country to develop without the support of skilled, knowledgeable, honest, and hardworking human resources. Economic progress of a society further increases demand for health and education facilities and services and skilled workers in various sectors including hospitality, industrial, agricultural, transport, and communication. Therefore, human resources planning and development should be the highest priority task for a nation.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors and Executive Officers of Asta-Ja USA, Asta-Ja members associated with other Asta-Ja organizations including Asta-Ja RDC, Asta-Ja ICC, Asta-Ja Abhiyan Nepal, Asta-Ja Agriculture Cooperative, and Asta-Ja Vyas Bhumi Nepal, and all other Asta-Ja Campaigners as well as individuals and organizations who have been involved heavily on sustainable conservation, development and utilization of Asta-Ja resources for economic growth, environmental quality and socio-economic transformation of the communities.

As the second wave of COVID-19 has terrified the communities in Nepal, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and salute doctors and nurses and all individuals in the front lines fighting against this pandemic. We wish safe and healthy life to every individuals.

Please visit our website <http://www.astajausa.org/> for more information.



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Manpower for the Development of Nepal

Manpower is one of the four (land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship) production factors in economic development. Manpower plays a key role in managing the other three components of the economic activities. It also determines the overall directions of the economy of the nation, which will have implication in the regional and eventually world economy. Proper management and utilization of human manpower are necessary for economic prosperity and sustainable development of a country. There is a role of skilled as well as unskilled manpower for overall economic prosperity of a nation. While the role of unskilled manpower can never be undermined in the economic development of the country, skilled manpower can play a pivotal role to accelerate the economic development. Realizing this fact, to better manage the country's human resource, the various skilled manpower development programs have been initiated at different time points starting from a planned development programs in Nepal. Among the trained manpower, emphasis was placed in technical manpower including medical science, engineering, agriculture, forestry, and food science at government levels. Establishment of four technical institutes within Tribhuvan University is an example. At the same time, there was a regular scholarships program to train the students in foreign countries. This trend is still continuing now which was started before 1960s. While the training facilities were limited to a few institutions before, now it has global in nature. Some of those initiatives are private funded now. With the adoption of open market economy and being a member of WTO, education opportunities as well as job markets have also been globalized for last three decades. While it has been a situation of loss to the nation due to 'brain-drain' in a short term, Nepali technical manpower have developed their expertise in every single sector of science and technology including medical science, engineering, agriculture, forestry, food science and others from various parts of the world including America, Europe, Japan, Australia, and various countries in Asia. There are no any continents where Nepali expertise are not working as a professor,

researchers, policy makers, and high level professionals. This manpower situated in the world is willing to contribute to their motherland whenever necessary whereas some of them are already contributing in the areas of their expertise. They train the students and encourage them to go back to the homeland and serve the nation. This



*Dr. Dilip R. Panthee
Asheville, North Carolina, USA*

will help to introduce the technology. Any useful collaboration is always sought between homeland and overseas universities and research institutes. One of our concerns was that there are several world class institutes or organizations in which our neighbors such as Indians are showing their sizeable presence all the time. Now, Nepali expertise are showing their presence to some extent although we should say that this is the beginning of the process. It has been helpful to get the international support and access in favor of Nepal. While it is a prestige for a nation to have presence of its citizens working in international organizations, by considering the need of the country there are several Nepali experts who are willing to go back to their homeland and get involved directly in economic development. This growing interest of Nepali experts working in various parts of the world should be capitalized by the political leaders, and create conducive policy and working environment in the country. When they go back to the homeland, they will not bring only skilled manpower to the country but also they will bring a sizeable investment. We hope that the government of Nepal can take advantage of this sentiment of well trained Nepali experts working around the world.

Editorial Board

Dr. Dilip R. Panthee, Coordinator

Dr. Raju Pandey, Member

Dr. Prasamsa Singh, Member

Dr. Jiw Nath Ghimire, Member

Dr. Shyam Thapa, Member

Manpower for Agricultural Transformation in Nepal

Asta-Ja movement has recognized Eight Ja— the Nepali letter “Ja,”—meaning Jal (water), Jamin (land), Jungle (forest), Jadibuti (medicinal and aromatic plants), Janashakti (manpower), Janawar (animals), Jarajuri (crop plants), and Jalabayu (climate) for sustainable conservation, development, and utilization of the resources and fast-paced socio-economic transformation of Nepal. Agriculture constitutes the foundation of human civilization as it supplies food required for human survival. To meet the food demand of the ever-increasing population, modernization of agriculture production systems has been emphasized around the globe, including Nepal. Janashakti (Human resources) plays the most crucial role in managing the rest of the Asta-Ja resources.

In the earlier days, program and policy emphasis was placed on increasing production through increased input utilization such as improved varieties, chemical fertilizer, and pesticides. Several indicators suggest that production and productivity have increased. Government efforts have certainly helped to some extent, but farmers seem to be two steps ahead of the national research and extension system. Be it the adoption of new cultivars of crops (extensive use of hybrid seed in crops like maize, rice, and most vegetables), or other production practices (including production under protected structures, application of pesticides, micronutrients, etc.) Various technologies that farmers have introduced spreads to a large area before the extension discovers it. Researchers remain unaware of the next generation of problems faced by such adoption of technologies.

Adoption of newer technologies boosted local production of various crop commodities leading to one step closer to self-sufficiency. On the contrary, the country has become more dependent on external inputs (such as seed, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.). At the same time, problems associated with the haphazard adoption of ‘modern’ technologies have also led to environmental and public health disasters. For example, the ever-increasing use of chemical pesticides has been blamed for the increased incidence of both acute and chronic health issues (including cancer, kidney failure, etc.)

especially among the communities associated with high input agriculture (such as fresh vegetable production).

