

To: All
From: Rita (Honouring the Memory of Our Friend * [Dhiraj¹](#) <3 Who Dedicated his Life to the Wellbeing of the Nepali Children)
Date: 31st January 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – January 2022

Nepal Context:

The New Year began with many worries! Both Delta and Omicron have fueled the Covid surge. However, the rise in cases so far is below expectations with insignificant number of hospitalization and very low cases of deaths. Although from past experiences, Nepalis seem to carry certain levels of immunity – it is worrying that a large number of the population remains unvaccinated. But more worrying is: Kathmandu Post (Jan 13), reports: **The monthly consumer price inflation climbed to its highest in 64 months in December, rising to 7.11 percent year-on-year from 5.32 percent in November, data from the country's central bank, Nepal Rastra Bank, showed on Thursday. Last time the country saw the highest monthly inflation rate was in September 2016-17 at 7.9 percent. Experts warn inflation may jump to a double-digit figure this fiscal year. “It’s quite a worrisome situation,” said Puskar Bajracharya, an economist. “All households are worried. For Sharmila Sthapit, a housewife who the TKP quoted, says: “I used to set aside Rs. 20,000 to manage my monthly kitchen expenses for a family of six - it has doubled now.”² Now with Covid restrictions life has shrunk once more and come to almost a lock-down situation.**

Work with the Land:



¹ Susan's life partner

² <https://bit.ly/3I3zb05>



This month the construction work is moving fast at Padmalaya, despite many pressures and challenges. Ganga, Emil, and I met early on in preparation for Emil to leave for the fields - clarifying, assessing, and planning out. On the 13th a small puja performed by Nirajan (the finance officer at Nawalpur) preceded the casting of the library building foundation. Contractor Rishi Ram Itani who has also been supervising the work at the site, Govinda, and other staff members were present. We plan



to do a bigger puja/event including a wider group of stakeholders at a suitable time. But the important thing is that the casting was finished with 20 labourers working for over 14 hours that day to finish off at 11pm in the night. *Six cube samples of the concrete from the batch used for footing casting were lab tested. According to Emil, the test results showed that the compressive strength of the concrete was satisfying and good as per engineering requirements.*

Similarly, casting the walls for the underground water tank is also being carried out.

On the 16th Emil visited the contractor's workshop in Chitwan. According to him, all the steel column members, primary steel beams, have been fabricated with necessary anchor plates and joint stubs. A sample for primer painting was also tested to ensure quality.

At present there are 8 labourers working at the site each day. Additionally, 5 men and 7 women are also involved in the production of bricks. This month, 3500 larger and 1850 smaller bricks have been produced and is in storage.



The search for additional piece/s of land was ongoing this month and finally we are zeroing on 2 pieces of land that Govinda thinks are suitable. A decision to buy both or either, will soon be made. On the 28th Susan, Ganga and Rita met to review/assess and pull together all the loose ends regarding



Padmalaya. A field visit is decided, which will give us an opportunity to visit the new pieces of land again and come to a suitable decision. It is important to do this early on owing to the rising price, especially now that the adjoining highway is nearing completion.

The mustard crop sown in the Padmalaya fields was harvested this month. The seeds will be thrashed during the coming week for storage.

Programme Update at Padmalaya:

Over 50% of the staff and volunteer team at Sehari are down with seasonal flu. Owing to omicron threats the local schools are closed. In the local communities, those

who are ill are opting to stay at home and use homemade herbal remedies. The monthly review and planning meeting with staff and volunteers provided the Nawalpur team an occasion to wish "Happy New Year - 2022" to each other. Other kinds of relevant awareness raising orientations on suicide and the omicron variant have been conducted. But other previously planned activities at the community level in Nawalpur have been postponed owing to many people being ill and owing to the omicron risks.

One of the women peace women in the Nawalpur programme, Lalumaya Damai, lost her daughter and is living alone in a shed with instable/inadequate roofing. Govinda and his team bought and installed a new tin roof for her. Similarly, another one of the peace women, Muna Chaudhary whose husband is in bed owing to being paralyzed (conflict victim) has been affected by covid. Learning that the family had little food, