



2nd NRN Global Knowledge Convention



Diaspora for Innovation and Prosperity in Nepal: Post COVID-19 Scenario

**09-11 October 2020
Kathmandu University, Nepal**



**Organized by the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)
Co-organizer: Government of Nepal**

www.knowledge.nrna.org

Following the grand success of the 1st NRN Global Knowledge Convention 2018 in Kathmandu, the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) is organizing the next 2nd NRN Global Knowledge Convention on 09-11 October 2020 in Kathmandu University, Nepal. These conventions aim to bring together experts of various disciplines from Nepal, the Nepali diaspora and international scientific communities to explore Nepal's needs for expertise to help the country move towards a knowledge-based economy. Similar to the first convention, the second convention will be co-organized in partnership with the Government of Nepal (GoN), and in collaboration with Nepal's education & research institutions, private sectors and other stakeholders. In addition, the second convention will endeavor to expand its horizon in all possible dimensions along with the realization of the new context brought by the unprecedented pandemic. We openly invite all interested supporters to explore the possibility of active collaboration and participation.

The convention will use Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations and the 15th five-year plan of National Planning Commission of Nepal to shape its objectives and goals. In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the convention will discuss its socioeconomic impact on diaspora and resident Nepalis, and the challenges and opportunities it has brought in Nepal and around the world. The convention has reached out to Nepali stakeholders (GoN, Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, National Planning Commission, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, Universities, Alumni Association, Research Centers, International Organizations, Private Sectors, Industries, Startups and Innovators) to explore the areas of collaboration and interest.

Amid the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the convention will be organized in a hybrid model. For participants who cannot attend the convention in person, it can be attended online.

The focus of the convention will be guided by four overarching themes:

- ◆ In-house Innovation for Societal Changes
- ◆ Science, Technology & Innovation Policy
- ◆ Startups and Commercialization
- ◆ Digitalized Economy

The convention will cover the following broader topical areas:

- ◆ Emerging Science and Technology (Natural Sciences, Life and Health Sciences, Bio technology, Engineering, Information Science and Technology, Big Data & Artificial Intelligence)
- ◆ Public Safety (Environment and Climate Change, Road Safety, Pandemic and Natural Disaster Risk Management)
- ◆ Education and Social Sciences (Vocational Education, Good Governance, Women Equality & Youth Empowerment)
- ◆ Knowledge-based Economy (Finance, Investment, Innovation and Startups, IP Protection)

Centered around these subject areas, the conference will be organized in three parts: Inauguration, Plenary & Symposium sessions. The inaugural session will feature keynote speeches from internationally recognized experts on science and technology (S&T) research and, policy formation and implementation. High-profile global experts who have played a key role in the field of S&T development and technology transfer, and made significant contributions to their country's economic transformation, will address plenary sessions.

The Convention will cover the following Plenary and Symposium Sessions.

PLENARY SESSIONS

P1: COVID-19 Impact on Nepal's Economy & Path to Recovery

Coordinators: Dr Biswo Poudel & Mr Ranjeet Mahato



The outbreak of Coronavirus disease in the pandemic scale has brought about global economy concerns. To break the chain of its transmission, governments around the world have imposed restrictive measures that have led to a major downturn in the global economy. It has impacted Nepal's economy especially in tourism industry, hospitality, employment, service sectors and export industry; however, it has also opened up opportunities in other sectors such as agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health and soft industries, science and technology, and innovation. In this context, we will discuss how Nepal's economic policies ought to change to reduce the economic impact of this and similar future disasters. We will focus on how to achieve economic recovery, financial stability and fiscal sustainability, and bring back business confidence to increase employment and productivity. This session will be organized in collaboration with the National Planning Commission of Nepal.

P2: Preparedness for Pandemic and Natural Disaster Risk Management

Coordinators: Dr Drona Rasali & Dr Puru Shrestha



Nepal has been facing challenges of COVID-19 pandemic which has created one of the unique situations in our lifetime. The country has been fortunate to have reported a little over 10 thousand sporadic cases with a couple of dozen lives lost by 5 months after the first case reported (June 25), when the global confirmed cases had surpassed nine million and the loss of lives inching closer to half a million. The country had most opportune time to learn from the experiences of full-fledged pandemic crises in other countries to restructure its public health system for fighting against any potentially devastating contagion or natural disaster. The most ideal preparedness for a developing country like Nepal would be to have an integrated plan in place to form a permanent organizational structure to collate and mobilize resources, implement well planned programs and projects, and evaluate the outcomes and impacts on global Nepali community. The purpose of this plenary session is to carry out assessment of public health response to the current pandemic crisis as a case to learn the lessons from, in order to envision and put in place a fully functional structure of public health system in the face of future pandemic crises or natural disasters.

