

FAAN *Newsletter*

Issue 1

2024

Message from the President



Dear All,
Greetings,

It is our immense pleasure to announce the significant decision and declarations made during our latest 16th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on behalf of

Fulbright Alumni Association of Nepal (FAAN). It is imperative to reiterate our commitment to the Fulbright mission, which revolves around giving back to the state and society through our intellectual legacy, "Fulbrighters always work with passion and intellectual legacy".

We firmly believe in the concept of Three Generational Engagement, which encapsulates the wisdom, institutional memory and rich experience of the Senior Fulbrighter Group (Age 60+); the high energy and enthusiasm of the Youth (25-40 Age); and the combined knowledge and experience of the Mid-Career group (40-60 Age).

By fostering collaboration among these generations, we aim to effect positive and impactful change in our society.

The impactful work of Fulbrighters upon their return, contributing to institutional development

and sustainability, is evident. It's crucial to document and recognize these contributions for the benefit of future generations. To this end, FAAN is undertaking a tracer study of Nepali Fulbrighters.

It's crucial to recognize that we, as FAAN, possess numerous strengths and have the potential to contribute significantly to society with our intellectual legacy. So, we have to work with our own state, society, community, youth etc. for unleashing our potentials for nation building.

In solidarity, the Fulbright Alumni Association of Nepal (FAAN) remains steadfast in its dedication to building a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous society through the impactful and exemplary works.

At the heart of our approach is the Three Generational Engagement model, which harnesses the expertise and institutional memory of senior group; the vitality and enthusiasm of youth; and the experiences and passion of mid-career professionals.

Thank you so much. I would like to welcome you all to join your hands together for future endeavors,

In Solidarity,
On behalf of FAAN,
Purna B. Nepali, Ph.D.

Year 2023-2024 in review

Fulbright Commission and FAAN Sign MoU

On February 7, 2024, the USEF-Nepal/Fulbright Commission and the Fulbright Alumni Association of Nepal (FAAN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for collaboration. This partnership supports activities such as conducting a tracer study of Fulbrighters, publishing a Fulbright Journal, brochures and newsletter, and fostering a strong Fulbright community. The Fulbright Commission has committed to support FAAN for these initiatives.



Empowering Women in Energy Sector

The Stree Shakti Project, funded by the U.S. Embassy in Nepal under the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) and implemented by FAAN in the leadership of Shweta Dhoubhadel. The project aimed to increase women's involvement in the energy sector. Six training events from September 2022 to December 2023 were organized under the project, reaching 176 female students and 22 guests, including energy professionals and local women leaders.

The project's launch event in February 2023 features a policy dialogue themed "Promoting Women in the Nepalese Energy Sector." Additionally, three virtual seminars were held in 2023: "Women Leadership in the Nepalese Energy Sector" in March, "Renewable Energy" in July, and "Cross-Border Electricity Trade" later that month.

The program concluded with a GRAND closing event on February 12, 2024, at the Himalayan Hotel. The



event showcased three generations of Fulbright scholars as keynote speakers, with remarks by Garrett E. Wilkerson, Public Affairs Chief of the US Embassy Nepal, and Nick Langton, Executive Director of USEF-Nepal (Fulbright Commission to Nepal). It also featured two panel discussions: one reflecting on the Stree Shakti project's impact and another exploring the challenges and opportunities in fostering a feminist work culture.



FAAN Welcomes Recent Returnees

On August 23, 2024, FAAN hosted nine recent Fulbright and UGRAD returnees at USEF-Nepal office premises. They shared their experience of studying in the US and briefed the team on their current engagements. They thanked FAAN for connecting them with other returnees so that they

could start their networking. They also expressed interest to contribute to different areas such as scientific research, ayurvedic medicine, law, diplomacy, visual arts, and public health through the wider FAAN activities.



Economic Reconstruction of Nepal: Challenges and Way Forward



A Talk Program on **ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION OF NEPAL: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD**

hosted by **Nepal Association of Humphrey Fellows (NAHF)**
in collaboration with **Fulbright Alumni Association of Nepal (FAAN)**
with support from **USEF/Nepal**

Speakers:

- Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, Former Finance Minister, Fulbright Alumni and Chair Emeritus - SAIM
- Ms. Sneha Rajbhandari, Public Affairs, Public-Private Partnerships, Communications, Public Relations - Coca-Cola Beverages

*Monday, March 11, 2024, 3:30 pm.
SAIM College, Old Baneshwor, Kathmandu*

The program will be followed by Dinner.

