

### In this issue:

- A Canadian Grade Seven Class Helps a Nepali School Get Its First Library 1
- Personal Profile: Manuram Phuyal 2
- Prison Libraries In Western Nepal 2
- Sangam Model Library 3
- Dolakha Learning Centre Update 4

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# Nepal Library Foundation

## NEWS



*"A library is an arsenal of liberty" anon.*

## A Grade Seven Class in Surrey BC Helps a School in Nepal Get Its First Library

**B**aira Mahadev Elementary School is located in the scenic village of Lapsephedi in Shankarapur municipality, near Kathmandu. Poor road infrastructure means long walks for many students to reach the school.

Lapsephedi is a small community of about 5,000 people most of whom are historically marginalized subsistence farmers who barely survive on less than the equivalent of \$2 dollars a day earned through manual labour. Baira Mahadev Elementary currently has 105

students, ranging from 4 to 14 years old. It sustained major damage due to the massive earthquakes and landslides that hit central Nepal in 2015. Already in a very poor condition and without any sustainable source of funding, it was struggling to get

and NLF Canada started to source funds to assist in its implementation. A long term goal of the NLF is to connect schools in Nepal with schools in Canada. A fortuitous meeting of NLF Canada supporter Bhaba Regmi, with her son's Grade 7 teacher, Ms

Leanne Villeneuve, of Berkshire Park Elementary School in Surrey BC resulted in a collaboration of her class with teachers in Baira Mahadev School in Nepal. Ms Villeneuve, who has visited Nepal, saw this as an opportunity for her students to gain insight into the very different conditions of



*Opening day at Baira Mahadev Library*

children living in Lapsephedi.

Students in Ms Villeneuve's class engaged in fundraising activities raising over \$900 through a variety of creative ventures.

In July 2019 Ms Regmi, accompanied by her two sons, travelled to Baira Mahadev School with four

*A long term goal of the Nepal Library Foundation is to connect schools in Canada to schools in Nepal*

*The NLF team provided training to teachers in the use of the library as a teaching and learning tool as school libraries are a rarity in Nepal*

back on its feet after the disaster.

The principal of the school, Mr Raghav Jha, approached the NLF for assistance in developing a school library which could be accessed by the community at large. Dhan Kumar Shrestha of the NLF Kathmandu office met with school officials and community members to develop a plan of action

large suitcases full of books donated by the Vancouver Public library, and assorted educational supplies. During her visit the NLF Nepal team worked alongside the school staff installing networked computers connected to an ePustakalaya digital library server as well as cataloguing and putting in place over 700 books in the newly created library. As well the NLF team provided training

*See Baira Mahadev P3*

## Prison Libraries in Western Nepal

Nepal's police officers are not usually known for establishing educational facilities in the prisons they manage however Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) Mahesh Bikram Shah is an exception. He is an established author and the recipient in 2007 (2063 BS) of the Madan Puraskar, Nepal's premier literary award.

"I have always been interested in writing and literature but I had never thought prisoners might like to read and that prisoners would benefit from libraries" he says, "The epiphany moment occurred during my interaction with a prisoner about eighteen months ago. An inmate asked me if I could provide good books for them to read. The request stunned me. This had never happened before and I decided to launch a book collection cam-

paign".

Shah was in charge of the province of Karnali at the time. Local organizations, public personalities and businesses joined the campaign. Shah connected with NLF Canada's President, Naresh Koirala, who enthusiastically endorsed the NLF's participation in the project.

"Prison libraries have been NLF's dream for a long time and this was an opportunity we did not want to miss" says Koirala. Dhan Kumar Shrestha, NLF Nepal's Director, coordinated book collection and provided library management advice. In less than six months the campaign collected nearly 11,000 books and

*"The epiphany moment occurred during my interaction with a prisoner...he asked if I could provide good books for them to read"*

distributed them to the ten prisons in the province's ten districts.

The prison libraries run reading clubs; hold writing competitions and literary seminars where invited guests participate.

Shah says a recently freed prisoner told him that he had read 50 books in four months and this had helped him 'expand his mind'. He now wanted to do something positive for his community. Reading culture is developing in the prison libraries and this is a good thing he adds, citing positive feedback from prison wardens, one of whom stated that the relationship of wardens with the prisoners had improved considerably since the inmates had access to books.



NLF Nepal General Secretary Dhan Kumar Shrestha receiving a certificate of appreciation from DIGP Mahesh Bikram Shah

## Personal Profile: Maniram Phuyal - A Dedicated Educator

Maniram Phuyal was elected with an overwhelming majority to the Legislative Council of Province Number 3 in 2017. Until 2016, he was the head teacher of Nepal Rastrya Nirman Lower Secondary School (NRNLSS).