P3: Science, Technology & Innovation Policy Implementation

Coordinators: Dr Uttam Babu Shrestha & Dr Suresh Kumar Dhungel



Discussions in this plenary session comprise three key aspects: Nepal's Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy, existing environment of doing scientific research in Nepal and excellence in Science. The plenary speakers will not only highlight the current policies and practices in STI in Nepal but also provide insights on fostering excellence in science. Government of Nepal promulgated STI policy in 2019. It has incorporated many aspects for mainstreaming STI for national capacity building and overall prosperity. The proposed plenary will present the audience a comprehensive picture of the opportunities explored in the policy document, possible challenges of its implementation, and collaborative role of Non-Resident Nepalese diaspora for knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and overall capacity building of Nepali STI sector. In recent times, there is a small trend of returning of Nepalese

scientists in Nepal from overseas and these returnees are conducting research through startups. Speakers will share their knowledge and experience on the barriers and enablers of doing science and research existed in Nepal. Like socioeconomic sectors, Nepal's STI is also lagging behind while Nepalese scientific diaspora communities are doing excellent world-class science. In this context, the plenary session will discuss on fostering best practices and excellence in science in Nepal and the role of diaspora communities in enhancing science excellence in Nepal.

P4: Research, Innovation & Commercialization

Coordinator: Dr Raju Adhikari



Research, Innovation & Commercialization plenary session will cover a range of topics aligned with to the federal government's strategic policies and programs on Science and Technology for knowledge-based economy, and their implementation in the current three levels of government structure. The session aims to cover areas on research, innovations, startups, technology transfer, product development and commercialization. The presentations and deliberations will also focus on federal funding and grants to research enterprises and startups, intellectual property, strategic partnership between public research institutions, universities, and industries, inter disciplinary collaborative approach and linkages locally and globally. The session will put emphasis on innovations of the indigenous technologies and products.

SYMPOSIUM SESSIONS

S1: Agriculture and Food Security

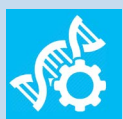
Coordinator: Dr Jagadish Timsina



Challenges of providing adequate, safe and nutritious food to everyone is a global issue. Over 50% of households in Nepal are reported as food insecure and one-in-three households were either mildly or severely food insecure in 2017. Nepalese agriculture has several issues, such as soil nutrient losses by erosion and nutrient mining, scarcity of water for irrigation, mismanagement of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, inadequate supply of agrifood seeds and animal genetic materials, and lack of improved technology-based farming. Further, agriculture is marred by shortage of labor force due to out-migration, resulting in feminization of agriculture and land abandonment. Despite these challenges, agriculture has a major role to play to solve food and nutrition problems. The planned symposium will bring together agricultural and allied experts from Nepal and globally to share their experiences, and discuss possible policy initiatives to reduce food and nutrition insecurity problems in the country.

S2: Biomedical Technologies

Coordinator: Dr Devi Basnet



Biomedical technology has been developing to resolve the medical issues introduced by rapidly deteriorating environment, change in modern lifestyle, high use of processed food, lack of the physical exercise etc. Developed countries are using sophisticated and expensive technological devices to cope with the health issues. Developing countries are compelled to either use imported technology or develop simple and effective technologies they can afford comfortably. This symposium aims to provide a platform for updating and exchanging state-of-the-art knowledge on biomedical science and technology. It will discuss recent scientific development in biomedical science and development of therapeutic drugs. It will also explore the relation of biomedical science to neuroscience, immunology, immunotherapy, tumor biology, biomedical engineering and bio-nanotechnology to develop remedy for human diseases. Cost effective technologies based on innovative ideas and suitable for developing economies will be given high priority.

