

WHAT'S UP?

NEWSLETTER OXFAM IN NEPAL

SPECIAL EDITION - INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY



OXFAM



Shostika Khatri, YSB first cohort, presenting at an event. Photo credit: Shostika Khatri

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YOUTH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Every year August 12 is observed as International Youth Day to draw worldwide focus on youth. The day acknowledges potential of youth in global and national development. It is estimated that a quarter of global population – 1.8 billion people – are between ages of 15 and 35.

Likewise, according to Nepal's National Youth Policy, approximately 20.8 percent of the total population falls in age group 16-25 years while 40.68 percent lies in age group 16-40.

However, this young population remain largely excluded from local and global political and economic processes. They are excluded from leadership and decision-making process. Therefore, it is imperative that we empower youth to ensure their contribution towards community development and environment protection.

At Oxfam, we believe in a future where young people play an active role in society, and work together to help create a world without poverty. Oxfam is confident that these young women and men will prove to be a powerful force of global change and development. Therefore, Oxfam has developed a Theory of Change (ToC) to explore what needs to happen so that young people, institutions,

and communities can create equitable, transformative, and sustainable change together.



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In line with this ToC, in Nepal, Oxfam has been working continuously with young people, to increase their social, political, and economic participation. We try and ensure youth involvement in all our projects. We also have a few stand-alone projects that are majorly focused on youth empowerment.

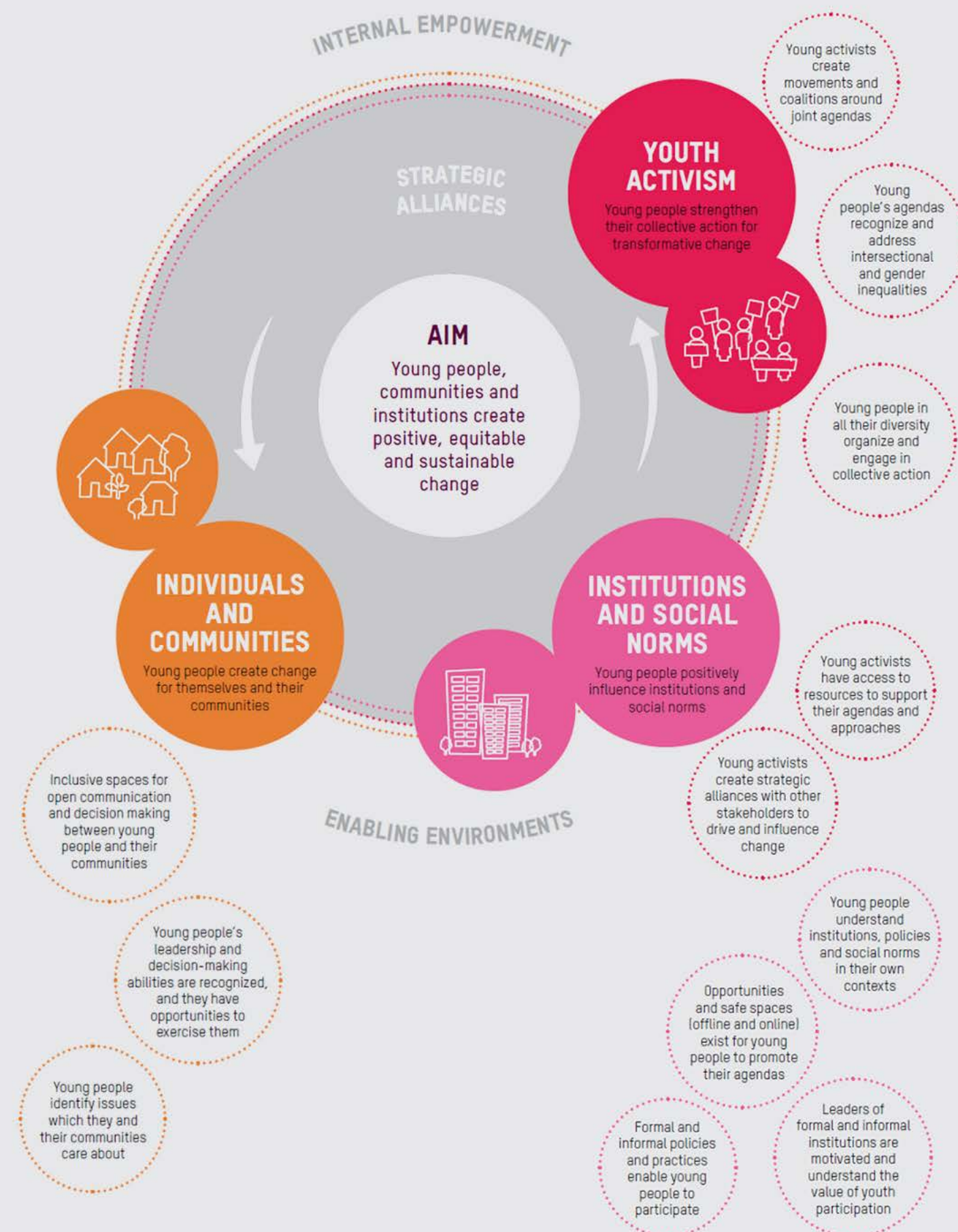
Our work with youth is centred on belief that if young people are enabled to effectively use their skills and creativity to assert their rights and influence structures and behaviors, they can create lasting change in their communities.