The Nepal Association of Humphrey Fellows (NAHF), in collaboration with FAAN and with support from USEF-Nepal, hosted a talk program on March 11, 2024 featuring two distinguished speakers: Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, former finance minister, and Ms. Sneha Rajbhandari, a development practitioner with expertise spanning academia, politics, and entrepreneurship. Their combined perspectives offered a compelling blend of experience from both older and younger generations.



FAAN Collaborates with NARC on Transforming Vegetable Breeding Technologies

Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC) hosted a Fulbright Specialist Dr. Dilip Panthee from North Carolina State University, conducted a training in Nepal (January 20 - February 20, 2024) on advanced vegetable breeding in collaboration with the Feed the Future Horticulture Innovation Lab. The program aimed to enhance the skills of Nepalese scientists and entrepreneurs in conventional and advanced breeding techniques, molecular breeding, and statistical methods. Dr. Panthee's sessions provided hands-on experience in breeding techniques and fostered partnerships in

the vegetable seed industry in Nepal. Dr. Panthee is a mentor of Dr. Tek Gotame in his Post Doctoral Research in 2019-2020 at NCSU, USA.



Joint Inter-Alumni Meeting

The Joint Inter-Alumni Meeting of the Fulbright Alumni Association of Nepal (FAAN), National Association of Humphrey Fellows (NAHF), and Global Undergrad was held on September 30, 2024, with a focus on fostering professional networking and solidarity among alumni. Emphasizing the

Fulbright Mission, the event highlighted the "Three Generational Engagement" model, which integrates the wisdom of seniors, the energy of youth, and the experience of mid-career professionals. Key initiatives included establishing an Innovative Youth Award and conducting a tracer study to document

the contributions of Nepali Fulbrighters. The meeting concluded with plans for a collaborative lecture series and a commitment to strengthen the

robust Fulbright community's impact on state and the society.



Policy Dialogue on Foreign Policy Perceptions

The Department of Public Policy and Management, and Kathmandu University Policy Lab at Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) in association with FAAN organized a policy dialogue on "Perception and Foreign Policies" on September 11, 2024. The speakers included Prof. Sangeeta

Thapliyal from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai, a foreign policy expert and public intellectual. The dialogue aimed to enhance understanding of foreign policy perceptions, contributing to the discourse on governance and public policy in Nepal.

Policy Dialogue on Perception and Foreign Policies

SPEAKERS

Professor Sangeeta Thapliyal
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai
Foreign Policy Expert and Public Intellectual

Organised by:
Department of Public Policy & Management, Master of Public Policy & Management (MPPM), KUSOM, Balkumari, Lalitpur

Date: 11 September 2024
Time: 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM NPT
Venue: Big Conference Hall, KUSOM, Balkumari, Lalitpur



Advancing Public Policy and Management Education in Nepal

Prof. Rosemary O'Leary, a Fulbright Specialist, led a project at Kathmandu University's Department of Public Policy to institutionalize public policy and management education in Nepal. The initiative focused on revising the Master of Public Policy and Management (MPPM) curriculum, enhancing

faculty training, and ensuring program sustainability. Key outcomes included developing a new capstone model based on established frameworks, creating a policy analysis exercise for students, and designing a program tailored for local government officials.

New Life Members of the Year 2023-2025

1. Dr. Puspa Raj Poudel
2. Dr. Sanju Shrestha
3. Ms. Medha Joshi
4. Miss. Anita Khebang
5. Ms. Sahina Shrestha
6. Ms. Smita Poudel
7. Dr. Susmita Talukdar
8. Dr. Buddha Ram Shah
9. Mr. Gajendra Bhattarai
10. Prof. Dr. Chaitanya Mishra

Enhancing Public Sector Leadership and Collaboration

The Public Lecture Series titled “Higher Public Policy and Management Education and Collaborative Public Management for Professional Development” was held on September 12, 2023, at Dhokaima Café, Lalitpur. Organized by KUSOM MPPM, USEF- Nepal, and FAAN, the series aimed to enhance understanding of public policy and management, focusing on ethical leadership and collaboration for professional growth. Main topics

included developing strategic leadership skills, addressing public sector challenges in Nepal, and frameworks for effective change management. Speakers included Prof. Achyut Wagle, Registrar of Kathmandu University, and Prof. Rosemary O’Leary, a Fulbright Specialist. Special remarks were delivered by Mr Binod Kumar Singh, Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Affairs, and Prof. Bhola Thapa, Vice-Chancellor of Kathmandu University.

