



Australia Awards

# Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility

Case Study #4:  
Nepal

May 2017



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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACNS	Autism Care Nepal Society
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDAB	Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (now DFAT)
ANAA	Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ATC	Air Traffic Control unit
ANU	Australian National University
AWB	Australia Awards and Alumni Branch (DFAT)
CPN(M)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
DAP	Direct Aid Program
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DHS	Nepal Demographic and Health Surveys
DNC	Disabled Newlife Center
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
GESI	gender equity and social inclusion
GIS	Geographic Information System
INGO	International non-government organisation
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MITRA	Measures for Intervention Training Research and Action
MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population (Government of Nepal)
NAHUDA	Natural and Human Resource Development Association
NGO	non-government organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission (Government of Nepal)
PPP	Population Perspective Plan
PSO	Parliament Secretary Office

RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (now RMIT University)
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SCA	Short Course Award
TIA	Tribhuvan International Airport
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFP/UNFBA	United Nations Population Fund
WaSH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

# 1. Executive Summary

This report details the outcomes of a Case Study of Nepalese alumni of Australian development scholarships. Alumni in this Case Study completed their scholarships between the late-1980s and the mid-1990s. This research was conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT), Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (the Facility).

## 1.1 Findings

### 1.1.1 Development contributions

The Nepal Case Study alumni cohort comprised three females and six males who collectively have worked across numerous ministries of the Government of Nepal including those that are now called Foreign Affairs; Forests and Soil Conservation, General Administration; Health and Population; Physical Infrastructure and Transportation; Tourism, Civil Aviation, and Culture; Urban Development; and Women, Children and Social Welfare. They provided clear examples how they had used the skills, knowledge and networks gained during their time in Australia to contribute to partner-country development goals. Given the nature of the cohort, these examples are diverse and difficult to collate and categorise, but could conceivably be divided into outcomes related to **policy development and implementation** and **program or project based solutions**. Examples include:

- improving health outcomes for thousands of rural Nepali women through the provision cervical cancer screening and awareness raising
- fostering understanding about the value of evidence-based planning based on population information culminating in the formation of the Ministry of Population and Planning
- effective international diplomatic efforts including establishing bilateral relations and posts, increasing trade and aid, and effectively representing Nepali citizens in crisis
- improving the quality and efficiency of services provided within the then Ministry of Civil Aviation
- extending the effect of Australian assistance via the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project through the effective implementation of forest conservation policy
- designing and implementing environmentally sustainable Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) programs including in Nepal, benefiting 1.7 million people in 70 towns.

A standout feature of the Nepal Case Study was that **all alumni participants were clearly exceptional individuals**. Their intelligence and dedication to service was unmistakable and they all placed high value on ethics in the workplace. For the Case Study researchers, this made attributing their success specifically to the Australia Awards a challenge, but what was certain was that the **Australian Government had selected very high quality candidates 20 years ago**. Other factors that underpinned alumni's success in contributing to partner-country development goals were:

- **the longevity of the skills and knowledge** gained in Australia. Many alumni were drawing upon their skills gained in Australia after retirement in their consulting or volunteer work. The benefit of this to the Government of Nepal and Government of Australia is that valuable human resources are still being utilised, extending the investment made in these individuals
- **practical (work-based) and transferrable skills** gained in Australia enabled alumni to be more effective, provide better advice and ultimately improve the quality of their work. Alumni reported being more employable or ‘transferrable’ within the civil service due to having these skills
- the expertise gained in Australia resulted in extensive recognition and increased opportunities over the life of alumni’s skills, **particularly for those who had undertaken doctorate degrees.**

Some of the factors that challenged alumni in contributing to partner-country development goals were that alumni lacked support at the time to reintegrate to their workplaces, and some worked in environments that were not conducive to change.

### 1.1.2 Economic and Public Diplomacy Outcomes

While Nepal Case Study alumni participants provided some good examples of collaboration and partnerships developed between Australia and Nepal, many of the networks that underpinned past collaboration had elapsed as the years passed and alumni retired. The most significant examples of impact regarding the long-term economic and public diplomacy outcomes of the Australia Awards were:

- the establishment of the **250-member Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia (ANAA)** in 1998 by a core group of alumni, which has maintained links between alumni and Australians in Nepal
- the work and achievements of ANAA including plans to commemorate Australia-Nepal relations
- **the environment network fostered by Ms Neeta Pokhrel** which has resulted in sourcing Australian utilities staff to work on Asian Development Bank (ADB) funded programs
- **the work of Australian Embassy staff and alumni** in fostering positive diplomatic relations via the Australia Awards
- **the Australian academic network of Dr Prakash Pant**, who now has permanent family links to Australia.

Some of the factors that enabled alumni to maintain networks and foster partnerships and collaboration between Australia and Nepal included ANAA; most alumni interviewed for this Case Study were members and active within the organisation; the course they studied, some of which were more conducive to building strong networks; and the sector in which they worked, two of which provided stronger foundations to build partnerships, namely development and academia.

The factors that challenged alumni to maintain networks and foster partnerships and collaboration were: the lack of support in Australia to build relationships due to the demands of the course or lack of opportunity provided by the institution; the time elapsed since studying in Australia; and the divergent views on the appropriate role and services

that could be provided by ANAA. Some alumni reported that an audit or survey of alumni member needs and capacity would be useful to consolidate views.

### 1.1.3 Views about Australian and Australian expertise

All alumni in the Nepal Case Study reported positive views of Australia and Australian expertise, providing evidence that **this long-term outcome of the Australia Awards has been achieved.**

Alumni's views about Australia were derived from multiple sources and only a few held preconceived views based on prior experience or word of mouth. Some alumni maintained or transmitted their positive views through ongoing contact with Australians or as part of their role in the workplace.

The positive views held by alumni inspired them to act in their workplace or community to share their knowledge or expertise. The major outcomes of these actions were changed workplace practices and policies and the establishment of ANAA.

The main factors that enabled the formation of these positive views were:

- **positive academic experiences**, and in particular, on arrival support via bridging courses
- **experiential learning** which transformed alumni resulting in long held positive views and memories
- **family support in Australia and positive views of the generous allowances** provided by the Australian Government.

### 1.1.4 Impact of Australia Awards on addressing equity issues

Case Study participants described the Nepal context as characterised by pervasive cultural and systemic barriers preventing the full participation in society by disadvantaged groups. Australia Awards play a small part in a broader program of change required to address issues of equity in Nepal. However some positive signs of progress exist, such as the increased participation of women in government. However, alumni reported that support is needed to ensure that women who are fast tracked into government are supported to succeed.

**There were no alumni with disability available to participate in this Case Study.**

Case Study researchers were advised that the focus on disability has only eventuated in the past five years and there were simply no Australian scholarship alumni with disability more than 20 years ago.

**The barriers that people with disability face to full participation in society were described by Case Study participants as attitudinal, cultural and systemic.**

Disability inclusiveness is an emerging area in Nepal and while policies and legislation is in place, many reported that is yet to be enacted.

Only three female alumnae participated in the Nepal Case Study. **All of them provided strong examples of how the Australia Awards have positively impacted their career** and provided them with the confidence to challenge discriminatory practices and behaviour.

One of the unique features of the Nepal Case Study is that **alumni themselves have acted to address issues of equity in various ways.** These included:



- **establishing the first active autism support organisation in Nepal**, connecting parents and those living with autism with services and treatment
- **leading the provision of health services for rural women**, and services and support for children with disability through non-government organisations (NGOs)

Some of the factors that enabled the Australia Awards to address issues of equity were: targeted programs that identified women working in particular industries; alumni's depth of knowledge and understanding about equity issues; and the generous family support provided to alumni via their Australian scholarship.

Some of the factors that challenged alumni and in turn the Australia Awards in addressing equity issues were: gender bias and discrimination experienced by alumna regarding their expertise; bias regarding the appropriate role of women in Nepalese society; and the health requirements for Australian visas which disadvantage many Nepali citizens.

## 2. Background of the Study

The Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (the Facility) is a four-year project funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) which is designed to assess the development contributions and economic and public diplomacy outcomes of Australia's investment in the Australia Awards. The key research and reporting activities being undertaken are a quantitative survey and qualitative Case Studies, which are prepared concurrently throughout the four years of the project.

This report provides the key findings of the Nepal Case Study, which was undertaken in March 2017, the last of four Case Studies completed during the first year of the Facility.

### 2.1 Objectives

The Facility seeks to generate high-quality information on former scholarship holders, with a focus on less recent alumni. This information will provide a strong evidence base for country programs and the Australia Awards and Alumni Branch (AWB) of DFAT to evaluate the impact of Australia Awards on alumni and, by implication, on their home institutions and countries.

### 2.2 Scope

The scope of the Facility is limited to alumni of DFAT's Australia Awards and previous DFAT-funded scholarships programs, awards, and fellowships (managed by AWB).

### 2.3 Case Studies

The Case Studies are being conducted via an iterative approach whereby the qualitative phase can be designed based on what is learned from the initial quantitative phase.

The Facility Case Study methodology is explanatory and multiple in design. That is, cases are selected based on findings from the quantitative (survey) research, and the 'how' and 'why' of alumni experiences is explained in detail. Multiple Case Studies enable the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. Case Studies contribute to the evidence base for country programs, providing useful comparison across cases to build a robust understanding of diverse alumni experience.

#### 2.3.1 Year 1 of the Facility

In this first year of the Facility, however, Case Study countries and themes were based on criteria such as availability and range of alumni details in the centralised database; previous country or thematic research undertaken; investment priorities, and partner-country priorities. **The cohort for Year 1 Case Studies comprises alumni who graduated between 1955 and 1995.** Case Studies provide useful vignettes and quotes to build an understanding of alumni experiences. In Year 1, the selected Case Study countries are Fiji, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Nepal. Field research took place between late October 2016 and March 2017.

### 2.3.2 Years 2 through 4

Subsequent Case Studies in Years 2 through 4 will be determined through the annual planning process. Case Studies will not be limited to geographic foci, and may be sectoral or regional as determined through findings of the annual survey and planning and consultation process. Case Studies will also align with the Australia Awards Australia Awards Global Strategy: Investing in the next generation of global leaders for development 2016-2018 (the Global Strategy) and the Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework priorities and any other areas of importance as identified by AWB.

## 2.4 Country context

Nepal has committed to nearly sixty years of planned development, and despite recurring political instability and significant natural disaster events, the Government of Nepal has set itself the ambitious target of improving its status of 'least-developed nation' to 'developing nation' by 2022 (National Planning Commission, 2013: p. i). Through concerted effort, Nepal has halved the percentage of people living on less than USD \$1.25 a day within a seven year period, reducing the rate from 53 per cent in 2003/2004 to 25 per cent in 2010/2011. This progress has continued, in addition to improvements in education, health and gender (World Bank, 2017).

A transitioning federal democracy, Nepal has experienced significant upheaval since the 1990s when it transitioned to a multiparty democratic system for a second time. A series of coups by King Gyanendra and civil conflict with the insurgent group CPN-Maoist (CPN (M)) undermined the democratic efforts at the time (Hachhethu, Kumar & Subedi, 2008; pp. 2–3). In 2006, mass protests known as Jana Andolan II involving an estimated 3 to 4 million Nepalis led to the conclusion of civil conflict with CPN(M). As part of the agreement, this group was inducted as a mainstream political party (2008; p. 1). This cessation was followed by the 2008 national elections which signalled Nepal's transition to a federal democratic republic.

More recently, efforts have been made to decentralise governmental structures to improve governance, resulting in the 2017 local government election, the first since 1997. However, Nepal continues to face challenges in poverty, education quality and access, job creation, and economic growth (National Planning Commission, 2013) (DFAT, 2017).

Nepal was selected as a Case Study for Year 1 due to, 1) the significant number of alumni from this country working in governance and public policy, and 2) the alignment with partner-country priorities in human resource capacity development (National Planning Commission, 1992).

## 3. Methodology

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Case Study design, development and implementation. The Nepal Case Study is the fourth Case Study in the Facility's first year. Nepal was one of four Case Study countries proposed in the Facility Annual Plan. It was accepted by the Facility Advisory Committee on the basis of having sufficiently large numbers of alumni who had studied in Australia between the years 1955-1995 in the investment priority area of public policy. In addition, there was a lack of previous research in Nepal regarding less recent alumni.

### 3.1 Overall Case Study design

The purpose of the Facility Case Studies is to collect detailed qualitative data on the impact and benefits of the Australia Awards and predecessor scholarship programs. The Case Study methodology is based upon Robert Yin's recommended approach, as described in 'Case Study Research: Design and Methods' (Yin, 2003). The Global Strategy and the Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (DFAT, 2016a) forms the basis for the Case Study design. The propositions, questions, data, and report template are built around this Global Strategy. Findings reported by alumni are triangulated with relevant stakeholders such as employers and colleagues, and industry bodies, thereby strengthening findings by providing further evidence to support or refute propositions.

This methodology was developed by the Facility team and AWB. The overarching theory that has guided the design of this Case Study methodology is based upon the goal of the Australia Awards that '... partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests'. The Case Study research questions are as follows:

1. How do alumni use the skills, knowledge and networks gained on award to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals?
2. How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia's economic and public diplomacy outcomes?
3. How has being an Australian Awards alumni impacted alumni?
4. Are the benefits of receiving a scholarship experienced equally by all groups who have received them?

The primary unit of analysis for this Case Study is the individual alumnus or alumna. Case Studies seek to explore how alumni of Australia Awards have acted to contribute to the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Australia Awards.

### 3.2 Methods

The data collection method used for this Case Study was key participant interviews. A set of questions was developed for each key participant group, namely alumni, colleagues and employers (both of alumni and generally); alumni associations; and the Australian Government staff and managing contractors working on the Australia Awards

in partner countries. Questions for each key participant group align with the research propositions (located at Annex 1) and long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards. This ensures that data collected directly relate to the key questions the Case Study is seeking to answer, and that there is consistency across each Case Study.

### 3.3 Sample

Case Studies in the first year of the Facility focus on alumni who studied in Australia between 1955–1995. The Global Alumni database included a total of 549 alumni from Nepal; 325 male and 224 female. From this group, a total of 144 aligned with the cohort focus, and 34 aligned with both the cohort and the sector focus. There were current contact details available for 10 alumni from this group. Of those 10, six alumni responded to emails and or phone calls requesting an interview and agreed to participate in this Case Study. An additional three were identified via other alumni, the Australia Awards Nepal office, and other general online searches. One of these general searches unearthed details for **Ms Neeta Pokhrel**, the only alumna residing outside Nepal. None of the alumni were reported to be (or self-reported) living with disability.

**Table 1: Nepal Case Study alumni participants**

Name	Gender	Years	Australian Government Scholarship	Position	Urban/Rural
Ms Neeta Pokhrel	F	1993-97	Development	Senior Urban Planning /WASH Specialist ADB (Nepal and India)	R*
Ms Geeta Shrestha	F	1996-97	Development	Retired Previously Air Traffic Controller, Chief Rating and Licencing Division	U
Dr Prakesh Pant	M	1988-89 1991-95	Development	Chairperson and Senior Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Adviser MITRA Samaj Consultant (Development Projects)	U
Dr Ram Hari Aryal	M	1988-90 1991-94	Development	Retired Former Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Founder, ANAA	U
Mr Arjun Mainali	M	1994-95	Development	Retired Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	U
Dr Kabiraj Khanal	M	1993-95	AIDAB	Retired Joint Secretary, Government of Nepal Ministry of Health (and various) Founding member ANAA	U
Mr Achyutra Sharma	M	1991-92	Development	Retired Government employee Consultant (Development Projects) Founding Member ANAA	U
Mr Rudra Nepal	M	1993	Development	Former Ambassador to Australia (2012-2016)	U

Name	Gender	Years	Australian Government Scholarship	Position	Urban/Rural
Mrs Bindu Mishra	F	1994-96	Development	Under-Secretary of the Government of Nepal, District Forest Officer, Baglung	R

\*Currently based in Manila, previously from Dharan in southern Nepal prior to accepting a scholarship

\*\*Follow up interview conducted by the Australia Awards office.

The total number of nine alumni participants exceeded the target number of six to seven per Case Study. As only one alum proposed an employer to be interviewed, the research team increase the number of alumni and other key stakeholder interviews to gather further contextual data. These additional interviews provided further insight into alumni perspectives and the impact of the Australian scholarships on the outcomes for Nepal and Australia. A total of 16 interviews (with 17 participants) were conducted for the Nepal Case Study, as detailed Table 2.

**Table 2: Key stakeholder and employer/colleague interviews**

Date	Name	Position	Reason for Interview
13/03	Mr Sekhar Bonu	Director, Urban Development and Water Division, Asian Development Bank	Manager of Ms Pokhrel (Australian scholarship alumna)
27/03	Ms Ainsley Hemming	Second Secretary, Development Cooperation of the Australian Embassy	Key stakeholder (DFAT)
28/3	Mr Sandesh Shrestha	N/A	Son of Mrs Shrestha, alumna
28/03	Mr Rishi Ram Tripathi	General Secretary, Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia (ANAA)	Mr Tripathi is General Secretary of the Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia
30/03	Mr Khyam Bahadur B.K.	Program Officer – Nepal Scope Global	Key stakeholder (Australia Awards)
30/03	Ms Sunita Gurang Gaurav Katwal	Program Manager, Australia Awards, Volunteers and Humanitarian Australian Embassy, Kathmandu Country Program Manager – Nepal Scope Global	Key stakeholder (DFAT) Key stakeholder (Australia Awards)
30/03	Dr Sunita Maleku Amatya	President, Autism Care Nepal Society	Provided insight into psychosocial/developmental disabilities and their effect on career. Dr Maleku also received an Australia Awards Short Course Award (SCA) in 2016
31/03	Ms Tara D Gurung	Director – Development Policy and Programs, Australian Embassy, Kathmandu	Key stakeholder (DFAT) and provided insight into how gender impacts career in Nepal

### 3.4 Exclusions

All Case Study alumni were selected from the Global Alumni database, which only includes those who have successfully completed their degree. Accordingly, this study excludes anyone who did not complete their scholarship.

### 3.5 Data collection

All Case Study instruments were piloted with Australia Awards alumni who currently reside in Australia. This process validated the instruments and allowed adaptations to be made to some of the questions. In addition, an interview guide was developed for researchers to record collected data. This Case Study was conducted by Ms Rachel Parker, Senior Research Fellow, and Ms Amanda Taylor, Research Officer, core Facility staff who bring relevant expertise in qualitative research and international development. Case Study researchers worked together in pairs to undertake data collection and report writing: one conducted the interview and the other recorded and took notes. This enabled high-quality reliable data to be gathered. At the conclusion of interviews, the researchers discussed and verified the data to ensure completeness and accuracy. Alumni also provided curriculum vitae to the researchers for further background information.

### 3.6 Process

The Case Study field research was undertaken in Nepal from 27 March to 1 April 2017. A total of 16 interviews were conducted with 17 participants, comprising: nine alumni; one employer; two DFAT staff members; two staff members from the managing contractor, Scope Global; one alumni association representative; one disability specialist, and one gender and development specialist. Fifteen of these interviews were voice recorded. The interview with **Dr Sunita Maleku** was not recorded due to the informal interview setting and presence of significant background noise, so detailed notes were taken and provided to Dr Maleku for review.

The researchers faced difficulty in arranging one alumni interview (**Mrs Bindu Mishra**, based in Baglung, in Province 4, Western Nepal). A face-to-face interview was scheduled in Pokhara for 31 March, however flights to Pokhara on that day were cancelled due to inclement weather, and the research team were scheduled to depart the following day. A phone interview was conducted from Kathmandu and voice recorded, however the telecommunications quality was poor and the resulting data was insufficient to proceed.

As the team were committed to including alumni located in cities outside main urban centres, the researchers asked staff from the Australia Awards office in Kathmandu to conduct a follow up phone call interview with Mrs Mishra. This was conducted on Monday 29 May by **Mr Khyam Bishwokarma**, Program Officer, Australia Awards managing contractor. The map of Nepal (Figure 1) highlights the Baglung, Pokhara, Kathmandu and Dharan areas (circled in red).





**Figure 1: Map of Nepal**

### 3.7 Data management and reporting

All interviews bar one were voice recorded (with prior approval obtained). In addition, the second Case Study researcher annotated responses during the interview. All interview recordings were subsequently transcribed by a transcription specialist. After the completion of the interview and transcription process, the Case Study researchers consolidated the written and oral recordings into a denaturalised transcription (with breaks in speech, sentence restarting, and fillers excluded). The denaturalised transcription is flowing and easy to read and focuses on what is said over how it is said.

### 3.8 Transcription approval, coding and analysis

Transcript review by participants is sometimes used in qualitative research as a courtesy, and to ensure the validity of the data and avoid errors. The Case Study participants were advised they would be given the opportunity to review the transcript to confirm the content and clarify and/or add further input. However, they were not required to undertake this review as they had already granted their permission for their data to be used in developing the Case Study.

Completed interview transcripts and notes were sent to each of the Case Study participants for their review and approval. The researchers provided ample time for the participants to respond and sent follow up requests. Five of the nine alumni provided feedback on the transcripts, offering minor edits and clarifications of names. In addition, four of the eight key stakeholders reviewed and provided comments on their transcripts.

The non-response from the remaining alumni was attributed to a lack of time to review the text (up to 15 pages), given their high ranking roles, and responses to follow up requests confirmed this situation. The Nepal Case Study cohort includes alumni with significant demands on their time.

Interview scripts were coded in a template in accordance with the research questions



and propositions. This enabled emerging themes to be identified and links made between participants that supported or refuted the research propositions.

The data was then analysed by comparing coded alumni and key stakeholder transcripts and collating themes that emerged across experiences as they related to the research questions, propositions, and the long-term outcomes of the Global Strategy. When a number of alumni reported a particular experience or factor that enabled or challenged them in contributing to the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards, this was earmarked as a theme to explore the relationships between the data, propositions and research questions. This process was conducted over three days of workshops.

### 3.9 Limitations

A number of limitations of this research were inherent to both the nature of the research and the research process.

#### 3.9.1 Positive response bias/no choice sample

Alumni who felt that, overall, they had a positive experience as an Australian Government scholarship recipient and/or have met the expectations of receiving an award during their career progress were more likely to agree to participate in Case Studies. This phenomena is described frequently in scholarships tracer study research as documented in an audit conducted by the Facility of previous Australia Awards research.

Accordingly, the sample of alumni in the Nepal Case Study was biased towards those who had positive experiences and achievements to share. However, the Case Study team endeavoured to address this imbalance by including a range of alumni through avoiding leading questions, and offering alumni opportunities to reflect on their outcomes at the beginning and at the end of the interview without specific questions to guide their answers.

Further, the Nepal Case Study alumni are generally those who responded to the request for interview. Effort was made to ensure that both males and females were represented in this cohort, however the majority of alumni who agreed to participate in this study are Brahmin males who live and work in Kathmandu. This is perhaps indicative of this era where the female scholarship candidate pool from the Government of Nepal was very limited.

#### 3.9.2 Alignment with Australia Awards goal and outcomes

Outcome 1 of the Global Strategy is that 'alumni are using the skills, knowledge and networks gained on award to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals'. However, some alumni have shaped development goals rather than contributed to them. So, while it may be outside the purview of partner-country development goals that this research is being evaluated against, such contributions are still significant.

The Case Study researchers experienced difficulty in evaluating Outcome 2 'alumni are contributing to *cooperation* between Australia and partner countries', and Outcome 3 'effective, mutually advantageous *partnerships* between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries'. These two outcomes are aligned with the second research question for the Case Study 'How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia's economic and public diplomacy outcomes?' The research team managed the overlap between 'cooperation' and 'partnerships' by determining that

Outcome 2 relates to *people-to-people links* including informal relationships whereas Outcome 3 specifically relates to *institutional links* between the partner-country and Australia, which alumni have contributed to establishing.

No issues were encountered by the research team in collecting, collating, coding or analysing data related to Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards.

### **3.9.3 Alignment with partner-country development goals**

The ability to code the interview transcripts depended on understanding partner-country development goals, and this was not always possible. Researchers involved in the Case Study made concerted attempts to identify relevant secondary data such as policy documents, papers, books and digital resources to provide background and insight into development plans, policies and changes over more than 20 years from when these alumni commenced their scholarship and the present day. Of particular relevance were current country development goals articulated as objectives by DFAT.

## 4. Development Outcomes

### Summary Findings

**Alumni have used their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving Nepal's development goals in the areas of governance and public policy.**

Although spread across a number of sectors, the alumni in this case study are able to provide clear examples of their contribution to national development including through **policy** and **project development and implementation** in their respective fields.

#### Enabling factors

- Skills and knowledge gained in Australia have longevity
- Alumni developed practical skills which have proved valuable in their careers
- Studying in Australia provided opportunities to practice skills in the workplace
- Alumni developed valuable transferable skills
- Alumni have expertise and are recognised as experts as a result of studying in Australia
- Alumni possess particular characteristics and attributes that underpin their success.

#### Challenging factors

- Alumni lacked support for reintegration due to transfers and political instability
- Alumni returned to work environments that were not conducive to change.
- The potential impact of scholarships could be weakened by alumni migration as a result of a limited job market in Nepal.

### 4.1 Background

Chapter 4 includes findings on whether alumni have used their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals. This is a topic of strategic interest, not only for Australia and partner countries, but scholarship stakeholders globally; as the literature finds that many of these entities view international scholarships as an effective mechanism for delivering development objectives (Abimbola et al., 2016; Chesterfield & Dant, 2013; Day, Stackhouse, & Geddes, 2009).

In Australia, human resource capacity training including Australian scholarships has been part of the development assistance program to Nepal since 1979 (Embassy of Nepal, 2017). During the 1990s when alumni in this Case Study received their awards, Nepal underwent a series of changes following the restoration of a multiparty democracy in 1990 which signalled the end of absolute monarchical rule.

To determine Nepal's development priorities during the period 1990–1995 when alumni in this Case Study undertook their scholarships, the main documents referenced are the Eighth Periodic Plan (1992–1997), the Seventh Periodic Plan (1985–1990), and the 'Year Book Australia' by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for 1990, 1991, and 1992. Each of these plans includes a focus on training and capacity development for public

service employees. The Government of Nepal described public sector human resource development as necessary for the achievement of national development plans. Similarly, the Australian government prioritised public sector human resource development assistance as important to support the Government of Nepal to achieve its economic and social advancement goals.

This background information contextualises the fact that most Australia Awards alumni during the focus years of 1955-1995 were working in the governance and public policy sector, and explains the focus of this sector in the Nepal Case Study.

Interviews with Nepal Case Study alumni also revealed that this sector includes those working in the development sector, in addition to those working in the civil service.

The area of governance and public policy human resource capacity development was used as a framework to code and then analyse the data obtained from alumni, employers and stakeholders. Specifically, information they provided was used to support or refute the following propositions and underlying assumptions.

1. Alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals.
  - a. alumni develop skills, knowledge and networks on award that enable and are used to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals; and
  - b. alumni understand, value and want to contribute to partner-country development goals.

This chapter presents evidence that alumni have used their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals in the areas of governance and public policy. It then outlines the factors that both enabled and challenged alumni in contributing to the achievement of these goals.

## 4.2 Alumni contributions

A unique aspect of the Nepal Case Study is that it does not focus on a singular field of study unlike the other first year Facility Case Studies, namely: education in Fiji, engineering in Sri Lanka, and agriculture in Kenya. For all Case Studies, the cohort focus is guided by partner-country development priorities, and reflected in the field of study where the majority of scholarships are awarded. Initial analysis of the Nepal cohort showed alumni were spread across a vast range of fields of study with no clear majority linking with development priorities.

In contrast, there was a clear majority of scholarships awarded to alumni categorised as 'governance and public policy'. As a result, alumni have worked in various sectors and do not provide the same examples of contributions to development by sector that occurs from analysing alumni by field of study. The alumni in this Case Study however, still **provide strong examples of contribution to national development**, which fall under the following themes according to job function, or sectoral/ thematic area of focus:

- General administrators
- Specialists
- Demography

- Foreign affairs and trade
- Forestry
- Civil aviation
- Environmental engineering

All alumni bar one in this Case Study received their awards while employed by the Nepal Civil Service. The exception is **Ms Neeta Pokhrel**, who received her award through open competition as a high school graduate, and has since worked in the private sector and currently for the Asian Development Bank.

#### 4.2.1 General administrators

Civil servants in Nepal are typically generalists in term of expertise and job function. This system allows for frequent staff transfers. Both **Mr Achyutraj Sharma** and **Mr Kabiraj Khanal** have served in a number of different ministries and as a result have contributed to the development of Nepal across a variety of areas.

Mr Khanal undertook a Master of Demography at Australian National University (ANU) from 1993 to 1995, and served as a government employee for close to 32 years, retiring in January 2016. During this time, Mr Khanal led the Geographic Information System (GIS) surveying for two years while serving as Under Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP). In addition, as Joint Secretary for the Ministry of Information and Communication, Mr Khanal formulated and guided policy development. **He attributes his ability to contribute to the critical and lateral thinking and English language skills he developed on award in Australia.**

Mr Sharma undertook a Master of Development Administration at ANU from 1991 to 1992 and held varying posts such as the Deputy Permanent Representative (Commerce) for the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations (UN) and other international organisations in Geneva. After his final post within the Department of Women's Development, Mr Sharma carried forward the knowledge he gained regarding significant health concerns affecting women and focused specifically on addressing the high mortality rate of cervical cancer in Nepal. This issue ranks as the most frequent cancer among women in Nepal, and the most frequent cancer among women between 15 and 44 year of age (ICO Information Centre on HPV and Cancer, 2017).

Since retiring four years ago, Mr Sharma is currently advocating, raising awareness and providing services to rural women for cervical cancer screening. Mr Sharma currently works for the NGO Nepal Natural and Human Resources Development Association (NAHUDA) as General-Secretary. So far with NAHUDA, Mr Sharma and his team have provided cervical cancer screening services to 220,000 women. In addition, Mr Sharma is the General Secretary of the NGO Disabled Newlife Center (DNC) in Kathmandu. The Center is dedicated to assisting children with disability throughout Nepal to receive medical treatment and support, and access to education. **Mr Sharma's contributions reflect his stated passion for social work which he has been immersed in following his retirement.**

#### 4.2.2 Specialists

##### Demography

**Dr Ramhari Aryal** and **Dr Prakash Pant** were both awarded Australian scholarships to

undertake a Master of Demography at ANU at around the same time in the late 1980s. Following this, Dr Aryal was supported by the Australian Government to undertake his doctorate in Demography at the University of Adelaide and completed his thesis titled: '*The onset of fertility decline in urban Nepal: A study of Kathmandu City*'. Similarly, Dr Pant also completed a doctorate in Demography at ANU focusing on '*Infant and child mortality in Nepal: socio economic, demographic and cultural factors*'. **Upon return to Nepal, Dr Aryal and Dr Pant have contributed significantly to development planning and policy in Nepal working with government ministries, UN agencies, and international non-government organisation (INGOs).**

Based on his expert knowledge of population and the central role it plays in ministerial planning, **Dr Aryal successfully advocated for the establishment of a Ministry of Population and Environment in 1995** while working in the Parliamentary Secretariat. Throughout his career with the Nepal civil service, Dr Aryal has made significant high level contributions to government in policy and development planning. This includes initiating the national population policy for the Ministry of Population and Environment to improve coordination between ministries and departments to better utilise population information in planning.

During his career, Dr Aryal has also undertaken the roles of Joint Secretary in the National Planning Commission Secretariat (NPC), and contributed to the development of the Population Perspective Plan (PPP) 2010 – 2031 while working in the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) (First National Population Conference 2014, p.7). A key purpose of the PPP is to guide the formulation and implementation of population policies, as population is a crucial development variable. Dr Aryal has been advocating this throughout his career to ensure development planning reflects the characteristics of Nepal's population.

Prior to his award, Dr Pant was a lecturer in research, teaching management at Tribhuvan University. Following the completion of his doctorate degree in Australia, Dr Pant returned to his position as lecturer and began teaching demography. Dr Pant described the transferral of knowledge and skills to his students, many of whom are now working in the UK, USA, Japan, and in high-level positions in Nepal, as the contribution he has made to the development of Nepal. Furthermore, Dr Pant has undertaken numerous roles in technical research for UN agencies and programs such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP/UNFBA), and research institutes such as the London School of Hygiene. He attributes his access to these opportunities as being due to the skills he developed in Australia. Dr Pant has also supported a number Nepal Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) as a consultant for the MoHP.

#### **Foreign affairs and trade**

**Mr Rudra Nepal** and **Mr Arjun Kant Mainali** are former officers of the Nepal Ministry of Foreign Affairs who both participated in a tertiary Foreign Affairs and Trade course offered in partnership between ANU and DFAT. The Postgraduate Diploma and Master Degree in Foreign Affairs and Trade course was designed for both DFAT staff and members of other national Foreign Service ministries to attend concurrently. Following completion of their courses in Australia in 1993 and 1995 respectively, both Mr Nepal and Mr Mainali went on to represent Nepal in a number foreign postings.

Mr Nepal resumed his post back in Nepal in 1994 and began working in the South Asia



Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) focusing on trade and economic issues for the country of Nepal. He stated that in this role he was **immediately able to implement the practical knowledge he developed on award in trade promotion**. Mr Nepal is Nepal's immediate past Ambassador to Australia from 2012 to 2016. It was in this role that Mr Nepal reported being able to make his most significant contribution, particularly in fostering people-to-people links as an advocate of the Australian education system to Nepali students considering studying abroad.

