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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Rising from COVID pandemic situation has been a challenge globally. Year 2021 was also affected by the pandemic impacts, but resilience and adaptation has been the forefront of this year in Nepal as elsewhere in different sectors of the country. Restless development Nepal also powered through the situation and continued to strive to promote Youth leadership through an approach of Youth collective and Youth engagement. The learning of Year 2021 has been a tremendous one and has enhanced the organisational capacity to adapt to the pandemic situation and work through the virtual platforms.

This year Restless Development has further engaged the young people virtually on a global level. Through various virtual engagements and events, such as Global Youth Entrepreneurship Summit celebrating International Youth Day; Online Campaigns commemorating International Women’s Day, International Day against Discrimination and Pride Month; Global campaigns on challenging COVID issues like mental health, we have been able to connect with our partners and ensured meaningful youth engagements. Apart from the campaigns, we were also able to develop a qualitative substantial Youth Led Research Report through virtual engagement. Through this research work, 1400 diary entries were recorded virtually in Nepal and Indonesia, reflecting the impacts of COVID-19 on Youth Specific Livelihoods and a Qualitative in depth report was developed.

This is an exemplary example of adaptation of the pandemic situation and integrating our Youth engagement and leadership approach in all our achievements this year.

Regardless of the current situation, we desire to proceed with our work keeping up strong relations with our Advisory Board members, staff, volunteers, alumni, partners, and global connections. Moving ahead to the year 2022, we also expect to indulge more face-to-face engagements embedding Youth Led Research as one of the organizational priorities. As we are moving to a new strategic change in the global agency, we will be developing and implementing our future programmes and activities through the new strategy and approach. Youth led Climate action will also be our forte for the coming years.

KAAJAL PRADHAN
DIRECTOR
Gopal Thapa from Dolakha, Nepal holds a belief that youths can build a better future. A passion for social contribution is what inspired him to start the volunteering program with restless development. Gopal’s journey as a Youth Take the Lead (YTL) volunteer has helped him enrich his knowledge on prevailing challenges and measures to eliminate them while utilising the youth resource.

Prior to joining YTL, Gopal was associated with Restless Development Nepal as a volunteer in the National Youth Engagement Network (NYEN) project.

While working as an NYEN volunteer, Gopal had the opportunity to learn about the YTL project from a fellow team member who was a YTL volunteer alumni.

Gopal became aware of the YTL’s contribution in supporting young people to polish their skills and become change agents.

“Being a YTL Volunteer has provided me with a plethora of opportunities for learning. I’m ecstatic because the more you learn, the more you want to learn.”

He is a person who believes that learning is a lifelong process, and thus embarked on the YTL journey after the completion of his tenure as a NYEN volunteer.

"Youth Take The Lead (YTL) has nurtured my personal as well as professional life. I have received ample opportunities to demonstrate leadership, communication, and teamwork skills throughout this learning journey. COVID-19 brought different challenges, but my team and I took it as an opportunity to work virtually adjusting procedures to adopt a digitization approach to conduct virtual events. Since this project is a virtual exchange project I had a chance to engage with YTL volunteers from Tanzania and young people from all around the world and work closely with them to conduct various events including National and Global Dialogues. This experience was worthwhile and it has helped me to explore myself and bring out the best of me."

- GOPAL THAPA, NEPAL
Gopal, with his team, discovered and assessed the gaps in the work of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working for women, young people, the LGBTQI community, and people living with disabilities. He and his team moved on to address those gaps by providing relevant training such as organisational development and fundraising. Further, Gopal shared that the CSOs prepared immediate action plans after attending the training and that he has been following up with them as a mentor to help them if they need it. Likewise, Gopal has conducted national dialogues, global dialogues and is actively involved in the preparation of a Global Citizen Toolkit which he says is “filled with new experiences and new learnings.”

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, coerced Gopal and his team to make some last-minute changes in their initial plan which posed a significant challenge. Nevertheless, the team managed to make the best out of this situation collectively through virtual settings. Though there have been challenges, Gopal appreciates the opportunity to apply his knowledge, abilities, and learnings into practice. Additionally, he stated that “We often participate in the training and program but do not get the chance to learn how it is actually planned and conducted”.

His engagement in YTL has allowed him to educate as well as planning, executing, and documenting an activity or event. Likewise, Gopal realised the value of documentation as it provides crucial facts and information which can support effective interaction with people, especially with stakeholders.

