



Audit Report, Nepal: September-November 2009

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Naresh Koirala, Paul Bird and Alison Bird, President, Secretary and Director respectively, of The Nepal Library Foundation (NLF) visited Nepal in the fourth quarter of 2009 to audit a number of NLF supported libraries and to assess the status and existing management of libraries who had previously requested financial support from the NLF. In total, six libraries were audited. These comprised three school libraries: one each at Nangi, Reema and Tikot villages in the district of Myagdi; two community libraries: one each in Chandrakot and in Sundari Danda (Ria's Reading Room) in the district of Kaski; and also the Society for Kathmandu Valley Public Library, in Kathmandu. Three further libraries, one each at Jomsom in Mustang, Phalebas in Parbat and Shrikhanda Pur in Kavre districts, were assessed. We also had several meetings with the programme directors of Open Learning Exchange whose content development efforts are supported by the NLF.

The NLF, in collaboration with the Non-Resident Nepali Association, had previously provided computers to school libraries in Chandrakot, Nangi, Reema and Tikot villages and to the Society for Kathmandu Valley Public Library (SKVPL) in Kathmandu. Ria's Reading Room bought children's books with NLF support. The recipient schools in Charikot and Myagdi were selected by Mr. Mahabir Pun, team leader of Nepal Wireless Network, with whom the NLF has been working collaboratively for the last two years. The SKVPL is the NLF's host library in Nepal. It was expected that the NLF-provided computers would be used by library patrons as a resource for accessing digitally available learning materials. The focus of our audit of the libraries in Myagdi was to appraise whether these objectives were being met; to understand the needs and concerns of the users of these libraries and, as a follow up to the visit, to develop a comprehensive programme to address identified needs and concerns. The libraries that had requested financial support from the NLF were visited primarily to assess their needs, their capability to use and maintain the resources requested from the NLF and their programme for long term sustainability.

It was evident from the audit that a collaborative effort from all groups engaged in public library development in Nepal was essential to expand the coverage of public libraries in the country in a cost-effective manner and to ensure long term sustainability of new and existing libraries. Upon completion of the auditing, the NLF held a meeting in Kathmandu with all the major organizations engaged in library development in Nepal to discuss the findings from the

audit. A plan of action to address the issues and concerns identified during the audit and arising from the Kathmandu meeting was agreed on by the participants in the meeting. This report presents the findings from the audit, observations made during the assessment of libraries seeking support, and a collaborative plan of action adopted by the Kathmandu meeting.

2.0 AUDIT FINDINGS

A detailed report, including copies of completed audit forms, is attached in Appendix 1. Selected photographs from various libraries are included in Appendix 2. A summary of the findings from the audit and assessment visits to the various libraries is presented below.

2.1 Computer Usage:

- The computers donated by the NLF were set up within school premises in Chandrakot, Nangi, Reema and Tikot. Internet connection through the Nepal Wireless Network was available only in libraries in Chandrakot, Nangi and Tikot. Each school had a teacher in charge of maintenance of the computers and of providing instruction in the use of computers. The computers in Chandrakot were functioning well. The school was closed on the day of our visit and we were not able to conduct a formal auditing of the use of the computers. The computers in Nangi and Tikot were being used primarily for e-mails and chat (Appendix 2 i & iii). A significant proportion of the adult male population of the district of Myagdi is working outside the area. The traditional mode of communication between the women who remain in the village and their men folks has been by conventional postal mail, which is slow (once a month) and unreliable. The computers have enhanced the speed of communication between families for which the villagers are grateful. The school in Reema was, at the time of our visit, outside the area of coverage of the wireless signals. Five computers in Reema remain unused (Appendix 2 Photo ii).
- The NLF has been promoting the use of Linux operating systems instead of Windows because Linux offers free access to its software; it consumes less power, requires less maintenance and makes local area networking significantly less expensive than Windows. However, the Nepal Government has mandated the use of Windows and not all school's teachers are trained to use Linux. As a result, Linux was used only partially. For example, in Nangi, the computers used for classroom teaching were using the Windows Operating System; other computers were using Linux.
- Because of lack of information technology specialists, trouble shooting and maintenance of computers was a major problem in all village schools and libraries. On the day of our visit at least three computers out of 13 computers in the Nangi computer laboratory were not in use because they had "broken down". The teachers who were in charge of teaching and operating the computer laboratory had little training in software trouble-shooting and no knowledge of hardware problems. The

computers had to be sent to Pokhara - a minimum one day journey- for servicing. The cost for doing this was prohibitive.

