



SUCCESS CASE STUDY

Dailekh School
Project

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P r e f a c e

The Dailekh School Project is a unique endeavor in Nepal where the effort of one private school is being felt in an entire district in terms of the gift of education. An important contribution made by an institution and we at Rato Bangala are proud to be initiating this.

DSP is a joint collaboration between the Rato Bangala Foundation, the Department of Education, the District Education Office of Dailekh, and the National Center for Education and Development (NCED), the District Development Committee, one municipality and fifty-five Village Development Committees in Dailekh. As of today, the project is involved in 513 schools.

DSP aims to overhaul teaching, learning at a scale that will touch each child in every household and thus serve as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation in the district. It seeks to bring government-funded school in Dailekh at par with national standards of classroom practice contextualized to fit the local conditions. This is done mainly through teacher training programs, supportive supervision and by providing limited but durable materials to be used for multiple subjects.

Having served as the catalyst to being about profound success in the arena of education, DSP today is viewed as a pioneer institution in the country made up of individuals such as DEO's who work hard to support the program, School Supervisors and Resource Persons, Head Teachers, students and every individual parent who make up the Dailekh School Project. It is our pleasure here to present before you a sample of case studies done by the DSP team during their extended visit to Dailekh in February 2013. The stories give us an idea of how lives are lived and the choices made by families in order to survive and thrive in one of the most remote corners of Nepal, in Dailekh district.

We thank Khagendra Shresth (Principal of Deepshishu Primary School), Teachers Chatra Bahadur Thapa and Pritha Rawal of Deepshishu Primary School, Principal Navaraj Bist of Bhairav Devi Primary School, the B.K. family which includes father Chandra Bhadur B.K., mother Rabina B.K. and daughter Sangita Bika for their hospitality. The compilation and the work of Min Shahi (Program Manager) and Smriti Pokharel (Program Officer) have been enhanced by inspiring photographs captured in Dhruva Basnet's lens. We acknowledge the DSP Field Officers, Resource Center Personnel and the School Management Team that provided unreserved support through it all.

Thank you on behalf of DSP

Shanta Dixit
Chairperson

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CASE STUDY



Deepshishu Primary School
Narayan Municipality-8, Dailekh

Deepshishu Primary School was established in 2038 BS; very close to the district head-quarter of Dailekh. The school was surrounded by forests and a river that ran nearby. There were about 100 households within close vicinity of the school, occupied by people belonging to marginalized castes or Dalits. Before the establishment of Deepshishu, children from the community attended Saraswoti Higher Secondary School at Jhupresal or Basanta Higher Secondary School at Kimugaun. Students had to walk for more than two hours to reach their schools which proved to be a very difficult task. Hence the local community came together and decided to establish a school. In 2038, Deepshishu consisted of 62 students, two rooms to accommodate them and a grant of Rs. 50,000.

Deepshishu before 2050 BS

Deepshishu was founded as a regular school following all government set rules and regulations suiting to local circumstances. Parents fueled with a desire to help were ready to pay for teachers salaries and contribute labor to build the school. They were also willing to provide support for infrastructures like furniture's, play ground, and classrooms. However most items contributed by the community did not meet the required standards to set up a functioning school. The rooms were very congested with little or no lightings consisting of outdated furniture. At the beginning in 2038/39 BS, community people jointly paid for the teachers' salary.

In 2039/40, Deepshishu got accreditation from the District Education Office and was provided regular support from the government. The community was eventually misled to believe that it was now a government run school and gradually lost ownership of the school. The teachers blamed the community, parents and students for not taking the institution seriously. The community and parents felt that the teachers were not responsible towards students and did not fulfill their duties. Teachers were of the opinion that students were not well prepared in the morning while coming to school. Since nobody was actually accountable to the school it was especially easy for the teachers who were passing their days sitting idle.

Factors like improving the overall quality of education in the school, the admission process, construction of toilets, securing drinking water facilities for students, creating a school environment where students could learn free of all other worries, developing working relationship between the school and parents did not rest on any ones shoulder. The furniture was old and insufficient for students and teachers alike; classrooms were not safe because of a partly open roof without a lock system in the windows and doors. The roof of the building would always get destroyed during the monsoon season.

The school was roofless during most rainy seasons making it impossible for the students to study. It proved to be very tiring bringing together pieces that had flown far and wide. The community would gather ropes from the lohoro river bridge and tie the zinc sheets together.

Deepshishu during the initial years lacked a secure safe playing field for children within the school premises due to lack of a boundary wall. Cattle were let loose into the school premises by those living nearby. During the monsoon when class was in session, cows would enter the classroom and scare children away. One child being scared of cattle refused to attend school for an entire week.

The school administration on its part was following normal rules and regulations in terms of admission and evaluation but was not systematic and proved to be un effective due to ignorance and lack of knowledge. However the school authorities of Deepshishu were trying to keep a record of all examinations held at the school from the year 2045/46. No one was delegated the task of checking records or evaluating student progress. Students were admitted any time of the year. Parents and teachers refused to follow a set procedure for admission. This came about due to poor planning coupled with no incentive to improve the quality of exams and education on the whole.

Initially the teachers did not respect student since they felt superior to them. Most teachers and students used impolite and derogatory language towards each other.

One day a very frustrated teacher labelled his academically challenged student as eating waste materials from a fish. The child on reaching home informed his parents about the teachers derogatory language. The very next day community people gathered together and brought black flags to the school to protest against the teacher. It took an entire day to calm them down.

School from 2050 to 2060 BS

This period was filled with trials and tribulations for Deepshishu Primary School. The teachers had undergone few training after 1993 and were teaching on a regular basis. There was lack of motivation from the government and other organizations to provide adequate trainings to teachers. Some of the teachers had participated in sessions provided by the government like training by radio, whole school approach etc but a conducive environment was not available for implementing the same. It was difficult to motivate teachers and manage resources at the local level. There were limited organizations in existence to support the school and the teachers. A monitoring or a support system provided by the government was absent while the resource center carried out limited administrative work. School visits were few in number and happening at varied intervals. The whole school approach training conducted by the government was effective but not implemented due to lack of motivation by teachers and lack of monitoring by training providers.