This edition of our newsletter is focused on capturing our efforts in youth engagement in Nepal. And, it is with immense pride we share that 26,088 of our programme participants in past year were in age group of 15-24 years. Please read on to learn more about our youth-focused activities.



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YOUTH LEADERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION META-THEORY OF CHANGE



MY EXPERIENCE AS YSB FIRST COHORT – SHOSTIKA KHATRI

YSB (Youth Sounding Board) – the word itself sounded strange first time I heard of it. As an undergraduate student from Dipayal Silgarhi Municipality in Doti district of Sudurpaschim Province, I had limited opportunities for learning and exposure. I had a lot of apprehensions before applying for YSB, but my curiosity got the better of me.

And I am glad that I applied. I was lucky to be selected as one of the 25 members of YSB's first cohort. My experience as a YSB cohort helped me become the person I am today – confident, vocal, and adaptable.

Through my association with YSB, I had the pleasure of meeting and learning from inspiring personalities like H.E.

Mrs. Nona Deprez, Ambassador, European Union Delegation to Nepal and Eloisa Astudillo Fernandez, Deputy Head, European Union Delegation to Nepal for first time in my life. I was fortunate to get the opportunity of accompanying ambassadors from EU, Finland, France, and Germany on field visits to far western region including the municipality I am from.



Shostika Khatri attending Multi-Stakeholder Discourse on Violence Against Women. Photo credit: Shostika Khatri

Youth unemployment is a major problem in my municipality. A lot of young people migrate to India or other foreign countries for employment. During ambassadors' visit, ward members raised this issue with a request to conduct vocational trainings for youth.

Correspondingly, on our visit to Kailali district, we witnessed a successful mushroom farm started by a youth. The owner was kind enough to give us a tour and explain process of mushroom cultivation, from harvesting to packaging. We learned about various farming techniques as well as challenges faced by farmers. The visit affirmed that there is opportunity in our own country if we are willing to try.

My experience with YSB has been incredibly valuable and impactful. Joining YSB platform provided me with countless opportunities to learn and grow as I attended various trainings. YSB helped hone my leadership abilities. I got involved in various projects such as National Youth Consultation to End Child and Early Marriage, Provincial Workshop, Youth Festival, Water Source Sanitation, etc.

Furthermore, YSB opened doors for networking and collaboration. Attending various conferences, seminars, and events helped me connect with professionals and like-minded individuals. These connections have not only expanded my professional network but presented me with opportunities for mentorship,

partnerships, and potential future collaborations.

I feel grateful to Oxfam, Helvetas Nepal, Restless Development, and Youth Innovation Lab for involving me in their programs which has helped me gain a deeper understanding of issues faced by vulnerable communities. The commitment and efforts of these organizations to address social injustices and promote equality is inspirational.

This novel initiative of these organizations to create an empowering ecosystem for young people to grow, learn, and thrive must be applauded. I appreciate their relentless support and belief in us throughout our one-year term.

I am fortunate that my experience with YSB has been largely positive, and this opportunity outweighs the challenges. Numerous workshops, training programs, and networking events has enriched my knowledge and skills and I feel better equipped to handle any obstacles that may arise in future.