- None of the villages had contingency plans for the replacement of computers provided by donor agencies once these became dysfunctional.
- None of the three schools had heard that OLE-produced content was available online. Neither did they know how to access this resource.
- Most of the teachers and the students had problems using learning materials available online because they lacked proficiency in the English language.

2.2 Teacher Commitment

- Everyone we met was very grateful that the computers were made available to them. We noticed unbounded enthusiasm to learn and to be trained. There was no lack of commitment.

2.3 Books and Library Management

- The majority of the books we saw in school libraries were old. None of the libraries had fixed budgets allocated for the purchase of new books. There was no programme to identify current needs, update or cull old books. Each library had rudimentary (hand written) catalogues of books. Some of the school libraries were used as lending libraries, others were not.
- Ria's Reading Room (Appendix 2 Photo iv) is a children's library attached to a government school. It is very well run by a highly motivated manager and includes not only children's books, but also toys and educational games. It operates as a lending library. The books are properly catalogued and managed. However, teachers made little use of the library.
- None of the librarians had proper training in library management. They were aware that they did not possess library management skills and were anxious to be trained.

2.4 Society for Kathmandu Valley Public Library (SKVPL)

- The SKVPL is the main urban library in Kathmandu. Over the last three years the NLF has provided six computers and a number of books to the SKVPL. It has a holding of over 5,000 books. The library is housed in two buildings having 11,000 sq.ft. and 7,000 sq.ft. floor area respectively. The smaller building is used as a children's library. The library is managed by a qualified librarian. SKVPL provides a basic level of training in library management to librarians in the country. The detailed scope of the training is not known at this stage.
- The NLF-provided computers are being used for cataloguing books, managing the library and for internet access by the library users.

- The SKVPL has no website. It needs assistance in training, in using free access operating systems and in planning for continued development as a "world class urban library".

2.5 Open Learning Exchange (OLE)

In 2007 the NLF recognized that providing computers to rural areas for learning would not be effective without content development. The learning materials available online needed to be in the Nepali language. The NLF entered into a partnership agreement with OLE to assist OLE in developing the e-pustakalaya (e-library). The first phase of the programme has been successfully completed. OLE completed their assignment under a MOU with the NLF in time and within budget. The e-pustakalaya can be accessed by following the link from Open Learning Exchange, Nepal. www.olenepal.org. No formal auditing of OLE was conducted due to time constraints. Following is a summary of our observations during several meetings we had with Dr. Saurav Bhatta and Mr. Rabi Karmachraya of OLE.

- The organization is run in a professional manner by a highly committed and competent staff with a strong vision for the future.
- OLE Nepal is respected as the leader amongst OLEs all over the world.
- OLE works closely with the Nepal Wireless Network.

3.0 ASSESSED LIBRARIES

The existing libraries in Srikhandapur, Banepa and in Phalebas, Parbat have approached the NLF for funding support to buy books and computers. As a matter of policy, the NLF supports only libraries which have community support and which have a demonstrable programme for the long term sustainability of the library. We visited the two libraries to assess their needs and review their sustainability programmes with the library management board. Following are the findings:

- **Prakash Library, Shrikhandapur:** The library is located about five kilometers south of the township of Banepa, close to Kathmandu University. The Management Board (the Board) of the library consists of members of the farming community who have always been interested in education. The library was first established in 1957 and was visited by, amongst many dignitaries of the day, BP Koirala. We saw the visitor's books with BP's comments. The library was shut down during the Panchyat period and, over time, the small library building started to fall apart. Recently, the building has been refurbished and the library reopened with some books donated by various aid agencies (e.g. the Indian Embassy, the Asia Foundation). The library desperately needs Nepali books of direct relevance to the local students and the community. The library has also requested a computer and training of the librarian. The library is used as a lending library. Part of the

library's operating cost is raised by a membership fee. We reviewed the sustainability plan of the library, which is weak.