Gopal has still got around two months until the YTL journey comes to an end. He plans to execute his experiences and learnings from previous events and activities in the upcoming ones. Also, he is positive about the application of the learnings that he has attained so far from his YTL journey later in his life.
Suzeena Shrestha, a 22 year old resident of the Nagarjun Municipality in Kathmandu, has been working as a Global Citizen Volunteer at Restless Development Nepal. She is a young enthusiastic learner who aims to establish herself as a Public Health Professional.

While attending one of our webinars during her exploration of potential options for her future career, she found out about the National Dialogue on SRHR organised by Restless Development Nepal.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights was something that suited her interest; therefore she participated in this dialogue which eventually led her to global citizen volunteering. She took this as an opportunity to sharpen her skills, and apply her learnings to change the lives of other young people. Her goal working with youth is to have a positive impact in the community as a whole while engaging and learning in the process.

The global citizen volunteering proved to be a foundation for Suzeena’s professional career. With little experience after finishing her undergraduate study in public health sector, she decided to use her learning outcomes to help young people tackle health challenges. Further, Suzeena was looking forward to new experiences which would help her boost her spirit of learning and recognize her personal strengths and skills.

“Working as a Global Citizen Volunteer has helped me to achieve my goals. The various tasks and responsibilities like working in a team, leading the school sessions, meeting and communicating with different stakeholders enhanced my personal and professional skills. I got ample opportunities to explore and learn while planning and implementing advocacy plans of SRHR and mental health in school and community. It was an eye opening experience for me as a public health student which made me more confident and vocal.”

– SUZEEA SHRESTHA, NEPAL
She had opportunities to learn a lot about the public health issues among young people. Similarly, the global dialogues helped her to broaden her perspective and understand the impact of these issues and her role as a health student and a global citizen. It made her realise the importance of advocacy and taking small steps to make a difference.

Suzeena and her team initiated different advocacy activities to facilitate an adolescent friendly environment for young people. She was engaged in designing and facilitating both virtual and physical sessions at school on different components of Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

In addition to that, she was also involved in organising different informative and interactive Extra Curricular Activities programs, workshops to sensitise young people on SRHR and Mental Health. Further, she attended various meetings with major stakeholders including school principal, local ward office members to lobby for creating an adolescent friendly environment in the working community.

In a society where talking about Sexual and Reproductive Health and Mental health is considered as a taboo, Suzeena had challenges in facilitating these components as it was difficult to build rapport with students as the sessions were initially conducted virtually considering COVID-19. However it helped her to improve her rapport building skills and learn technical skills to make effective use of virtual platforms and promote interactive engagement of students in virtual platforms as well as in facilitating in-person sessions.

Suzeena looks forward to pursuing a PhD in psychosocial support. She hopes to apply her learnings & experiences as a Global Citizen Volunteer.

The Global Citizen Volunteering journey has been a great learning experience for Suzeena. This exposure has helped her transform in many ways.

She believes her engagement with Restless Development has taught her a lot about the professional working environment. She says the training and exposure she received during this journey has been a wonderful learning opportunity that will support her career and future endeavours. Her involvement as a Global Citizen Volunteer has helped her to explore new avenues. The Psychosocial support training she organised has actually helped her to identify her interests in Mental Health.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAMMES AND EVENTS
“Working as a global citizen volunteer has helped me to achieve my goals. The various tasks and responsibilities like working in a team, leading the school sessions, meeting and communicating with different stakeholders enhanced my personal and professional skills. I got ample opportunities to explore and learn while planning and implementing advocacy plans of SRHR and mental health in school and community. It was an eye opening experience for me as a public health student which made me more confident and vocal.”

- SUZENA SHRESTRA, GLOBAL CITIZEN VOLUNTEER

“Working as a global citizen was my first leap towards my career. It has helped to develop my self confidence and has prepared me to face future challenges. I believe as a youth we can do anything if we believe in ourselves and give our 100%.

- RITA PURI, GLOBAL CITIZEN VOLUNTEER

“Throughout the YTL Journey, I can see the change in me. It makes me more confident and professional to carry out the activities at the community level. From my experience, I want to motivate young people like me that there are no age boundaries to learn new things and spread your knowledge among the people who can lead the community towards positive change.”

- KIRPA NEPALI, YTL VOLUNTEER

“Thank you for initiating this unique program that responds to local needs especially during the time of COVID. This program has definitely benefited the Dakshinkali Municipality in many ways and we request you to extend such programs in other schools of Dakshinkali in near future. We further hope that the upcoming programs will also focus on livelihood, civic education and engagement to establish a civilized society.”

- MOHAN BASNET, MAYOR OF DAKSHINKALI MUNICIPALITY

“Through NYEN, I was engaged in awareness-raising, information sharing, and advocacy activities. I gained a lot of knowledge which is now reflected in my skills and capabilities. I would like to take a moment to thank Restless Development Nepal that was a platform for me where I could enhance my abilities. I had inspiring mentors, diligent colleagues, and personal leaders throughout the NYEN journey who gave me the chance to learn and motivate myself by helping me to grow at an individual and professional level.”

- BINAYAK KHATIWADA
The National Youth Engagement Network (NYEN), is a collaborative effort of three organizations: Raleigh International, Restless Development Nepal, and VSO Nepal. The platform was designed to build an active network of International Citizen Service (ICS) alumni and local youths which aimed at providing the young active leaders with the resources and capacity to further strengthen the knowledge and skills to contribute positively towards the progress of Nepali society. The network has created and empowered youth leaders with the voice in decision-making and advocate for social change. The resources and skills delivered through this project have enabled young people to enhance their careers and/or seek better employment opportunities, fully utilising their knowledge and innovative thoughts. This has not only benefited the youths of Nepal but also the wider society as the project will allow networking opportunities within the pool of young people. The outcomes of the project are designed to contribute towards fulfilling some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to mark the International Day Against Discrimination, International Women’s Day and Pride Month June, we ran online campaigns. The main aim of the online campaigns was to celebrate these international days by providing information on the prevailing discrimination, challenges faced by women, and people who belong to LGBTIQ community and voices of youths on the same. Also, the other motive to run an online campaign was to provide a platform where youths from diverse backgrounds can have their say and give a message on the occasion of the international days which emphasizes a positive change in the world. The target audience were International Citizen Service (ICS) volunteers, local youth, and other people who come from diverse backgrounds active on social media platforms. Meaningful videos, poem, sarts, and quotations from the young people were accumulated and shared through the social media handles which helped to amplify their voices and motivate other people to speak up for creating a just society.

Birendra’s Case Story

On the occasion of Pride Month, we reached out to Birendra Chaudhary, a 24-year-old LGBTIQ activist who has been advocating for the rights and empowerment of LGBTIQ people from a very young age. Birendra came across Restless Development Nepal in 2018 when he participated in the Training of Trainers (ToT) Rupantaran Training Program. After receiving Rupantaran training, he delivered these modules to in – and – out of school youths in his community who belonged to sexual and gender minority groups. The Rupantaran training was an opportunity for Birendra to explore and broaden his scope of knowledge on moral education, livelihood, and sexual and reproductive health and contribute to the holistic development of LGBTIQ youths in the community.
Birendra shared that when he first started delivering the training in his community, many parents were hesitant to send their kids to the training because it was facilitated by a person belonging to an LGBTIQ community. Despite some hurdles, the training program was successful in attracting young children from the community. As these children shared their valuable learnings on holistic development across their neighborhood, more parents were convinced to send their children to participate in the training. So, this training provided him an opportunity to prove himself in the community and be recognized.

He shared that his engagement with Restless Development Nepal was a life-changing experience. It has helped him network with people and organizations working for LGBTIQ and broaden his knowledge of development issues relevant to young people. He shared that he is pleased to have received an opportunity through Restless Development Nepal, which has helped him develop his self-esteem and self-confidence. He stressed that many people like him are afraid to open up due to the stigma.

“I am making efforts to help such people, and there has been some progress, but a lot needs to be done by government and organizations to establish a gender-inclusive society where LGBTIQ can live a dignified life free of stigma, hate, and discrimination”

– Birendra, Nepal
Youth Take The Lead

The Youth Take the Lead programme is a mutual exchange programme supported by The Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (NOREC). This platform provides opportunities to young people from Nepal and Tanzania to learn, exchange, and deliver the best practices from the host country to the home country and vice versa. The exchange participants are engaged to gain experience working with CSOs, alumni, and young people.