S3: Financial Investment

Coordinators: Mr Ranjeet Mahato & Mr Analraj Bhattarai



Domestic investment alone is not enough to realize double-digit growth rate that is needed to achieve Nepal's target of becoming a middle-income economy by 2030. To attain such unprecedented growth, we will need both Foreign Direct and Domestic investments. In this context, the symposium will discuss investment prospects and challenges in Nepal, explore incentives and facilities given to investors by the Government of Nepal, and aim to recommend a number of changes needed in investment laws, especially in Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act - 2019, to attract enough investments. It will also investigate existing financial laws and suggest necessary improvements that can facilitate economic growth of Nepal.

S4: Fintech for Economic Transformation

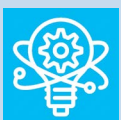
Coordinators: Dr Gyanendra Prasad Joshi & Mr Lok Raj Sharma



Financial technology (Fintech) seeks to improve delivery of financial services by utilizing advanced algorithms in electronic platforms such as cloud computing, personal computers and smartphones. Due to rapid growth of FinTech, government policies and users quick adoption, FinTech is penetrating deep into the financial markets of both developing and developed economies. Due to the lack of prompt regulatory initiatives from the government, the existence of large section of unbanked population and the predominantly cash-driven economy, Nepal is not catching up with the pace of FinTech adoption compared to other economies. This session will discuss the advantages and necessity of FinTech and digitization in multiple economic sectors, especially in the current context of economic slow-down brought by COVID-19 pandemic, and advise the Government to make swift upgrading in digital policies so as to create an attractive business environment for both domestic and foreign investors.

S5: Information and Communication Technology

Coordinator: Dr Gyanendra Prasad Joshi



It is essential to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to foster development of Nepal. For the purposes of this symposium, the term ICT refers to electronic technologies for information processing and communication systems, including use of big data, and platforms built on such technologies. The ICT symposium is a forum that brings together interdisciplinary interaction and multidimensional collaboration among different stakeholders to address development challenges of Nepal with the aid of information and communication technology applications. This symposium will focus on developing strategic plans for a balanced and inclusive growth of economy through the use of ICT. The symposium will reflect the multidisciplinary nature of ICT research and innovation, with anticipated contributions from fields including, but not limited to, ICT4D, blockchain-based digital government, ICT policy, smart cities, e-education, e-business, telemedicine, Industry 4.0, digital divide, application of augmented reality, application of artificial intelligence and digital convergence.

S6: Innovation and Startups

Coordinators: Dr Raju Adhikari & Dr Rameshwar Adhikari

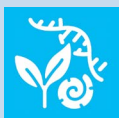


Funding for research and innovation is limited, and is increasing only at a very slow pace in Nepal. Due to lack of innovation, we have failed to make a direct impact on socioeconomic prosperity of the country. Government needs to drastically increase budget for innovation, and private sector need to increase proportional investment to develop required infrastructure and join global race for innovation. Local innovative research can also help build capacity to mitigate natural crises like COVID19.

This session will discuss how GoN S&T agencies, academic, private sector institutions and NRNA need to build strong partnership and co-investment approach for the development of research and innovation. It will particularly focus on the role of NRNs in technology transfer, intellectual property protection, and product development and commercialization through startup companies.

S7: Intersection in Natural Sciences

Coordinators: Dr Tara Sigdel & Dr Narayan Adhikari



We are at the crossroads of an unprecedented transition in the way we think and do science. Because of the rapid progress in computer technology and electronics, we are in a better position to interrogate the microparticles and living cells to the entire universe through research. This symposium is designed to serve as a forum for discussion on topics that are related to natural sciences such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biological sciences. There will be keynote speeches on the changing landscape of natural science domain and challenges that exist in Nepal for catching up with the rest of the world. In addition, there will be scientific presentations on research data preferably that intersect more than one natural science disciplines.

S8: Life and Health Sciences

Coordinators: Dr Drona Rasali & Dr Archana Amatya



Provision of quality health services is essential for assuring good health and well-being of the people. Their affordability and equitable access to all segments of the population are equally important for a just society that we envision for Nepal in the 21st century. Progress in modern medical sciences and technologies has improved the diagnoses and treatments of diseases such as various cancers, heart diseases and other chronic diseases. However, these advances have not always been resource friendly for Low-and-Middle Income Countries like Nepal, which continue to struggle with implementing latest practices in diagnoses and treatment of these diseases. On the other hand, many diseases, especially, the non-communicable chronic diseases, which are carrying increasing high resource burden on the society, are preventable through health promotion and policy changes in multiple sectors. The symposium aims to examine various aspects of health care and public health in Nepal exploring the potentials for strengthening the system of health care integrating primary care, acute care, specialized care and public health.

