

Project Report

Model Library Project II

Pratapkot, TSMC, Dang District, Lumbini Province, Nepal



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About Yours Humanly Nepal

Yours Humanly Nepal (YHN) is a registered nonprofit organization in Nepal and focuses on providing access to quality education for underserved children across Nepal.

YHN runs two main programs called Coloring Futures and Bridging Gaps with other shortterm projects, such as the COVID-19 Response Program.

The *Coloring Futures Program* provides long term assistance to scholars in the form of scholarships that cover a child's education from kindergarten through grade 12. The K-12 Scholarship is one of our most impactful

programs with children from across four districts of Nepal benefiting from it. This scholarship covers tuition fees, uniforms, books & stationery, meals, school trips, and other related expenses.

The *Bridging Gaps Program* creates and implements projects in struggling community and private schools by providing/building libraries, computer labs, STEAM labs, lunch rooms, playgrounds, toilets, classrooms, and similar. This program impacts more children over a period of time as these projects serve hundreds of students in their local schools every academic year.

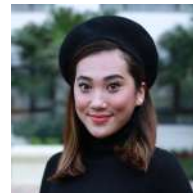
The Nepal Team



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Bhim Acharya
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Yours Humanly Nepal is headed by Candina K. Gurung as the Chairperson supported by the team of board members and staff. The board consists of Bhim Acharya who serves as the Board Treasurer, Paramita Rana as Board Secretary, and Kreeti Adhikari and Jomesh Tamang as Board Members. Suyasha KC works as full-time Admin Assistant. Part time staff and volunteers make up the rest of the team.

The team members' profiles can be viewed here: <https://yourshumanly.org/our-role-impact/our-team/>

About the Project

Mission & Vision

The *Model Library Project* is thus named because through it, we not only aim to setup a library in a poor school where there was none, but build it with a greater vision to transform the very nature of education in community schools with the ultimate goal to produce a well-rounded future workforce to lift Nepal out of poverty.

So our work here, beginning with a model library, is not just for the sake of doing some charity work to help poor children in a poor country, but to participate as an impactful organization in a strategic and significant way to contribute in developing a country that has been struggling to lift its people out of poverty.

As an organization, we exist to transform people's lives, and through providing equitable educational resources to children in Nepal, we are doing just that.

Goals

We hope to setup a great number of similar libraries, STEAM labs, hygienic lunchrooms, sanitary toilets with running water, inviting playgrounds, attractive classrooms, and more in every of the 77 districts of Nepal because we know our work changes lives.

Outcome

One small community school in a remote location gets a brand new model library. What's the outcome? That school has more than 200 students from neighboring communities. Each student impacts their family. Families make up individual communities. These communities start experiencing positive changes. Their girls are educated. They become lawyers, managers, technicians. Whole communities are transformed. The next generation is not so poor anymore. The women aren't as repressed anymore. Their children have better lives with even better prospects for the future.

How can a library do all this? This might be a question asked by many. But the question should be - *Why not a library?*

What this library has done is made the school more interesting to the children. It makes them want to go to school. It provides the teachers with resources that they desperately need. Lessons become more fascinating. They get to read books about amazing men and women and realize that they can become like them. It begins to instill dreams in their hearts and imagine themselves in a better world. They begin to build goals to pursue these dreams. It inspires them.

Once you give children the tools they need, they do the rest by themselves.

Understanding the Project Context

The Concept of a Library in Nepal



School libraries provide much needed additional information, knowledge, and entertainment to students of all ages. The prospect of going to a library is exciting to children and adults alike. They get to explore different worlds through novels and comics, personally engage in story-telling, get informed about exciting new topics, look up facts about their favorite dinosaur, travel galaxies, access DIY science projects, imagine themselves in a magical world, and much more. And in the western world, that is common sense.

However, in developing countries like Nepal, the concept of a library is glaringly different. There is a certain traditional view that libraries are a storehouse for complicated books that only academic geniuses would want to read. In fact, in most school libraries, even in private boarding schools, musty books are stored in padlocked steel cabinets in a dark room whose door has been bolted shut. The implied message is KEEP OUT!!

Even for the most archaic nerd out there, it is not an inviting place. This does nothing for young children who are already struggling to develop a habit of reading. Reading equals studying, and studying is a chore. It's boring: you have to do it for the tests so you can move on to the next grade.

continued...

"The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity. And that means finding books that they enjoy, giving them access to those books, and letting them read them."

-- Neil Gaiman

But what's worse is that even such "libraries" are unavailable in most community schools across Nepal's 77 districts. The ones that do have designed them to be inaccessible to their own students by locking it up in fear of books being worn out, furniture being damaged.