Considering the Covid 19, the Youth Take the Lead 2021 project activities were carried out in home countries and there was a virtual exchange between the participants of Tanzania and Nepal. In response to the Covid 19 pandemic, participants from Restless Development Nepal organised 2 National dialogues and 1 Global dialogue on virtual platform reaching more than 200 youths where young people from diverse backgrounds and nationalities. The young people shared their experiences and challenges in their home countries and the best possible solutions to solve these issues in their communities. The issues like SRHR, Mental Health and Youth Employment were major issues raised in the dialogue and recommendations were collected to solve these issues. These recommendations were developed into advocacy action plans which was implemented by 3 young people nominated as Global Citizen Volunteers. The advocacy action plans were implemented in two community schools: Arunodaya Higher Secondary and Shree Seti Devi Secondary School of Dakshinkali Municipality where a Menstrual Hygiene Room was established to ensure affordable and accessible services to adolescents. Similarly, the students were also oriented on different components of Comprehensive Sexuality Components and Common Mental Health through in-school sessions, awareness programs, workshops and trainings contributing to establish an adolescent friendly environment in working community schools.

The Youth Take the Lead Participants organised a 3 days training to capacitate 6 youth Led CSOs of Kathmandu based on the capacity gaps identified through CSO assessment. The CSOs were trained on Organisational Development, Strategic Planning, M&E Framework, Fundraising and Partnership. The Youth Led CSOs developed action plan indicators on training deliverables on the basis of which the organisations were followed up and supported by Restless Development Nepal. Similarly, 17 young people were trained on Leadership Digital Advocacy and Meaningful Youth Engagement. Further, a Global Citizenship toolkit has been developed with the help of external consultants as an endeavour to develop a guideline for promoting young people as global citizens.
Restless Development conducted a Youth-Led Research project, “Youth Specific Livelihood Impacts and Responses to COVID-19”, in Indonesia and Nepal in partnership with the University of Cambridge, with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The project was conducted to ensure that young people in Asia play a vital role, helping us to: 1) understand the impact of the crisis in real time on youth themselves and 2) to inform recovery efforts while the response is still ongoing, ensuring it is based on community level insight. For this, 5 Young Rapporteurs and 50 Diary Writers have been recruited from diverse backgrounds. The diary writers had been selected based on five specific clusters: Migrant Waste Pickers, Young NEET Mothers, Health Workers, LGBTIQ (Nepal)/People with Disability (Indonesia) and Low level Tourism Workers.

In both countries, job loss and unemployment, and financial burden were the major impacts in all the clusters caused by the pandemic. The diary writers of the Young NEET Mothers cluster revealed there is a disruption in health services and a decrease in the frequency of hospital visits for a check-up due to the fear of infections. Similarly, in the cluster of Low-Level Trekkers/Tourism, the diary writers, both in Indonesia and Nepal mentioned that the Government has to be proactive to support the tourism industry and respond immediately to minimise the crisis faced by the sectors due to the pandemic. Moreover, in the cluster of Migrant Waste Pickers in Nepal it was found that the prolonged lockdown has halted their daily work and as a result, some had to rely on other occupations such as farming. Unlike Nepal, in Indonesia, despite the pandemic, the majority of diarists’ work was able to fetch more junk or used goods than before the pandemic. However, few struggled to continue their work due to lockdown in Indonesia as well.

Further, the increased workload was found as the major problem by the cluster of healthcare workers. The majority highlighted health care workers were mistreated and accused of spreading the virus in the community. They mentioned the need of active rapid-response teams in the community as well as the active role of the Government to manage those teams which can lessen the burden of health workers and can be available for rapid-response work too when needed. In the LGBTIQ cluster, the majority of the diary writers shared that there was an opportunity to learn new business skills through virtual platforms. They also expressed a reluctance to be vaccinated because the process is time-consuming and gender blind. Diary writers of People with Disability (PWDs) cluster revealed the pandemic had led to increased dependency on the parents for money. According to various diarists, people were hesitant to provide required support to those with physical disabilities when they needed it, whether for mobility or otherwise, because of social distancing protocol. In order to deal with the financial struggles, the diary writers from all the clusters shared that they used their savings, took loans, or borrowed money from family members and friends. Additionally, the diary writers shared that the support from friends and family helped them to stay positive during the tough times brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.
“During the difficult time brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the support from friends and families and the arrival of vaccines provided me hope.” – Diary Writer

“The trekkers seek genuine support from the government as they have felt neglected and that their condition was not paid attention by the government to the desired extent.” – Sona Shrestha, Rapporteur

“For us there is a lack of job opportunities and the COVID-19 pandemic has made it even harder for us to find jobs. Creation of job opportunities for persons with disabilities should be priorities by the government.” – Diary Writer

“It is necessary to create a safe working environment for the migrant waste pickers. They should be provided with safety equipment or materials for work and the government should secure their work.” – Nisrina, Rapporteur
The conference emphasised on the transformation of the food system as a genuine agenda for the long term. It has stressed the use of new techniques by international development communities investing directly in youth for climate justice and environmental dialogue. Moreover, to accomplish the current development paradigm – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – it was recommended that the international community should allocate resources equally to enable young people’s participation in all programs.