Khagendras' arrival in Deepshishu School

In 2052 BS, Khagendra Shresth the current principle was transferred from another school to Deepshishu Primary School. Shresth carried on a decade long crusade to bring about changes to the school.

Khagendra Shresth was a shop keeper in Dailekh before becoming a teacher, twenty two years ago. While growing up, Khagendra faced severe financial hardships at home and had never imagined that he would one day embrace the teaching profession but when opportunity loomed in front of him, without a thought Shresth hung on to the ropes and has never looked back.

Shresth started fulfilling his responsibilities by concentrating on improving the physical structure of the school. The building was old and dilapidated. The failing school infrastructure had caused another challenge for Shresth. During the rainy season, the roof of two of the classrooms leaked. Students had to be moved from one room to another which hampered the schools daily routine. He constantly tried to secure support from concerned authorities like Narayan Municipality and the District Education Committee.

Shresth started to renovate the building, improvised on the furniture and tried to secure drinking water facilities for the students. Due to lack of adequate funding the, the user committee decided to provide free wood for construction. Labor was contributed from the community itself. Four rooms were eventually built to house the students. The space was then adequate with enough lighting for students to study comfortably and for teachers to navigate freely. The Nepal army has also provided support to Deepshishu.

Khagendra struggled for ten years to improve the personal hygiene habits of students. Since health and hygiene is lowest on the radar, parents do not teach daily hygiene to their children who do not keep themselves clean. Every Friday Deepshishu provided bath and hair cut to children, free of cost. Soap and towels are provided by Shresth himself. He considers himself only 50% successful and has yet to reach the 100 % mark at having parents inculcate healthy habits to their children.

One person from each family started leaving Dailekh seek a livelihood in India. On turning, sixteen all youth aspired to go to India and seek jobs to support their families. They intend to get opportunities to relieve their parents of financial hardships. Since an adult family member is missing, a child had to lend a hand at home. Most of the children studying in Deepshishu work during early morning hours either in their homes or at the local market to earn extra money. This hampered their concentration which deviated away from books.

Due to the meager pay received as salaries, many teachers in Dailekh resorted to side business to sustain their families. Although this trend until now has not affected the teachers of Deepshishu yet, educators of other schools in the district stopped paying attention to their students. They

*Khagendra Shresth
Principal of
Deepshishu
Primary School*



were busy seeking an alternate to sustain their daily lives. Shresth too is a business man but his first priority has been taking care of children and instilling in them a desire to study. He believes that combined team effort and hard work can bring about true development. Teachers need to pay attention to and guide their students while children on the other hand should remain sincere and put in extra effort to excel in class. Irrespective of all hardships, Shresth feels that one has to be sincere to ones profession.

During the time when Khagendra took office, the country was faced with Maoist insurgency on all sides. The revolutionaries wanted to close all schools in Dailekh. They asked teachers to join hands as part of their struggle for freedom and demolish monarchy once and for all. Shresth questioned the Maoists principles and values. Children quit schools and followed the guerilla warfare. When insurgency started in Dailekh, Shresth requested the Maoist to spare his school and the children. He was held captive for six months and was eventually set free. This era with all its uncertainty was a difficult time in Khagendra's life. He is glad that this period is over.

Parents of students attending Deepshishu are totally depended on the school for everything from books, pencils etc. These materials have to be provided to children which takes a toll on the school management committee as a whole. Often to encourage children to attend school,

teachers ended up buying school supplies with their money. During this time the GHAR DAILO Program also took place. It was initiated by teachers of Deepshishu who campaigned from door to door making parents aware of the importance of education and the values of sending a child to school.

Most parents were requested to pay Rs. 500 for monthly maintenance of the school since Deepshishu is a government run school and is free for all, but many declined and the expected amount could not be collected. However Khagendra took charge and collected 1,50,000 from the community. One lakh was given by the District Education Office to Deepshishu as amount that should have been dispersed prior to set up the school. Rs 50,000 was collected from the land owner. The amount was used to buy a piece of land and make a play field for the students. Part of that land is currently used to grow vegetables which are then sold in the local market. All proceeds from the sale are used for the school.

Average achievement score and record of student's enrollment was very poor in the initial days. Only 18 out of 31 participated in the final exam in 2057. Drop out is less in upper grades but in grade 1, it has always been a problem since the beginning. Similarly, a below 40% average achievement score was recorded for major subjects.

Scenario Now

Khagendra is a motivated and an energetic person willing to bring about changes in the school. According to him there are numerous positive factors that play a role in motivating the school management team. The community has a big hand in upgrading the quality of a school. Credit has to be given to the various teachers training programs conducted by the government and non government organizations which played a significant part in improving the school environ-

ment and improvising the quality of education at Deepshishu. He was given the opportunity to attend a two and a half months training program in 2061 BS held in Kathmandu, given by RBPOP which enabled him to observe some of the best and well performing schools in the capital and the neighboring districts. During this time Khagendra gained numerous ideas to improve the teaching learning environment in his school. Having acquired ideas like child centered methods, use of teaching materials, collection of materials at the local level and the ability to work in a team; Shresth was motivated to improve the quality of Deepshishu Primary School. On observing Rato Bangala School, Shresth decided that Deepshishu would serve as a similar role model in the district.

During my visit to Kathmandu, I got the opportunity to observe well performing schools in the capital and learnt new ways to improvise the school. I also learnt to work in a team and to deal with students. After completing the training session in Kathmandu I intended to make Deepshishu a role model in the district.

I came back to Dailekh and started various activities with teachers, students and community people. But it became easier to make changes with students but it is difficult with teachers because I was the only one who was trained while the teachers had not sat for any of the trainings.