It goes without saying that there are hardly any books that would be attractive to children even if they accidentally ended up in their school library. Titles like *How to Pass the Entry Level Exam for Pubic Administration* and *Past Exam Mathematics Questions Compilation 1995-1998* will only make them want to get out as quickly as possible.

Therefore, it is not a surprise that the overall education in Nepal struggles. With the absence of extra-curricular reading, story time, no access to age-appropriate books, and an environment that does not support reading, entire communities are lagging behind, especially in rural and remote areas of the country.

This problem does not affect just the children, but the teachers as well. They don't have any materials or resources other than the government mandated textbook. This adds to the already depressing situation.

This is only a small look into the massive gap present in Nepal's community schools.

Photos of a typical community school library in the Kathmandu Valley reveal locked cabinets full of outdated books gathering dust. Private schools don't fare any better.



The School in Pratapkot, Dang

Why this school was chosen



Shree Secondary School is a community school located 13 kilometers away from Tulsipur's main market area. Despite not being very far, Pratapkot village is hard to reach due to its remote location. For one thing, it is situated 1,400 meters above sea level on the hills that surround the Deukhari Valley. In contrast, Tulsipur city center's elevation is just 620 meters.

The geography of the area has become the main impediment for development in Pratapkot. Though it is part of the Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City, its infrastructure and facilities lag far behind that of its counterparts in the lower lying areas. The main road that leads up to the village is a winding dirt road of rocky soil subject to frequent landslides especially during the monsoon. But this is the only way to get there.

In spite of all this, Shree Secondary School has become sort of a hub of education for the surrounding villages of this remote area. Students from nearby villages walk even as much as two hours to get to the school. As a matter of fact, the school hosts over 200 students from kindergarten to grade 10, plus staff.

...continued

Dang District is a district of Lumbini Province located in the Inner Terai of midwestern Nepal. Deukhuri Valley of the district is the capital of the province and is the second largest valley of Asia surrounded by Sivalik Hills and the Mahabharata Range. Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City is the second-most populous city in Dang district after Ghorahi its capital. Pratapkot is one of the 19 wards in Tulsipur SMC.

PROJECT REPORT

The school lacks even the most basic facilities such as classroom furniture, equipment, toilets, running water, compound walls, etc. Though other schools receive much aid for these things, Shree Secondary School is unfortunate in its location, so it has been ignored and passed over by many organizations. This has resulted in the students receiving below par education.

Moreover, the local population are also unlucky socioeconomically. As the soil quality is poor and non-arable, they are not able to find subsistence through farming. The families who found better prospects elsewhere moved away, but the poorest of the poor had no choice but to stay. The very children of these very families place their hope in this school for a better future.

But the good news is that in recent years, the mayor of TSMC has allotted funding for a new computer lab for the students and two laptops for the staff. However, the very rudimentary library they had was of no use to anyone. It was basically a storeroom for moldy outdated textbooks.

This condition was brought to our attention back in 2020 by the mayor's office. The Yours Humanly Nepal team went on location and conducted a survey to collect all necessary data and document the bleak reality that met us there.

However, the pandemic and lack of funding delayed our plans to construct an impactful library for the school and its students.

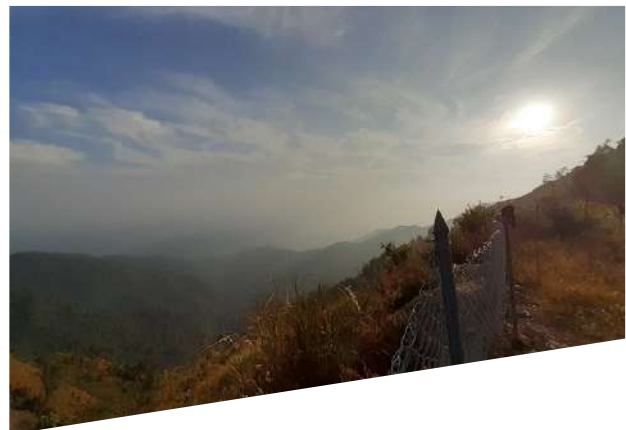
Shree Secondary School was established in 1958 in a shed where students took classes in exchange for crops. At the behest of the villagers, the then king Mahendra provided a royal grant to build the school, and since then, has grown into a secondary level school. This short look into its history shows their determination and resolve.





Some photos of the school

Surrounded by hills in a gorgeous location stands a dilapidated school that needs much help...