S9: Physical Infrastructure Development

Coordinator: Mr Ratan Jha



This symposium will assess existing challenges and opportunities related to physical infrastructure development in Nepal, and recommend policies, programs and implementation mechanisms to jump-start major infrastructure projects to revive the sunken economy of the country following the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. Also, the symposium will deliberate upon a firm mechanism to integrate the large number of NRN returnees especially the migrant workers working in the areas of building and construction, by directly involving them into these infrastructure development project. Focus will include review of overall challenges in delivering large infrastructure projects in Nepal, critical analysis of the status of the past and ongoing mega infrastructure projects, also known as Projects of National Pride of Nepal and lessons learned from these flagship projects, use of new technologies and methodologies in construction, capacity enhancement of Nepali contractors, review of existing contracting process and procurement laws, and ensuring integrity in delivering mega infrastructure projects.

S10: Public Health and Pandemic Mitigation

Coordinator: Dr Sanjeeb Sapkota



The health crisis brought by Corona virus (Sars-Cov-2) pandemic reminded us that public health concerns are invariably primary and the rest, whether it is economic growth or personal wealth, is secondary. It exposed the inherent inequality and disparity in public's access to health care services, both in developed and developing societies. On the bright side, it unearthed the strength, resilience, audacity and tenacity we humankind, in particular the Nepali community, has in fighting the global health challenges. Though health has been recognized as a fundamental right of all, the reality is far from it. Over 8 million Nepali living in different parts of the globe and 29 million living in Nepal had to collective fight against the pandemic amid limited knowledge and resources. Via a scientific interaction among the healthcare professionals who are engaged in maintaining and improving the health of Nepali people, this symposium will explore both the limitations and strengths of our community. The theme of this session is public health for all, and mitigation of pandemic using innovation, collaboration and partnership. At the completion of this symposium, concrete Call For Action will be produced which will assist government agencies, general public and healthcare organizations in improving the health of Nepali people.

S11: Social Sciences

Coordinator: Dr Krishna Adhikari



In recent decades, Nepal has seen unprecedented political movements, resulting in very substantial changes in socio-cultural, political and economic spheres. Moreover, movements of people, particularly the rise of international labor migration in the past two decades, have led to multiple reconfigurations: of family structures, of socio-cultural and economic relations, of occupational practices, of consumption patterns, and so on. On the one hand, new class-based relations and inequalities are emerging. On the other, egalitarian—including caste and gender—policy reforms and behaviors are becoming more and more commonplace. The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has posed risks both to national and to international mobility. It has already disrupted the way we socialize and interact; old social norms are breaking down, and new patterns are emerging. In the face of these new challenges, as well as bearing in mind Nepal's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly gender equality #5, reduced inequalities #10, race justice and institutions #16), the symposium on Social Sciences aims to bring leading social scientists and researchers from across the globe together in order to share and discuss recent research and experiences that help reshape policies in order to adapt to the new circumstances, and make use of new opportunities. We are interested in papers that address one or more of the following subjects: internal and international migration; gender, caste and class relations; social welfare; governance and development; social institutions and social science institutions.

S12: Sustainable Energy

Coordinator: Dr Binayak Bhandari



The 7th Sustainable Development Goal is to provide affordable and clean energy to all by 2030. To achieve this goal, countries around the world are taking initiatives for power generation by switching to clean energies. Unlike many countries, Nepal satisfies all the energy requirements from renewable energies, with few exceptions like cooking, heating, and transportation for which biomass or imported petroleum fuels are used. Nepal has made remarkable efforts in electricity generation and transmission over the years; according to International Energy Agency, only 6% of the population remains without access to electricity today. Dependence on imported petroleum and providing subsidy for Liquefied Petroleum Gas for cooking put a huge financial burden on the country. It is the right time for Nepal to focus on increasing per capita energy consumption in various sectors like transportation, cooking, heating, agriculture, etc. by making use of surplus electricity which will be produced by the completion of the upcoming hydropower

projects. This symposium will focus on ways to end dependency on imported fuels thus reducing the trade deficit, ensure energy security in case of irregular supply and blockades, and boost the national economy.