Mr Nepal occupied a critical role as Nepal's representative during the April 2015 Nepal/Gorkha earthquake, assisting with the coordination of assistance from the Nepali diaspora and Australian community. Mr Nepal's contributions as a foreign diplomat, creating links across trade, aid, and diplomacy reflects Nepal's development priority of building relationships in the region for economic development and partnerships (National Planning Commission, 2013).

Mr Mainali also had a very successful career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to retiring in 2015, Mr Mainali occupied positions including Chief of Protocol, and established the Nepal Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka which consolidated Nepal - Sri Lankan diplomatic relations. Importantly, Mr Mainali was selected as the Special Representative of the Foreign Ministry for the Welfare of the Nepalese Living in Iraq to **assist citizens trapped in ISIS occupied Mosul in 2014 and lacking legal documentation to safely exit the country. Eleven Nepali citizens working in Iraq were successfully extracted as a result of Mr Mainali's efforts**. The successful conclusion of this incident was significant and reported widely.

In contrast, in 2004, 12 Nepalese were taken hostage and killed by the militant group Army of Ansar al-Sunna while crossing the border into Iraq. The sentiment at the time was that the Government of Nepal had not done enough to protect its citizens (BBC News, 2004, Keshab Poudel, 2014). Despite a longstanding ban restricting Nepali citizens from going abroad to conflict-affected countries including Iraq, many continue to go due to attractive employment opportunities that outweigh the limited opportunities in Nepal. An unofficial estimate in 2014 stated that around 10,000 Nepalese were working in Iraq, with half located in the Kurdish province (Mainali, 2014). With no embassy representation in Iraq, Nepali citizens face limited support when conflict escalates. **With the successful conclusion of the 2014 incident, Mr Mainali positively represented Nepal on the world stage, demonstrating an effective and competent government able to represent citizens in difficult situations.**

#### Forestry support

**Mrs Bindu Mishra** is an Under-Secretary of the Government of Nepal, serving as a District Forest Officer at the District Forest Office in Baglung in Western Nepal. In this leadership role, Mrs Mishra represents one of the 75 districts in Nepal and is responsible for 69 staff. Her primary responsibilities include the management of the district forest area including supporting, monitoring and evaluating the community-managed forest areas, and managing foreign investment projects. Mrs Mishra's award to study forestry was part of Australia's ongoing human resource capacity development directed at the forestry sector (DFAT, 2017), and support's Nepal's ongoing priority and objectives in sustainable forestry management, particularly as forest areas consist of 39.6% of total land area in Nepal. Of this area, an approximate 1,664,918 hectares are under the protection, management, and utilisation of 17,808 community forest users' groups, which

Mrs Mishra plays a role in supporting (National Planning Commission, 2013, pp. 60–61).

### Civil aviation

**Mrs Geeta Shrestha** was awarded an Australian scholarship to undertake a Master of Logistics Management, focusing on organisational behaviour for her role as an Air Traffic Controller at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) in Kathmandu. Mrs Shrestha learned key principles which she put into practice in her workplace. As a result, she strengthened communication skills incorporating the notion of ‘the right information at the right time’ which changed the way her team provided information to pilots. From the knowledge she developed on award, Mrs Shrestha introduced new practices in the Air Traffic Control (ATC) unit, guiding the team to provide precise and concise information by calculating and communicating to the pilots the time delays for take-off and landing. **As a result, pilot stress and radio frequency congestion were reduced, and the relationship between the ATC and the pilots was improved.**

Fundamentally, Mrs Shrestha internalised the lessons she learned in organisational behaviour at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) that ‘everyone in the organisation is an asset’. Ethically-oriented, Mrs Shrestha changed the culture and practices of the Rating and Licensing Division when she became Chief. She introduced new testing procedures whereby air traffic controllers would not be unnecessarily questioned during their tests, and feedback was promptly provided for those who did not pass. She established protocols for resitting tests, and the required process became more transparent and fair. **As a result of these changes, trust, enjoyment, and efficiency within the ATC was increased, and absenteeism reduced.**

In addition, Mrs Shrestha felt empowered by the skills and knowledge she had acquired on award, which enabled her to take responsibility and use initiative to assume a leadership role and make critical decisions when needed. Mrs Shrestha described one such incident as one of her career highlights, when an international aircraft scheduled to land at TIA was repeatedly diverted due to inclement weather. No single person was available to guide Mrs Shrestha’s decision making at the time. However, she rose to the challenge and took sole responsibility to collate all information required to guide the landing of the aircraft. **Mrs Shrestha acknowledged her Australian education in this situation; her leadership and problem solving skills, and ability to weigh up the pros and cons of various actions and anticipate the result.**

This example positively reflects the investment made by Australia in assisting Nepal to develop its civil aviation capacity. Mrs Shrestha’s scholarship coincided with the AUD \$9 million investment by Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (ADAIB) (now DFAT) to support improvements to this sector. This project aimed to assist landlocked Nepal, where safe and reliable air transport was identified as a development priority, to support tourism, which accounted for one third of Nepal’s foreign exchange earnings, in addition to trade that is air freighted (Bilney, 1993). Accordingly, Mrs Shrestha’s contributions clearly align with partner development objectives.

### Environmental engineering

Working for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a Senior Urban Development Specialist with a focus on water supply sanitation, **Ms Pokhrel’s** projects were described by her director, **Mr Sekhar Bonu** as being ‘**some of the best designed and executed, [where] the benefits to the beneficiaries are much better**’. Since completing her scholarship to study a Bachelor of Environmental Engineering from the RMIT, Ms



Pokhrel has worked in a number of countries, including Australia. The time spent working in Australia enabled her to see how the theory she learned in green construction practices and ecologically sustainable development (ESD) could be applied in a developed country context. Taking both the knowledge and experiences she gained through studying and working in Australia, she has made significant contributions to sustainable development in both Nepal and India. **Ms Pokhrel is proud to have contributed to designing and executing the Third Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project which provides access to water and sanitation for 1.7 million people across 70 towns in Nepal**, and leading the Kolkata (India) Environmental Improvement Investment Program to improve the water and sanitation system for about 5 million people.

### 4.3 Key enabling factors

#### 4.3.1 Skills and knowledge gained in Australia have longevity

A significant key enabling factor in achieving Outcome 4 of the Australia Awards is the longevity and continued relevancy of the skills and knowledge alumni gained in Australia. All alumni in this Case Study described the value of their skills and knowledge over the life of their careers in various roles. **In a number cases, through possessing these skills, alumni's careers have been extended beyond the civil service mandatory retirement age of 58. Mr Sharma, Mr Khanal, Dr Pant, and Dr Aryal** have all continued to work in various capacities as consultants, board directors and volunteers in their respective fields. In stating how his scholarship instigated the career trajectory he followed, Dr Pant stated:

They [the masters degree and PhD] gave me [a] foundation/basis, and that basis was the entry point, the gate. Once I entered the gate I saw a lot of opportunities and I started learning. I didn't know about GIS [geographic information system]. Now I am doing GIS studies. I didn't know about the Human Development Index and other things, there were four or five human development indices from 1998 to 2000. I was the technical person calculating all these things.

Dr Pant now works with local NGO, MITRA (Measures for Intervention Training Research and Action) Samaj, as Chairperson and Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor, and consultant on donor country and UN projects.

This finding regarding longevity of skills and knowledge extends the impact of the investment made by Australia through scholarships to assist partner-country development priorities. The benefit for the Government of Nepal is that their valuable human resource is still active beyond the (relatively young) retirement age, and alumni are continuing to contribute to national development regardless of their age. This also supports the priority articulated by the Government of Nepal in the Thirteenth Development Plan (National Planning Commission 2013, pp. 107 – 108) in human resource development with the following objective:

To maintain a balance between the demand and supply of human resources by developing efficient and skilled human resources that can compete in national and international markets.

To achieve this, the following operating policy is given: 'The knowledge, skills, and experiences of retired government employees will be utilised for nation-building.' The

alumni in this Case Study who have continued to work after formally retiring demonstrate the value and longevity of their skills and knowledge developed on award that can be leveraged for development projects and Australia Awards alumni activities. **As a result there is a significant return on investment for both DFAT and the Government of Nepal in the training provided through scholarships.**

#### **4.3.2 Alumni developed practical skills which provided valuable in their careers**

Alumni commonly described one of the benefits of Australian tertiary education as the ability to develop both theoretical and practical skills and knowledge.

Alumni stated that the combination of theory and practice was a focus in their previous tertiary studies in Nepal, and education in Australia provided deeper learning for Mr Khanal, Mr Mainali, Dr Pant, and Mr Nepal. Mr Nepal shared his comparative understanding of the different styles of tertiary education stating that:

I also had studied economics in Nepal, but the way the universities are run here, studying in Nepal and studying in Australia was very, very, different...So, after studying in Australia, I could learn the more practical side of trade and economic relations and things like that. [Such as how] to promote trade...You have to have knowledge and the market research, things like that are important. Unless you know that, you can't just talk about trade promotion – if you are producing things in this country without matching the requirement of the needs of the other countries, then how can you promote trade? So those kinds of practical things were important and those kinds of things we learned when we studied in Australia.

Dr Pant shared that the theory driven and exam oriented system in Nepal 'didn't teach you how you are going to apply your education in practical situations'. In contrast, he felt that the practical orientation was a strength of his Australian education as he learned how to apply his knowledge and skills.

Alumni reported that the benefit of the approach to learning in the Australia tertiary education system for them was the improvement in the quality of their performance and advice in their government roles.

#### **4.3.3 Studying in Australia provided opportunities to practice skills in the workplace**

Two alumni in this Case Study pointed to the benefit of work opportunities while studying which enabled them to readily apply the skills and knowledge gained in Australia upon return to Nepal. This was particularly important for Ms Pokhrel as the field of environmental engineering was emerging at that time. Working in Australia enabled her to learn from best practice and use the latest technology which would not have been available to her if she had immediately returned to Nepal post award.

This deep and embedded learning through professional work in Australia also enabled knowledge to be transferred across contexts and to colleagues. As a result of her professional experiences, Ms Pokhrel has been able to confidently push the boundaries, having had the opportunity to learn about best practices and apply them to developing country contexts.

Dr Pant also stated that his experience teaching as a tutor at ANU was one of the most important moments for him in Australia and in his career. He valued this as a 'great learning opportunity', which complemented his role as a lecturer at Tribhuvan University.

Accordingly, supplementary work-integrated learning opportunities may offer valuable experience for other Australia Awards recipients to broaden their skills, knowledge and networks and support application post award in their home countries.

#### **4.3.4 Alumni developed valuable transferable skills**

Through their scholarships, alumni gained valuable twenty-first century skills that enabled them to solve problems and thereby improve their performance. These particular skills are:

**Critical and analytical thinking:** **Mr Sharma** described developing critical thinking skills which enabled him to propose ‘new ways of thinking that were well received’ and implement processes he learned in Australia. This differentiated him from what he described were ‘traditional’ and ‘cumbersome’ ways or approaches embedded within the civil service.

**English language and communication:** Enhanced English language skills have benefitted **Mr Khanal** and **Mr Nepal** in their high-level government policy and communications work. As Under Secretary and then Joint Secretary, Mr Khanal was able to use and rely on his advanced English language skills in policy development and dissemination. Similarly, as a Foreign Ministry official, Mr Nepal’s English language skills were refined through studying specific skills such as developing concise communiqués. **Dr Pant** also participated as a Student Representative at ANU, an experience that exposed him to a wider group of people, and gave him the opportunity to attend departmental board meetings where he learned diplomatic communication skills.

**Digital literacy:** Many of the alumni reported learning computer skills while on award, a skillset they had not had an opportunity to develop prior to studying in Australia. For **Mrs Shrestha**, **Mr Mainali**, **Mr Nepal**, and **Dr Pant**, dedicated support courses to develop these skills enabled them to undertake their studies successfully. Furthermore, Mr Nepal reported that on his return he was able to use these technical skills to support the integration of computers into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Cross-cultural competency:** **Mr Mainali** and **Mrs Mishra** described exposure to an international community at their universities as a significant aspect of their time in Australia. Mr Mainali described experiencing a ‘breakthrough’ in understanding the Pacific culture through the cross-cultural experiencing staying in dormitory accommodation with fellow students from many different countries. This experience assisted Mr Mainali in his role in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Time management:** **Dr Pant** stated that time management was the most important transferrable skill he learned at ANU, through dealing with deadlines and commitments and coping with pressure.

These skills increased the employability of alumni; for Mr Khanal it provided him with access to broader employment opportunities which generalists needed to progress their careers. **Overall, these twenty-first century skills supported the longevity of skills and knowledge developed, enabling alumni to perform at a high level of professionalism. They also underpin the importance of the in-country experience as vital to fostering the development of a broad range of skills.**

#### 4.3.5 Alumni have expertise and are recognised as experts as a result of studying in Australia

Alumni described being recognised as possessing expert skills and knowledge as a result of studying in Australia, and that this capacity was valued in their workplace. **Mrs Shrestha, Dr Aryal, Mr Mainali, and Mr Sharma** all explained that foreign tertiary degrees do not necessarily lead to promotion, however they considered in a points-based system in performance reviews. As a result, a number of alumni did not attribute their rank within the civil service to having received a scholarship. Instead, alumni see a link between the quality of their work and the scholarship and education they received in Australia. They link the scholarship with high quality decision making and improved performance, not with promotions. **Mr Khanal** explained this, stating:

If you compare the career promotion...in that case it might not be much different because the people or officers were not exposed to an Australian or any other foreign university, they were also getting promotions over here...*But if you compared the quality of the performance of the job that is totally different.* I think the main contribution of the Australian education is over there in that case, it enhances your quality of doing things better [emphasis added].

Accordingly, education qualifications are not always linked to promotions and seniority, and this should be taken into account in measuring outcomes.

#### 4.3.6 Alumni possess particular characteristics and attributes that underpin their success

Lastly, a significant factor in the successful contribution to national development by alumni is the fact that they are individually exceptional. **This finding positively reflects the concerted efforts by DFAT and Australia Awards staff in their screening and selection processes.**

Alumni in the Nepal Case Study possess qualities and attributes which have assisted or underpinned their ability to contribute to partner-country development goals:

**Desire to contribute or make a positive difference:** From the outset, **Ms Pokhrel** knew she would work in a development context and is a strong advocate for implementing cutting edge technology in developing countries. Despite its challenges, she believes that 'it can and should be done'. Evident here is Ms Pokhrel's motivation to do what she believes is right by people in resource-limited settings. **Mr Sharma** intrinsically values social work which has motivated him to focus his time in the area of gender and disability following his retirement from the civil service. In addition, Mr Sharma explained that this quality, the desire to contribute, is an aspect which applicants for the scholarship were screened for. As part of the basic criteria, successful applicants were those who are 'interested and willing to contribute more after getting the education award'. This quality is an enabling factor that has been a source of motivation for some alumni to make significant contributions to community and country development.

**Intelligence:** Alumni demonstrated exceptional academic performance. **Dr Aryal** received high distinctions throughout his study; **Ms Pokhrel** was selected through open competition as a high school graduate. Accordingly, Ms Pokhrel transitioned to an Australian tertiary environment at a far younger age than all other Nepal Case Study alumni. In addition, she hailed from Dharan in Western Nepal. Ms Pokhrel's manager at the ADB, Dr Sekhar Bonu described her as 'extraordinarily gifted'.

**Ethics:** Mrs Shrestha placed a high value on ethics and doing the right thing by others. The confidence she gained from the skills and knowledge acquired on award empowered her to reinforce ethical standards in her workplace, which provided greater transparency for her staff.

These qualities help to contextualise alumni's career success.

## 4.4 Key challenging factors

### 4.4.1 Alumni lacked support for reintegration

A lack of reintegration planning was a challenging factor for the alumni in this Case Study. As a result, the opportunities for alumni to use skills and knowledge directly upon return were varied and partly attributed to luck. A factor that contributed a challenging reintegration for civil service staff was the nature of the transfer system, with employees constantly rotated through different ministries. For **Mr Khanal** this meant he was not immediately able to utilise his technical expertise in demography. Prior to his award, Mr Khanal was working in the National Planning Commission Secretariat (NPC), and following his return was then transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which was largely unrelated to his field of study in Australia. It was not until a transfer to the MoHP that Mr Khanal found the role relevant to his field of study and expertise.

Conversely, **Mr Aryal** recognised the good fortune in being able to immediately begin applying his skills and knowledge post award, stating that he was in the 'right place, [at the] right time' when he received a transfer from the parliamentary secretary to the newly established Ministry of Population and Environment.

Another challenge for returning alumni is political instability. **Mr Sharma** was studying in Australia during the period of change to a multiparty democratic system in Nepal and was transferred to a new ministry post award. Working in the Department of Transport Management, and then the Department of Women's Development, Mr Sharma expressed that it was difficult to apply his skills in these changing contextual environments.