The 17th Executive Committee (EC) of FAAN

PURNA B. NEPALI is an associate professor and head of the Department of Public Policy at Kathmandu University. He is a non-resident research fellow at Harvard Kennedy School, focusing on the political economy of inclusive agrarian transformation. Dr. Nepali completed a Fulbright fellowship (2017-18) at Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University and researches public and social policy, inclusive growth, social inclusion, and rural issues. He is the current President of FAAN.

PUSPA RAJ POUDEL is an assistant professor and the Director of Planning at the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS), Tribhuvan University. He completed a postdoctoral visiting fellowship at Cornell University as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar (2021-22). His research focused on “Developing Phenotypic Markers in Grape Seedlings that Predict High Malate in Fruit.” He is currently the Vice-President of FAAN.

TEK PRASAD GOTAME, Senior Scientist (S-4), is Chief of the Planning Division at the Nepal Agricultural Research Council. He was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar (2019-2020) and completed his postdoc research in ‘Molecular Breeding for Heat Stress Tolerance in Tomato’ at the North Carolina State University. Dr. Gotame has received several awards, including the Kaji Indra Katuwal Krishi Puraskar and the Nepal Bidhyabhusan ‘Ka’ from the Ministry of Education, Nepal. With over 24 years of experience in agriculture R&D, he is currently the General Secretary of FAAN.

PRERANA MARASINI studied International Affairs at the New School University as a Fulbright scholar (2010-2012). She has worked for national and

international media, development organizations, and diplomatic missions. She currently works as the Communications Manager at the British Embassy in Kathmandu. She has been associated with FAAN since 2018 and is currently the Secretary of FAAN.

MEDHA JOSHI is a participant in the Fulbright Foreign Student Program 2018-20. She graduated from George Washington University with a Master of Public Policy degree. Building on her academic training and past professional experiences in the governance, education and business sectors, her interest lies in researching governance issues. She is currently the Treasurer of FAAN.

SANJU SHRESTHA, Assistant Professor, is a Nepalese physicist and a faculty of Tribhuvan University. She earned her Ph.D. in 2006 in low-dimensional devices. Dr. Shrestha has many national/international journal publications and received several awards, including a Fulbright grant in 2020-21 and Nepal Bidhyabhusan ‘Ka’. She is also active in professional organizations such as NPS, NSWIP, IEEE and is an alumnus of OWSD and Fulbright. She is currently a member of the EC.

RAM BHAKTA AMATYA participated in Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement in 1971. He is a member of the EC.

ANITA KHEBANG is a Fulbright Foreign Student Program grantee (2021-22). She completed her Master’s in Public Health, specializing in Maternal and Child Health from George Washington University. She has over seven years of experience in the public health sector of Nepal, where she has worked at national and sub-national levels on addressing maternal and child health issues.

Currently, she works as an Oversight Officer for the Country Coordinating Mechanism in Nepal, which coordinates the national response to HIV, TB and Malaria in the country through the Global Fund grants. She is currently a member of the EC.

SAHINA SHRESTHA is a journalist based in Kathmandu, Nepal. She is a Fulbright Foreign Student Program grantee (2018-19). She graduated from New York University with a Master's in Journalism. She is currently a member of the EC.

SMITA POUDEL is the Section Officer at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA). With over 9 years of service in the Government of Nepal, she has held roles such as Assistant Chief District Officer, Planning Officer at the National Unit for Coordination of Refugee Affairs, and Section Officer at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. She is a Fulbright Foreign Student Program grantee (2021-22) and holds a Master's

Degree in Sustainable International Development from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, USA. She is currently a member of the EC.

SUJAN RANA is the undersecretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and Development. Dr. Rana holds a Master of Public Health (MPH) in Veterinary Public Health from Ohio State University (2011-2013). He is currently a member of the EC.

KIRTI KUSUM JOSHI, an urban and regional planning expert, has over 20 years of experience in land use planning, urban resilience, urban economics, and policy research. He earned his Ph.D. from Tohoku University and was a Fulbright Post-Doc Scholar at Harvard GSD. He has served as visiting faculty at the Institute of Engineering (Tribhuvan University) and Kathmandu University, School of Management. He is an advisory member of FAAN. He is Dean of Faculty of Engineering & IT, Lumbini Tech. University, Nepalgunj.

Alumni Spotlight

Sona Thadarai (FFSP 2021-23)

Born and raised in a middle-class family in Tanahu district, Sona Thadarai's path to success was shaped by determination, perseverance and a sense of purpose.

"I grew up with typical Nepali societal boundaries," recalls Sona, who today serves as a career diplomat in Nepal's Foreign Service.

From an early age, she harbored dreams of entering the medical field, and until grade 12, she prepared for medical school. But as time passed, a change of intuition led her to consider other career paths. "I thought, if I'm putting in this much effort, maybe I could do better in another field as well," says Sona.