Project Phases

What we did after the survey trip to Pratapkot

Phase 01

Research & Assessment

Phase 02

Planning & Budgeting

Phase 03

Project Execution



Purchasing wiring, LED light bulbs, panels, and switches for the library.



Hardware store proprietor pointing out paint brand options for superior quality finish and durability.



Books, games, charts, maps, stationery, and other materials getting ready to be shipped.

Once the Yours Humanly Nepal team had all the information regarding the school's challenges and the condition of the rudimentary library, we began planning the "roadmap" for our work ahead.

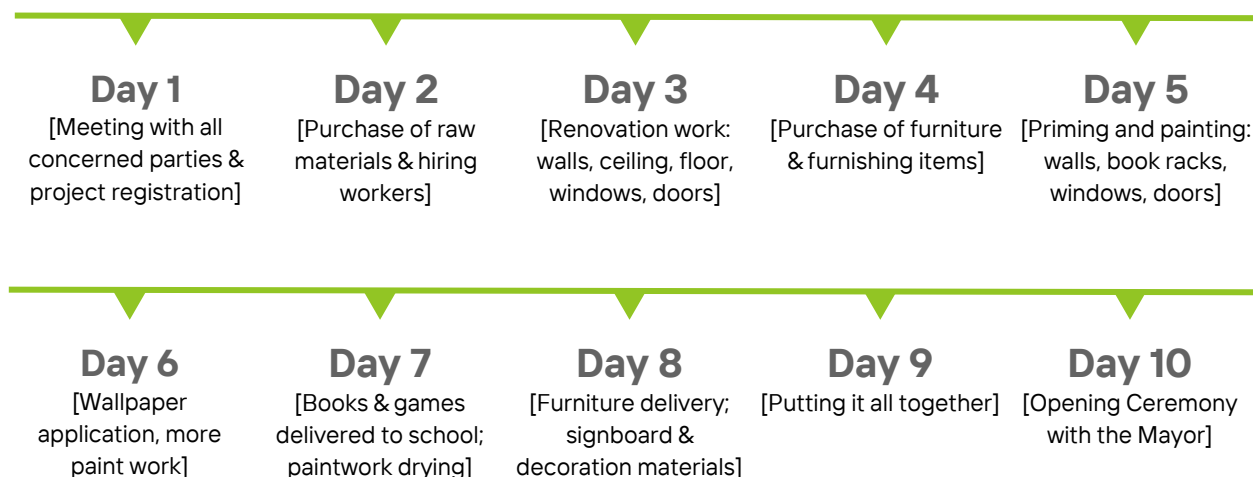
Firstly, we got in touch with numerous publishing houses and big educational bookstores in Kathmandu for the books and other resources we would be needing for the library.

Then we scoured the market for latest rates on raw materials like cement, wall putty, etc. for renovation work, wallpaper and paint, carpeting and furniture, labor cost, lighting and electrical work, and so on.

Later, the team got to work on the layout and design of the library - fun, stimulating, and comfortable.

Finally, we estimated the costs for field visit and stay as well as all related logistics. This gave us an idea of our budget.

Estimated Timeline



The **actual timeline** was slightly altered, as expected, due to things outside of our control, such as weather, traveler's diarrhea, power cuts, shortage of goods in the local market, etc. However, the agenda was thoroughly followed and goals met.

Certain purchases had been made in Kathmandu prior to heading to the location and subsequently shipped to Dang. These include books, educational games and teaching materials, outdoor sports equipment, wallpaper, library decoration and stationery items.

The geographic difficulty of the school's location was one of the main reasons for general delay in the work. It made it difficult for workers to get to location on a daily basis, which is why a few of the main workers ended up staying on-site for over a week.

Because Tulsipur is a more regional city, many common goods that are easily found in Kathmandu were not as easily accessible and we had to wait a few days for some goods to arrive.

Design Concept

A briefing on the design concept

Layout

An open layout was chosen to allow plenty of space in the middle for activities like story-circle and games. Two of the windowless walls were lined with book racks to provide easy access to books and other materials while saving space. Seating arrangements were strategically placed near windows for maximum natural light and access to air. The space can be easily rearranged if adjustment is needed for any particular activity.

Color Scheme

The Yours Humanly colors were not only chosen because they are our official colors, but also because blue symbolizes intelligent thinking, calmness, and tranquility, while green is associated with energy - taking action and life. Bright pink was also added on one wall because it is very popular among both boys and girls in Nepal and is considered special. The remaining walls were painted a soothing neutral light grey. Book racks were painted white in contrast to the standard wood-finish which is not very inviting for children with its dark hues and somber appearance.