Deepshishu at Present

Today the school consists of 162 students. There are 85 Dalits and 75 Chetris. Children come from Narayan municipality and Bindawasini VDC to study at Deepshishu Primary School. In the beginning the school lacked basic infrastructure and the principal waged a crusade to construct classrooms and secure furniture and drinking water facilities. In 2052 with only two teachers in his team Shresth was faced with the double responsibility of managing the school and gathering support from various stake holders. Today the scenario has changed for the better. The team can concentrate on improving academics, and improvising the overall structure of Deepshishu. When the DSP team visited the school, we were impressed with its clean playgrounds and fields surrounding the school. There were separate toilets for both boys and girls which were very well maintained. All classrooms had tables and benches for the students



Students of Deepshishu in their school library

to sit on and consisted of a black board, white boards, job charts and various other learning materials. Deepshishu Primary school seemed very well managed. The day started out with children cleaning their individual classrooms with the help of job charts. They then lined up to conduct prayers and daily exercise after which they moved to their individual classrooms.

Regarding the administrative structure, Khagendra has done a commendable job. The school consists of grade one to five. There are a total of five teachers in the school. One teacher has been assigned to a particular grade. Sometimes when a teacher is absent, another teacher serves as a substitute. Often teachers from other schools in the district volunteer at Deepshishu. Meetings in the school are held on a daily basis where teachers discuss problems and share their day's achievements. They make it a point to attend all weekly Friday meetings and all monthly cluster meetings presided over by the principal who serves as the guiding factor. Shresth believes that combined team effort and hard work can bring about true development. Teachers need to pay attention to and guide their students while children on the other hand should remain sincere and put in extra effort to excel in class.

According to Khagendra and his team, five years ago, DSP intervened in the district by taking ten schools under its wings but today this number has spread to five hundred and thirteen. There were numerous teacher training sessions held in Kathmandu and in Dailekh. The teachers were given an opportunity to attend training sessions for a few months and were provided with a window period to experiment in their classrooms as well. Teachers got the opportunity know each other, to learn from each other and were given an implementation plan to be used at their respective schools.

The trainings provided them with practical, useful ideas to experiment with and made the classroom an interesting learning place for the students. Initially classroom teaching was just confined to text books. The teachers taught word by word, while the students mugged pages after pages. After the advent of DSP, the entire scenario has changed. Teachers today strive to make the classroom bright, colorful and interesting for the students to study in. Initiatives have been taken to make each room a child friendly place as envisioned by DSP. Often teachers take initiative to buy study and play materials for their students. They apply teaching learning materials to knowledge available in textbooks. The principal shares a wonderful professional relationship with his entire team. Without their support Shresth would not have reached the pinnacle that he is in today.



Art and crafts materials at Deepshishu

Khagendra is of the opinion that frequent visits by the project staff has motivated teachers and served as a backbone for the same. The integrated package for improving the quality of education in school was carried out by the Rato Bangala Partnership in Outreach Program (RBPOP). The intensive training program, support of necessary materials, reading books, and supportive supervision served as icing on the cake.

Child clubs another feature advocated by DSP has been prominent in the school after its intervention. There are numerous clubs such as the dance club, health club, cleanliness club and gardening club. Students are free to join a club which captures their interest and enables

them to think creatively. By joining these clubs children are free to explore their creativities, are made aware of their responsibilities and learn to delegate tasks to each other. They learn to work in a team.

Shresth feels that noticeable developments have been brought about in the entire district after the advent of DSP. Cluster and Friday meetings are held on a regular basis and at frequent intervals. The teachers gather together after school to share ideas and expertise; it has been a great learning experience. Throughout his tenure Khagendra has never once closed the school early irrespective of rain or storm nor cancelled any of the cluster or Friday meetings for any reason. Shresth feels that discipline has to be maintained at all times since it shapes and moulds a person.

Khagendra is of the opinion that his entire team is doing a great job. In his words he expressed, "I am sure we have few short comings but great achievements have been made in the last ten years. While striving to achieve the best if one does not receive support it gets very frustrating, but people around us do not realize this. Our failures are highlighted while our achievements are not."

Most of Khagendras students have become doctors, engineers and teachers. He feels extremely proud when his students achieve a set profession. Shresth feels that a purpose has been achieved when he sees students from one of the most rural parts of Nepal compete and often win over children who are provided with all facilities. He is also extremely humbled by the fact that regular children have a good academic record in the school. Shresth knows for sure that hard work is being put in by the teachers and the students.

Shresth throughout the interview expressed a keen desire to extend from grade five to ten in his school. The primary reason being the school dropout rate which will drastically reduce. After passing grade five from Deepshishu, children have to walk for an hour to reach another school to continue grade six and higher. Citing lack of motivation from parents and students, most drop out of school. Shresth hopes to put an end to this trend. If the extension to grade ten does take place as envisioned by Khagendra, the school needs additional classrooms and learned teachers. He expects to extend two classes per year. Within close proximity to Depshishu, Shresth has taken initiative and opened a preschool which has a teacher and twenty five students. Regular children have a good academic record in the school. Khagendra opined that he has had to endure multiple sacrifices both in his personal and professional life to bring the school to its current standing. Shresth had to encourage, support, and counsel his juniors' along with the teachers. Deepshishu has experienced teachers who are senior to him in age, profession and have taught him many useful things along the way.

A vital step taken by Khagendra is the fact that when called for meetings with stakeholders he sends representatives from his school rather than trying to attend all meetings himself. Through this the teachers get to interact with important stakeholders which will be beneficial for the school in the long run. The teachers learn new things and often face their fears. Deepshishu Primary School has had multiple agenda meetings where they have asked people within and outside of the district to help. It has also been learnt that stakeholders in spite of having a keen understanding of the current scenario, persistently blame the teaching team of Deepshishu.

Shresth had hoped that the Department of Education would pay sincere attention to most of the problems faced by schools in Dailekh. But sadly this has not been the case. The combined effort by teachers and a few well wishers like DSP has brought the school to where it stands today.

The DSP team got an opportunity to interact with two teachers from Deepshishu. Pritha Bahadur Rawal has been a teacher since 2041 BS and has been working in Deepshishu since last ten years.