I hope to continue my work in development sector and make a positive and lasting impact on individuals, families, and communities in need. In future, I hope to contribute to creation of a society where every individual is treated with dignity, respect, and given equal opportunity.

**Shostika Khatri is a 22-year-old undergraduate student specializing in Political Science and Sociology.*

About YSB:

Youth Sounding Board (YSB) is a consultative space for Nepalese youth to have an influence on EU's actions by making it more participatory, relevant, and effective for youth. It is an all-inclusive multi-sectorial platform of engagement designed to bring together youth voices to guide EU's development cooperation in Nepal. Formation of Youth Sounding Board started in Brussels and similar boards have been formed in Nigeria and Tanzania. In Nepal, Youth Sounding Board is co-funded by EU, and it is piloted by Youth Innovation Lab, Oxfam, and Helvetas and their consortium members.

YSB aims to ensure that young people are brought to discussion table to advise and guide and to inform how EU's actions can be more responsive to needs of youth, and how their activities can be much more deliberate in addressing youth needs. This platform would be an opportunity for young people to involve and contribute to the design, implementation, and monitoring/review of EU actions in Nepal and be a potential platform for dialogue with EU and EU member states and Government of Nepal.

TURNING FATE AROUND



Deepak Saud fishing in his fishpond. Photo credit: Gopal Saud, NEEDS Nepal

Deepak Saud from Parshuram Municipality-6 of Dadeldhura district, lives with his wife, a son, and a daughter. When his family split from his parents, he inherited a small plot of land that was unproductive and faced water-logging problem. Production from the land was so low that it was difficult to sustain a family of four for even three months.

He was forced to do menial wage labour to support his family. Mere act of bringing a one-time meal to table brought him happiness. He could not afford to send his children to school let alone buy new clothes for them. He had already exhausted his credit limit after borrowing from a money lender at a high interest rate. But, today, he wishes to forget his bitter past.

Launch of Oxfam's Strengthening Community Preparedness, Rapid Response and Recovery (SCOPR3)-Nepal project in 2021 turned

his life around. The project is implemented by National Environment and Equity Development Society (NEEDS) Nepal; a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Kanchanpur district. It is focused on ensuring that communities affected by recurrent disasters in highly vulnerable areas have enhanced capacities for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

As fate would have it, Saud's area was selected as the project's implementation site, and he became an eligible project participant. He is now known as a successful fish farmer in his village, Thandajala.

He started fish farming after receiving basic training and that consisted of first lot fingerlings and feed support for three months. On-the-spot coaching by field technicians and frequent site visits by governmental officials motivated Saud further.

He earned 30,000 NPR in first month by selling fish in local market and he is hopeful that he will earn more in days to come. He also plans on expanding his pond area. His income is now sufficient to feed his family and pay for education of his two children. He is happy that he can make his own decision regarding activities that affect his family's life.

At present, he is also a member of Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMC), a local voluntary disaster response group formed by NEEDS Nepal as part of the project.

Prior to launch of SCOPR3 project, seasonal migration among young men was rampant in the municipality. This put women, children, and aged population at risk with little or no preparedness for impending disaster. But after launching SCOPR3 project, young people have stayed back and are earning a good income at home. Their involvement in CDMCs means they are now prepared to act as co-lead in disaster preparedness and response in their areas.

A lot of youth like Saud have benefited from livelihood support through SCOPR3 project and received training to respond to any crisis and actively participate in search and rescue mission during disasters.

INSPIRING YOUTH FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Puspa Pant, a 22-year-old undergraduate student from Lamakhet, Patan Municipality-6, Baitadi, Sudurpaschim Province never thought she would be contributing to family expenses at such a young age. Growing up in a family of nine with agriculture as main source of income, oftentimes they faced difficulties in meeting necessities.

She was a young girl focused only on studies and housework with little idea or interest in entrepreneurship until her involvement in Youth-led GESI

initiatives for COVID Recovery Strategies and Actions in Nepal project. The project is implemented by Oxfam, Women Association for Marginalised Women (WAM) and Yuwalaya and is co-funded by European Union.

She got opportunity to attend a Financial Literacy class under this project which piqued her interest in business. The class taught her about savings, loan process and procedures, family development plan, business plan and many ideas for startup business.



Puspa Pant working at her mushroom farm. Photo credit: Jayram Bishwokarma/WAM

Following the class, she participated in a three-day mushroom cultivation training conducted by the project. Attending the training gave her confidence and motivation to start a mushroom farm. She shared her idea with her family. They were more than willing to support her in her endeavor.