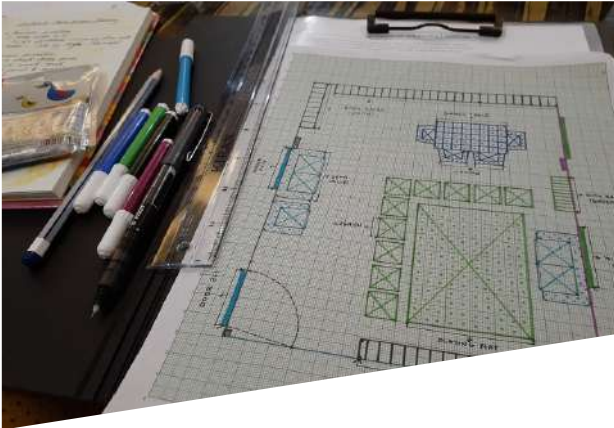
Furniture & Furnishing Selection

We selected high quality durable plastic furniture including chairs, low tables, standard table, and stools in blue, white, and green. These will be easy to clean and move around. To make the library cozy and inviting, we placed couches (child-sized) so reading can be associated with relaxation and fun. Since floor seating is popular in Nepal, *chakkatis* (floor cushions) have been provided in addition to floor mats of different sizes so group work and games can be done by making a circle. They can be stacked or rolled up and put away in a corner when more space is needed.

The white book racks provide a bright background for the colorful books and games placed there. This also complements the ceiling covered in wallpaper with patterns of planets in a starry blue backdrop and newly installed LED lighting for cloudy days. The floor has been carpeted with high quality thick linoleum as opposed to standard carpeting as Pratapkot is subject to strong winds that bring dust inside. This is easier to maintain.

Details

Finishing touches include fur pillows, stuffed toys, and emoji cushions for comfort and fun; wall and table clocks in attractive designs for children to learn telling time; themed foam stickers on the walls that include alphabets, numbers, 'the sea', 'the circus', 'flower garden', etc. for visual prompts and inspiration.



Design concept of the library

A smart layout incorporating a fun and inviting space with the Yours Humanly Nepal signature colors as the main theme complemented by carefully selected accents and tones...



Long-term Impact

How effective will this library be in the foreseeable future?



The model library in Shree Secondary School, Pratapkot is one of a kind in the whole district. And after the Mayor declared it a *namuna* library, it has become a paradigm that all the schools throughout the district desire to emulate.

This has resulted in local governments of other districts reaching out to us so we can build similar libraries in the schools of their districts. It has transformed their perception of what a school library should be and they want in.

So this library is not just impacting the school in which it was setup, but the entire public school community in Nepal.

In the school itself, children who never wanted to read are now rushing to the library. They can't wait for the next library period. They are reading books with wide-eyed curiosity and excitedly exchanging stories with their friends. Children who have never before hugged a teddy bear are now doing so on the library couch. Girls missing school for house chores are now insisting on going to school. They won't be thinking about yielding to getting married off by their families until they finish school.

Namuna means 'example' or 'model' in the Nepali language and is a word associated with excellence.

Monitoring & Follow-up

Current efforts and future strategies



November 2020 YHN field survey with local government officials, school staff, and TFN Fellows



April 2022 discussing future partnerships with the Mayor on opening day after the ribbon-cutting



May 2022 post-project meeting with TFN Fellows and coordinator at YHN office premises

Teach For Nepal (TFN) Fellows - Mr. Ashutosh Parajuli and Mr. Alish Gurung - have been crucial in this project's success. Our partnership with TFN also goes further with on-site monitoring of the library by new Fellow Mr. Spandan, who has replaced his seniors at the school.

The Fellows are well-trained teachers and instructors and their placement in Shree Secondary School has been key to the upkeep, management, and monitoring of the library and its materials. In addition to their organization's mission to train the existing school staff with updated teaching methods and materials, the Fellows have assisted YHN in all stages of the library construction.

Regular updates in the form of photos and online communication with the Fellows is taking place.

We hope to visit the site within one year (of opening) for an in-person follow-up and meet all the children, school staff, and community members to get some feedback on how the library has impacted them.

We also look forward to partnering with the Mayor's office for training librarians and installing computers with LMS software for more reliable monitoring and tracking progress. Key steps have been taken to move forward.

Future Projects

Other Bridging Gaps projects in the planning stage



In addition to more model libraries, Yours Humanly Nepal is planning to set up model STEAM labs in poor community schools of Nepal. We are currently doing research on Sindhupalchowk district's community schools and Lumbini Province as a whole because of the current education drive in place which makes the local government more cooperative and government grants possible.