Inspired by her father, who worked at Nepal Rastra Bank for over 20 years, she decided to pursue a career in government service. "Growing up seeing my father go to office, I thought such a job could be my first step to contribute to my country," she adds.

In 2011, she joined Nepal Rastra Bank. But a few months later, she got through the competitive exams of the Public Service Commission and joined Nepal's Foreign Service, marking the beginning of a 14-year long journey in diplomacy



and foreign affairs. "As a teenager, I was unaware of where I would land, but I felt joining the foreign service offered better exposure and opportunities to represent the nation in the international arena," says Sona.

Over the years, she has served in different roles within the Foreign Ministry including posting at the Embassy of Nepal in Seoul and a brief assignment

at the Embassy of Nepal in Doha. Currently, Sona is stationed at the Embassy of Nepal in Washington, D.C.

Sona's decision to apply for the Fulbright program was carefully thought out, reflecting her characteristic of meticulous planning. "I always had a five-year plan, and part of that plan was to pursue a Master's degree abroad in a full scholarship," says Sona, who in Spring 2023 completed her Master of International Affairs (MIA) concentrating in Economic and Political Development and specializing in International Organizations and United Nations from the School of International and Public Affairs in Columbia University, New York.

Fulbright, she felt, was the perfect opportunity to realize her dream of becoming a full-time student. "Because I started working full-time right after high school, I had always been a part-time student," she shares. "I longed to take a break from my career and fully immerse myself in studies that aligned with my profession."

In 2020, COVID-19 provided an unexpected but perfect opportunity to focus on her applications. The process was challenging, but with the encouragement from her mentors and her own determination and tenacity, she succeeded. "As personal engagements slowed down due to COVID-19, I couldn't restrict myself just to my job. So, I decided it was the right time to apply. I never thought I'd secure the grant on the first attempt, especially because I had heard stories of others applying multiple times before being selected," she says.

Getting accepted to Fulbright felt like a turning point, but the transition was not without challenges. Settling in the U.S. amid the pandemic presented its own set of hurdles, from navigating housing arrangements virtually to adapting to the intense academic environment of an Ivy League institution.

Despite the difficulties the experience proved immensely rewarding. "The professors were incredibly hardworking and always available for us," says Sona. The diversity of people

she encountered—from fellow civil servants to experts in corporate and tech fields—enriched her understanding of global policy issues.

Fulbright wasn't just a stepping stone in her education—it was also a medium to break down misconceptions in her workplace. "In my office, only a few senior officials would take sabbatical for higher studies on scholarship. There was a belief that only high-ranking people got these opportunities. I believe I helped to break that misconception and set a new trend," she says.

Personally, she says, the experience was transformative. "I used to think I was very confident and bold, but being a student again made me realize how much more I could learn and grow," she admits. "I evolved a lot, building confidence in handling things on my own, which was different from my professional life where many aspects are taken care of by organizers."

A significant part of her Fulbright journey is the sense of giving back to the community. "When I got the Fulbright grant, I was thrilled and thankful. The credit goes to the cohort of people who motivated and guided me. Now, I'm always willing to assist if someone reaches out to me for advice or help with their Fulbright application because someone did the same for me."

She actively participates in Fulbright events and stays in touch with both current and former Fulbrighters, valuing the mentorship and knowledge exchange within the community.

In the future, she hopes to continue contributing to the Fulbright network and inspire others along the way. "Fulbright provided me with the lens to view things from different perspectives. I wish to motivate Fulbright aspirants and tell them that no matter where they come from, they can fulfill their ambitions. Fulbright isn't just about the scholarship—it's about the sense of belongingness, and I am always ready to contribute to the community, wherever I am in the world."

17th EC of FAAN holds AGM (December 7, 2024)



On December 7, 2024, the Fulbright Alumni Association of Nepal (FAAN) successfully convened its Annual General Meeting, reflecting on past achievements, sharing updates, and discussing future plans. The program featured welcome remarks by Ms. Prerana Marasini, Secretary of FAAN; the annual report by Dr. Tek Prasad Gotame, General Secretary; a financial update and a presentation on the Fulbright Alumni Tracer Study

by Ms. Medha Joshi, Treasurer; and a presentation on the “Fulbright Innovators for Change” initiative by Miss. Anita Khebang, Executive Committee Member. The EC also felicitated Mr. Ram Bhakta Amatya for his outstanding contributions to the association. The event concluded with closing remarks from Dr. Purna Nepali, President, who expressed gratitude and outlined FAAN’s vision for the future.



For further information:



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“Happy New Year 2025”