She started her mushroom business by getting a loan of 70,000 NPR from a local cooperative. The mushroom farm she started with just 60 packets of mushrooms produced 420 kgs of mushroom in first batch. Since then, there has been no looking back for her.

Mushrooms are sold at 270 NPR per kg in local market. She shared that she has earned 90,000 NPR in just three months. With her business booming not only does she help her family, but she is also paying for her education herself. She also plans to expand her business. She has put 100 packets of mushroom in second lot. She is further coordinating with the municipality for their support in business expansion.

She never misses out an opportunity to thank Oxfam in Nepal and Women Association for Marginalized Women (WAM), Oxfam's project implementing partner, for helping her become financially independent.

YUWA SANGA KO HAMRO SAHAYATRA

Nepal is home to diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, each with their unique tradition, customs, music, art, and dances. Music has always been an integral part of Nepali culture, with various traditional instruments (like madal, sarangi, sanai, narsinga, jhamta, damaha, murchunga, etc) and genres passed down through generations.

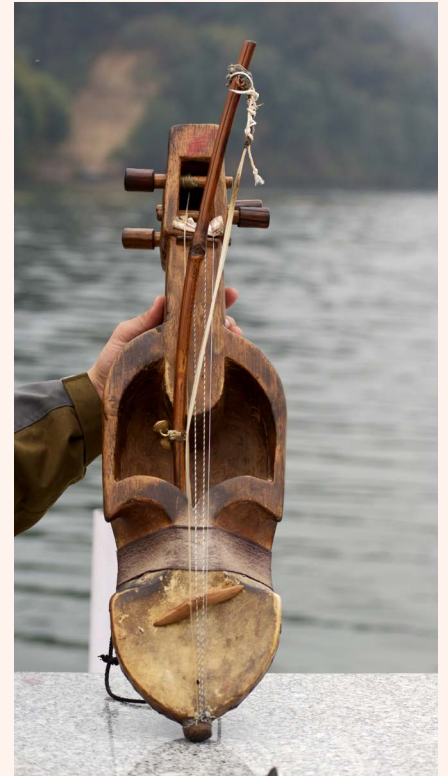
However, use of indigenous music, arts and local cultures have been sidelined by urban-centric music bands and groups. Rising use of social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) means traditional musicians, singers and folklore artists are left behind due to their lack of digital knowledge. Skills and knowledge are not transferred to next generation due to youth's declining interest. Consequently, local culture, arts, rituals, music, and traditions could slowly disappear.

Therefore, Oxfam is stepping up to promote local dance, songs, arts or rituals and culture among youth through "Yuwa Sanga Hamro Sahayatra" Project. Oxfam and

implementing partner Yuwalaya intend to ensure preservation of indigenous culture and music and promote its use as a tool for awareness raising. Oxfam, through its different project experiences, found that people related emotionally when messages are delivered via dance, songs, arts, and rituals.

The project will benefit youths between ages 15-24 from Kailali, Surkhet and Dailekh districts in Karnali and Sudurpaschim Provinces. Fifty percent of participants will be female and at least twenty percent will be from marginalized and indigenous communities.

Mostly marginalized people like Dalits, have been preserving indigenous music and art. Likewise, Tharu community from plains in Kailali are engaged in preserving indigenous music, art, and dance. Project's activities are focused on creating learning opportunities and learning spaces for young people to pursue their interests. Building linkage and network of young talented people



*Sarangi, a Nepali folk instrument.
Photo source: www.pexels.com*

through exposure visits will enhance their development. Furthermore, scholarships and digital literacy education will inspire youth to pick up learning traditional music and dance.

Oxfam is hopeful that this one-of-a-kind project will highlight importance of preserving and promoting local and traditional art forms and enhance youth engagement and empowerment.

If you have any concerns or queries regarding safeguarding, please contact the following number **16600150076** or send an email at **speakup@oxfam.org.uk** For feedback and complains related to programme, please contact the following numbers— NTC: **9851179358**; Ncell: **9801571204**

FEEDBACK?

Do you have programme updates, stories, pictures, videos to share? Or, any important questions on the newsletter?

Please contact: **Rachana Mukhia, Media and Communication Officer at rmukhia@oxfam.org.uk**

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