The issue of reintegration continues to be a concern for the Australia Awards Office in Kathmandu. **Mr Khyam Bishwokarma** shared that a need for reintegration support remains a common concern for returning alumni, particularly for those seeking work on return, and that support systems should be implemented to address this issue.

### 4.4.2 A work environment that is not conducive to change

Many of the alumni found that the ideas they gained from new skills and knowledge developed on award were typically positively received. However, one alumnus, **Mr Sharma** stated that there are aspects which make applying and gaining support for new ideas challenging. More broadly, Mr Sharma shared that resistance to new ideas and technologies is to be expected and can be overcome through demonstration and action. However, Mr Sharma's was often a lone voice with opponents strong in numbers, making it difficult to gain endorsement for change. **While alumni are returning with skills and knowledge, the system they return to is often unchanged and applying their learning to this context, and convincing others is challenging.** This relates to the factor described above - preparing to return and planning with employers is integral to a smooth and productive reintegration which maximises the Australian Government's return on investment.

#### 4.4.3 Impact is weakened by alumni migration

Some alumni expressed concern that migration weakened the impact of the Australia Awards as those no longer residing in Nepal cannot contribute towards nation building. Two alumni expressed concern based on their observations that Australia Awards recipients completing undergraduate degrees or selected from the open competition were more likely to return to Australia following completion of their studies. Both alumni were in favour of a bond or stipulated period working in Nepal upon return that would help to ensure longer term outcomes are achieved. 'Brain drain' in the form of emigration for employment and education was a concern articulated in Nepal's Thirteenth Development Plan (2013, p.107), particularly among individuals with technical and managerial skills. With nearly 1,500 individuals emigrating from Nepal every day, the concern for Nepal in implementing and achieving its national development plans is that human resources and capacity continue to be insubstantial in meeting national development goals (*ibid*, pp 107 -108).

However, the case of **Ms Pokhrel** counters this argument. Ms Pokhrel remained in Australia for a number of years post award which ultimately contributed to her ability to make a strong development impact:

The exposure was more complete, more wholesome an experience after my five years of work experience in Australia. Engineering is an applied science and simply learning from textbooks or 'knowing' how to do it is not good enough.

Ms Pokhrel's aim was always to return to infrastructure development in developing countries after gaining a few years of experience. In articulating why working in Australia was important to her ability to contribute to development, Ms Pokhrel stated:

The ability to see how our theory could be applied really helped me when working in Nepal, India and Bangladesh...If I had not been exposed to that particular work [of best practices in green construction and ESD], I wouldn't be able to preach, [I] wouldn't have enough teeth if I hadn't applied that knowledge first here.

Ms Pokhrel's experiences and career contrasts with the other alumni in this Case Study as she had received her award as a high school graduate with no professional experience. Integrating professional work for a period following course completion may be an aspect for further consideration as an additional component that could strengthen the outcome of the award for high-achieving undergraduate alumni to successfully reintegrate back into their home countries.



## 5. Economic and Public Diplomacy Outcomes

### Summary findings

Alumni in Nepal provided some **good examples of collaboration and partnerships** developed between Australia and Nepal, **however many alumni networks had elapsed**. Findings suggest a weak to moderate contribution to achieving the long-term Outcomes 2 and 3 of the Australia Awards.

The most significant example of impact, and vehicle for strengthening contribution to the long-term Outcomes 2 and 3 of the Australia Awards is ANAA; the Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia. **ANAA has a large membership base, high profile members, established governance arrangements and support from the Australian Embassy Nepal**. Furthermore, ANAA is planning other projects that aim to commemorate and strengthen Australia-Nepal relations.

One Philippines-based alumni from Nepal provided very strong examples of contribution to Outcomes 2 and 3 through **ongoing networking, collaboration and partnerships with Australians and Australian utility companies**.

Australia Awards staff and alumni have upheld **Australia's reputation as a small and exceptional donor**, and alumni in the Government of Nepal who support and promote the awards perpetuate this view.

Alumni in academia and or with family links to Australia are **potentially champions for increased alumni engagement**.

### Enabling factors

- ANAA actively maintains links between alumni, Australians in Nepal and alumni in the Region
- Certain courses such as environmental engineering and foreign affairs and trade were conducive to building strong networks
- Certain sectors, such as academia and development, provided optimal conditions for bilateral partnerships and ongoing collaboration

### Challenging factors

- Universities and courses did not always allow for or provide opportunities to foster networks
- Strong informal and formal networks dwindled over time
- Views diverged on the alumni association's role and services

### 5.1 Background

Chapter 5 provides evidence to answer research question 2 of this Case Study: 'How are Australia Awards contributing to Australia's economic and public diplomacy outcomes?' This question relates to the following long-term Outcomes 2 and 3 of the Strategy:

- Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries
- Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and businesses in Australia and partnerships.

The Australia Awards are a key element of DFAT's public diplomacy strategy (2016) and as the discussion above details, two of the Australia Awards' long-term outcomes relate to the Australia Awards role in fostering cooperation and networks that are mutually beneficial for alumni's home countries and for Australia. Alumni participants in the Nepal Case Study provided insights into the kinds of connections and networks they established in their time in Australia. Examples of collaboration between Australia and Nepal and institutional partnerships are provided here at section 5.2 followed by the factors that enabled and the factors that challenged collaboration or partnership development.

## 5.2 Networks or partnerships developed between Australia Awards alumni and Australians or Australian organisations

Alumni in the Nepal Case Study provided some good examples of collaboration and or institutional partnerships developed since returning to Nepal. However as described below due to the status of many alumni as retired and time lapsed between the award and this Case Study, many networks have dwindled. Included here are the strongest examples of how alumni have contributed to economic and public diplomacy outcomes.

**Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia (ANAA).** The most significant example of networking and collaboration by alumni was the establishment of the Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia (ANAA). The organisation was conceived by **Dr Ram Hari Aryal** in 1998, who with eight other Australian alumni (including two interviewed as part of this Case Study) were the founding members. The organisation now has 250 members and has undertaken and planning a series of activities designed to continue to foster the Australia-Nepal bilateral relationship. As a vehicle for fostering economic and public diplomacy it can potentially both enable and challenge the achievement of this outcome as described at sections 5.3.1 and 5.4.1.

### **ANAA Projects that celebrate Australia-Nepal diplomatic relationship and the impact of assistance**

**Mr Rishi Ram Tripathi**, General Secretary of ANAA, described planning by ANAA to release an annual publication to assist with the institutional memory of relations between Australia and Nepal, commemorating the commencement of diplomatic relations and assistance from 1960. Australian aid has been provided in the forestry, livestock and human resource development sectors. Mr Tripathi recalled assistance provided in the 1970s under the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project whereby nurseries and plantations were established in the districts of Sindhupalchok and Kavre Palanchok (Sattaur, 1987). According to Mr Tripathi, this work which is still evident today, should be remembered, particularly the long-standing relationship with Australian forestry expert Mr Don Gilmour, who visits Nepal regularly. ANAA is working toward an annual publication released on Australia Day or a similar day of meaning to both countries, to commemorate these successful and long-standing partnerships.

**Strong active collaboration via the environmental engineering network.** The one alumna who did actively draw on her networks and maintain connections with RMIT



mentors and staff was **Ms Geeta Pokhrel**. Ms Pokhrel described her environmental engineering cohort at RMIT as a 'tight knit class' who are close still; three of her classmates attended her wedding. One of Ms Pokhrel's classmates, Christine Wardle, founded Blue Environment and asked Ms Pokhrel to join as a Senior Associate, which she did when she returned to Australia from 2011-2013. She stated that the environment network formed via her RMIT cohort is 'quite active' and linked through social media and described their various respective roles in local councils, Melbourne Water, and Rio Tinto. She said they aim to meet informally once a year during holidays. Ms Pokhrel affirmed that professionally they seek ideas from one another and that she 'constantly taps her professional networks when hiring consultants who then spread the word'. Conversely, she said that 'Australian consultants who are seeking work within [ADB] projects come to me and I ask for recommendations through my networks to find reputable organisations for them.' Most significantly, Ms Pokhrel's manager Dr Bonu described how Ms Pokhrel sought Australia utilities staff to partner and work on ADB projects.

This example illustrates that contrition toward economic and public diplomacy outcomes is not limited to those who returned home following study. Some of the factors that enabled Ms Pokhrel's success could include the nature of the course as new, perhaps the cohort size, and the shared values of participants. In addition, Ms Pokhrel's years spent working in Australia immediately following her award potentially impacted her ability to build these relationships into the lifelong mutually beneficial network to which she belongs today. This example also demonstrates the insights gained from including overseas-based alumni in the Facility Case Studies.

### **Alumni contributions to fostering strong Australia-Nepal relations**

Australian Embassy staff in Nepal described how the links fostered within the Government of Nepal via the Australia Awards have become 'incredibly important to them'. Ms Ainsley Hemming, Second Secretary, Development Cooperation at the Australian Embassy, Nepal, stated that alumni assist to maintain the reputation that Australia has of being **a small but an exceptional donor**. She went on to say that via the Australia Awards, Australia is seen as a country that is 'welcoming, supporting and keen contributors to Nepal'.

Further to this, Mr Gaurav Katwal advised that there are currently two Australia Awards alumni in the Ministry of General Administration, one who is solely responsible for communications, and another who is responsible for scholarships in addition to other areas. Mr Katwal affirmed that these alumni do a 'wonderful job of Australia Awards promotion' in fora such as the Ministry of General Administration's high level committee meeting for all donors. This exemplifies the reach and influence of alumni beyond the traditional domains for collaboration and networking in the workplace post return.

### **Academic collaboration and ongoing familial links**

**Dr Prakash Pant** described a strong relationships with Australia, where after completing his doctorate he visited two or three times to present papers and attend conferences. Since 1988, Dr Pant has travelled back and forth to Australia on many occasions – to undertake work with the University of Melbourne and the University of Queensland. Furthermore, Dr Pant's daughter was born in and currently lives in Australia, and has worked in Australia for many years. These enduring family links present an opportunity

for the Australia Awards to leverage; it is possible that alumni with family connections to Australia are more invested and open to ongoing engagement and activity through the Australia Global Alumni network and can act as valuable champions of this work.

### 5.3 Key enabling factors

#### 5.3.1 ANAA actively maintains links between alumni, Australians in Nepal and alumni in the Region.

As noted above, Nepal has an active alumni association (ANAA) that has been operating for almost two decades. Many of the alumni involved in this Case Study are active members. Its activities assist to foster collaboration among alumni, by operating as a formal 'hub' for which those who have studied in Australia can share ideas. As noted by Dr Aryal, a founding member and president for 16 years, the initial aim of the organisation was for alumni to 'share experiences'. Mrs Shrestha, also closely involved in the association, concurs with this view noting that she saw it as a way to keep ongoing 'exposure to knowledgeable people'.

While the ANAA has wide ranging aims, one particular way that it has enabled continuing links between alumni and Australia is through its ongoing collaboration with the Australian Embassy and the Australia Awards managing contractor in Kathmandu. As Mr Tripathy noted, 'we are working closely with the Australian Embassy and the Australia Awards also, and most of the time [they] invite us to most of the activities carried out the by Australian Embassy [and] Australia Awards.' Dr Aryal explained that some of these events include 'pre-departure' and 'welcome home' briefings for Australia Awards recipients.

Another way that ANAA is likely to help facilitate relationships and increase public diplomacy impact for Australia is through its promotion of Australia as a destination for education. Dr Aryal highlighted that the ANAA aims to 'encourage [others] to go to Australia to study'. This encouragement and advice not only helps to build Australia's reputation, it is also building a larger base of Australian alumni in Nepal for whom the existence of a long-standing alumni association offers an important point for meeting and potentially developing links back to Australia following their study. In fact, ANAA's current strategic plan aims to double membership to 500 by 2019. The association also plays a regional role in maintaining and fostering these links. Mr Tripathy described regional level alumni engagement activity that was occurring involving seven countries whereby country level organisations submit proposals to the Regional body for grant funding.

#### 5.3.2 Certain courses are conducive to building strong networks

Alumni's ability to forge networks and foster collaboration was dependent on the opportunities provided through their course and university, as described below. Certain courses, such as the Bachelor of Environmental Engineering and the Master and Post Graduate Diploma of Foreign Affairs and Trade, appeared more conducive to building initial relationships, due to the small size of cohorts and opportunities to network with each other. As Ms Pokhrel described, her university cohort was 'tight knit'; Mr Mainali, who completed a Master of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1995 described the advantage of studying with DFAT staff, whom he then met on postings and in Nepal. Mr Nepal, who completed a Post Graduate Diploma of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1993 stated that studying with other Foreign Service officers was a good experience and created a collegiate atmosphere.

### **5.3.3 Certain sectors such as academia and development provided optimal conditions for bilateral partnerships**

Through opportunities such as conference participation and research collaboration, the academic environment is potentially more conducive to fostering bilateral collaboration than other sectors. Dr Pant mentioned the opportunities he had to attend conferences and work with different Australian universities after completing his Australian scholarships. In addition, the development sector supports strong collaboration as aid investments create networks and partnerships by design, as explained by Mr Tripathee. Mr Tripathee, who received an Australian scholarship to study a Master in Environmental Management, described the impact of the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project and the key Australian collaborators who remain connected with Nepal to this day. This example demonstrates the strong sector-based connections that exist and alumni's roles in maintaining institutional memory or extending the impact of Australian assistance.

## **5.4 Key challenging factors**

### **5.4.1 Universities and courses did not always allow for or provide opportunities to foster networks**

A number of alumni reported that they were not able to foster networks while on award in Australia because opportunities were not provided by universities, and or the course work load did not allow the time required to engage in these activities. Mr Nepal reported that during the year he spent studying alongside DFAT staff he was 'confined mostly to study'. Mr Sharma stated that coping with the academic requirements consumed all of his time. This is potentially a lost opportunity, as according to alumni, an opportunity to share their experiences in government with Australian counterparts would have been valuable. This outcome is relevant for many of the alumni undertaking Australian government scholarships during this era. Today, the Australia Awards offers fellowships as well as scholarships, with these fellowships much more conducive to embedding professional networking opportunities and are specifically designed to 'strengthen partnerships and links between Australian organisations and partner organisations in developing countries, in support of Australia's economic diplomacy objectives'<sup>1</sup>

### **5.4.2 Strong informal and formal networks post award have dwindled over time**

Most alumni in the Nepal Case Study spoke of strong informal and formal networks in the years following their time in Australia. However at the time of this Case Study, many of these networks had dwindled to minimal or no contact at all. This could be attributed to the time of the Case Study as more than 20 years since completing their award and the retired status of a number of alumni. Mr Sharma described having 'lots of informal networks', and Mrs Shrestha mentioned friendships with fellow students from Bangkok, Australia including people working in railways, people who designed supermarkets. She stated that those people assisted her greatly, but they are no longer in communication due to the time lapsed. Dr Pant mentioned his supervisor, Dr Alan Gray, with admiration as a 'great influential person' who passed away in 2001. His other professional contacts at ANU had elapsed or contact was intermittent via email or social media. Dr Aryal expressed similarly, that his university connections had elapsed as he and his formed contacts had retired from full time professional work. Dr Aryal's supervisor, Professor Graeme Hugo, also passed away some time ago. This findings points to a lack of

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/Pages/australia-awards.aspx>

opportunities to maintain or expand these networks over the years. As above, these scholarships were provided prior to the establishment of Australia Awards short course awards and fellowships, which could have assisted to extend or maintain existing networks.

#### **5.4.3 Views diverged on the alumni association's role and services**

While the existence of a strong and active alumni association has notable benefits (described earlier in this chapter), there were also some issues apparent relating to engagement and unified vision for ANAA that potentially reduces the impact of the association.

For example, while the association has been operating for a long period of time, it appears that it is driven by the enthusiasm and commitment of a core group who continue to sustain activities and strategic direction. According to one of these key players, Dr Aryal, the possibilities for ANAA to reach its full potential are hampered because only a few are active. When discussing ways that ANAA has engaged with its membership, there did not appear to be a strong understanding of the current needs of members or their capacity to assist and become involved. Some alumni interviewed suggested that a survey or consultation about their needs had not occurred and could be a useful and important exercise for ANAA to increase its understanding about its own capabilities, resources and potential for impact.

There were also some differences of opinion among alumni relating to the ability of ANAA to achieve its stated aims. There is ample information to suggest it plays a useful role in providing information and support for those wishing to study in Australia, and it was clear that the association was helping connect Nepalese alumni with each other. However, there was not as much information to identify specific ways in which it is helping to maintain relationships with Australian organisations and people in Australia when alumni return to Nepal. This particular aim is covered in ANAA's 'Objective 2' in its Strategic Plan 2015-2019, which is 'To strengthen socio-economic and cultural relationship between Australia and Nepal'. However, Dr Pant, a founding member of ANAA suggested that the role of the association was to merely provide the 'venue' for alumni, but that it is ultimately the alumni's responsibility to derive benefit from this network. He suggested ANAA as different from a professional organisation which connects people by sector. When asked about whether ANAA could play a role in locating Australian educated human resources, Dr Pant stated that in the context of Nepal it was not practical but could be possible in the future.