Chetra Bahadur has been teaching in Deepshishu for last three years. Both have been teaching in the district since the last 25 years.

Regarding the management and administrative structure of the school, there are a total of five teachers in Deepshishu including the principal Khagendra Shresth, who serves as the guiding force at all times. There is one teacher assigned to one class.

The teachers hold meetings after school to discuss any issues or problems they may be facing and plan the next day's agenda including lesson plans. They stay back after school to help children with homework and visit individual homes to give tuitions to those who are academically weak.

Rawal and Thapa have also gone from door to door asking parents to send their children to school and have counseled those who are hesitant, informing them about the values and the goodness of education.

Both feel that adding classrooms and increasing the grade from five to ten will help reduce the dropout rate. After passing grade five, children have to walk for an hour to reach another school. Naturally they lack motivation. Students after reaching a certain age aspire to go to India and earn a livelihood to sustain themselves and their families back home.

Thapa opined that if new teachers are brought to Deepshishu, the school will be better managed. Teachers will be able to give more time to students of a particular grade instead of managing two or more classes. Shresth as the principal can then devote time to the management structure and can push the school forward. Both advocators had approached the District Education Office with letters to solve this ongoing issue but have yet to be taken notice of by the District Education Office. This important issue still lies in the back burner.

Pritha Bahdur elaborated that people in Dailekh do not understand how hard teachers work in school during the day. Dealing with various students on a daily basis is a challenge in itself. He further added that they are often ridiculed and made fun of. Most parents are hesitant to provide their children with copies and pencil for school. They expect the school to provide all the materials which takes a toll on the school which does not have adequate funds for all the supplies.

Both teachers maintained that they are very dedicated to their profession and loyal to their school timings. Since Khagendra has instilled in them a desire to excel. Thapa and Rawal sat for the trainings provided by DSP where they learnt to make job charts and pocket chart.

Pritha Rawal the senior most teacher at Deepshishu taking a class.



During the sessions they learnt to identify objects with knowledge found in text books and connect the same to real life scenarios. The trainings taught teachers to make classroom an interesting place but lack of resources have prevented both from doing so. Often teachers buy play and study materials from their own pocket to encourage students to attend school. Both maintain that children must

be treated as adults to help them gain responsibility. Substantial changes have been brought about at Deepshishu after the introduction of DSP in Dailekh. With the formation of child clubs students are responsible for cleaning their classrooms, the playgrounds and the toilets. A feeling of responsibility is inculcated in children who have been doing a good job. The most important moment in a teacher's life is when their students do well in class and excel in academia. Both teachers agree on this.

No one from his family or the community believed that Khagendra would prove to be a leader for Dailekh district. Having proved most people wrong he has carved a niche for himself in Dailekh. Shresth opined that although teachers are crucial for shaping a student's life, the profession is not taken seriously. It is assumed that anyone can become a teacher which is not true at all. Every teacher needs a certain set of skills to deal with students on a daily basis. Previously there were no organizations in any of the schools in Dailekh to help and support teachers, but today circumstances have changed. Valid organizations to help and support teachers have come into existence.

Looking back with satisfaction at his life today, Shresth would encourage all to enter the field of education and spread knowledge in the district. He is of the opinion that the level of education is the key parameter to judge a community and an entire country. Khagendra elaborated that he has not thought of another profession and is proud of having brought Deepshishu to this platform. Shresth will continue as its principal for many more years.

CASE STUDY



Navaraj Bist, Principal
Shree Bhairav Devi Primary School
Paiyachaur, Dailekh

Navaraj Bist was born in 2026 BS (1969) hailing from a poor family belonging to Lakuri VDC. Being the oldest amongst his five siblings Bist faced severe financial hardships at home while growing up. His father was a farmer who would travel to India for few months each year to earn a livelihood for his family. He earned about nine to ten thousand rupees a month which was barely enough to support five children. Bist's village being one of the most rural in Nepal had no lights, no roads or any other modern infrastructures. The entire community depended on nature for their livelihood. Navaraj's only interaction while growing up was with those from his village. The youths in Bist's community were involved in age old addictions like drinking and singing. Had Navaraj been a common villager, it would not have come as surprise to anyone but destiny had other plans in store for him.

Since the tender age of five, young Bist watched in awe as his uncle opened a school in their native village and requested parents to send their children to school. Navaraj inspired to do the same for his community. Bist opined that had he not been a teacher he would have moved to India like everyone else in his village to secure financial stability for his family.

In 2048 AD, the government established Bhairav Devi Primary School which was actually a joint venture undertaken by the community, the teachers and the government. Bist informed that NRS. 25,000 was donated by the agriculture association (Sana Kisan Aayojana) of the district to form the school. An agreement was eventually reached between 119 parents who agreed to set up the school which started out with 65 students-42 boys and 23 girls. Bist hails from Lakuri VDC but the decision to make him the principal of Bhairav Devi was a joint one.

Navaraj started his school life in 2031 (1974) by joining Jana Kalyan Primary School, very close to his home. Every day young Bist took a joy ride to school with his friends and was not interested in academia. On turning sixteen, Navaraj intended to go to India and work there like most youth from his village. In school Bist's favorite subject was mathematics but Navaraj was extremely good at memorizing lines and phrases. In grade six, he scored ninety two out of hundred in mathematics. It was one of the most memorable days in his life.

Everyone in our village saluted the teachers. My uncle was referred to as masterji and was very well respected in my community. I too aspired to be like my uncle and desired to command the same amount of respect as him.

While growing up, Bist did not have any other role models to look up to with the exception of his uncle. He had the option of going to India, becoming a potter like his father, or inculcating habits of drinking and smoking like the youth of his village. Seeing widespread poverty around him, Bist aspired to study and bring about changes in his life and in the community as a whole. After completing his secondary level education Navaraj started teaching in a remote village called Layanti Bindrasaini.