Another area that we are looking into is training for management - that is training librarians, installing Library Management Systems (LMS) software and library computers. These will be required for the longterm continuation and proper management of the facilities we setup. This has been the biggest request after actual infrastructural needs. The schools need trained staff.

As most community schools already have government provision for a computer lab, requests for these have declined. However, trained computer instructors are lacking, so these labs are collecting dust with no one to run them. But in the scenario of poor startup private schools in rural areas, they still need computers as they receive no state funding. These schools will also not be left behind if grants and funding from international organizations and associations are not hindered.



Photos of other schools that are requesting YHN partnership

The Mayor of Tulsipur taking us on a local tour of both the best and struggling schools of the sub-metropolis as well as new public school projects under construction...



Project Partners



Behring Global Educational Foundation

THIS PROJECT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE GENEROUS GRANT FROM BEHRING GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION.

<http://www.bgefoundation.org/>



Teach For Nepal

THE COORDINATION OF TEACH FOR NEPAL FELLOWS WAS CRUCIAL THROUGHOUT THIS PROJECT'S FORMATIVE AND FINAL STAGES.

<https://www.teachfornepal.org/>

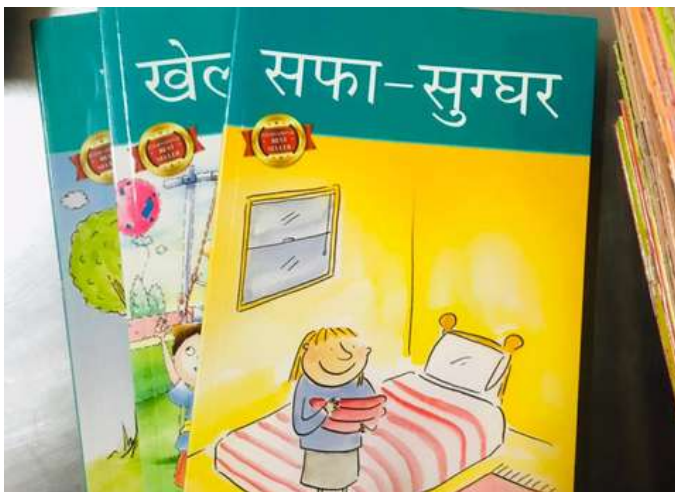
Special Thanks To:



FOR GENEROUS DISCOUNTS ON BOOKS, GAMES, AND TEACHING AID MATERIALS.

Gallery

Selecting books and games



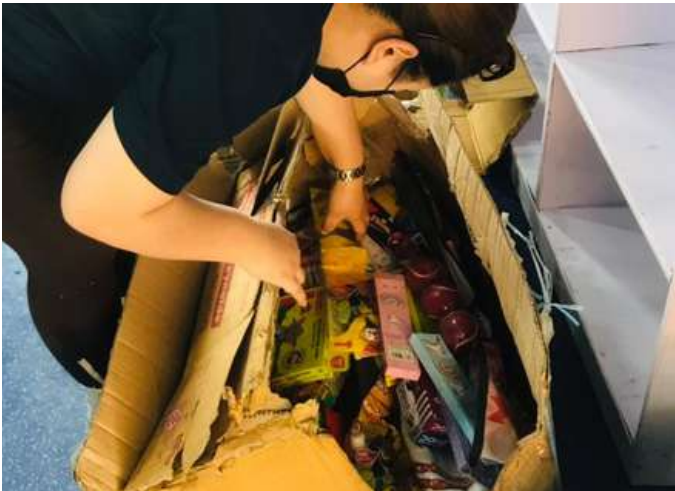
Gallery

Collecting tools and raw materials



Gallery

Setting up the library 1



Gallery

Setting up the library 2



Gallery

Setting up the library 3



Gallery

Finishing touches



Gallery

Ribbon-cutting by Tulsipur's Mayor



Gallery

Activities on opening day



Gallery

Children excited to explore their new library



Gallery

Before and After



Gallery

Final Before-After look



These photos show the vast difference in the state of the school, not just within the library area but also outside. Though we set out to build a library, we ended up having to renovate the building that houses the library because of its deplorable state. The exterior of the building was repaired and painted with the mandated standard community school colors of yellow and blue. Yellow on the walls and blue on doors and windows. This included the principal's office and teachers' room. Large dustbins were placed right outside the library in addition to a large doormat at the entrance.



Yours Humanly®
Transforming Lives Through Education

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