Recently, the policy has tilted towards sustainable development through the promotion of environment-friendly technologies.

For example, despite lengthy talks of sustainable

farming practices, farmers have switched to hybrid varieties that rely on imported seeds. Despite policy support for organic farming, farmers stand on a mile-long line to buy chemical fertilizers. Change in government policy (from the promotion of pesticides to adoption of integrated pest management practices) about a quarter-century ago has led to increased public awareness about potential hazards associated with pesticide abuse. There has been an increase in interest in using extracts made with local materials to suppress various pests. However, it has not translated into the practice of pesticide usage. The volume of total pesticide usage has continuously increased over the years. It may be partly attributed to the expansion of fresh vegetable cultivation to meet the market demand. In most parts, the lack of alternatives has driven to over-reliance on the same old-fashioned technologies contrary to the policy documents. Despite common rhetoric of ‘pesticide as last resort’ and ‘only when necessary’ there have not been any recommendations based on pest densities neither there exist different recommendations for susceptible, tolerant, or resistant crop varieties. Farmers still tend to follow routine applications of pesticides. Pesticide regulations are poorly implemented, necessary safety precautions are rarely followed. It shows that the change in policy alone is not adequate if it is not supported by programs. There is a lack of strong programs and activities to develop new technologies that require trained human resources.



*Dr. Raju Raj Pandey
California, USA*

Inadequate human resources available across the board in the national research system are the main bottleneck. Out of 406 approved scientist positions at NARC, only 225 are filled. Moreover, there is a tendency to move to urban centers and more 'lucrative' administrative positions thereby minimizing the commitment to the technology generation aspect. Available human resources are thinly distributed to perform a wide variety of tasks within the discipline that rarely meets the demand. Even worse is the loss of human resources to developing countries where well-educated high skilled manpower move to acquire higher education and eventually migrate due to better opportunities available.

As the scientific community grows, they have begun to network and organize themselves into professional societies even in foreign lands. Asta-Ja Research and Development Center (<https://astajardcnepal.org/>) and Asta-Ja USA (<http://www.astajausa.org/>) have been actively trying to organize professionals of many fields, both within Nepal and abroad, to contribute towards improving people's livelihood by promoting sustainable conservation, development, and utilization of Asta-Ja

resources. Agricultural professionals also have tried to get organized into respective societies. Society of Overseas Nepalese Entomologist (nepaloverseasento.info) and Nepalese Agricultural Professionals of Americas (<https://www.napaamericas.org>) are just to name a few where more than 250 agricultural professionals from academia, research institutions, and private sectors have joined. These highly qualified and skilled professionals are eagerly waiting to contribute to various programs in Nepal. National institutions and organizations within Nepal should open up avenues where these professionals can actively participate to fulfill the human resource needs within Nepal.

COVID-19 Pandemic Book Launch

In the early morning of 9th January 2021, Kathmandu, the residence of Dr. Satya Mohan Joshi was the most sought after sight in the screens out of many screens throughout the globe. On the other end of the screens were the Asta-Ja network members including the ones from the Asta-Ja USA, Asta-Ja RDC and Asta-Ja ICC. The occasion was the launching of the book, namely, "**COVID-19 Pandemic and Nepal: Issues and Perspectives**", an especial edition jointly published by Asta-Ja RDC and Asta-Ja USA. DR. Satya Mohan Joshi was the chief-guest of the program whereas Prof. Durga Dutta Poudel, who is also the visionary as well as the Founder of the Asta-Ja Framework, chaired the program. The event was graced by the presence of various representatives from different organizations of Nepal and USA.

Asta-Ja, meaning eight Nepali letter "Ja" include Jal (water), Jamin (land), Jungle (forest), Jadibuti (medicinal and aromatic plants), Janashakti (human resources), Janawar, (animals), Jarajuri (crop plants), and Jalabayu (climate). The Asta-Ja Framework is a multi-sectoral and transdisciplinary planning and management framework for sustainable conservation, development and utilization of Asta-Ja resources, which include both the natural as well

as human resources. The Asta-Ja Framework has eight principles for its implementation:

1. Community awareness,
2. Community capacity-building,
3. Policy decision making,
4. Interrelationships and linkages,
5. Comprehensive assessment,
6. Sustainable technologies and practices,
7. Institutions, trade and governance, and
8. Sustainable community development and socio-economic transformation.



Ms. Sabina Khatri
Kathmandu, Nepal

ASTA-JA USA and ASTA-JA RDC

invites you to join a

VIRTUAL BOOK LAUNCH PROGRAM

By
Dr. SATYA MOHAN JOSHI

Time and Date



USA	Nepal
Fri., January 8, 2021	Sat., January 9, 2021
EST: 9:15-11:30 PM	8:00-10:15 AM

Zoom Link
<https://ullafayette.zoom.us/j/97445740497>


Meeting ID: 974 4574 0497

Facebook live at
www.facebook.com/AstajaUSA/

Access the book at
<http://www.astajausa.org/>



Covid-19 Pandemic and Nepal: Issues and Perspectives



Edited by
Basu Sharma and Ambika P. Adhikari

Asta-Ja USA

Aligned to the Asta-Ja Framework are two different sister organizations of the Asta-Ja network, Asta-Ja Research and Development Center (Asta-Ja RDC) and Asta-Ja USA involved in this book launch. Asta-Ja RDC is a non-profit and non-governmental organization registered in District Development Office, Kathmandu on 2071-1-10 BS and is dedicated to enhance grass-roots community involvement in research and development of Asta-Ja. Likewise, Asta-Ja USA is also a non-profit and non-political organization registered in 2018 AD under the federal tax code of USA, which is established exclusively for charitable, educational, environmental, humanitarian and scientific research and development purposes within and outside the USA.

Realizing the need for documentation of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal, the book is developed by capturing experiences; short-term as well as long-term effects in our lifestyle, economy and society; and possible approaches in tackling the impacts. The book is a special edition, which also serves as a chronicle of COVID-19 impacts in Nepal and Nepalese all around the world. The book comprises 12 chapters on diverse specific topics ranging from housing styles to tourism sectors. The book was edited by Dr. Basu Sharma and Dr. Ambika P. Adhikari. Contributors to the book chapters include, Dr. Basu Sharma, Dr. Ambika P. Adhikari, Dr. Aditya R. Khanal, Dr. Kalidas Subedi, Dr. Suroj Pokhrel, Dr. Dilip Raj Panthee, Dr. Khushi R. Tiwari, Mr. Pushpa L. Moktan, Dr. Durga D. Poudel, Dr. Udhab R. Khadka, Dr. Keshav Bhattarai, Dr. Hari Kandel, Dr. Arjun Aryal, Ms. Monika Ghimire, Dr. Romy Das Karna, Dr. Kanchan Joshi, and Dr. Kalpana Khanal. The digital copy of the book can be downloaded free from the link <http://www.astajausa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/COVID-19-ASTA-JA-BOOK-SERIES-2020.pdf>

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the book launch program was hosted over the ZOOM platform whereas the same program was being broadcasted by the media partner "Radio Himalaya" as well as shared via "Facebook Live" with almost 1,100 viewers. The opening remarks were given by Dr. Kalpana Khanal and Dr. Prakash Neupane jointly. The editors of the book Dr.

Basu Sharma and Dr. Ambika Adhikari, highlighted their journey of the book publication. Likewise, representing the article reviewers' team, Prof. Keshav Bhattarai, Dr. Prasamsa Singh, Prof. Durga D Poudel and Prof. Dinesh Gajurel, Prof. Keshav Bhattarai shared their experiences during the review process. This was followed by the highlight of the program, i.e. the book launch by Dr. Satya Mohan Joshi, whose graceful presence and remarks were the most awaited moment for all the listeners. To break the monotony of the formal session, a musical session was presented. After that, the authors of all twelve chapters who represented different disciplines were invited for brief presentation of their respective book chapters. Upon the completion of the presentation, it was deeply realized that the agriculture and the tourism sector was irreparably affected by the pandemic incurring significantly large economic loss to the country, whereas the bright side was that the peak of air pollution took a steep plunge during the given period.

The book launch event that was planned for two hours extended nearly to three hours, close to the midnight in the eastern USA. The participants attended the event with a very high level of passion, enthusiasm, and interest. In fact, the event was a clear testimony of Asta-Ja mission of bringing together all three generations in planning and development of Asta-Ja resources and socio-economic transformation of Nepal. The participants were very enthusiastic during the Q&A session. At the end, Prof. Durga Dutta Poudel delivered his concluding remarks emphasizing the vision and the mission of Asta-Ja and thanked everybody involved in this book launch event. The book launch program concluded with highly motivating and constructive environment with expectation of similar and other important activities in the future by Asta-Ja network.

Frequent Transfer of Civil Servants and Its Consequences in Current Development in Nepal

Dr. Dilip R. Panthee and Dr. Raju R. Pandey

Background

Bureaucracy is regarded as a 'permanent government. Once a person passes the 'public service commission' test, he/she enjoys permanence within the system. However, one interesting phenomenon in Nepali bureaucracy is the frequent transfer of civil servants. In the remote past, when education opportunity was limited only at a very few urban areas and town centers, such transfers were probably motivated by some good intentions. There probably is a legal provision to regulate employee transfer. Elites from more affluent and resourceful areas were required to serve in the under-served, under-represented, remote areas of the country. They were provided with special incentives and benefits for such a service, such as higher pay, better consideration in their future promotion to higher positions within the system. It was also a part of some sort of reward and punishment. Transfer to a remote zone was considered as punishment whereas opportunities to more lucrative places were considered as a reward.

Especially after the reinstatement of democracy in 1990, everyone began to enjoy the political liberty. The politicization of bureaucracy has brought too many ill-effects in the governance. Civil servants, who are supposed to be politically unbiased, have openly been involved in a dirty political game. More recently, the transfer of public servants has been motivated by political bias. Those with access to political leaders in power began to use their 'connections' for personal rewards and penalize others who supported a different political philosophy. There are often rumors about unscrupulous motives including bribery, commissions, and rampant corruption playing a greater role in such transfers. Most civil servants have experienced unwelcome 'transfer' during their public service.

A frequent and unwelcome transfer of an employee will have a demotivating effect impacting the performance. Here, we try to initiate discussion on some of the important impacts the frequent and unwelcome transfer can cause on an employee's personal, family and professional life as well as his/her ability to serve the clients.

The cost involved in transferring the employee is borne by the public funds. Though we do not

exactly know the total direct financial cost of such mass transfer of employees, it must be a huge amount. Furthermore, the travel time involved in moving from one office to the next is lost workdays. Lack of service that the client is supposed to receive from the employee has a much bigger cost, seldom thought about. Time lost in 'handing over' and 'taking over' is also not productive service.

On the employee side, frequent transfers lead to disturbances to family life. One has to decide whether the whole family should move to a place of a new assignment. Usually, they end up leaving the family behind and move to the new place alone. As a result, the person has to divide his/her time between family and assignment. Neither the family gets enough time nor the work assignment receives full commitment. The cost of maintaining multiple places of residence can create enormous financial constraints.

There is a greater impact on children's education. Employee transfer does not always happen to coincide with the school academic calendar. In the middle of the school year, moving to a new school is very difficult. Again, such transfers happen every few years, the child has to keep moving from one place to the other. In addition to its direct impact on academics, growing children will have the psychological trauma of separation from their friends. What is the cost, we do not know.

Transfer of an employee to a remote district mostly happens because of two main reasons. First, an employee wants to spend two years to earn the points at a higher rate counting towards his/her promotion to a higher position. They just want to pass two years in those districts, but tend to spend as much of their time as possible away from the district, attending various meetings, seminars, etc. Second, the supervisor in power intends to punish an employee for bad behavior, or corruption, or lack of enthusiasm, or most likely due to differences in political affiliation. This revengeful transfer is the least productive. How can one expect to improve performance when they are out of sight from the supervisor? Moreover, why should the people living in the remote region get a public servant that is non-productive, inefficient, and corrupt?

Accountability and legacy

Frequent transfers of employees are one of the major factors of poor accountability in any development work. There is a tendency to shift blame to the previous employee for any inaction or poor management. The finger-pointing can be an easy escape but has a big toll on accountability. Also, due to the short duration of the assignment, there is no observable legacy of any manager. For example, a horticulturist had been assigned to Sarlahi (tropical region), Daman (temperate region), and Trishuli (sub-tropical region) for about 6 years. He said he learned a lot about tropical fruit in Sarlahi, temperate fruit in Daman, and sub-tropical fruit in Trishuli. But by the time he was ready to contribute, he used get transferred to a new site. It seems that he has been transferred from one farm devoted to fruit crop to the next farm also devoted to fruit crop. The tropical, temperate and sub-tropical fruit species are very different.

There are hardly any civil servants who can retire from the same place where they start their jobs. They have to move to several places during their service period from east to west, and north to south. Some of the employees are transferred in as short as six months to a year whereas others may stay up to four to six years in one place. When there is a change in the government, the first thing they want to do is to transfer of high level of civil servants although this is nothing to bring about any positive changes but to create confusion among the public. While this may be fun to see places around the country in the short run like a tourist on a vacation, it has several consequences that a country is paying the price for a long time. We are trying to document some of those potential consequences in this brief article.

Impact on the family situation and personal life

As soon as a new employee joins the government job as a new employee, she/he has enormous energy. She/he dreams to make several changes and brings new energy into the system. However, before too long, from the place of their first appointment, where they start building some experience and gain some momentum, they may have to face the situation of 'transfer'. These places where they are moving to have an enormous impact on their family as well as personal life. Their extended family may be in the east, for example, and the nuclear family may be in Kathmandu, and they have to move to the far west. This scenario creates a complicated situation not only in their family life but also in their personal life. Their children never get the love of their parents up to the level they deserve. Their parents are never taken care of up to the level they deserve, and the employee is never happy up to the level they deserve. They have to juggle between workplace to home too frequently. It creates unhappiness among the family members.

Impact on work performance and learning curve

Work performance is the result of the overall happiness of an employee. If employees are not happy, work performance goes down significantly. Because of the family situation created above, employee's performance is reflected regularly. Furthermore, it is our routine system that an employee gets an appointment to work in vegetable, stays there for about two years, gets familiar with the production system and overall situation, and gets transferred to work in fruits or agronomical crops. It takes another two years to get familiar with the new crop and so on. By doing so, one employee spends more than 50% of his/her active working life. By then, s/he already lose the enthusiasm by which they had started the job. We should understand that it takes some time to understand the system of any discipline including agriculture, engineering, forestry, medical science, or administrative positions. It is important to develop expertise in given areas and let them work for a long time so that they can excel well.

The cost involved in the transfer of civil servants

The Government of Nepal has to bear the heavy financial load involved in the transfer of civil servants to cover the travel and daily allowances annually. This is unproductive and a waste of national resources. These resources can be used for any useful items including public health, education, agriculture, or transportation.

Possible involvement of corruption due to transfer

A single employee has to support three family structures including extended family, nucleus family (wife and children), and himself (or herself). It involves a significant amount of money which is not enough from his/her monthly regular salary and benefits. In that case, an employee looks for additional sources of income, which may include some financial irregularities. It has happened in the past, and it is going to continue unless we make any visible changes in the future.

Concept of local job for local candidates

To avoid the above irregularities, and promote family values, maximize salary benefits from a job, enhance job satisfaction and happiness, develop expertise in various subject matters, it is advised that local jobs are offered to the local candidates as far as possible. This will create stability and provide the service more smoothly to the public where needed. Now, education is prospering throughout the country. There are not any regions where agriculture, education, engineering, forestry, medical science, and social science-related schools are not available. These schools produce highly trained manpower throughout the country. These people are encouraged for local employment as far as possible.

Constitutional provision encouraging hiring local employees

The current constitution has the provision of hiring school teachers, agricultural, medical, and municipality professionals at local levels by themselves. If this authority is used properly, this will bring about the above corrections towards positive directions.

In closure, the current system of transferring civil servants has more negative effects than positive ones. It has been a financial liability and less productive. We can make the existing manpower more productive, efficient, expert if we let

them work in their local area and area of expertise. The provision of the local government available in the current constitution should be utilized properly to hire and manage the local people for the better management of the available positions. It is probably a good time to think about long-term, output-oriented assignments if we are interested to contribute to sustained research and development.