Other alumni were also uncertain of the ability of the association to achieve this aim, although this was not a uniform view. For example, while one alumna believed that ANAA could support alumni by industry sector, another did not agree that this should be the role of the organisation, arguing that creating sector linkages should actually be the role of professional associations.

While this juxtaposition is not intended to suggest that the association is not making important contributions, it offers some insight into the complexity of roles that alumni associations might be expected to play. As such, understanding the needs of membership and then ensuring aims are consistent with these needs and are practically achievable, is important in deriving impact from such associations.

## 6. Views about Australia and Australian Expertise

### Summary findings

#### Findings

**All alumni in this case study reported positive views of Australia and Australian expertise.** This provides evidence that the Australia Awards have achieved the long-term outcome of alumni viewing Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively.

**Alumni's views about Australia were derived from multiple sources**, and only a few alumni held pre-existing views of Australian tertiary education based on recommendation from colleagues and word of mouth.

Some alumni **continued to foster positive views about Australia following their on award experience due to ongoing contact as part of their job function.**

Overall, **positive views about Australia held by alumni resulted in actions in the workplace and community to share this goodwill, such as establishing an alumni association and changing work practices.**

#### Enabling factors

- For all alumni, positive views were informed or strengthened by their academic experience on award, the support provided on arrival through the bridging course, and their broader experience of Australian people and culture.
- Learning in Australia was experiential and transformative, resulting in long-held positive views about Australia and Australian expertise.

The presence of their family in Australia with them also held significance for alumni when recalling their experiences in Australia and contributed to long-lasting positive views for both alumni and their children.

### 6.1 Background

Chapter 6 describes how alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise. This is a topic of interest to DFAT as alumni views have been identified as an area of change sought through Australia Awards and is one of the four long-term outcomes of the Global Strategy (DFAT, 2016):

- Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively.

The theory of change that underpins the Australia Awards is that an Australian scholarship provides both a good quality education, and positive experiences in Australia for alumni and their families. It is assumed that these results will translate to the achievement of the long-term outcome of alumni viewing Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively. It is proposed that this outcome, in tandem with those regarding skills, networks, cooperation and partnerships will contribute to the goal of the Australia Awards that:

- Partner countries progress their development goals and have positive relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests.

By focusing on a cohort of alumni who graduated over twenty years ago, this Case Study provides the opportunity to test if the longer term outcomes of the Australia Awards have been achieved in Nepal.

The Facility team determined that asking alumni directly about their views on Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise would not be useful and subject to acquiescence response bias. Accordingly the interview instrument included questions such as ‘Can you tell me about your time in Australia and experience as a scholarship recipient?’ and ‘[During your career], Have you ever drawn upon Australian expertise in your work? Can you give an example of this, such as Australian-developed practices, ways of working, processes, theory/theorists, consultants, journals, models, equipment etc.’ This was determined as a more appropriate way of obtaining a balance of views. The latter question was designed as the use of Australian expertise at work is a good indicator of one’s views about the quality and relevance of that expertise.

This chapter provides evidence that the Australia Awards have achieved the long-term outcome of Nepalese alumni viewing Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively. Further, it describes the various sources of alumni’s views about Australia, and how these views are revealed in professional contexts. The Nepal Case Study research team also had a unique opportunity to speak with the son of an alumna who also lived in Australia for the duration of his mother’s scholarship. His insights provided an example of the ripple effect the Australia Awards has beyond the alumni themselves; that positive views about Australia cascade to family and peers, who then become agents who influence others in the community.

## 6.2 How alumni views of Australia, Australians and Australian expertise are formed

There are multiple factors which have informed the views alumni have of Australia, Australians and Australian expertise. Combined, these have contributed to long-lasting positive views. The common findings were that:

1. Strength of positive views was not related to time spent in Australia
2. Positive views about Australia were formed from various sources,
3. Experiential transformative learning created long lasting positive views, and;
4. Alumni accompanied by family were supported and positive views filtered to alumni’s children.

### 6.2.1 Relationship between time spent in Australia and alumni’s views

The strength of alumni’s positive views does not necessarily relate to the amount of time spent in Australia. For example, **Ms Pokhrel** and **Dr Aryal** hold strong positive views which is expected as a result of their 5+ years in Australia. Holding similarly strong views, for example, were **Mrs Shrestha** and **Mr Khanal** who spent only two years in Australia. This indicates that cumulative positive experiences shape the views of alumni during their time spent in Australia. This can be shown through their responses to the questions, ‘can you tell me about your time in Australia as a scholarship recipient?’ and, ‘What do you believe are the greatest benefits of the Australian scholarships?’



Dr Aryal, who spent seven years in Australia stated that he liked the Australian way of life and the way people are integrated. He revealed generally positive views about his experiences, 'ANU is a world class university, I would say it is a very good university; the university is good, the scholarship is good, [and the] people are good too'. Similarly, Ms Pokhrel, who spent five years in Australia expressed positive views about her experiences studying at RMIT: 'Paulino Piotto and John [Brumley, Ms Pokhrel's professors] were just marvellous and gave a lot of time, especially to those three of us – the international students at that time. I stayed in contact with them after graduating college because of the close-knit nature...'

In contrast, Mrs Shrestha and Mr Kanal spent only two years in Australia but express similar very positive views about their experiences. In particular, Mrs Shrestha described the different culture in Australia where people expressed concern for her, her ability to manage and succeed: 'In Australia, I found people [were] very pleased to help. Here [in Nepal] if you ask, they will treat [you] as an inferior. But not in Australia, I just asked, they are so happy to assist you. That's the very big difference. [I have] good memories. Everywhere, people say hello, they will ask, 'are you happy in Australia?' [They were] so worried to see me happy.' Mr Kanal described his satisfaction with the quality of his education: 'The quality of the education was very good because the professors were very renowned...they were technically very sound...They proved themselves as the best in the field, particularly in the field of demography.'

Of significance is the long period over which alumni have held these views. However, the length of time spent in Australia does not appear to influence the strength of the view held. In particular, the interactions alumni had with institution staff and Australians in general were commonly recalled as a positive aspect of their time on award.

#### **6.2.2 Positive views about Australia are formed from various sources including on award experiences**

The views alumni form regarding Australia, Australians and Australian expertise are not only based on their experiences on award in Australia. A number of alumni in this Case Study developed their perceptions and understanding from colleagues who informed them on topics such as universities and course options, or as part of their role within the Nepal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, **Dr Aryal, Dr Pant, and Mr Khnal** were all informed by their colleagues which influenced their institution preferences. For **Mr Mainali**, as an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he was informed by his role as desk officer for Australia and his professional relationship with the Australian Ambassador to Nepal. Accordingly, alumni's views are not only based on their experiences while studying in Australia, but are also shaped by other sources and are reinforced by their on award experiences. This is important when considering the pre-departure activities of the Australia Awards such as promotion and selection.

One alumnus, **Mr Nepal** has a profound deep understanding about Australia and the bilateral relationship between Australia and Nepal through his most recent role as the **Former Ambassador of Nepal to Australia** from 2012 to 2016, which built upon his views developed as a student. From his experiences on award, Mr Nepal shared that he has long been an advocate of Australia destination for quality education. Through his role as Ambassador, he has developed extensive insights into trade, aid, and systems of government, particularly on the topics of federalism and multiculturalism which he perceives Nepal and Australia can mutually learn from each other.

However, a number of the alumni did not have strong preconceptions or knowledge about Australia and were entirely informed by their experiences on award. For alumni who received a bridging course this was referenced positively as a helpful introduction and transition into the Australian lifestyle and norms, and the skills needed for their tertiary courses. **Dr Pant, Dr Aryal, and Mrs Shrestha** all mentioned the positive benefits gained from receiving computer courses which enabled them to succeed both academically and upon return to their workplace. **Mr Sharma** highlighted the helpfulness of social welfare officers and the then Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB) (now DFAT) in providing a comprehensive program ranging from details such as paying bills and sourcing familiar foods to finding accommodation. As a result he felt privileged to have received such assistance. Overall, alumni participating in bridging programs were felt welcomed to Australia by this provision.

In contrast, Dr Pant notes that as he and his cohort did not receive a briefing about Australia he discussed experiencing some culture shock which stood out to him, particularly relating to differing socially accepted norms such as public displays of affection. As a result of this he made an effort to provide information based on his experiences for other newcomers who were also not informed as he felt it was needed. However, he notes that this type of information may no longer be needed as a result of greater availability and accessibility of information through various media platforms.

Although Australia Awards recipients arrive in Australia with varying degrees of knowledge of Australia, this finding indicates that bridging programs are beneficial in providing a foundation for alumni to develop or strengthen positive views about Australia. These programs reportedly provide a warm welcome and information and lessons which ease the transition process. Further, if interactions with Australia continue post award, alumni are likely to continue developing their views beyond their on award experiences.

### **6.2.3 Experiential transformative learning created long lasting positive views**

The in-country aspect of the scholarship affords alumni the opportunity to learn experientially. This deepens their knowledge and understanding of Australia, particularly its culture and people. As the son of an alumna who was able to join his mother on award in Australia, **Mr Sandesh Shrestha** suggests there is no substitute for experience, through media or otherwise. For Sandesh, living in Australia from ages nine to 11, he shares that this had a profound effect on his outlook:

It influenced [my] views of the world, [it's] different from others here... [I] am more open minded, I am liberal. I have a different way of looking at democracies...

This sentiment is also supported by **Mr Sharma** who identified the exposure to a different system and culture and receiving an Australian education as two of the greatest benefits of the Australian scholarships. To be able to 'experience how developed societies work over there' was felt to be particularly important as he believed that he was able to learn from witnessing and experiencing life in Australia. This was in addition to the academic program which he also perceived to be of a higher quality than was available in Nepal at the time. As Mr Sharma shared, witnessing how other people live their lives has a profound effect on alumni and can expand their normative understanding of life– 'you can see (a) different land (and societies)...you can see other lives'.

**Mr Mainali and Ms Pokhrel** also pointed to the additional benefit of travel and experiencing Australia beyond their institution campus, which helped to facilitate stronger



relationships and deeper understanding and underpin their positive views. Mr Mainali, while undertaking a Master of Foreign Affairs at Australian National University points to the benefit he gained from travelling around Australia and meeting people from different agencies and Australian institutions. He stated that this experience 'gave us a sense of the Australian system itself'.

For Ms Pokhrel, as an undergraduate in the newly established Bachelor of Environmental Engineering at RMIT, the generous stipends provided enabled her to avoid the financial stresses faced by some of her peers. As a result, Ms Pokhrel was able to fully participate in external activities such as a travel around Australia with friends from her cohort. These interactions underpin the long-lasting networks that she built during her time in Australia while studying and working. The benefits of these are described above in Chapter 4.

The evidence provided by the alumni in this Case Study suggests experiential learning catalyses positive views, particularly those experiences which extend beyond the classroom and intersect with the opportunities that arise from living in a foreign country. Such a thorough and holistic learning experience has had a transformative effect on both alumni and their children, and these memories shared indicate that they are long lasting and valued by the participants.

#### **6.2.4 Alumni accompanied by family were supported and positive views filtered to alumni's children.**

The effect on children regarding on award experiences and the outcomes following has been relatively unexplored in previous tracer and Case Studies. As discussed, the Nepal Case Study researchers spoke with the son of alumna **Mrs Shrestha**. **Mr Shrestha** was aged nine when he and his family moved from Kathmandu to Melbourne. As described above, living and attending school in Australia had a transformative effect on Mr Shrestha and his outlook on life, based on his experiences and observations of lives and social norms in Australia. However, there were also negative effects for Mr Shrestha as he experienced culture shock when arriving and adjusting to life and school in Melbourne, and reverse culture shock upon returning to Kathmandu and reintegrating into the Nepalese school and examination system.

A number of alumni reported the benefit to them in being able to bring their family with them to Australia for the duration of their studies. Further, the children of alumni have formed strong relationships with Australia and returned to work or study there in adulthood. In the case of **Dr Pant**, the relationship between his family and Australia has been positive and ongoing. His daughter was born in Australia, and is now living in Cairns and has been working in Australia for seven to eight years, and in addition, his son recently visited Australia.

Australian scholarships played a role in the broader phenomenon of globalisation, with the movement of people, ideas, and knowledge across national borders; but evidence here demonstrates that they have a ripple effect that goes beyond each individual alumni, where many more are impacted by the one scholarship. For alumni in this Case Study, the scholarships have not only had a positive effect on their own lives and careers, but also for their children. In some cases, family members have maintained existing or established new relationships and networks within Australia, extending the impact of the award further. Moreover, as Mr Shrestha describes above, their lives are also changed, and their views transformed, just as it was for their alumni parents. It is of

note that these few experiences shared provide evidence of the achievement of the long-term outcomes of the Australia Awards.

### 6.3 The effect of alumni's positive views regarding Australia and Australian expertise

With positive views held by the alumni, a number of practical outcomes have occurred as a result. These are highlighted by the following alumni.

**Dr Aryal:** 'When I came home – three times I got the opportunity to go to Australia. When I came back I wanted to just share my experience. My friends and alumni friends also encouraged me'. As a result of his enthusiasm and support from peers, Dr Aryal established the (ANAA with the purpose of alumni networking, and sharing their knowledge and experiences of Australia and advising others interested in studying or working in Australia. Dr Aryal has overseen the growth of ANAA from a group of five to six founding members to today's 250 members. The association is also now participating in activities to support local community development and social welfare services. Fellow alumni in this Case Study, **Dr Pant and Mr Khanal** are also founding members of ANAA.

**Mrs Shrestha:** While in Australia, Mrs Shrestha was surprised by the demeanour of Australians who were willing and pleased to assist her and noted the difference in Nepal where those who asked for assistance were treated as inferior. Her experience in Australia inspired Mrs Shrestha to instil changes in her work environment in the Rating and Licensing Department of the ATC when she became Chief. During her time, she transformed the department from the 'most hated and feared' to one where 'all air traffic controllers will come to [her] office [to] ask what they don't know without hesitation'. The result of concerted effort, Mrs Shrestha credits her team for their support in changing the work environment in the department into one that is now a positive and friendly.

**Ms Pokhrel:** Ms Pokhrel has a continuing relationship with Australia as a result of her extensive and holistic experience studying and working there. Her long-lasting networks and that she sourced Australian utilities companies for consultation on Asian Development Bank (ADB) sponsored projects is evident of her positive views of not only Australia, but also Australians and Australian expertise.

These examples above highlight the results that have occurred from the positive views developed by alumni through their various experiences with Australia, Australians and Australian expertise. Of note is the longevity of the positive views that are shared by alumni more than 20 years after their scholarship, and the positive effect of their interactions with the Australian community and how this has filtered to others.

## 7. Impact of Australia Awards on addressing equity issues

### Summary findings

[Scholarships cohorts] should be diverse. [This is] important because you have to pull on all the strings when developing your country, you can't just pull on one. Giving scholarships to a single group only pulls the strings one way. It creates imbalance.

**Mr Sandesh Shrestha**, son of Australia Awards alumna Mrs Geeta Shrestha.

### Alumni views and experiences in Nepal

Barriers to women's economic participation in Nepal were described by case study participants as **pervasive and both cultural and systemic**. Accordingly, overcoming these barriers requires an equally pervasive and multipronged approach.

**More women are participating in government in key decision making roles than ever before, however support is needed to ensure that women are prepared and supported to take on roles**

**People with disability face barriers to full participation in society that are attitudinal, cultural and systemic.** Disability inclusiveness is an emerging area in Nepal, and while policies and legislation are in place, case study participants reported **that these are not yet enacted**.

Identifying and targeting disadvantaged groups is a complex activity for Australia Awards staff as many people in Nepal face multiple disadvantages which are not simple to categorise.

**Alumni achievements:** The case of Dr Maleku and Autism Case Nepal Society is interesting to understand how disability advocacy emerges and advances in Nepal.

The achievements of some alumni in addressing equity issues in their work or retirement provide evidence that the Australia Awards are achieving its outcomes by **selecting candidates who have enacted a lifelong desire to make a positive difference**.

### Enabling factors:

- Certain targeted sector or industry initiatives have been successful in advancing the careers and work of alumna such as Mrs Shrestha.
- Depth of knowledge about equity issues is critical to play a meaningful role in contributing to these areas.
- Family support in Australia was described as critical to alumni's success and provides evidence to support the focus on family friendly conditions and allowances on the Australia Awards.

**Challenging factors:**

- Alumna reported gender bias toward their skills and ability on return from award that put them on the back foot of having to explain, justify or demonstrate their value in any given role.
- Alumna described resentment toward women in government roles a barrier, however those with overseas education qualifications appeared equipped and able to confront this issue.
- Some applicants are disadvantaged when meeting the health requirements for Australian visas due to common lung health problems experienced by many Nepalese.

## 7.1 Background

As articulated in the Global Strategy (DFAT, 2016b), five principles guide the implementation of Australia Awards investments. These are

1. Alignment with Australia's development, economic and public diplomacy priorities
2. Equity of Access
3. Merit based selection
4. Value for money and evidence-based decision making
5. Promote the Australia Awards.

Chapter 7 describes the impact of the Australia Awards in addressing equity and disadvantage in Nepal. This aligns with principle 2, above, which describes how interventions will be designed to 'address barriers to participation and provide on-award/post award support where participation by women, people with disability and other disadvantaged members of society is low' (DFAT, 2016b, p. 12). Additionally, this chapter seeks to answer the research question number 4: Are the benefits of receiving a scholarship experienced equally by all groups who have received them?

First, barriers to accessing Australia Awards are discussed in the context of alumni's experiences and views and their alignment with government policies and strategies. Second, some examples of how alumni themselves have made a positive difference to issues of inequality and disadvantage are presented. Finally, the factors that enable and challenge the Australia Awards and alumni in addressing issues of inequality and disadvantage are discussed.

## 7.2 Addressing equity issues in Nepal - context

The Facility Case Study instruments (see Annex 2) include a number of questions designed to obtain data on how the Australia Awards have impacted alumni. These include questions about alumni's career progression compared with males/females who have received a scholarship, and compared with peers who did not receive an award. In addition, questions were posed to all alumni about whether gender and disability impact careers. Alumni also highlighted other issues that impact career progress such as ethnicity and location. These issues, as they relate to Australia Awards access and impact, are described here.

### 7.2.1 Barriers to women's economic participation

**Ms Tara Gurung**, Director, Development Policy and Programs at the Australian Embassy, Kathmandu, **described the pervasive and entrenched barriers that inhibit women's economic participation.** According to Ms Gurung, expectations are different for women compared with men, and that these views are inculcated from birth. Ms Gurung stated that family and community views about what girls should and should not do influence girls behaviour, ambitions, and ultimately how prepared they are to assume leadership positions. Ms Gurung believes the biggest hurdle for women is challenging this mindset, which must be done through a multipronged approach including civil society, donor agencies and government.

**Dr Prakash Pant**, an alumnus and esteemed demographer, described the multiple challenges faced by women preventing them from engaging in paid employment as **the burden of child rearing and domestic duties combined with the hardship of limited household resources.** In addition, he stated that cultural norms will influence or determine women's roles, and these vary between locations in Nepal. For example, Dr Pant described some 'conservative' communities where women do not talk with males outside their family. Dr Pant affirmed that change is impeded by both poverty and culture. He described how in impoverished rural households, benefits move from child to parent; that is, a child who can access paid work contributes financially to the family, and this child is usually male. This affects female children and mothers, who are dependent on males; husband or son, for economic provision. Accordingly, a woman 'does not have her own life' said Dr Pant, as she is entirely dependent on others.

**Mr Kabiraj Khanal** described the barriers to gender equality as the negative attitudes held by male colleagues or employers about women's capacity to perform their role, particularly if it includes travel, due to their domestic responsibilities. **In this double bind, women face prejudice for the very thing that hinders their economic participation – the unequal division of home labour and their perceived traditional carer role.** According to many Case Study participants, this is a major hurdle to overcome for women and those working on making the Australia Awards more accessible to all.

Ms Gurung and Dr Pant's statements about the complexity of gender discrimination and barriers to women's empowerment in Nepal reflect the Australian Government's *Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy* (DFAT, 2016d). This strategy states that **women's economic participation needs to be 'empowering and...not exacerbate inequalities or place unfair burdens on women and their children'**<sup>2</sup>, acknowledging the existing systems, structures, beliefs and cultural practices that hold inequality in place.

### 7.2.2 Women's participation in governance

Mrs Shrestha noted that 35 years ago when she commenced working, it was rare to find an educated female holding a government position, but the situation for women as changed. Mr Nepal agreed; he stated that when he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was only one senior female officer, but now the Ministry is about 35% female, with a number of young officers and two female Ambassadors.

**Nepal is one of only 15 countries in the world with a female head of state; the**

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.pdf>

**Right Honourable Bidhya Devi Bhandari (Pew Research Center, 2017).** This fact was offered as evidence by most alumni that times have changed for women in Nepal. Indeed, many alumni stated that given there are a number of high profile females in government occupying positions such as Chief Justice; Speaker of the Parliament of Nepal; and Director of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)<sup>3</sup>; gender has less impact on careers now than it did in the past. Further, alumni cited 'reservations' (electoral gender quotas) whereby particular positions in government are held for women only, as further evidence of progress. However, **some alumni questioned the value of this approach as it perpetuates a belief that these appointments are not merit based, and women who occupy these positions are not respected.** These same views are held in other countries where electoral quotas have been introduced (McCann, 2013). To illustrate, one alumnus stated that 'competitive women who are good at their job [will get] fair treatment' implying that conversely, those who did not compete and or do not have the requisite skills and ability will not be treated fairly. **Ms Gurung agreed that the quota system can make women more vulnerable to discrimination or disdain.**

The Australia Awards staff in Nepal and those working on gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) issues are actively challenging negative perceptions about the value of identifying women for opportunities in their work with the Government of Nepal to promote the Australia Awards and seek nominations of female potential applicants. **This also acts to reinforce the government's own social inclusion policies.** In addition, longer term strategies are needed to address social, cultural and economic barriers that prevent women's participation in government (McCann, 2013).

### 7.2.3 Disability barriers

**Progress toward full and effective participation in society by people with disability has commenced, but is hampered by entrenched systemic and cultural barriers.**

When asked about how disability impacts career, most alumni described two particular barriers that prevent people with disability from full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. These were:

- the lack of infrastructure making accessing the physical environment impossible
- negative community attitudes toward people with disability.

No alumni mentioned the lack of assistive technology, and only one mentioned the effect of psychosocial or developmental disability on career progress. **Ms Ainsley Hemming of the Australian Embassy highlighted that it has only been possible to focus on disability inclusiveness in the Australia Awards Nepal in the past five years.**

Indeed, the new Constitution of Nepal (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2015), includes a focus on the rights of people with disability, and alumni described government's new social inclusion policies and reservation quotas designed to provide access to government employment opportunities for people with disability. However, according to alumnus Mr Sharma, change is not occurring at the speed demanded by society. He stated that slow progress continues to widen the gap between those in Nepal who face significant disadvantage and those in high income or developed countries who face the same challenges.

<sup>3</sup> See [http://saarc-sec.org/saarc\\_directors](http://saarc-sec.org/saarc_directors)



**Inaccessible physical environments.** Mr Shrestha implied that people with disability are outcasts in Nepal. He went on to describe how on World Disabled Day a participant stated that ‘this is the only day I feel like I am a member of this community.’ Mr Shrestha stated that ‘there is no guarantee that a disabled person *[sic]*, no matter how talented and skilful...can get access to jobs or education.’ He asserted that infrastructure is only for the well or able bodied person and that politicians are unable to focus on these issues due to prioritising issues perceived as more important. Mr Nepal concurred, that public transport, sidewalks, and buildings are largely inaccessible to a person who uses a wheelchair, and that **despite inclusive government policies, major changes are required for the physical infrastructure to ‘catch up’ with legislation.**

Two alumni mentioned that at least two people with disabilities work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and that this is evidence of progress toward inclusive policies and practices. However it was noted by alumni that the Ministry building has limited access for people with disability and that those who use wheelchairs are confined to particular levels and rooms. **Mr Sharma described how the lack of physical infrastructure and access to buildings prevents citizens with disability from accessing government services, let alone accessing government employment opportunities.** This further hinders progress toward full and effective participation for people with disability.

**Negative community attitudes.** The majority of the alumni interviewed for this Case Study described the prevalence of negative community attitudes toward people with disability in Nepal. Ms Pokhrel described the stigma that people with disability cannot perform as ‘quite strong’. Mr Kanal agreed that prejudice is still occurring. Dr Pant expanded that many people view those with disability as ‘unable’, or ‘a burden’, so ‘the pain of disability is one thing, and the discrimination from colleagues is another thing too’. He stated that these negative attitudes aggravate the problems for people with disability in Nepal. These views were well summarised by Mr Sharma who expressed that the word ‘disability’ itself is a hindrance to career and that people in Nepal have a closed mindset toward those with disability. **Australia Awards staff in Nepal described the challenge of merely identifying people with disability who have overcome these hurdles and currently occupy government positions as there are only a ‘handful’ who are eligible and can be nominated.**

**Developmental or psychosocial disabilities** Dr Pant stated that the effect and prevalence of developmental or psychosocial disabilities is largely unknown in Nepal. **He stated that data has not been collected and there is a complete lack of community awareness about these types of disabilities.** Dr Sunita Maleku, an Australia Awards Short Course alumna, was a valuable participant in this Case Study shedding light on the particular issue of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Nepal, as explained at Box 1 below.



### Box 1: Developmental disability in Nepal - the case of Autism Spectrum Disorder

#### Background

Dr Sunita Maleku received an Australia Awards short course award to study at Queensland University of Technology from April 18-29, 2016. The course was a multi-country participant Inclusive Education course with South Asian country representatives from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The course was initiated by Australia Awards Nepal and included 17 participants from Nepal from relevant government ministries and agencies including the Ministry of Education, Disabled People's Organizations and parents of children with disability.

#### Autism Care Nepal Society (ACNS)

Dr Maleku's son was diagnosed with autism at 28 months. At the time there were no services, diagnostic or otherwise, generally available in Nepal for her to access. For her son's assessment and diagnosis, Dr Maleku sought assistance from overseas organisations. She then formed partnerships with these organisations and subsequently determined, with other parents of children with autism, to establish the first national centre for autism in Nepal in 2008, *Autism Care Nepal Society (ACNS)* (<http://autismnepal.org/>). From this point onwards, Dr Maleku has occupied a vital role in making autism support services available to those who need them, including counselling, assessment and diagnosis, parent and child training, and therapies. In building ACNS, Dr Maleku has collaborated with Australian organisations and universities such as Autism Spectrum Australia (and Charles Sturt University). From 2015-2017, ACNS was awarded Direct Aid Program (DAP) funding from the Australian Embassy Nepal to expand and strengthen occupational therapy and vocational education and establish a unit for ongoing provision of these services and training.

#### ASD in Nepal - Challenges

Dr Maleku said that some of the barriers preventing disability inclusiveness for children and adults with developmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are:

- The widespread lack of understanding across the community about what autism is, how it manifests in behaviours, how it is diagnosed and treated.
- It reinforces gender barriers as mothers are adversely affected as the carers responsible for supporting children with autism. Female carers are shamed or excluded or cannot leave the child in the care of others. This further negatively impacts on women's ability fully participate in society.
- The lack of disability advocates with autism due to the nature of ASD. Within the disability movement, developmental or psychosocial disabilities occupy a lower rung in the hierarchy as they have fewer strong voices to advocate for change.
- while legislation and policies prevent discrimination, these are not enacted and schools regularly exclude or refuse to enrol children with autism. There are very few schools in Nepal that cater for students with autism.

Dr Maleku is hopeful, however despite these challenges. She highlighted the support of the Government of Nepal's Honourable Minister of Health Mr. Gagan Kumar Thapa in highlighting the need for government support, and other positive activities in the Region.

#### 7.2.4 Other combined disadvantages

Mr Gaurav Katwal, Country Manager of Australia Awards Nepal, stated that the worst scenario for accessing education or employment opportunities is when a person has multiple barriers, for example geography, gender, disability and ethnic minority status. A number of Case Study participants affirmed this; that disadvantage is not a 'single issue

struggle’ and often defies singular classifications. Ms Gurung said that ethnicity and gender interplay in their effect on how women are viewed and can advance in society. Dr Pant stated that disadvantage should not always be generalised at the ethnic group level as there are cases of poverty in high caste groups. He advocated that overall, **poverty should be the number one classification when awarding scholarships which target disadvantaged groups**. These statements highlight the complexity of the work undertaken by the Australia Awards staff to target disadvantaged groups, and justify their decision to appoint expert panel members such as Dr Pitamber Sharma to assist in appropriate and accurate targeting of awards to address disadvantage.

### 7.3 Achievements

One of the strengths of the Australia Awards, according to alumni, employers, and Australia Awards staff in Nepal, is the focus on people who in the past have not had the chance to access this type of opportunity, including traditionally marginalised groups such as women, people with disability, and particular ethnic groups such as Madhesi’s and Dalits. As Dr Pant said, there are those who could never afford to study abroad, who are disadvantaged and do not have access to resources. These people get the benefit of an overseas education and opportunity to improve their lives. Ms Hemming agreed that the Australia Awards supports ‘those who have already struggled and achieved amazing things against great odds’.

Further, alumni in the Nepal Case Study provided examples of how they themselves have sought to make a positive difference to those in Nepal who experience disadvantage. These are:

- **Ms Neeta Pokhrel**, who, as director of the ADB WaSH project she designed for Nepal (described above in section 4.2.2 Specialists: Environmental Engineering) included 30% female engineering consultants on the project.
- **Mr Achyutraj Sharma**, who since retiring from his position in government four years ago, established two civil society organisations to assist women and children with disability respectively. The first organisation was founded by Mr Sharma to address the high casualty rate of women with cervical cancer. To date the organisation has screened over 220,000 women for the disease, preventing innumerable deaths. The second organisation provides services for children with disability from remote areas of Nepal, bringing them to Kathmandu for treatment, family education and support.
- **Mr Rishi Ram Tripathy**, who as General Secretary of ANAA, has led the delivery of an Australian Embassy DAP funded program to promote the wellbeing and welfare of senior citizens in Nepal. ANAA members conducted a study in three districts and a series of workshops, and presented the findings to the Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare. Some recommendations made by the ANAA team to address policy gaps have been accepted and implemented.

These examples provide evidence that the Australia Awards is achieving its outcomes regarding selecting candidates who have enacted a lifelong desire to make a positive difference, which underpins the achievement of the Australia Awards long-term Outcome 1; ‘Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to partner-country development goals’ (DFAT, 2016).

## 7.4 Enabling factors

Some of the factors that enable the Australia Awards to address equity issues are as described here.

### 7.4.1 Targeted initiatives provide access for disadvantaged groups

**Access to scholarship opportunities can be influenced by pro-female policies or initiatives such as the award Mrs Shrestha received.** Mrs Shrestha reported that her scholarship was initiated by the female Australian Ambassador at the time, who had a strong relationship with the Civil Aviation Authority and felt that the female employees within the industry would benefit from an Australian education which would enhance their contribution upon return. According to Mrs Shrestha, applicants for this particular award did not have to compete with others – it was specifically for female air traffic controllers.

### 7.4.2 Depth of knowledge about equity issues is important to progress these causes

**Alumni's ability to contribute to positive outcomes for women and girls is in part determined by the depth of their understanding of about issues of gender equity and women's empowerment.** Alumni who had likely studied gender equity as part of their scholarship, or worked in the area of gender and development, were able to provide detailed and nuanced explanations of how gender impacts career development in Nepal. Ms Hemming agreed and drew the link between studying and working in GESI related areas saying 'nine times out of ten those studying these issues come back to Nepal to work on gender or disability issues, and the fact they applied in the first place shows us that they want to be champions of these issues.' Specifically these alumni were Mr Khanal, Dr Pant, and Mr Sharma who all emphatically stated that gender does impact career progress in Nepal and were able to provide evidence based nuanced accounts of this issue.

### 7.4.3 Family support in Australia was described as critical to alumni's success

On a number of occasions Mrs Shrestha mentioned her late husband's support as important for her career. She described him as her 'supporting pillar' who 'quit everything to come and support [her] and the kids' while she studied in Australia for two years. Further, Mrs Shrestha described how after her retirement, her husband encouraged her to join ANAA; to 'stay engaged' through this forum. Alternatively, Mr Sharma described how lack of family support had a negative impact on his studies. **These accounts further emphasise the benefit of Australia Awards stipends in supporting alumni in Australia.**

## 7.5 Challenging factors

Some of the factors that challenge the Australia Awards in address equity issues are as discussed below.

### 7.5.1 Negative perceptions of women's skills and ability

**Female alumnae described how acknowledgement or recognition of their skills, knowledge and ability was not automatic and often had to be asserted.** According to alumni, this stems from preconceived ideas about what women can and cannot do. Ms Pokhrel, described how as a female engineer in a male dominated industry she had to 'put her foot down' and assert herself when male colleagues questioned her presence on a

building site, or did not provide female toilets, or questioned her knowledge and ability as an engineer. Ms Pokhrel stated 'you have to tell them that you topped your class in environmental engineering as they think women are better at softer degrees.' Tellingly, Ms Pokhrel says 'with males, acceptance stems from them being shown that you know what you are talking about.' However, this places an added burden of responsibility on women who have already proven themselves through their education and achievements to explain, show, or justify the value they bring to any given role.