We advised the Board to carry out a demand survey in order to establish the type of books the community wishes to have included in the library and to submit a budget for the purchase of these books to the NLF. We advised the Prakash Library Board that subject to the agreement of the Board of the NLF, the NLF will reimburse a sum up to a maximum of CD\$1,500 to buy the books. We also advised the library Board to develop a sustainability plan within six months for our review. Subject to the NLF Board's acceptance of the plan, we will extend our funding support to a maximum of CD\$5,000 including the CD \$1,500. The contact person at Prakash Library is Mr. Ashish Shrestha.

- **Moti Library, Phalebas:** Moti Library was established in 1950 by Mr. Jagganath Sharma (Appendix 2 Photo vi). Like other libraries during that period, it was closed and then reopened 25 years ago. It currently acts as a lending library with about 8,000 titles. Its main source of funding is from membership (Rs. 110 per year) and its life members (Rs.1001. The NLF also became a life member). The library is well managed and is visited by an average of 130 users per day. Fifty to sixty books are lent every day. It also has a book club which started in late October, 2009. The library is presently outside the Nepal Wireless Network signal coverage area. However, it is expected that by mid 2010, a new relay tower will be installed to and internet access to Phalebas will be possible.

A new building for the library (Appendix 2 vi), at a cost of nearly NRs 5,000,000, is nearing completion. The Nepali Government and Read Nepal contributed to the cost of construction. Room to Read has agreed to supply books and furniture for the children's section of the new library.

Moti Library has requested financial support to buy books, computers and a photocopying machine and to train a librarian. Presently, the library does not have a sustainability plan and needs to submit one for the NLF's review. We advised the Board of Moti Library that subject to the NLF Board's acceptance of the plan, we will provide CD \$ 1,500 for books and extend our funding support to a maximum of CD\$5,000, including the CD \$1,500, once the sustainability plan becomes available. We also advised that if we receive targeted funds for computers, photocopier etc. the funds will be transferred as soon as possible. The contact person for Moti Library is Mr. Bhola Sharma.

- **Jomsom Community Library, Mustang**

The Jomsom community library was established with the assistance of READ Nepal. It is currently managed by the local "Ama Shamuha" which is chaired by Mohan Sherchand. The Ama Shamuha is also involved in providing a number of communal services such as garbage collection in Jomsom Bazaar, provision of clean drinking water; running an oil press and so on. The library used to raise part

of its operational cost by charging maintenance fees. We were advised that under READ Nepal's instruction they had to stop charging membership fees. The library covers some of its operating expenses from rents from shop fronts in the library building and also by charging user fees to tourists and levy from the oil press. But currently it does not have enough computers to meet the demand of the tourists.

Narayan Paudel is in charge of maintenance and servicing of the computers in the library. Narayan had some limited training, but needs more. The library operates Windows operating system. Narayan had not heard of Linux. He also did not know about OLE and e-pustakalaya. The library does not have a long term sustainability plan. The library committee requested NLF assistance in :

1. Developing a website for the library
2. A minimum of none more computer
3. Training of the Librarian and Narayan Paudel

We were very impressed with the enthusiasm and community spirit of the members of Ama Shamuha. We believe Johmsom will be a prime site for training and infrastructure support for the western hill region.

4.0 MISCELLANEOUS CONTACTS

During the course of the visit Naresh Koirala participated in a number of meetings arranged by organizations associated with Library developments in Nepal. These included:

- (i) "The Role of Libraries in Disseminations of Information in Villages" held in the National Library on October 9th, 2009;
- (ii) Met Drs. Suresh Chalise and Sanat Bista of Kathmandu University on 27 October to further discuss NLF and KU collaboration in training of librarians;
- (iii) Visited Ani Dorma Lama's nun school in Pharping on 23 October, 2009 to see the operation of the computers in the school;
- (iv) National meeting of the Community Library Association held in the World Trade Centre on 31 October, 2009;
- (v) Meeting held with HeNN in their office in Chabel on 21, November, 2009.

In addition Paul attended the international conference organized by OLE Nepal on November 3rd.