**Asta-Ja USA would like to extend
warm wishes on auspicious
occasion of Nepali New Year
2078 B.S.**

Asta-Ja USA Family

Do you know?

Asta-Ja USA is a 501(C)(3) Public Charity

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has determined that Asta-Ja USA is exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3). The 501(c)(3) status is valid from the date of February 28, 2018, date of registration of Asta-Ja USA. IRS determined Asta-Ja USA as public charity. With this status, donors can deduct contributions made to Asta-Ja USA. **To donate to Asta-Ja USA:**

Write a check and give it to one of our board members or mail it directly to 500 University Ave #1410, Honolulu, HI 96826 Or using your credit card or Paypal from our website at astajausa.org.

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Human Resources Development in Nepal

Dr. Durga D. Poudel

As human resources development does not occur overnight, it is important to plan human resources development considering current and future needs of the country. It is impossible for a country to develop without the support of skilled, knowledgeable, honest, and hard-working human resources. Future needs of human resources depend on the developmental works that the country is going to undertake. Economic progress of a society further increases demand for health and education facilities and services and skilled workers in various sectors including hospitality, industrial, agricultural, transport, and communication. Nepal is historically struggling with the production of sufficient skilled manpower to meet its developmental and social services need. Therefore, human resources planning and development should be the highest priority task for the Government of Nepal.

College Education

In 2016, the total number of college students was reported as 361,077, which was lower by 116,000 compared to 2013. This decrease in student number may reflect outmigration of Nepalese youths for foreign jobs as well as Nepalese students joining higher education in foreign countries. Nearly 60,000 students are reportedly leaving for foreign education annually in recent years. Of the total enrollments in 2016, 88.3% were in Bachelor program, 11.3% in Master's program, and remaining 0.4% were in advanced master's and Ph.D. programs. According to CBS Nepal online portal, the total number of student graduates from higher education in 2013/2014 was 58,802, and the number of graduates in Animal Science (15) < Forestry (105) < Agriculture (250) < Law (482) < Engineering (2,050) < Medicine (2,292) < Science and Technology (5,051) < Humanities (11,276) < Management (16,915) < Education (20,366). About 30% graduates from higher education especially from technical disciplines reportedly leave the country either for foreign jobs or for further study. The graduation numbers especially in Animal Science and Agriculture are quite troubling as the country's imports of agricultural goods is increasing year after year reaching over \$2 billion annually in recent years. With this level of graduation numbers in agriculture sector coupled with massive outbound of agricultural graduates to foreign countries, the vision of Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) (2015-2035) in making a "Self-reliant, competitive, and inclusive agriculture sector that drives economic growth and contributes to improved livelihoods and food and

nutrition security leading to food sovereignty" is technically impossible to realize. An immediate rethinking in ADS is necessary. An area of improvement in agriculture and forestry education includes increase in enrollment of female students. Number of female students enrolled in Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary Science higher education is reported as 31.21%. Streamlining Nepalese education system so that it comes within the reach of every citizen while advancing to a higher level of education and research is a critical task.

Professional Workforce

Available literatures suggest that number of technical professionals in Nepal is 16,422 medical doctors, 17,000 engineers, 38,759 staff nurses, 26,518 ANMs, and 3,500 agricultural graduates. Availability of 0.67 doctors and nurses per 1000 population tells limited medical services available to general population. Concentration of healthcare facilities in urban areas exacerbates the disparity on healthcare in Nepal. A high degree of disparity exists among Nepalese population with regard to health services mainly due to remoteness, lack of infrastructure, lack of health services facilities, socio-cultural traditions, and gender relations.

The Future of Work

Nepal has been aiming for food self-sufficiency since the beginning of its Five-Year planning. However, despite high potential for food self-sufficiency, Nepal has been importing wide range of agricultural products in recent decades. Major agricultural commodities imported in cereals, fat and edible oil, vegetables, fruits and nuts, animal fodder, oil seeds, coffee, tea and spices, sugar and confectionary, beverages, tobacco, live animal, dairy products, and fish. In order to substitute agricultural imports and realize food self-sufficiency, it is necessary to ensure adequate irrigation facilities, high yielding varieties, timely availability of necessary agricultural inputs, and appropriate crop production technologies. Food storage facilities and controlling food losses during storage will also significantly add to food self-sufficiency. Increasingly large number of graduates in Agriculture, Veterinary, Aquaculture, and Forestry will be necessary in order to meet the goal of food self-sufficiency. Similarly, the development of large hydroelectric projects are necessary to make Nepal self-sufficient in energy. The construction of hydroelectric projects, roadways, airports, irrigation canals and other construction activities

would require a large number of highly skilled engineers and support staff. Hospitality and management is another sector that will require increasingly large number of skilled workers. Nepal's tourist arrival in 2016 was 753,002. There were 82,830 tourists for pilgrimage. Nepal's tourism infrastructure in 2016 included 38,242 beds with 120 star and 985 non-star hotels, 3,444 travel agencies, 2,367 trekking agencies, 3,717 tourist guides, and 13,049 trekking guides. By learning lessons from Thailand, Nepal can attract at least 30 million tourist annually. In order to accommodate 30 million tourists annually, Nepal needs more than 1.5 million beds with about 4,800 star and 39,400 non-star hotels. There will be a tremendous growth on trekking agencies, including tourist and trekking guides. Additionally, Nepali communities are highly vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, landslides or climate change. Increased investment on infrastructures such as communication system,

early warning system, and flood control, evacuation routes, etc., and community capacity building is necessary for developing resilient communities against natural disasters and climate change impacts.