Early days of his teaching profession

Bist became an assistant teacher in 2045 (1989) at Saraswoti Primary School in Bindrasaini VDC in Dailekh district. During his tenure at the school, Bist started to enjoy his profession and discovered that he had zeal to teach others and spread knowledge to his community. Navaraj had high ambitions, was enthusiastic, and hard working. He prided himself on being a teacher and meeting his goals. But gradually Bist started to become impatient due to unprofessional behavior displayed by most people associated with the school. Navaraj had enthusiasm and wanted to bring about changes in Bhairav Devi Primary school but seeing the teachers at the school he felt discouraged. They paid little or no attention to the students, were involved in side businesses and spent their day on useless chatter. They did not work diligently towards improving academia in the school.

I had always wanted to become a teacher. I was extremely happy on being appointed as a teacher and aspired to bring about changes but seeing the condition of the school I felt discouraged. However the respect shown by my students and the community encouraged me to go on.

In 2048 Bist was transferred to Bhairav Devi Primary School which was newly established with no set infrastructures. Most community members were illiterate consisting of ninety % Dalits and Janjatis. Major problems faced by Bhairavdevi at the start were a high dropout rate amongst students, lack of teachers and lack of cooperation from the community.

The school was in shambles, with only half hearted support from the community. The students would come to school for half a day and go home after a few classes. All these factors started to demoralize me but never the less I continued with dedication and perseverance.

In 2052 BS (1996), Bist participated in the teacher training program conducted by the government and also took part in various short term training programs. Navaraj participated in the Whole School Approach, a ten day training program conducted under the Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP) which inspired him to bring about changes in the school. Navaraj inculcated ideas about teaching learning, and classroom management. However the program was not successful at being implemented due to lack of support from the local level.

After joining Bhairav Devi, Bist held regular meetings with concerned personnel at the central level and was simultaneously taking trainings on the Whole School Approach. Navaraj also sat for training conducted by Rato Bangala Partnership in Outreach Program (RBPOP) in 2063BS and participated at meetings organized at the resource center level. While he gained concrete knowledge regarding administrative and theoretical frameworks it could not be applied due to many factors. The resource center meetings focused mainly on administration while trainings conducted by RBPOP were short and practicable in principal but lacked monitoring and necessary support. During this time the district was gripped by Maoist insurgency which had paralyzed the country closing all avenues to work.

The training sessions conducted by the government and RBPOP were very informative and knowledgeable. I intended to apply all that I had learnt towards my school. However untrained teachers out weighed the trained ones and teaching learning materials were also unavailable. Gradually I began to forget important facts learnt at the sessions.

Bist also sat for the Multi Grade Multi Level (MGML) training along with the long and short term training sessions conducted by Dailekh School Project in 2066 (2009) held in Kathmandu. The management training with management committee chair was also vital where most of Bist's colleagues participated and prepared a plan to be implemented in the school. The project staff provided support by supplying limited teaching materials, monitoring schools and answering all queries.

Scenario then

The initial years from 2048 to 2053 were filled with trials and tribulations for Navaraj. As the only teacher at Bhairavdevi, Bist was faced with the triple responsibility of teaching students; meeting stakeholders to gather support and was burdened with the task of convincing parents to send their children to school.

Since its inception, Bist had to attend multiple meetings with members of the Village Development Committee, the District Education Committee and resource persons. Most meetings involved the collection of funds to keep the school running. For a year after its formation, Bist worked as a volunteer having received no pay from the District Education Office. While he participated in these meetings, volunteers from the village covered up for him. He was thus able to meet people and gather support for the school.

During the initial years, Navaraj was unable to secure substantial funds for the school because he had yet to establish his credibility. The Village Education Committee refused to provide him with adequate funds to keep the school running. Left with no option Bist used his own money to run the school and waged a personal battle with his family as well. His wife felt that he should concentrate on looking for a job that paid well. But Bist was persistent in his belief and knew that one day he would reap the fruits of his labor. Hence he carried on.

For ten years he devoted his life and precious time to the school and ignored everyone at his house. One day he will realize that he needs his family and the society he is ignoring now. As said by Bist's wife.

From 2048 to 2054 to sole handedly manage an entire school proved to be a very gruesome task for Bist. Being the only teacher at Bhairav Devi, Navaraj hurried from one classes to the next. He would give assignments to a particular class and rush to teach another grade. Bist was unable to pay attention to students who lacked academic skills. The management structure of the school lay in a state of confusion. Registers were not maintained and student records were in shambles. Bist had no time to oversee all administrative and managerial responsibilities which rested on his shoulder. The government had a set provision that only two

teachers would be provided for a certain number of students until grade two and three teachers to be provided for schools having up to grade five. To secure teachers a school has to have more students. To secure more teachers Bist had to secure more students. In the initial years he was on the lookout for both.

During this time the school received no support from parents. Students did not bring any stationery or copies with them to school. Parents instead of encouraging their children to attend school discouraged them. Rather than buying stationery for their children, parents spent their hard earned money on liquor. Most parents in the village would start drinking from mid afternoon. Hence, young children were forced to look after their siblings and help with household chores. Bist wanted to wage a battle against alcohol consumption in his community, but has not been successful as yet due to lack of combined support.

Navaraj through his own initiative provided afternoon tea and snacks to children, to lure them to school. Eventually this strategy helped and children were seen coming to school. But today after seeing the good work done by Navaraj and his team, parents want to send their children to school. Regular meetings are also held between teachers and parents of the students. Parents are now more enthusiastic and take a keen interest in their children's curriculum. They trust the school and know that their children are in good hands.

The turning point for Bhairavdevi and Navaraj Bist came about when two or more teachers were sent to the school.

Currently the school consists of 90% Dalits and 10% Janjantis. The total number of children enrolled in the school at present is 81. There are 54 Dalits, 23 Janajatis and 4 others. The area on the whole is characterized by 90 % illiteracy consisting of people unaware of education even in its basic form. Today Bhairav Devi Primary school consists of three regular teachers including the principal for a total of 81 students. The teachers and Navaraj have been managing the school well and work as a team supporting each other. He feels that combined team work and unparallel support has taken him to where he stands today. Bist incorporated a system of maintaining a time table for all teachers of Shree Bhairav Devi Primary School. *It is the duty of one teacher to come in early once a week to take care of issues at hand.* The school now has records of all exams held over the years, admissions and class register records are updated on a daily basis.