To celebrate the International Youth Day 2021, National Development Initiative (NEDI) in collaboration with Restless Development Nepal and other organisations and institutions conducted “International Youth Social Entrepreneurship Summit 2021” on the theme “Youth Innovation and Incubation for Achieving SDGs, Recovery from the COVID-19 and Prosperity”.

More than 200 participants from diverse fields including experts from national and international social entrepreneurs’, innovative investors, young model social entrepreneurs, government representatives, development partners, CSOs, academicians, development and economic journalists, and young people attended the summit. The recommendation that concerned authorities must start to recognise young people’s entrepreneurial abilities and the positive results they can bring into communities. Likewise, it was emphasised that concerned authorities must start to recognise young people’s entrepreneurial abilities and the positive results they can bring into communities. Further, it was stressed that the Government must encourage aspiring and potential entrepreneurs who present their commitment towards social welfare, particularly of the women, marginalised communities, and young people.

Similarly, Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN) in collaboration with Restless Development Nepal and other like-minded organisations orchestrated a 3 day-long National Conference to contextualise and rationalise the International Youth Day with national context under the theme of “Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health” from 10th to 12th August 2021. The conference was organised via Zoom and attended by 247 participants altogether. The conference particularly focused on the role that young people can play in bringing positive change to the food systems of the country. Various youth discourse, storytelling, publication declaration paper, video documentary, paper presentation followed by questions and answers session and sharing from young people took place during the conference. Ideas and recommendations were drawn through the discussion made to continue advocacy initiatives and raise awareness on the transformation of the food systems.

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To commemorate the IVD 2021, VSO Nepal together with Raleigh International Nepal and Restless Development Nepal conducted IVD 2021 Celebration Event with ICS Alumni Volunteers on 7th December 2021. The event invited together ICS returned volunteers, representatives of civil society organisations, and other experts to discuss issues on “Volunteer now for our common future”.

The event was led by the ICS Returned Volunteers (RVs) Steering Committee. The six-membered committee was formed with two RVs representatives from each organisation. A total of 58 youths from three organisations participated in the event.

In the event, 12 RVs shared their stories on their journey, learning, and reflections that includes 5 videos stories. RVs also shared about the experience of working in cross-agency collaboration relating to their NYEN journey. The session was followed by Social Media Engagement where RVs took pictures using photo-booth and SDG Wheel and shared them in their social media handles using hashtags #bethechange, #VolunteerNow, and #IVD2021.

There was a Networking session where RVs were provided time to get to know each other from all three agencies and share their stories with other RVs.

Mr. Naren Khatiwada from Youth Advocacy Nepal shared about the Volunteer Policy in Nepal. He discussed the contents of the National Volunteer Policy and its process. In the final session, Mr. Shailendra Raj Giri, Managing Director of MeroJobs.com provided Carrier counseling to RVs. He shared about the current Job Market Trend- what is the demand for youths in the current job market, some Practical tips for Job searching and applying especially for these youths, how to develop a smart CV that reflects personal skill sets, qualifications, and experience with desired job vacancies, and Some Do’s and Don’ts while applying for a position.
OUR IMPACT

Oriented 500 rural youth on online learning platforms, Job portals, CTEVT.
TRAINED 300 participants in capacity building.

Established menstrual hygiene room in six schools (for all female students and staffs)
Awareness on importance and use of MHR to 298 school-going girls.

The ADB project helped us understand how the volunteers (50 diary writers) felt/dealt with COVID-19.

Established six Menstrual Hygiene Room (MHR) in schools located in some rural regions of Nepal.
Worked with 11 schools in order to promote menstrual hygiene and spread awareness.
Engaged with 2246 Young people with the Projects.

Through the Youth Take the Lead, we were able to develop a citizenship toolkit with help of consultants as an endeavor to develop a guideline for promoting young people as global citizens.

Our programme reached 5000 Youths across Nepal.

WITH THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- NepalYouth Council
- Macquarie University
- Network on Humanitarian Action
- Voluntary Service Overseas
- Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation