

Students Exchange Program for Nepalese Students to Luxembourg
A Project Report



Prepared By:
Bidhya Neupane (Intern)
ARD

Association for Rural Development, Kavre
Madhyapur Thimi, Bhaktapur
Nepal

Oct. 2022

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	4
Acronyms	5
Background	6
Preparation Before Exchange Program	7
Selection of Participants	7
Visa and Important Documents	7
Preparation for Departure	7
Activities and Experiences	8
Day 1	8
Day 2	8
Day 3	9
Day 4	9
Day 5	9
Day 6	10
Day 7	10
Day 8	10
Day 9	10
Day 10	11
Analysis and Findings	12
Hospitality	12
Language Barrier	12
Cultural Exchange	12
Perception of Education and Schools	12
Socio-Political Exchange	13
Achievements and Opportunities	13
Challenges	13
The Way Forward	14
Recommendations	15
Conclusion	16
Annexe	17
Pictures	17
Departure from Nepal	17

Glimpse from the 'Nepal Festival'
Others

17
18

Acknowledgement

ARD regards it as an honour and a privilege to express gratitude to AEIN for the "enormous" amount of labour done to make the exchange program a success. The entire AEIN fraternity and the loving hosts (especially Lillian and Edmee) and their families who welcomed the Nepali students into their home are also applauded by ARD for their support and for providing them with the chance to travel and learn about a new culture where the language, foods, infrastructure, education system, traffic system, ideas, and people are all so different but amiable. This has had a significant effect on both their social and academic lives. Additionally, ARD would like to express its gratitude to the ENAD students, in particular for their unwavering friendliness and generosity towards the Nepalese students. It was a tremendously empowering and maturing experience for all of the Nepali students. Along with being grateful to Kushadevi Multiple Campus for allowing their students to participate in this exchange program, ARD is also grateful to all the enthusiastic participants who gave their best efforts and were eager to learn throughout the program. ARD is also thankful to the campus representative who played the role of a guardian as well as the officers representing ARD who guided and supervised students during their visit. ARD also must appreciate all the helping hands and people involved ever since this project was proposed for the successful completion of the project. ARD is looking forward to welcoming such support in future as well.

Acronyms

AEIN- Aide à l'Enfance de l'Inde et du Népal

ARD- Association for Rural Development

ENAD- Ecole Nationale pour Adultes

NGO- Non Governmental Organization

NRN- Non Resident Nepali

SDGs- Sustainable Development Goals

SOS- Save Our Souls

Chapter 1

Background

Association for Rural Development (ARD) is a non-government, non-profitable, and non-political organization established with the prime aim of innovative development and resource mobilization. Moreover, the organization is committed to creating social justice and social transformation for the socioeconomic development of disadvantaged and marginalized people in the country. Aide à l'Enfance de l'Inde et du Népal (AEIN), essentially acts as a support NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), raising private and public funds to finance projects and action programs designed and implemented in Nepal by local organizations. It works for lower castes, natives, peasants, women and children/youth. Its areas of intervention are rights, ecology/agriculture/fight against climate change, education/training, income and health. AEIN believes in the opening of consciences to North-South interdependencies. AEIN is one of the key hosts to support programs designed by ARD.

A youth exchange program was held to create a cultural exchange between the youths of Nepal and Luxembourg with the collaboration of ARD with AEIN. The overall objective of the project was:

- a. Promoting youth development through active engagement to achieve the Sustainable
- b. Promoting development Goals at the local level.

The specific objectives of this program were as follows:

- a. Encourage youth's active participation in achieving the Agenda 2030 at the local level by providing them with an opportunity for skill enhancement, knowledge, and leadership to reach their full potential.
- b. Organize a youth exchange program for a better understanding of cross-cultural and international practices to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Agenda 2030 (especially SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 8 – Decent Work and SDG 13 – Climate change) among youth in Nepal and Luxembourg.

This document serves as a complete document for the report of the student exchange program that took place from 26th September- 5th October where 5 students and 3 other representatives from Nepal participated in the program held in Luxembourg.

Chapter 2

Preparation Before Exchange Program

Selection of Participants

There were two steps taken in choosing the students for this exchange program. First, interested students from the Kushadevi Multiple Campus were required to submit a letter of motivation. Applications were submitted to ARD by applicants. A preliminary screening of the applications was conducted by the panel designated to the selection process, and a select group of qualified applicants were then contacted for an interview round. The top five students were picked based on their performance and the officers' assessments of their competency. Among the students was a group of young people enrolled in different courses at different levels and coming from various socio-cultural backgrounds.

A campus chief was selected from Kushadevi Multiple Campus as the representative teacher and two of the officers were selected as representatives for ARD.

Visa and Important Documents

It was important to have a passport to apply for the visa. ARD helped all the participants to prepare their documents to get their passports and financially aided them throughout the process until they acquired their visas. However, the process was time-consuming and tedious due to the long process required for documentation and approvals.

Preparation for Departure

Students received an orientation before they were set to leave for Luxembourg. Since the exchange program was fully funded, all the participants got their tickets for travel through the fund. It was also arranged by AEIN and ARD. The group of 8 Nepalese people for this exchange program had to go to Luxembourg by taking three flights (KTM- DUBAI, DUBAI- AMSTERDAM, AMSTERDAM – LUXEMBOURG). The team departed on 26th September from Nepal for a 10 days program.

Chapter 3

Activities and Experiences

Day 1

The team of young students, a focal teacher as a campus representative and two officers of ARD arrived at the Findel Airport of Luxembourg on 27th September 2022 at 10 AM Luxembourg Standard Time. The AEIN Team were already present at the airport to receive Nepalese guests who had travelled a very long flight to be a part of this program. Jeff had brought his vehicle to pick up the visitors from the airport and drive the team towards Liliane's home. There was an introductory session between the group of AEIN and ARD along with youths. It was also an occasion of a Hindu Festival, Ghatasthapana. Giving due respect to that occasion, the team from Nepal planted 'Jamara'- mainly a mixture of different seeds such as paddy, maize, wheat, etc. which is grown under shade for 10 days. There was a team lunch for the guests at Lillian's. This was also followed by a briefing session about the visit to Luxembourg. The team from Nepal were divided into two groups- one consisting of all males and the other consisting of all females. Both of the groups were assigned a family as a host. The male members stayed at Lillian's while the female members went to Edmee's. The first day of the visit then ended with a sound sleep.

Day 2

The Nepali team members had their breakfast with their new families in Luxembourg. AEIN Member, Jeff, received all the participants from Nepal and drove them to meet the students at ENAD. First, there was an exchange of greetings and introductions between the youths from ARD and the youths at Ecole Nationale pour Adultes (ENAD). The introductory session followed the knowledge sharing from two organisations. The students from ENAD took the team from Nepal on a city tour where the groups visited the Golden Queen Statue, Churches, Office Areas, Child Youth Helping Organization, etc. There was a meeting with youths regarding discussion on climate change issues in the Child Youth Helping Organization. After the discussion, the team was joined by Francoise from AEIN, who helped them shop in a Nepali market. They prepared a traditional Nepali lunch and served it to everyone. They returned to the families where they were staying and enjoyed a peaceful night.

Day 3

The third day of the visit started with a visit to Beval Rockhal University. There was a youth session that led to entrepreneurship development as psychological development. The session was intended for groups from Nepal and Luxembourg. The students and the team members had some snacks and departed to visit a shelter for homeless people. The team had a fulfilling meal in the shelter. Then the team were taken to BENU Village Esch which believed in responsible consumption by dealing with ecological challenge and promoting a wasteless lifestyle. The visiting groups learnt how old garments were recycled into new ones with the addition of innovative designs. This was a good example of managing fashion waste for the students who were visiting Nepal. As per the conversation with participants, some of them claimed to be influenced by this concept and wanted to explore its possibilities in Nepal as well. The team went to Lilliane's to rehearse for their cultural dance. The team had a meal before the groups returned to their families for rest.

Day 4

Jeff, a team member from AEIN took the members to ENAD so that they could participate in one of the classes. There was also a discussion where youths shared how Nepal and Luxembourg differed from each other as two different nations. The youths also shared a moment of cultural exchange with dance, songs and conversations about food, culture, political system and lifestyles. The team took a short break in the beauty of nature before heading to another stop, i.e., the Bierkereich Bio Gas plant. It was a guided tour for the team with Jeff. This gave the visitors from Nepal an idea about the production of green energy by utilizing waste. The team then went on a short visit to Belgium. The groups returned to their families for dinner and sleep.

Day 5

A program called "Festival Nepal" was organised by NRN (Non-Resident Nepali) Luxembourg and the AEIN family. The team from Nepal also presented their cultural dance performance at the festival. The Development and Economic Minister of Luxembourg were also present at the festival. The team from Nepal received appreciation at the event from a member of AEIN, Franco. The event also had a panel discussion on "Young Girls in Nepal" and some presentations. The youths from Nepal greatly interacted with the people who attended the event. The program was finally over at 7:00 PM Luxembourg Standard Time and the Nepali team went back to their families after a fulfilling authentic Nepali dinner.

Day 6

The team from Nepal went on a city tour to Germany. The rainy weather made the visit quite troublesome but a visit to Karl Marx's birthplace added joy and inspiration to the faces of promising youths. Apart from these, they visited palaces and other places around. The group had lunch at McDonald's before they gathered at Lilliane's place. Since the day was celebrated as Father's Day in Luxembourg, the team from Nepal decided to plan a little celebration for their loving hosts. The celebration included some conversation, a Nepali dessert and dinner. The group also went to Edmee's family with a surprise for Father's Day celebration before they took a rest at night.

Day 7

The team went shopping. They visited both Nepali and Luxembourgish supermarkets. They had lunch in a Nepali restaurant. After that, they visit an organic farm where they observed sheep, pigs, chickens and goats that were different from the breed in Nepal. The farm also offered them knowledge of milk production and pesticides free crops. The farm also had a market of its own. The Nepali team cooked dinner for both host families and shared a wonderful evening.

Day 8

The group had the visit Kannerdeuf Save Our Souls (SOS) of Luxembourg which functioned similarly to SOS Children Villages in Nepal. They received some snacks there and had a general interaction. The Nepali team went to ENAD for a final visit. They prepared some meals and shared them with the youths. They also performed a cultural dance. As a farewell gesture, the youths from Nepal offered Tika, scarves and some gifts. The youths then went ahead to participate in the Foyer Fundraising Event at Mudam Museum under the guidance of Françoise. The team then went to their families and shared a happy evening with dinner.

Day 9

This day remarked the greatest festival 'Dashain' celebrated in Nepal. Hence, the youths along with the campus chief and the representatives of ARD along with the hosts gathered for a celebration at Lilliane's house. The AEIN team was also present to cherish the celebration. They had a Nepali ritual of putting 'Tika' and 'Jamara' from elders and giving blessings and 'Dakshina' to young ones. They had some photo sessions and then shared a meal. After the celebration at Lilliane's, the group were driven to Schengen Museum. The visit was followed by

a journey to the borders of Germany and France. The youths along with the AEIN team and host family shared dinner at a Nepali restaurant. The dinner got sentimental with conversations about emotional attachment. After the last dinner of the visit, the groups were taken to their homes for rest and packing.

Day 10

The day of departure started with breakfast at the host families. All the hosts made their way to Findel airport so that they could bid farewell to the visitors. The groups also shared an emotional moment and finally, the Nepalese Team departed for Nepal.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Findings

Hospitality

The Eastern adage "Atithi Devo Bhawa," which translates to "Guests should be treated like Gods," is well known in Nepal. Going to a western European country was undoubtedly a culture shock for the participants, but on the plus side, fellow participants from Nepal always admired the generosity they got in Luxembourg. The hospitality shown to international students in Luxembourg helped them form bonds of friendship and belonging. The AEIN team and their family hosts, Lilliane and Edmee, showed the Nepalese team a lot of love and affection, which greatly delighted them.

Language Barrier

It was very challenging for participants to understand one another's thoughts due to different first and mother tongues. Although it wasn't entirely proficient, spoken English was employed as a medium. However, all of the participants actively participated in the panel discussions, conversations, and other activities by using their best verbal and non-verbal cues to express themselves.

Cultural Exchange

It was emphasized that the main goal of this program was cultural exchange. The cultural exchange was valued with other unplanned conversations along with the celebration of the Nepalese festival "Dashain" with the team of AEIN—from planting Jamara to putting Tika. The cultural exchange was not limited to visits to historical and cultural sites, the exchange of traditional gifts and memoirs, the exchange of native foods and snacks, and cultural dances and performances. The Nepali team shared their perception of being in a family and togetherness with the Luxembourgish while the Luxembourgish taught the Nepali team how punctuality and individuality are also important.

Perception of Education and Schools

Nepali students were surprised by the liberalism they observed at ENAD. The environment at school looked less controlled to them. They found the lecturers more friendly and approachable. The education based on practicality and engagement of students was something Nepali students wanted to bring back home. Even the campus representative mentioned that he

wanted to bring those practices into his classroom. A visit to SOS Children Village made a realise how SOS has been working across the world to help children in need.

Socio-Political Exchange

This exchange program, even though intended for cultural exchange, also led to socio-political information sharing and observation. It included gestures, conversation patterns, time management, etc. Nepali students interacted with the students at ENAD and discussed the political ideologies of their respective nations. Similarly, they talked about the social problems in their country as well. This could have helped the students from both nations to observe social and political issues in the globe through a wider perspective. Apart from these, Nepali students' observation of the road discipline that citizens followed in Luxembourg was one of the widely appreciated practices they wanted to take back to Nepal. Making students from the highly advanced west meet the students of the rural west certainly expanded their horizons of knowledge and helped them analyze things more critically than ever. For example, the visit to the eco village and the sessions related to entrepreneurship have helped the students to think about a sustainable future and innovative self-sustaining ideas for the future to execute in Nepal.

Achievements and Opportunities

While this exchange program took place, it made the students and other participants go through a lot of phases. This certainly helped to build up their confidence, their networking ability, social relations, and adaptability. Similarly, the participants achieved a life-long experience of understanding and witnessing European nations through their visit. Apart from these, Nepali students got to be vocal about the issues they had in their motherland. Nevertheless, the relationship and friendships the students established with AEIN, host families and their fellow mates from ENAD remain permanent. While this also served as an essential and meet up between representatives of AEIN and ARD.

Challenges

There were some challenges throughout the program. Some of these include:

- a. The highly bureaucratic system in Nepal to gather essential documents leads to long processes and time consumption
- b. Lack of enough pre-planned training activities for Nepali students so that they could adapt and interact more easily.
- c. Language barrier served as one of the major issues.

d. The cultural shock restrained the students from interacting much.

The Way Forward

Now that Nepali have been in the cultural exchange program, they can share this valuable experience with their friends, families, clubs and everyone. They can execute some of the ideas they learnt abroad. The students are believed to actively work on social issues and be responsible citizens for a sustainable future. Apart from these, the networks they made at AEIN will remain valuable for them to learn and share. The success of this program helped ARD to realise that more such programs are possible.

Chapter 5

Recommendations

Analyzing the challenges in the program, below are a few of the recommendations:

- a. There should be multiple orientation and training activities for Nepali students before departure.
- b. To prevent cultural shocks, students from both countries should have a knowledge-sharing session on the cultures of each other's countries.
- c. There should be some virtual interactions before visiting the destination nation.
- d. Similarly, students from both nations should participate in presentations and knowledge sharing as well as conferences quite often to sustain the relationship.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Luxembourg is a country full of knowledge, hospitality, development and history. Nepal is also a historical and eastern country that has great potential to emerge as a middle-income country through sustainable development. The exchange program for Nepali participants that was held in Luxembourg opened greater prospects for Nepali students to work on their local issues and become self-sufficient through entrepreneurial ideas. There were discussions on Agendas 2030 of SDGs among the participants and even in panel discussions. These indeed helped in creating a sense of responsibility among the youths to act on local levels to meet these goals. Similarly, along with interaction, presentation and other performances; the students learnt leadership as well as networking skills. The participants from both nations indeed had a great opportunity of exposed to a completely different culture. This has positively impacted their interpersonal and communication skills. Apart from these, students were able to learn, analyze, examine and adapt to the new people, new environment, new weather, new cuisines and a new set of friends and families. Hence, it can be said that the significant objectives proposed for this project were met.

While this project was successful, it can be learnt that similar programs are feasible shortly as well. By coping with challenges and learning from them, both AEIN and ARD can set up some more objectives for such programs. The exchange helped the participants from Nepal, but their anecdotes and narratives among their families, friends and college members will spread more international love and diplomacy. The success of programs as such also calls for an even greater bond between promising organisations like ARD and AEIN soon- to help rural communities grow sustainably.

Annexe

Pictures

Departure from Nepal



Glimpse from the 'Nepal Festival'





Others