Bist was motivated by trainings conducted by Dailekh School Project. Three teachers from Bhairavdevi attended the skill development training given by DSP which has proved itself in making the classroom child friendly and has compelled teachers to think outside the box. The teachers now work towards connecting real life scenarios to topics available in text books. Navaraj had always intended to convert all classrooms into child friendly places but his hands were tied due to lack of funds.

Bist over the years learnt to work in a team, mobilize available resources and was able to make changes in the school. His team now holds regular meetings on a daily and weekly basis. The teachers stay back after school and discuss their day's agenda. The lesson plans for the next day are made. During the weekly meetings all issues are brought to the forefront. Often solutions to certain problems are sought.

A monthly cluster meeting in progress at Bhairavdevi Primary School.



Navaraj informed that the various teaching materials provided by DSP have been very age appropriate, consisting of varied genres. Children like to do group activities in classrooms and not individually. The informative teaching learning materials have captured student attention. It is also due to these play things, and colorful books that students want to come and stay longer at school. They often

make it a point to not miss school which is a very encouraging fact.

Cluster meetings are held on the last Friday of each month where teachers come together and discuss problems faced in the classrooms. There are a total of thirty two teachers in their cluster and seven schools. During these meetings, teachers share their success and discuss problems with each other. All Friday and cluster meetings have proved to be great teaching learning experiences for all involved. The teachers of Bhairav Devi attend all meetings and a teacher will only miss a cluster meeting under rare circumstances. If any teaching materials are unavailable teachers prepare the materials themselves with the resources available and intend to make the classroom session a memorable one. They share tips with each other and learn from one another. Navaraj informed that he feels blessed to have hardworking teachers besides him those willing to make compromises and take risks along the way.

One major concern for Bist is the amount of pay received by teachers of primary school in Dailekh which is very meager. This responsibility rests with the District Education Committee which should try and solve this problem. Since a teachers' pay is very meager they resort to agriculture on the side to sustain their families and are unable to pay full attention to their students. Although faced with double responsibility teachers of Bhairav Devi strive to provide undivided attention to the children. In the beginning, Bist faced severe financial hardships since he was barely making enough to meet his daily needs, yet he concentrated all his attention on working for the school which took a toll on his family. If the District Education Committee continues to ignore this problem there could be a severe shortage of teachers in Dailekh district.

Future Plans

The amount of quality development that Navaraj intended to bring about for the school has not been materialized. He wants to gather funds, add new classrooms to the already existing structure and make Bhairav Devi school into a center for learning excellence in the district. Bist aspires to change the school into a role model in the district that others can replicate and look forward to.

Bhairav Devi Primary School currently consists of 82 students. Bist feels proud to have smart intelligent children in school in spite of facing severe hardships and acute poverty at home. Most children have expressed a desire to study and do well in their lives. Navaraj is happy to

see these changes. But on the other hand there are certain students who graduate with excellent marks from his school, drop out after grade five and do not continue their studies further. One person from each family is working in India or Qatar. Under such circumstances, children having to help with household responsibilities are often distracted and unable to continue with their studies.

Bhairav Devi was the very first school to hold an education fair in Dailekh. It was attended by most resource center personnel, field officers, parents, community people and student all of whom were very enthusiastic. The fair provided students with a platform to enhance their creativity. There were numerous stalls diversified for subjects like math, geography, science etc where various creative games associated with set subjects were played. Bist informed us that the school tries to hold one creative fair every year summing up most activities taught in class. Students plan all activities themselves and exhibit the same.

Students of Bhairav Devi participate in extracurricular activities on a daily basis. There are numerous child clubs in the school like the Drama club, the Cleaning club, the Gardening club and the Sankritik club. Students join the clubs as per their interests and par take in activities advocated by the club. The Drama club holds regular plays in school. The students are the actors. The Cleaning club is responsible for cleaning toilets and the area around the school campus. Similarly the Gardening club has maintained a small garden consisting of fruits and vegetables. Each club consists of six to ten members. The students themselves delegate tasks and responsibilities to each other and are responsible for their own actions.

The students of Bhairav Devi compete with students of other schools, also viewed as role models in the district. Bhairav Devi Primary school is looked upon as ideal for parents to send their children in terms of teachers, activities and the structure. The “bal kakshya” or preschool has been recognized as a role model by the District Education Office and have also been facilitated with an appreciation letter from DSP as well. The school also consists of a library with limited number of books but is in the process of collecting the same.

The last few years have witnessed tremendous growth of love and trust between the students and teachers who work together as a family. Bhairav Devi also has volunteers from grade eleven and twelve from the neighboring village which has provided considerable support to its current scenario.

Navaraj intends to sustain all ongoing programs in the school. Bhairav Devi Primary School as an institution and Bist as an ideal principal have been recognized by the resource center as well. Navaraj feels that his profession and a career spanning more than two decades are gravely intertwined with the community. To keep the fire burning one needs to repeatedly add oil. The team has been working hard to bring about an overall development of the school. The team holds meetings with stakeholders at varied intervals updating them on all



Shishu Kakshya of Bhairavdevi has been recognized by District Education Office as Role Model in the district.

Volleyball match
on a Friday
afternoon.



matters related to the school. Each person is enthusiastic for the school to progress and grow with each passing year. But, Bist does not want to politicize the institution under any circumstances. Teachers in his school have very little or no exposure of the outside world and he intends to keep them sheltered.

Navaraj and his team hope to add more classrooms to the already existing structure. Since the school consists of only until grade five, the teachers eventually expect to make it to grade ten. Currently, Bhairav Devi has eighty two students all of whom are managed well by the teachers. Since the school only has until grade five, those intending to study further have to walk for an hour to the next village, to attend school. This has increased the dropout rate because students are not motivated and parents want children to lend a helping hand at home. Bist to put an end to the dropout rate wants to add classes so that students can appear for board exam from his school. However, set criteria have to be met before the extension. The foremost factor is to gather adequate funds for extension. Secondly, the terrain around the school is hilly; it will have to be converted into flat land for construction. Bist feels that his ambition will not be realized for the next three or four years yet.