S13: Sustainable Environment

Coordinators: Dr Gopi Upreti & Dr Puru Shrestha



Nepal faces unique challenges in designing evidence-based and science-informed sustainable stewardship of natural assets such as healthy soil, fresh water & clean air for the well-being of her citizens. Rapid and unplanned development activities in the recent past and several regional global climate changes have degraded Nepal's important and sensitive natural assets faster than in any period in history, and hence exposed vulnerable citizens to serious risks. Nepali diaspora needs to work together with key stakeholders in Nepal to understand the opportunities and challenges, and to revamp the way it supports sustainability of research, innovation, policy and practitioner communities in Nepal. Together we can generate the multifaceted evidence-based scientific knowledge to design solutions for complex and intricately interactive environmental, societal and development challenges. This will help towards accelerating transformations contributing to broader sustainable socioeconomic development goals of Nepal. The symposium aims at discussing these pertaining issues.

S14: Sustainable Urban Development

Coordinators: Dr Ambika Adhikari & Mr Kishore Thapa



Although an unplanned and organic growth of urban areas sometimes seem to work fine, lack of coordinated planning for infrastructure to support the growth can lead to problems. The current urban growth in Nepal is mostly happening without adequate infrastructure capacity in facilities such as roads, transit, water supply, storm drainage, and sewerage. Some plans are in place for large cities like Kathmandu, but most newly developed urban areas in the country lack adequate planning for infrastructure. This symposium will assess existing challenges and opportunities related to urban planning and development in Nepal, and recommend policies, programs and implementation mechanisms towards achieving sustainable urban development in the country. Focus areas will include review of current problems, streamlining the urbanization process, improving urban planning tools and methods, creating more efficient urban transit and transportation, planning for public open spaces, and creating resiliency related to disasters caused by climate change and earthquake. It will also review how Nepal's urban development programs are aligned with UNs Sustainable Development Goal No. 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.

S15: Vocational Education

Coordinators: Dr Uttam Gaulee & Dr Uma Pradhan



Nepal has for long the GDP oriented development goal, primarily hoping for rapid economic development through large scale hydropower, infrastructure and industry projects to be built on borrowed money from multinational agencies and borrowed expertise from multinational companies. Meanwhile Nepal's own youth work in other countries helping to churn the GDP of those nations. Our success in bringing a GDP revolution has long been a matter of debate but where we have clearly failed is in unleashing the potential of our own natural and human endowments. Should we then start debating on how our education could be geared towards citizen engagement in continuous learning, elevating human productivity through training, and understanding the transformative potentials of its human and natural endowments? Could our education, training and scientific research be reorganized to unleash the fundamental potential of Nepal for the speedy advancement of its society and economy while being in harmony with the nature? If yes, how? This symposium aims to find answers to these questions through a discourse among global Nepali scholars.

Call for Abstracts

The convention organizing committee invites all interested participants and/or contributors to register and submit their abstracts via the convention website (<https://www.knowledge.nrna.org>).

Please submit your contributions to a specific symposium session listed above. These contributions will be considered for contributed talks in the symposium sessions.

Important Deadlines

The Abstract of papers to be presented shall be submitted to the Conference Organizers in advance. Following are the important deadlines.

Abstract submissions open:	01 August 2020
Abstract submission deadline:	04 September 2020
Notification of acceptance of abstract:	14 September 2020
Registration from:	01 September 2020

Registration

All participants must register and pay the registration fees online or onsite.

Full Registration Fees	Attending on-site	Attending online
Diaspora/foreign participants	\$60	\$20
Local participants	\$40	\$20
Local student participants	\$20	\$10

(The registration fees will be waived for invited speakers and discounted by 50% for students and other presenters of accepted papers.)

Proceedings

The conference proceedings will be published in Nepal Journal of Science and Technology (NJST). It is a peer reviewed open access journal of Nepal Academy of Science and Technology. The deadline to submit a full paper for publication in the proceedings is 31 October 2020. All papers will be peer reviewed by experts from Nepal and Nepali Diaspora Community.

Organizing Committee

The convention organizing committee consists of following experts.

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