Entrepreneurship development and integration of Nepalese economy to global economy is necessary for economic growth and fast-paced socio-economic transformation of Nepal. In this context, development of highly capable human resources equipped with necessary knowledge and skills, attitude, morals, motivation, and perseverance and sustainable conservation, development, and utilization of Asta-Ja resources is necessary. Human resources is the most important element for national development and socio-economic transformation of a society.

COVID-19 in College

It is a bright and sunny day out in the Fordham University Lincoln Center campus plaza as I settle down to interview my peers for this ethnographic project. Plenty of other students decided to take advantage of the gorgeous weather as well as I am surrounded by people playing soccer, eating lunch with friends, and taking their Zoom classes on the green space as they laze in the warm sun. I am tempted to join in and simply disregard my studies to appreciate the weather after a brutally cold and isolating winter, but I know in the back of my mind that I must focus on the task at hand.

Over the course of this pandemic, social distancing and isolation has played a key role in order to combat the rapid spread of Covid-19. What many people quickly realized, however, is that this meant sacrificing their mental health as well. Gone were the days of interacting and connecting with friends and family in person. At the peak of the pandemic, we were stuck in a time where we were forced to lock down in our houses with no end in sight as to when life would return back to “normal” once again. As a freshman entering college for the first time, this made me wonder how my fellow peers have been affected by the pandemic mentally. For many people, college is supposed to be the time where they develop their passions in life and “find themselves” as members of society. When “normal” life suddenly becomes ripped away and everything you once knew before changes, it can take a huge toll on the mental health of individuals. College students have been expected to continue and excel in their studies as they adjust to a new online-learning platform instead of the traditional in-person learning environment. For both students and faculty alike, not everybody is accustomed to online learning, therefore creating many unforeseen problems as students are trying to obtain their education and degree.

As I explained this concept to my peers, both expressed mixed opinions as to how they felt about adjusting to online learning and how it has affected them mentally. In order to maintain anonymity as mental health can be quite a sensitive topic, I will be referring to my peers by the pseudonyms Rachel and Mary. Rachel, a current junior from New York at Rose Hill, had felt quite burdened and saddened by the sudden switch to online learning. “I miss being able to interact and learn from others in-person” expressed Rachel. After all, Rachel had multiple semesters of in-person learning before the pandemic hit. Mary, on

the other hand, had quite a different opinion. “I love the flexibility online learning has given me in terms of time management,” said

Mary. As a current freshman at Lincoln Center, Mary appreciates

how online learning has given her the opportunity to spend more time exploring the city and with her new friends since she is able to attend class virtually anywhere. She has never experienced what in-person learning is like at college, and also expressed her feelings of nervousness for next semester since Fordham anticipates reverting back to in-person instruction.

It amazed me just how differently my peers expressed their opinions regarding online learning. As the conversation progressed, however, one thing that became clear that Rachel and Mary both agreed on was how mentally exhausting attending Zoom classes can be at times. Staring at a screen all day to participate in class and then continuing to be on your device in order to complete and submit assignments can make any individual feel mentally strained. Combined with the fact that we essentially had no break this semester since many colleges and universities across the country decided to cancel spring break created a recipe for disaster as many students, including myself, felt burnt out very quickly.

Another aspect of the pandemic that I believe has affected students is the element of social isolation. Students no longer have the option to attend typical socializing events such as football games or parties or even interact with



*Ms. Rachana Poudel
Freshman Year, Fordham University,
New York, NY, USA*

college lifestyle have been removed in order to reduce the spread of Covid-19. As a student taking all of her classes from home, Rachel conveyed with a dispirited tone just how isolated she feels at home. "Many of my friends are taking their classes from home which pushed me to make the decision to take my classes all online as well" explained Rachel. Since she does live in New York, however, she is occasionally able to visit campus which she expressed she is grateful for. As a current freshman living on campus, I was interested to hear Mary's thoughts regarding this topic since much of her experience has been altered due to the pandemic. "It does make me sad that I will never be able to get the true freshman year experience since not many people are on campus and there are so many restrictions, but I am still grateful for all of the memories and friends I have been able to make being on campus this year," said Mary.

As the interview came to a close, I began to reflect upon just how unique my own experience along with the experiences of current college students across the

country has been this year. I, along with many other students, fully expected to be sent back home after the first two weeks of instruction due to the uncertainties of the pandemic. The fact that we have been able to make it two semesters on campus is something that I believe should be celebrated (socially distanced of course). As we (hopefully) return back to in person classes in the fall, never again do we have to deal with the monotony of Zoom classes and online learning. Friends separated by travel restrictions and barriers can be reunited once again on campus. Professors and other faculty will finally be able to teach and interact with their students in person, which is something that I know many have missed being able to do. I hope that with ethnographic cases like this one, people will be able to recognize and commemorate as well just how far we have come as a society together.

Schoolchildren Receive Uniforms and Supplies

On March 4, 2021, Asta-Ja distributed school uniforms and supplies to schoolchildren in Chunder, Tanahu, Nepal. The funding support for the supplies came from Education International Foundation. In the presence of parents, Asta-Ja volunteers, local community members and School Board members, Hon. Mayor Mr. Baikuntha Neupane, Vyas Municipality Tanahu, Nepal, handed over school supplies including uniforms to 26 students in Shree Padma Elementary School, Chunder, Tanahu, Nepal. On behalf of the



schoolchildren, parents, and local communities, Mayor Neupane thanked Education International Foundation, Hawaii, for providing funding support and hoped that such



supports will continue from the Foundation in the future. Schoolchildren, parents, schoolteachers, and community members were very happy and were grateful to the Foundation for the support. He also appreciated Asta-Ja community activities and thanked Asta-Ja for supporting schoolchildren and hoped that such efforts will continue in the future. One of the school teachers Ms. Sanju Pandit in her own words said "I have never thought my students will be in school uniform one day and look so happy and beautiful. With school uniform, they look like big kids now. I am so happy to see them smiling." With the uniform, students seem much confident and motivated. School supplies (books, notebooks, pencils, bags) help them in their learnings including developing writing and reading skills with an



access to much needed educational supplies. Since almost all students come from so called "lower caste" (i.e. dalits) and marginalized communities who are struggling against social discrimination, poverty and various inequalities including education and health, this project was clearly for those who need the most.