Bist elaborated that his students have reached a pinnacle. He is certainly a very proud teacher seeing all their achievements. His students work for the government; some have become doctors and engineers. Some work in the district and some have left the country. According to Navaraj, teaching profession is the most important one because teachers impart knowledge to all. It is actually the knowledge giver who moulds and shapes a student's initial years. This profession deserves profound respect from the community but sadly has not gotten its due. To make the school an ideal one all stakeholders like the Village Education Committee and the resource center need to be involved but here the school has only managed to garner half hearted interests. He further opined that if all parties were fully interested, the school would have progressed to another level by now. Many meetings are held within the school premises itself which has become a favorite venue for cluster meetings as well.

Bist recalls that it took ten years of dedication, determination and hard work to bring the school to where it stands today. A major milestone achieved by the school is the fact that all classrooms consists of tables, chairs and chakatis. This is one of the few schools in Dailekh which has a stable infrastructure as this.

Navaraj wants all stakeholders to realize that there is a vacuum for talented teachers in the district. This can only be mitigated if the Village Education Committee sits up and takes notice. There are educated teachers but acute poverty has compelled them to try their hands at other arenas to sustain their families. Years of struggle and dedication have helped Bist carve a niche for himself in Dailekh. Today, Navaraj and Bhairav Devi Primary School are looked upon role models not just for the district but the country as a whole. A driving force coupled with the intention of doing well for the school kept him going and instilled in him a desire to succeed.

CASE STUDY



Sangita B.K., Student
Deepshishu Primary School
Narayan Municipality-8, Dailekh

Waking up at four am to tread forests and hilly terrain, the Dailekh School Project team reached a secluded house nestled amongst beautiful pine trees to capture the daily life of a family living in Narayan municipality, Chausila of Dailekh district. It consisted of four members, Father, Chandra Bahadur B.K., mother: Rabina B.K., Daughters Sangita B.K. and Rachana B. K. The daughters aged fourteen and eleven study in grade five and six respectively. The family also consists of two sons aged seven and ten who live with relatives about three hours away in another village. Chandra Bahadur B.K. informed us that his sons were young in age and he was left with no option but to send his sons to places where school was in close proximity. Sangita the younger of the two daughters attends Deepshishu Primary School, while the older one goes to Basanta Higher secondary school which is about an hour and a half away from home by foot.

The father Chandra Bahadur B.K. works at the local health post in the village. B.K. is from Lakuri Gabisa, belonging to a Dalit family consisting of five brothers. He is the youngest in the family. While growing up B.K.'s family faced immense poverty and hardship. On seeing the deplorable plight of his village in the arena of health, B.K. decided to do something about it. Filled with an immense desire to bring about changes B.K. travelled to Karnali Technical School in Surkhet and enrolled in the CMA course there, which he completed in four years and has been working in the health sector since the last fifteen years. Although born to a Dalit family, Chandra Bahadur has broken all previous stereotypes by created a niche for himself in his village. He does not drink; smoke or gamble a practice very common amongst Dalit families in most parts of rural Nepal.

Dalits are often illtreated in our society and labelled as drunks. Hence I want to break away from the stereotype and do something for my community. I do not drink, smoke or gamble, a practice common in my community. All my brothers followed in my footsteps. There is peace and happiness at home.

All four of his brothers have followed in his footsteps. B.K.'s family has set an example in their village by proving to the community that even a small amount of education can help change a person. This trend is not common in rural villages of Nepal where drinking, smoking and gambling is the norm. Since youngsters are shown the path by elders in the village, it is difficult to divert from the carved road and walk astray.

Every day Bika walks for an hour to reach the health center. His main tasks at work involve counseling couples regarding safe sex measures, administering injection, giving medicines for minor illnesses and referring people to the nearest health posts or to the district hospital. B.K. informed that he often goes from door to door counseling people, an initiative taken by his

own will to educate the community about basic health care measures that can save lives. However he is saddened by the fact that although education has made a stride in his village health care has yet to make a start which is due to ignorance at large. Although his job at the health post enables him to live comfortably, B.K. does agriculture and poultry farming on the side to support his family. He raises crops like corn, wheat and vegetables and sells them in the local market.

The mother of the family, Rabina B.K. got married to CB at the tender age of eighteen. Due to profound poverty her family faced many hardships in their native village. They would often eat once a day to save costs. Rabina's family consisted of six sisters, often frowned upon in rural Nepal since parents are of the opinion that sons will relieve their family of financial burdens. Her mother believed she was cursed, having given birth to six daughters and remained depressed most of the time. Rabina helped her family in the fields and tended to animals until the time of her marriage. The financial burden on the family to meet their daily needs was so profound that none of Rabina's family had time to think about going to school or gaining an education. They were busy trying to earn their daily meals.

After her marriage to CB, Rabina gave birth to two daughters within three years and bore her sons a few years later. Hence domestic responsibilities took over which completely diverted Rabina's mind from seeking an education or going to school. Her day was spent working in the field and tending to her growing family.

One very inspirational factor in Rabina's life came about at a later stage when her children started attending school. She decided to study and has completed grade five. This motivation although a bit late came at a time when she saw her daughters going to school. Rabina felt that if her daughters could study, so could she. She wanted to study, get a job and ease the pressure on her husband to support their family. Rabina completed grade five but family and personal obligations took over and has not been able to move further.

However, Rabina still expressed a desire to study and informed me that teachers at her school were very supportive of her decision to enroll in school. Rabina opined that teachers took a keen interest in her academia and very willingly answered all her queries regarding class work. They helped her with homework as well. She is personally very grateful to the teachers and the entire community that supported and encouraged her to attend school.