### 7.5.2 Negative perceptions of women's participation in employment

In response to the question about how gender impacts career, Mrs Shrestha recalled how working women were 'despised' for their capacity to earn and contribute by their male counterparts. Both she and her son described that male colleagues would resent and envy the working woman, particularly if their wives did not work. However Mrs Shrestha stated that she did not feel the effect of gender barriers in her career stating that as an air traffic controller, 'if you do a great job that's all that matters'. Dr Pant agreed, that an Australian degree negates any difference in career progress between men and women. He stated 'once [female scholarship alumnae] come back...most of the time they don't feel [there is a] difference between men and women.' **Accordingly it is possible that alumnae, equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence fostered on award, are better able to address negative attitudes and treatment than those who have not studied overseas.**

### 7.5.3 Australian visa requirements disadvantage developing country participants

Before Nepalese Australia Awards recipients can mobilise themselves and their families to take up the scholarship opportunity they must first meet the health requirements to obtain a visa. Mr Sharma reported that visa requirements included a medical examination and chest X-ray, and that many Nepalese are not able to pass this test due to the prevalence of scattered calcified granulomas in the lung. Mr Sharma stated this condition was very common in Nepal due to childhood illnesses and diseases, and in fact his own application was initially rejected. It was subsequently reviewed and accepted when a second opinion was sought. **Mr Sharma described how the strict medical screening almost prevented him from getting the opportunity to study in Australia and has most likely deprived others of this chance.** His wife's visa application was also rejected on these grounds which had an adverse effect on Mr Sharma, his studies, and the level of support available to him in Australia. Important to note, the most common non communicable disease in Nepal is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (43%).<sup>4</sup>

### 7.5.4 ANAA does not provide targeted alumni events based on member needs

At the time of interview, ANAA did not provide services or events specifically to support female alumnae or alumni with disabilities to progress their careers in Nepal. However, the General Secretary, Mr Tripathi, advised that plans were in development to submit proposals for funding regarding activities such as these. Mrs Mishra, who is based in Baglung, suggested that ANAA could support alumni by building links and developing a support system among alumni according to their course of study. She stated that this could assist in establishing connections between alumni who live in Kathmandu and those who are based in rural locations such as herself. She suggested that this could also help develop

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.who.int/countries/npl/en/>

links with the potential and relevant donors. From discussions with ANAA and members it does not appear that a survey of members and their needs and priorities has been conducted. This could be useful in providing appropriate and targeted support, particularly given that ANAA is a fee for service membership organisation.

## 8. Conclusion

Alumni targeted to participate in the Nepal Case Study were those whose awards were categorised as 'public policy and governance' however their fields of study varied greatly. **Accordingly it was hard to cascade findings up to the sector level, unlike other Facility Case Studies.** Strong examples of contribution toward partner-country development goals were presented, but these examples were dispersed across a number of sectors. This Case Study may have been more cohesive if specific questions were added regarding the impact of alumni contributions on the civil service more broadly; **an important consideration for future multi-sectoral studies.**

**Nonetheless, discrete examples were profound.** For example, the impact of developing a national population policy, as Dr Aryal did, or changing mindsets and practices in the then Civil Aviation Authority, as Mrs Shrestha did, cannot be underestimated. Improvements to the sectors as described in the Nepal Case Study, such as water, health and sanitation; tourism and aviation; national planning, the civil service; and foreign policy, are included as priorities in national planning documentation. In addition, improvements to the lives of people with disability and disadvantaged people such as women and Madhesi's, are included in the Constitution of Nepal and national planning documentation. **This indicates a strong alignment between the achievements of Australia Awards alumni and the Government of Nepal's development priorities and plans.**

The weakest impact related to the Australia Awards outcomes regarding cooperation between Australia and partner countries, and effective and mutually advantageous partnerships between Australian and Nepalese institutions and business. This was attributed to the **time lapsed between studying in Australia and this Case Study, and the lack of opportunity to maintain or reconnect with networks in Australia.** **However, ANAA, as a vehicle to both honour and build Australia-Nepal relations, has great potential to make a positive impact here.**

The greatest impact was found relating to Australia Awards long-term Outcomes 1 and 4, where all alumni in this Case Study have used their skills and knowledge on award to contribute to partner-country development plans, and that all alumni reported viewing Australia and Australian expertise positively. The latter was demonstrated through alumni's use of theory, practices and principles gained in Australia to positive effect in their workplace; **they clearly acknowledged the benefit of the knowledge they gained many years before.**

## 9. Alumni Profiles

### Neeta Pokhrel

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*I am proud of everything I have achieved. Being able to make a dent in people's lives drove me to Environmental Engineering from day one...Each project makes me feel that I am changing people's lives. The exposure, the rigour of training that you receive in Australia, plus the five years of work I also received here, was as equally as important as the degree. I received confidence, leadership skills, and the discipline I learnt during this time was immeasurable. I feel so privileged, as I believe it made me into the person that I am today. For that I am permanently indebted.*

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<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Years</b>	1993–1997
<b>Degree</b>	Bachelor of Environmental Engineering
<b>University</b>	The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)
<b>Current position</b>	Senior Urban Development Specialist, Urban Development and Water Division, Asian Development Bank (ADB)
<b>Brief biography</b>	<p>Ms Pokhrel is currently living and working in Manila, Philippines for the ADB as a senior urban Planner and WASH specialist leading largescale projects in Nepal and India. Born in the small regional town of Dharan in East Nepal, a three day journey from Kathmandu. As a result, tertiary education was not easily accessible. Upon seeing an advertisement in her local newspaper for the Australia government scholarships, Ms Pokhrel applied and considers herself very lucky to be accepted as it was a coveted scholarship.</p> <p>In 1997 Ms Pokhrel completed her Bachelor of Environmental Engineering at RMIT in Melbourne. Following this she worked at Bovis Lend Lease in Sydney on construction projects including the 2000 Sydney Olympic Village. Ms Pokhrel then progressed to Project Manager and worked in Melbourne implementing environmentally sustainable design principles. Ms Pokhrel received a second scholarship to undertake a Master of Science in Hydrology for Environmental Management at the Imperial College London.</p> <p>Ms Pokhrel returned to Nepal in 2003 to work for Water Aid Nepal designing water supply and sanitation schemes in peri-urban areas. Ms Pokhrel then accepted a position at the ADB and has worked on water and sanitation projects in Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.</p>

Location at time of field research: Manila, Philippines  
Date of interview: 13 March 2017



## Geeta Shrestha

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*I feel pride for the way we were able to manage my Division [ATC Training and Rating] in quite a different way and I am very thankful for my team for their full relentless support in changing the image of my Division in the Air Traffic Control family. When I went to that Division as chief of that Division it was in my mind just how to make an image of that Division into a friendly and homely environment in the Air Traffic Control Community. But that does not quite mean in compromising with the responsibility that division has. We just managed to take the live examinations in a homely environment so that the controllers can utilise their full potential.*

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<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Years</b>	1996–1997
<b>Degree</b>	Master of Logistics Management – Organisational Behaviour
<b>University</b>	The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)
<b>Current position</b>	Retired. Formerly Deputy Director, Air Traffic Controller, Training Rating Division, Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal
<b>Brief biography</b>	<p>Mrs Shrestha is a retired air traffic controller and lives in Nepal with her oldest son, Sandesh. Working for the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Mrs Shrestha applied under a special scholarship established by the then Australian Ambassador to Nepal. This scholarship specifically targeted females in civil aviation to build their capacity to contribute to the development of the sector.</p> <p>In 1997 Mrs Shrestha completed a Master of Logistics Management – Organisational Behaviour at RMIT in Melbourne, and was accompanied for the duration of her scholarship in Australia by her husband and two sons. She greatly credits her husband's support to undertake the scholarship. A school principal and president of the local cinema house, Mr Shrestha quit his jobs to support Mrs Shrestha and to care for their children while she completed her studies.</p> <p>Post award, Mrs Shrestha returned in her role as an air traffic controller, and within seven years was promoted to the position of Chief and Deputy Directory of the Air Traffic Controllers Training and Rating. This department was responsible for the annual testing and requalification for the air traffic controllers at Tribhuvan International Airport and upholding international operating standards.</p>

Location at time of field research: Kathmandu, Nepal  
Date of interview: 28 March 2017

## Dr Prakesh Pant

*One of the things is that I have contributed a lot is in teaching. My students, some of them are in London, some of them are in the USA, some of them are in Japan, some of them are here are in good positions. So, I see that as my success...Another thing is that...I had an opportunity to do technical research. I was involved in various projects. I worked with UNICEF, I worked with the London School of Hygiene, and then with UNFP/UNFBA, UNDP [United Nations Development Programme], lots of organisations. That was because I got these skills from Australia.*



<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Award Years</b>	1991–1995; 1988–1989
<b>Degrees</b>	PhD in Demography - ‘ <i>Infant and child mortality in Nepal: socio- economic, demographic and cultural factors</i> ’; Master of Demography
<b>University</b>	Australian National University (ANU)
<b>Current position</b>	Chairperson and Senior Monitoring & Evaluations Advisor - MITRA Samaj, Consultant (development projects)
<b>Brief biography</b>	<p>Dr Pant is currently the Chairperson and Senior Monitoring &amp; Evaluations Advisor for MITRA Samaj, and provides expertise on Nepal’s demography as a consultant on development projects for UN and donor agencies and programmes. With a master’s degree in management, Dr Pant was working for the Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA) at Tribhuvan University as a research assistant and lecturer.</p> <p>In 1989 Dr Pant completed his Master of Demography at ANU and was selected into the PhD program where in 1995 he completed his thesis. Post award, Dr Pant returned to Tribhuvan University to resume his previous role with the additional responsibility of lecturing on demography. Dr Pant has made significant contributions in the field of research, supporting numerous development projects and policy design. With a prolific international research profile, a few of his select works include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ‘Family Planning, Reproductive Health and, Maternal and Child Health, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Survey in 49 Hill and Mountain Districts: A Comparative Analysis (2015)’;</li><li>• ‘A comparative Analysis of Unmet Need in Nepal (2008)’.</li></ul>

Location at time of field research: Kathmandu, Nepal  
Date of interview: 28 March 2017

## Dr Ram Hari Aryal

*Doing a PhD itself is very prestigious here in the community...That is good, but we have to do accordingly also...I'm recognised as the Senior Demographer of Nepal. So in UNDP, the UN system, in government and the community also, [I am recognised as] the Senior Demographer, [and I] knows a lot of things about the demography of Nepal. But...that is because of the degree [from Australia]. That is the thing.*



<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Award Years</b>	1993–1994; 1988–1990; 1986
<b>Degrees</b>	PhD in Demography - ‘The onset of fertility decline in urban Nepal: A study of Kathmandu City’; Master of Demography; English Language Course
<b>University</b>	University of South Australia; Australian National University (ANU)
<b>Current position</b>	Nepal Rastra Bank – Board of Directors, Consultant (development projects)
<b>Brief Biography</b>	<p>Recently retired from the Nepal Civil Service, Dr Aryal now serves on the Board of Directors for Nepal Rastra Bank, and also supports development projects as a consultant. Prior to his professional career, Dr Aryal received a Master of Economics from Tribhuvan University.</p> <p>While working in the Parliament Secretary Office (PSO) Dr Aryal received his first scholarship to Australia to undertake an English language course to support engagement with international representatives. During this time he had the opportunity to visit ANU and learned of their demography program. On his return to Nepal, Dr Aryal successfully conveyed the need for capacity development in the area of demography for government planning. In 1990 Dr Aryal completed a Master of Demography at ANU, and was admitted into the PhD program at the University of South Australia with a two year World Bank graduate scholarship. With the support of a second development scholarship from Australia Dr Aryal was able to complete his doctoral thesis.</p> <p>Dr Aryal returned to his role with PSO and was successful in his advocacy for the creation of the Ministry for Population and Environment to which he was transferred. Dr Aryal then served as the Joint Secretary for the Population Division in the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and as Secretary for the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST).</p>

Location at time of field research: Kathmandu, Nepal  
Date of interview: 29 March 2017

## Arjun Mainali

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*There are two landmark things that I have done. I was the person who opened my Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka [and] the only person within that Embassy for a year.*

*Number two, during the 2014 Iraq/Mosul incident when ISIL[Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] moved in and captured the whole town, Nepalese people were there during that time in that area. It became a big UN crisis. During that time I went as a special representative for the Ministry [of Foreign Affairs, Nepal in] Iraq and rescued them... Some people had entered Baghdad itself and had started feeling unsafe and panicked and wanted to go home, and I got them all out.*

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<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Award Years</b>	1994–1995
<b>Degree</b>	Master of Foreign Affairs and Trade
<b>University</b>	Australian National University (ANU)
<b>Current position</b>	Retired. Formerly Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Brief biography** Mr Mainali is a recently retired Ministry of Foreign Affairs official and the former Chief of Protocol living in Kathmandu Nepal. As a junior officer in the Ministry, Mr Mainali received a scholarship to undertake a joint program run by ANU and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia for foreign ministry officials and DFAT staff. In 1995, Mr Mainali graduated from this program with a Master of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

After completing his studies, Mr Mainali returned to his position, but was promptly posted to Sri Lanka during the period of the Sri Lankan Civil War. As Ambassador from 1995 to 1999, Mr Mainali established Nepal's embassy bolstering Nepali and Sri Lanka relations. Following this, Mr Mainali occupied a number of roles internationally promoting Nepali relations, including as Deputy Chief of Mission of Nepal in Washington, D.C, and as the Special Representative of the Foreign Ministry for the Welfare of the Nepalese Living in Iraq to assist citizens trapped by escalating conflict.

Location at time of field research: Kathmandu, Nepal  
Date of interview: 29 March 2017

## Kabiraj Khanal

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*One by-product of Australia is my English [skills] ...compared to the level of English before going to Australia and after coming back from Australia it's much better of course... [This benefitted my career] a lot. As a government employee...I did my work professionally, and practically.*

*When I was in the Ministry of Health I was able to guide the research. I was the process guy who did the GIS surveys as well for two consecutive years. It created a level of confidence: I can do that. That was the thing. Otherwise, although I knew well, I was never sure; I was not confident, but after getting back from Australia I was confident enough that in my field, I can do it. I can speak to those subjects. I can defend myself, I can argue my points, making it evidence-based.*

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<b>Scholarship</b>	AIDAB
<b>Award Years</b>	1993–1995
<b>Degree</b>	Master of Demography
<b>University</b>	Australian National University (ANU)
<b>Current position</b>	Retired. Formerly Joint Secretary for the Ministry of Information and Communications
<b>Brief biography</b>	<p>Mr Khanal is a former officer of the Nepal Civil Service, who retired after 32 years of service in January 2016. While studying for a Master of Economics from Tribhuvan University, Mr Khanal developed an interest in the field of demography which led to him supplementing his knowledge with a Diploma in Population Studies. While working for the National Planning Commission Secretariat (NPC) as Secretary General, Mr Khanal became aware of the then Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB) (now DFAT) scholarship offered at that time. With advice from his professors at Tribhuvan University, Mr Khanal applied to study at ANU.</p> <p>In 1995 Mr Khanal completed a Master of Demography at ANU and received a transfer to the Ministry of Home Affairs where he worked for 22 years. During his career, Mr Khanal has served in an additional two ministries, working within the Ministry of Health as Under Secretary and finally the Ministry of Information and Communications as Joint Secretary.</p>

Location at time of field research: Kathmandu, Nepal  
Date of interview: 29 March 2017

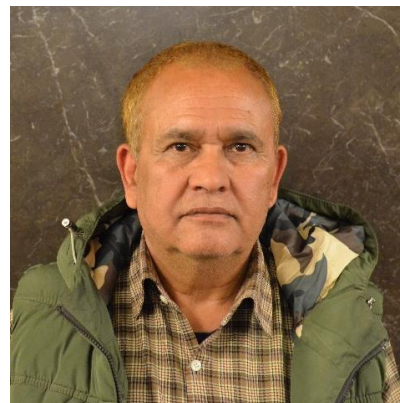


## Achyut Raj Sharma

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*Already four years I am retired. I am involved in two different areas, one is the women's health area...[when] I was assigned the Women Development Officer job...I realised there were so many issues for women which could be improved but I picked up and I chose one very specific one: that is on the women specific cancer awareness...I am different than the rest of the other common people because I got the opportunity to learn something and to see something new. Then that motivated me to work differently than my other colleagues...In this NGO (non-governmental organisation), without any assistance...we have been able to screen 220,000 women so far...This, my activity, as to say, this is the achievement.*