Chunder Drinking Water Project at Final Stage of Completion

In collaboration with Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunset and Rotary International, Asta-Ja USA and Asta-Ja Research and Development Center (Asta-Ja RDC) worked closely with Rotary Club Damauli, Vyas Municipality, and Chunder Community in Vyas Municipality in Tanahu, Nepal, in developing a drinking water project. The funding support for this project came from Rotary International. The construction work of the Chunder Drinking Water project has at the final stage of its completion. The project consists of water lifting, treatment, disinfection, and distribution of drinking water to 68 households. The Magar community in Chudher village is located at 2,206 ft above sea level, where women spend as much as five hours daily carrying water on their backs for their families.



This project has a total water source capacity of 3,500 liters per hour. A 200-liter per hour instant and continue passing chamber supplies water to a 10,000-liter intake storage tank. There is a 7.5hp 3 phase Lifting pump with 256 meter head with 3500-4000 LPH flow for lifting water to uphill storage tank. Pipe length from intake storage tank to uphill storage tank is 1,000 meter. Pipe and electric cable are placed underground at 90cm to 1 meter deep ridge. The

electric cable is double protected by putting it inside 50mm HDPE pipe with 10kgs pressure. The uphill storage tank con-



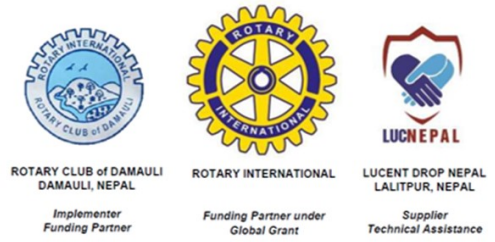
sists of existing Ferro-cement 20,000 liters reservoir. Water filtration system includes pressure filter for turbidity removal with automatic multi-port valve along with ultrafiltration and ultraviolet water purification system, pre-



sediment filter of 3 micron filtration, post carbon filter with multiple cartridge filter, and ozone generator at storage tanks. It is a six-stage water treatment system including

four stages of purification and two layers of disinfection. The post filtration storage tank capacity include 20,000 liters (4 units of 5,000 liters each poly tank). The pipe line used in collection include 2" (50mm) GI/PPR and HDPE pipes. Clean drinking water supply to 68 households is accomplished with 5,400 meters (5.4km) of 50mm/40mm/32mm and 20mm HDPE and PPR distribution pipeline.

Rotary Club Damauli is also preparing to lead another Rotary International project next year that focuses on improving basic education by providing science laboratory equipment to two High Schools in Vyas Municipality, Tanahu, and by conducting adult science literacy training on environment and agriculture. About 30 Rotarians from Hawaii, USA, are planning for visiting Damauli and nearby schools to participate in the project next year.



ASTA-JA USA and ASTA-JA RDC, COLLABORATING PARTNERS

Basic Education Improvement in Damauli, Tanahu

Asta-Ja is collaborating with Rotary Club Damauli, Tanahu, Nepal, which has received Rotary International Global Grant to provide science lab and computer equipment to Shree Udaya and Shree Jana Jukta Shahi Secondary Schools in Damauli, Nepal. The main objective of the grant is to give practical and hands-on education on physics, chemistry, biology, surveying and other science-based courses. Project activities include upgrading classroom facilities and E-learning opportunities, training teachers, supply science lab equipment and promote adult science literacy. The main goal of the project is supporting basic science education for career-minded students and increasing science literacy in general. The two-days teachers training involves hands-on teaching activities to improve their laboratory skills in relation to biology, physics, chemistry, surveying, and environmental fields. Adult literacy training involves community adult learning specific to cotemporary challenges including climate change, environment and agriculture. Intermediate level skilled workforce especially in the fields



of animal science, agriculture, and engineering and surveying is limited in Nepal. Shree Jan Jukta Shahi Secondary and Shree Udaya Secondary schools have started three-year Diploma in Veterinary, Agriculture and Surveying in recent years. In Veterinary program at Shree Jana Jukta Shahi Secondary School, almost half of total students come from Tanhau district and another half come from outside Tanahu district such as Rautahat, Parsa, Sarlahi, Nawalparasi, and Humla. There is growing interest of students enrolling in this program nationwide. Shree Udaya Secondary School is running its 18-month Technical Education in Civil Engineering (TSLC) for the past six years with an average enrollment of 40 students per year. This curriculum is designed to produce basic level human resources, i.e. Sub-Overseer, in the field of Civil engineering, who are equipped with

knowledge, skills and attitude that is necessary for work as technicians, especially in the construction sector. These graduates gain technical skills and knowledge in road and building construction, water supply and irrigation, sanitation, and construction of the bridges. The curricular program consists of one year in house training and six months



on-the-job training. After completing the Civil Engineering TSLC examination, most graduates are engaged in governmental and non-governmental offices as a technical, sub engineer and supervisor. While some graduates have started their own consultancy business, others have joined the governmental agencies, and their local Municipalities and Rural Municipalities. Students from Humla, Mugu and Jumla after graduation have worked as technicians or supervisors in various construction projects in their respective local areas. Of the total student enrollment in this program, 42% has been girl and 35% dalit students. Interestingly, dalit girl students occupy 40% of the total girl enrollment in the program or 17% of the total students in the program. This is very impressive. Students in this program come from Tanhau, Gorkha, Kaski, Lamjung, Dolpa, Humla, and Mugu districts. Two years ago, Shree Udaya Secondary School also got permission to conduct three-years Diploma course in Agriculture (I.Sc Ag). This school is going to admit its first batch of Three-Year Diploma in Agriculture degree very soon.