The daughter of the family, Sangita B.K., aged eleven, enjoys treading the hilly terrain and walking to school for an hour each day. She wakes up at about five in the morning, brushes her teeth and goes to the river to bathe. Washing dishes are next on her agenda after which she gives fodder to the chicken and the cattle. She then drinks tea that her mother has prepared and does homework with her sister who is a grade six student at another school. After the daily morning activities, it is time to eat, change and head to school for the day.



The B.K. family from left Father Chandra Bahadur B.K., Sangita B.K., Mother Rabina B.K., sister Rachana B.K.

Sangita B.K. and her sister were enrolled in a private school in the district headquarter but seeing the changes and the improvements brought about in the government run schools of Dailekh after the advent of RBPOP/DSP, Chandra B.K. reenrolled his daughters back at Deepshishu Primary School located within the community itself.

We were initially enrolled at Deepshishu. But we left the school and were admitted to a private school in the district headquarter. Both me and my sister missed the teaching methods applied by teachers of Deepshishu Primary school. We missed the friendly environment as well. Our father then enrolled us back at Deepshishu. We are very happy now.

The Dailekh School Project started work in Dailekh in the year 2006. Prior to that Deepshishu was a partner of RBPOP launched by RBS. Since then teachers of Deepshishu and other government run schools have sat for various teacher training programs conducted by DSP with the aim to create a child friendly environment in the classroom. The programs coupled with combined effort by all stake holders have achieved profound success.

Once in school, Sangita goes directly to her classroom, cleans it along with the help of other students and arranges the job chart for the day. Job charts are especially important for students at Deepshishu because it gives them a sense of belonging. They learn to follow rules and realize their responsibilities. The students then hurry and stand in line for the morning assembly where they sing the national anthem and do some physical activities. The morning assembly is presided over by the teachers but students of the school help conduct the entire session. After assembly Sangita heads to class and attends eight classes a day filled in between by a recess and a lunch break. At four when school ends, she heads the same way back home. The rest of the evening is filled with doing household chores and homework.

I came to Deepshishu in grade one. We were told to make job charts since then. In grade two all students were making job charts and following the same on a daily basis. Without arranging the job chart for the day, I do not start my day. It instills in me a sense of responsibility.

According to Sangita, classroom sessions are very interactive and fun where new and creative methods are sought on a daily basis. After attending the trainings given by DSP, teachers connect real life experiences with knowledge found in text books. Unique study materials are used to garner student interests. The teachers at Deepshishu give ample time to the students and even stay back after school to help children with homework. Most of the play and study materials are either donated or bought by the school. Teachers often spend their own money to buy play and study materials for students. The dustbins around the school, balls and nets for badmintons have been bought by the teachers and given to the school.

While in school, Sangita makes it a point to visit the library on a daily basis. According to her, sound, knowledgeable and informative books are now kept in the library. After its intervention DSP along with RBPOP has donated books to the school library. Today books are continuously brought and contributed to the main library and classrooms which consist of string libraries accessible to students. The responsibility of the string library rests with students who maintain a record of all books borrowed by their fellow students. One of the main objectives of

DSP to develop a child friendly atmosphere in the classroom has contributed to children being more knowledgeable by inculcating in them a profound reading habit. Numerous genres like science, math and English books are present in the main library and the string libraries in the classrooms.



Sangita is reading in the school Library.

According to Sangita, teachers while teaching refer to books available in the library and connect their lesson plans to available books. There are many story books both in English and Nepali. Sangita looks forward to turning the pages and reading about people, places and things which often seem larger than life to her. She gets the feeling of transcending boundaries of distance and time. Of all the subjects, Sangita enjoys reading and studying English the most. She feels an immense sense of pride while reading English because it is not her native language and helps her gain control over her senses. She enjoys studying Nepali because it is her mother tongue and she is fluent in it. Dance and singing classes in school play an extremely important role in her school life as well. Sangita enjoys her creative time and is the main lead for an upcoming play for which she is busy rehearsing her dialogues. Sangeeta B.K. is a good student in her class often competing for the second and third position. B.K is often found helping her fellow students in school. Every year she takes responsibility in extracurricular activities often assuming leadership responsibilities.

I have read many books in the school library. The books that I have read until now are Mangale ko changa, Raja ko phora bhakt prasad bhyagutto and I really enjoyed it. After reading story books, I like to read my text books also.

According to Sangita, due to the trainings provided by DSP and the initiatives taken by teachers, there are numerous child clubs at Deepshishu. Students take part in these clubs according to their own interests. There is the Sanskritik club, the gardening club, the cleaning club etc. The Sanskritik club organizes activities like dramas, and plays within the school premises. The gardening club ensures that plants are watered on a daily basis and that there is greenery in and around the school area. The cleaning club delegates responsibility to students and makes one person in charge of cleaning toilets and the school premises. Sangita feels that child clubs have molded students to think creatively by instilling in them a sense of responsibility.

Fridays are very special for Sangita because there are many fun activities planned for the day. Most of the times volleyball matches are organized; there are quiz and drawing competitions held. But amongst all activities Sangita looks forward to playing musical chair the most. She eagerly waits for Fridays and does not like it if she has to miss school for any reason. Sunita Giri is her best friend in school. Sunita also a student of grade four helps Sangita with school work and assists her in many other tasks. Both girls eat and work together in school.

Sangita doing homework along with her sister before school.



Sangita informed us that there is constant monitoring by DSP field officers in her school. The resource persons and field officers, sit in classrooms that are in session and provide friendly supervision to students and teachers.

To sit in the remote village of Dailekh and watch Sangita's family go on with their daily lives was

a far cry from the world that I lived in. The B.K. family is comparatively wealthy in the village compared to most other families but the happiness in their faces as they accepted their fate without any complaints was an inspiration in itself. Through their hard work and an accurate understanding of their surroundings the B.K. family has proved that man is the ruler of his own destiny. Hard work coupled with dedication pays off in the long run, all other factors are secondary.

Vision

Quality of education in all Primary schools of Dailekh District improved to commendable national standards.

Purpose

Child Centered Teaching Learning (CCTL) environment is maintained in all Primary schools of Dailekh.