Naresh and Paul also met Amar Gurung, manager of Madan Pustakalaya, on November 26th to update ourselves on the work of Madan Pustakalaya and to explore the possibility of collaboration between the NLF and Madan Pustakalaya.

Alison and Iswari Koirala visited the Buddha Academy to present the vice principal with a cheque for the purchase of books for their school library.

5.0 FURTHER WORK

It was apparent from the audit and assessment visits that there has been a significant duplication of effort on the part of the various library organizations working in Nepal. At the national level, such duplications have led to inefficiency and increased costs in the delivery of services. The following areas of inefficiency were identified:

- (i) in training librarians
-the NLF, Room to Read, Read Nepal, and SKVPL are all training their own people. It would be more cost effective if all organizations were to coordinate a central training program which would offer different levels of training according to an agreed annual schedule in different parts of the country.
- (ii) in providing service for the maintenance and operation of computers
- all organizations suffered from lack of timely servicing. If facilities for servicing computers were to be developed on a regional basis, the computers would be used much more efficiently;
- (iii) the use of different operating systems, despite the fact that all recognized that, for Nepali conditions, Linux is a better system.

Other matters that became apparent during the auditing were:

- (i) The need to survey and classify libraries e.g. children's libraries, public libraries; school libraries;
- (ii) The need to define the scope of different trainings
- (iii) Advocacy for appropriate laws to promote public libraries.
- (iv) Development of training in the educational use of libraries in schools

The NLF organized a meeting of major players in the library movement in Nepal to discuss the above topics. The goal was to explore areas of collaboration amongst the participating organizations in order to cost effectively achieve our common mission of library development.

The agenda of the meeting and the minutes of the meeting are attached as Appendix 3. The participants of the meeting concurred with the need for collaboration and formed a number of committees to carry this forward.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The NLF gratefully acknowledges the cooperation it received from various individuals and organizations we met during our trip. Particular thanks are due to:

- (i) Dr Saurav Bhatta and Mr. Rabi Karmarcharya of Open Learning Exchange, Kathmandu
- (ii) Dr. Sanat Kumar Bista and Dr. Suresh Raj Chalise of Kathmandu University;
- (iii) Ms. Ani Choying Dolma of Arya Tara School, Kathmandu;
- (iv) Mr. Amar Gurung of Madan Pustakalaya

- (v) Mr. Rabrindra Misra and his associates of HeNN.
- (vi) Mr. Arjun Parajuli of Ria's Reading Room, Sunderi Danda, Kaski;
- (vii) Mr. Kumar Garuja Pun, Head Master of Adarsha Madhayamik Bidhalaya, Reema, Myagdi
- (viii) Mr. Mahabir Pun for organizing our trip to Myagdi;
- (ix) Mr. Pradeep Pun, Head Master and Tek Bahadur Pun, Computer Teacher, Shree Tikot Madhayamik Bidhyalaya; Histan, Myagdhi;
- (x) Mr. Raman Pun, Head Master and Krishna Pun, Computer Teacher, Himachal Higher Secondary School and their Associates in Nagi for their hospitability;
- (xi) Mr. Tek Bahadur Pun and his wife for the hospitality extended to us in their house in Tikot;
- (xii) Mr. Bholu Sharma and other personnel associated with Moti Library for organizing our trip to Phalebas, Parbat and for their hospitality.
- (xiii) Ms. Sanjana Shrestha of READ, Nepal

APENDIX 1
(Audit Details)

APPENDIX 2
(Selected Photographs)



- (i) NRN, NLF and HeNN supplied in Himalchal School, Nangi. Although the resource was not being used for formal learning the lady in the picture above, previously illiterate, has learned to read and write e-mails to her son who is working in Dubai.



- (ii) NRN supplied computers in Reema. These are largely unused due to lack of content and sporadic power supply.



(iii) Computer room in Tikot School. Three computers were non functional. There was no plan in place to fix these.



(iv) Ria's Reading Room in Sunderi Danda school. Although popular with the students little educational use is made of the library by teachers. This library is exemplary and of a very high quality.



(v) Meeting with the library committee in Jomson Community Library. The committee recognized the need for improved ITC resources, training and the need to promote use of the library in the community.



(vi) Naresh Koirala and Bhola Sharma inspect the new Moti library building