This Global Grant is certainly going to help both schools in improving their basic education. At least 30 Rotarians from Hawaii, USA, are planning for visiting Damauli, Tanahu, to participate in project implementation.

Book Publication

Asta-Ja USA and Asta-Ja RDC published the book "Covid-19 Pandemic and Nepal: Issues and Perspectives" in December 2020. Edited by Basu Sharma and Ambika P. Adhikari, the book contains 12 papers by 17 authors. The 159-page book is a part of Asta-Ja's Occasional Book Series and addresses some of the key impacts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in Nepal, and proposes some policy recommendations to mitigate those impacts. The book covers the areas of how agriculture, food production, employment, urban planning, economy, public health and research activities are impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors review the pandemic's impact in Nepal, analyze various scenarios brought about by the pandemics in these areas, and also suggest mitigation measures and policy recommendations.

In the papers, the authors have attempted to capture the micro and macro effects and analyze evolving future where things also can become better if appropriate policy and program interventions are carried out by the government and private sector. Recommendations coming out of these well-researched and well thought-through papers should add significantly to the public policy space in Nepal. Similarly, this book can also be a useful reference to those researchers, professionals and students, who are interested to review the impacts of the Covid-19 in Nepal, and explore possible solutions to help Nepal face the impacts of the pandemic.

The volume was published in a short time period to be of value to the individuals interested in reviewing the dynamics of the situation brought about by the Covid-19 in Nepal. For this purpose, the editors and publishers had to shrink the time period to collect, review and compile the papers to publish this document. The nature of the current pandemic is such that people will need to learn as they go forward. The editors and Asta-Ja believes that this volume will provide some good reference in this dynamic and fast-changing situation.

Asta-Ja occasional series publications are designed to discuss contemporary issues related to natural resources, agriculture, environment, infrastructure and planning that relate to economic development particularly in developing countries.

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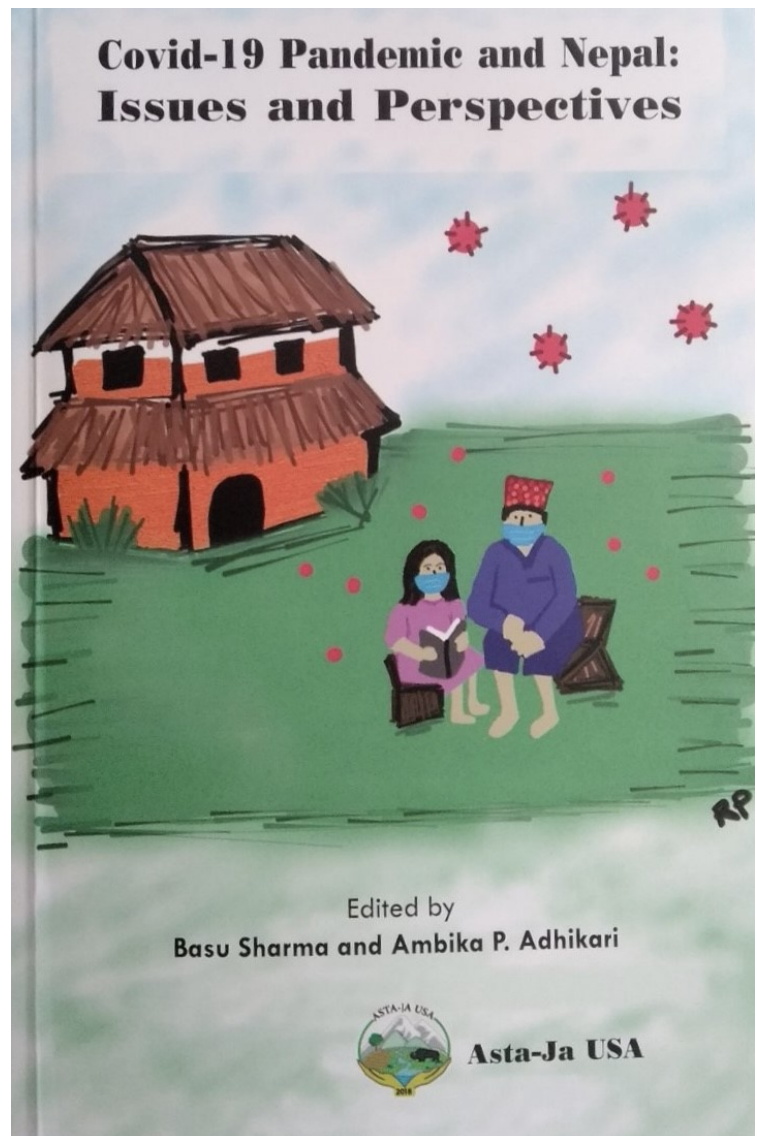
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Asta-Ja USA

**500 University Ave #1410
Honolulu, HI, 96826
USA**

Phone: (337)-739-3694

E-mail: info@astajausa.com

Website: www.astajausa.org