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<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Award Years</b>	1993–1995
<b>Degree</b>	Graduate Diploma in Development Administration
<b>University</b>	Australian National University (ANU)
<b>Current position</b>	General Secretary - Nepal Natural and Human Resources Development Association (NAHUDA); General Secretary - Disabled Newlife Centre (DNC)
<b>Brief biography</b>	<p>Mr Sharma is a retired civil servant now working as the General Secretary for NAHUDA and DNC in Kathmandu. Born in 1955, Mr Sharma holds a Master of Political Science and a Bachelor of Laws from Tribhuvan University. Working as a training officer in the Ministry of Human Resources, Mr Sharma was selected for an Australian government scholarship to undertake a Graduate Diploma in Development Administration at ANU.</p> <p>Post award, Mr Sharma was transferred to the Transport Management Department as Transport Manager. Mr Sharma was then the training coordinator for the Department for Women Development, Chief District Officer for the Ministry of Home Affairs, General Manager in the National Productivity and Economic Development Centre, and the Deputy Permanent Representative for the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations and Other International Organisations, Geneva.</p> <p>A prolific actor in community development, and in addition to his two roles supporting women's health and disability inclusiveness, Mr Sharma is a life member of the Nepal Red Cross Society and the Cancer Relief Society of Nepal. Mr Sharma also volunteers his time to assist disaster and conflict affected communities, and is a trained psycho social counsellor.</p>

Location at time of field research: Kathmandu, Nepal  
Date of interview: 29 March 2017

## Rudra Nepal

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*The most important thing that I did; I should mention about my own career as ambassador in Australia. I represented my country there. So the people-to-people relations that had been growing very, very, fast between Australia and Nepal...and there is an equally growing number of students...So to build these kinds of relations between Nepal and Australia... I also, as an ambassador...had some goals. I've always been an advocate of Australia as a good centre of learning and education, and having myself been there as a student... [I], take pride in that. So building people-to-people relations that was a very important aspect of our work as an ambassador... having been a student in Australia myself, I tell [students] it's a good place to study...I could convince them. For the last eight or 10 years, a lot of Nepalese students are going to Australia. The latest media release said we're the eighth largest source of foreign student, Nepal. It was not because of me, but I also added to that, I could contribute [to that].*

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<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Award Years</b>	1993
<b>Degree</b>	Post Graduate Diploma in Foreign Affairs and Trade
<b>University</b>	Australian National University (ANU)
<b>Current position</b>	Retired. Former Ambassador to Australia (2012 – 2016)

**Brief biography:** Mr Nepal is a retired official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where his last role was as Nepal's Ambassador to Australia from 2012 to 2016. Prior to studying in Australia, Mr Nepal completed a Master of Arts in Economics from Tribhuvan University, and joined the Ministry in 1982.

Born in the western part of Nepal, Mr Nepal spent ten years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before being selected for the Post Graduate Diploma in Foreign Affairs and Trade in a joint program by ANU and DFAT.

Mr Nepal returned to his role in the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation Division (SAARC) focusing on trade and economics. Mr Nepal then held the position of First Secretary at the Embassy of Nepal in Tokyo, Japan; Minister-Counsellor at the Embassy of Nepal in Washington DC; and Minister Counsellor at the Nepalese Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Location at time of field research: Kathmandu, Nepal

Date of interview: 30 March 2017



## Bindu Mishra

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*[My most proud achievements are] First thing, being female and being the boss. Also being sometimes a role model, that is inspiring for myself, because they say 'look at her, she's the boss, she's also female...she is working for us, for the development of the country, that's great'. That's a great motivation for myself. And then with the challenges of being female and working in the forestry sector, all of these opportunities have come to me properly...and I am proud to be there. Sometimes for us [females] it is difficult because of the social unacceptance, even now. People, and colleagues sometimes, they don't believe in our ability. So we have to do more to prove our capability and things are different*

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<b>Scholarship</b>	Development scholarship
<b>Award Years</b>	1994–1996
<b>Degree</b>	Master of Forestry
<b>University</b>	Australian National University (ANU)
<b>Current position</b>	District Forest Officer - Baglung, Western Nepal.
<b>Brief biography</b>	<p>Mrs Mishra is an Under Secretary in the Government of Nepal and is currently working as the District Forest Officer in Baglung, Western Nepal, one of the 75 districts in Nepal. In this role, Mrs Mishra oversees 69 staff, and is responsible for the management of the forest area in Baglung.</p> <p>Inspired by her seniors who had received scholarships to study in Australia and came back to contribute to Nepal, Mrs Mishra stated this was her motivation for applying for a scholarship herself. In 1996 Mrs Mishra completed a Master of Forestry at ANU.</p> <p>Following her studies, Mrs Mishra resumed her role as an Assistant Forest Officer. Working under a transfer system, Mrs Mishra was frequently moved around the districts which provided further learning opportunities to practically understand different climatic and physiographic conditions; and different forest types. This also enabled Mrs Mishra to learn more about the multilingual and multicultural diversity of Nepal's citizens.</p> <p>Mrs Mishra was selected for the EU funded project Gulmi, Arghakhachi Rural Development Project (GARDEP), where she served as a National Program Expert (Gender) from 1998 to 2000. This opportunity arose from an open competition. Mrs Mishra's master's thesis on women's participation in community forestry was instrumental in her successful application.</p>

Location at time of field research: Pokhara, Nepal (via phone); and Kathmandu, Nepal  
Date of interview: 31 March 2017; and 29 May 2017

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# Annex 1: Case Study propositions

Explanatory Case Studies require the development of propositions that are intricately linked to the original research questions. A proposition is a statement that helps direct attention to something that should be examined in a Case Study. The researcher has to make a speculation, on the basis of the literature and any other earlier evidence, as to what they expect the findings of the research to be. When a Case Study proposal includes specific propositions, it increases the likelihood that the researcher can limit the scope of study and complete the project. The researcher can have several propositions to guide the study, but each must have a distinct focus and purpose. The data collection and analysis can then be structured in order to support or refute the research propositions.

For the Facility, propositions were formed using the Global Strategy outcomes as the basis. Sub-propositions were formulated by speculating on the underlying assumption or enabling factors that realise the proposition. In alignment with the methodology, instruments will be designed to collect data that both support and refute the propositions.

1. Alumni use their skills knowledge and networks to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals<sup>5</sup>
  - a alumni develop skills, knowledge and networks on award that enable and are used to contribute to achieving partner-country development goals
  - b alumni understand, value and want to contribute to partner-country development goals
2. Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries
  - a alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships
3. Effective, mutually advantageous partnerships between institutions and business [have been developed] in Australia and partner countries.
  - a alumni possess and are able to leverage their useful networks and relationships
  - b partnerships that are developed are effective and mutually advantageous to participating countries
4. Alumni view Australia and Australian expertise positively
  - a alumni's views are underpinned by their experiences in Australia
5. The benefits of receiving an Australia Award or scholarship are experienced equally by all recipients.
  - a receiving an Australia Award or scholarship positively addresses, rather than reinforces, imbalances that are associated with gender and disability.

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<sup>5</sup> This proposition differs from the Australia Awards Program Logic long-term outcome number 1 in order to link this proposition to the Goal of the Australia Awards (see page 2). The use of the term 'partner-country development goals' instead of 'sustainable development' makes the proposition and ensuing questions more relevant and relatable to alumni.

## Annex 2: Key participant questions

### Alumni

#### *[Validation question]*

We'd like to start with learning a bit about you. We understand you are a scholarship alumni and you studied [in x year/s, at x university, in x field], is that right? Can you give us some background about your study and then your subsequent career pathway from then?

1. Can you please let me know why you applied? What was your motivation?
  - a Were there any difficulties or barriers to overcome in accepting the Australia Award/scholarship? On reflection, would you have made the same decisions? (G)
2. Can you tell me about your time in Australia and experience as a scholarship recipient?

[Ask a. and b. after participant has had an opportunity to answer the main question]

- a Did you make friends and professional networks?
  - b Thinking about the friendships and networks that you might have developed on award, were there any that were long lasting, resulting in working together or connecting other people?
- 3 After you returned, what was your job and were you able to apply the skills and knowledge gained during your time on award?
  - a What were some of the barriers to applying these skills and knowledge when you returned home?
  - b What do you think is needed to assist alumni to use their skills and knowledge when they return home?
- 4 Based on your personal and/or professional experiences, what do you believe are the greatest benefits of the Australia Awards/scholarships?
- 5 [During your career], Have you ever drawn upon Australian expertise in your work? Can you give an example of this, such as Australian-developed practices, ways of working, processes, theory/theorists, consultants, journals, models, equipment etc?
- 6 Are you currently or have been a member of an alumni association, can you please describe for us how this is/was relevant for you?
  - a What more could be done?
  - b If not why not?
- 7 Can you describe an achievement that you are most proud of, in your work or community?
  - a Is there any relationship between this achievement and receiving an Australia Award?
- 8 Were your beliefs or perspectives of the world changed or challenged in any way

- while on award? (G and I)
- 9 Compared with the males/females who have received an Australia Award from [country X], how has your career progressed since returning home? (G)
    - a Do you think gender impacts career progress?
    - b Do you think disability impacts career progress?
  - 10 Compared to peers similar to you but did not receive an opportunity to study overseas, do you believe there are any differences in how your careers have progressed?
  - 11 Do you have anything further to add?

### **Employers/colleagues – For interviews regarding an individual alumni**

*[Validation question]*

Could you please tell us about yourself? (What is your profession, or what is your role in the organisation?)

- 1 Could you please tell us how long have you known X and in what capacity?
  - a Did you know X before s/he received an award?
  - b Were you his/her manager?
- 2 To your knowledge, what skills, knowledge and networks did X use after returning to country X after completing their scholarship?
  - a Could you provide examples of how this was applied?
- 3 How did the organisation support X to use his/her skills, knowledge and networks post return from Australia?
  - a What was your role in supporting X's return to your country post award?
    - i Developing reintegration/return to work plan?
    - ii If so why? What did involve?
    - iii If not, why?
  - b Did X return to the same role post return?
  - c Did they receive additional responsibilities post return?
- 4 In your view, how did X's qualification impact his/her career
- 5 Have you or your organisation benefited from any networks or friendships between [country X] and Australia created by the alumni as a result of being an Australian scholarship recipient?
  - a Please explain further; who and what?
  - b What about any other countries?
- 6 Are you aware of any other links X has created between people in X and Australia as a result of being an Australian scholarship recipient?



- a Please explain further; who, what why?
- b What about between people in X and any other countries?
- 7 What more could be done to increase opportunities to create institutional links between Australia and your country?
- 8 How has having an Australian scholarship recipient in your organisation impacted how you view Australia and Australian expertise?
  - a As a result, do you draw on Australian expertise for your work?
- 9 What are some of the things that make it easy or difficult for women to progress in their careers in your country?
- 10 What are some of the things that make it easy or difficult for those with disability to progress in their careers in your country?

### **Employers/stakeholders – For interviews regarding alumni generally**

*[Validation question]*

Could you please tell us about yourself? (What is your profession, or what is your role in the organisation?)

- 1 In your view, what has been the overall long-term impact of having Australian scholarship recipients in your organisation?
  - a Estimated, how many Australian scholarship recipients have worked for your organisation?
  - b How has having a number of Australian scholarship recipients over a number of years influenced your department's ability to achieve its goals and /or objectives?
  - c With regards to skills and knowledge; i.e. changed practices, processes or systems?
- 2 Has your organisation been able to leverage any networks or relationships as a result of having Australian government scholarship alumni?
  - a What examples can you provide?
  - b What have been the outcomes of this?
- 3 As a result of having a number of Australian scholarship recipients over a number of years in your organisation, have they influenced the way you view Australia and Australian expertise?
- 4 Have alumni proposed any links between your organisation and organisations in Australia?
  - a If yes what has been the result of these links?
  - b Benefits to you?
  - c Benefits to your workplace?
  - d Benefits to your country?



- e If no, why not?
- 5 Are you aware if alumni have presented any opportunities on return to link your workplace or any other organisation in your country with an organisation in another country?
  - a If yes what has been the result of these links?
  - b Benefits to you?
  - c Benefits to your workplace?
  - d Benefits to your country?
  - e If no, why not?
- 6 What are some of the things that make it easy or difficult for women to progress in their careers in your country?
- 7 What are some of the things that make it easy or difficult for those with disability to progress in their careers in your country?

## DFAT

*[Validation question]*

Could you please tell us about yourself and your role with the Australia Awards?

- 1 In your own words, what is the purpose of the Australia Awards?
  - a In your own words how does the initiative achieve [points stated in the previous response]?
- 2 Based on your experience what would you say are the strengths of the Australia Awards?
- 3 How do you think an alumni's participation in the Australia Awards contributes to [Country X's] development goals?
  - a What evidence have you seen of this either personally or professionally?
  - b Do you think the initiative lead to benefits for both Australia and [Country X]?
- 4 In your opinion, how do you think an alumni's participation in the Australia Awards contributes to a positive relationships between [Country X] and Australia?
  - a What factors/events have informed this opinion?
- 5 How do you think the Australia Awards contribute to gender equality and disability inclusiveness?
  - a Let's start with gender equality
  - b What about disability inclusiveness
- 6 Based on your professional and personal experience living in [Country X] what barriers are there to achieving gender equality and disability inclusiveness?
  - a Do you feel [barriers stated in the previous response] have changed over time?
  - b In what way?

- 7 If you had the power to change things about the Australia Awards what would you make different?
- 8 That covers the things I wanted to ask. Anything you would like to add?

## Annex 3: Participants in the Nepal Case Study

**Table 3: Nepal Case Study alumni participants**

Date of interview	Gender	Name	Year of Award	Scholarship	Position	Urban/ Rural
13/03	F	Neeta Pokhrel	93-97	M. Environmental Engineering, RMIT	Senior Urban Planning /WASH Specialist ADB (Nepal and India)	R*
28/3	F	Geeta Shrestha	96-97	Master of Logistics Management RMIT (1996-1997)	Retired Previously Air Traffic Controller, Chief Rating and Licencing Division	U
28/3	M	Dr Prakesh Pant	88-89 91-95	M. Demography ANU PhD Demography (Topic: Infant and Child Mortality) ANU	Chairperson and Senior M&E Adviser MITRA Samaj Consultant (Development Projects)	U
29/3	M	Dr Ram Hari Aryal	88-90 91-94	M. Demography ANU PhD Demography Adelaide	Retired Former Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Founder, ANAA	U
29/3	M	Arjun Mainali	94-95	PGD Foreign Affairs and Trade ANU	Retired Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	U
29/3	M	Kabiraj Khanal	93-95	M. Demography ANU	Retired Joint Secretary, Government of Nepal Ministry of Health (and various) Founding member ANAA	U
29/3	M	Achyutra Sharma	91-92	Master Development Administration ANU	Retired Government employee Consultant (Development Projects) Founding Member ANAA	U
30/3	M	Rudra Nepal	93	PGD Foreign Affairs and Trade ANU	Former Ambassador to Australia (2012-2016)	U
31/3 29/05**	F	Bindu Mishra	94-96	M Forestry ANU	District Chief, Forestry Division (TBC)	R

\*Currently based in Manila, previously from Dharan in southern Nepal prior to accepting a scholarship

\*\*Follow up interview conducted by the Australia Awards office

**Table 4: Key stakeholder and employer/colleague interviews**

Date	Name	Position	Reason for Interview
13/03	Mr Sekhar Bonu	Director, Urban Development and Water Division, Asian Development Bank	Manager of Ms Neeta Pokhrel (Australian scholarship alumna)
27/03	Ms Ainsley Hemming	Second Secretary, Development Cooperation of the Australian Embassy	Key stakeholder (DFAT)
28/3	Mr Sandesh Shrestha	N/A	Son of Mrs Geeta Shrestha, alumna
28/03	Mr Rishi Ram Tripathi	General Secretary, Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia (ANAA)	Mr Tripathi is General Secretary of the Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia
30/03	Mr Khyam Bahadur B.K.	Program Officer – Nepal Scope Global	Key stakeholder (Australia Awards)
30/03	Ms Sunita Gurung	Program Manager Australia Awards, Volunteers and Humanitarian	Key stakeholder (DFAT)
	Mr Gaurav Katwal	Australian Embassy, Kathmandu Country Program Manager – Nepal Scope Global	Key stakeholder (Australia Awards)
30/03	Dr Sunita Maleku Amatya	President, Autism Care Nepal Society	<p>Provided insight into psychosocial/developmental disabilities and their effect on career.</p> <p>Dr Maleku also received an Australia Awards Short Course Award (SCA) in 2016</p>
31/03	Ms Tara D Gurung	Director – Development Policy and Programs, Australian Embassy, Kathmandu	Key stakeholder (DFAT) and provided insight into how gender impacts career in Nepal.