"My teaching position was too remote to affect the changes I wanted" he says. "I wanted to improve the quality of education and provide better resources for our schools and communities".

He resigned from his teaching position in 2016 and entered politics.

Maniram joined the NLF Nepal as a life member and in 2017 he

*"I wanted to improve the quality of education and provide better resources to our schools and communities"*

became its Vice President. He actively supported the establishment of the Bair Mahadev Elementary School library (see p# "Bair Mahadev). He has pledged to use part of the Legislative Council Members Constitution Development Fund to establish a model library in the village of Mul Pani in his constituency at a cost of \$20,000. See the report on Sangam library for the definition of and rationale for a model library p#. He also wants to enhance the facilities in Bair Mahadev Library and to support library development through his constituency.

Maniram is also providing funds to develop another model library in NRNLSS. The NLF has already started the enhancement

of Bair Mahadev at a cost of \$10,000. He is also lobbying to provide funding for prison libraries in the Province 3.

NLF Nepal is fortunate to have Maniram as it's Vice President and more importantly, to have a politician truly dedicated to the development of libraries.



Maniram Phuyal



## Sangam Community Library: NLF's First Recognized Model Library

Established in the year 2003 the Sangam Community Library became the first library ever in the town of Triyuga in Udaypur District in Nepal. It

served a community of 50,000 for nearly seven years, but fell into disuse around 2010 and was on the verge of closing down.

In 2017, Sangam was brought back to full operation with the support of Nepal Library Foundation, Canada, working with local community leaders to implement the revival program.

Dhan Kumar Shrestha, General Secretary of NLF, Nepal led the NLF team. As well as conventional library services, Sangam currently operates as a community resource

center and provides a women's computer literacy program, access to the ePustakalaya digital library and computer and internet access.

Additionally, the local community's financial co-operative and parish improvement centre also operate from the library premises.

In 2018 NLF started a program of recognizing successful libraries which act as models for others wishing to set up community library resource centres of their own and acknowledged Sangam as its first model library. The

recognition was a testament to Sangam's integration of community activities with the library as a focal point and its commitment to ongoing development.



*A women's computer literacy class in Sangam Library.*

In order to build on its role as a model to others it will hold a 35 day long library and management training program which is recognized by the Federal Government. This will provide a basic qualification in library management. It will continue to expand its On-Line Community Resource Management Centre and to provide computer education. A door-to-door book exchange program is to be initiated. There is also a move to develop the library as a

Citizen's Centre for Dialogue and to provide conference facilities for the community and Province.

NLF has been a supporter of Sangam Community Library since 2017. It provides ongoing support in the form of management expertise, including planning, stakeholder consultation, quality assurance and program auditing.

Sangam is soliciting financial help from charitable donors to advance ongoing program development. NLF is proud to be a part of the Sangam team.

### *Baira Mahadev continued from P 1*

to teachers in the use of the library as a teaching and learning tool as school libraries are a rarity in Nepal. Students are allocated class library time and teachers are able to use the networked projector and printer which was purchased using the contribution from Ms Villeneuve's class.

The library is open to the community during school hours. The head teacher is arranging for training sessions in the school making good use of the printer and projector. Recently, the school ran teachers training for multi-grade multi-level

class and conducted training for girls (grade 5 - 8) on sexual and reproductive health especially around menstruation, a traditionally taboo subject that can lead to hardship for women of child bearing age in Nepal. The head teacher has plans to run a computer training session for youth. The library and equipment are already making a noticeable impact on teaching and learning in the school and community.

Primary funding for the project was provided by the Richmond Pentecostal Society Child Care Society and NLF Canada.

# Dolakha Learning Centre Update

After the earthquakes of 2015, and the severe damage inflicted on the school buildings in Dolakha, the NLF was involved in the building of a learning centre composed of a computer room and a library and another room to provide a resource to the community and school after the school buildings were devastated. Apart from the building itself geotechnical work needed to be carried out. Significant assistance for this was provided by BGC Ltd, a Vancouver based engineering company. The building and engineering work has now been completed and was recently (Jan 2020) visited by Dr Sara Shneiderman of the University of British Columbia who has carried out research work in the area. All pictures are credited to Dr Shneiderman.



*The resource room is used daily by the kindergarten class until their classroom is rebuilt.*



*Mr Uddhab Thami, teacher, and Mr Bharat Shrestha, school Principal, in the library. Mr Thami makes daily use of the attached computer room to teach Grades 6, 7 and 8 classes.*



*The finished learning centre and retaining wall*

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## About the NLF

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**Endowment Fund:** Our goal for 2020 is NPR 1 000 000 000 (approximately USD 9 000). The interest from this will build the foundation of a sustainable source of income. Please contact us for more information at any of the above e-mail addresses.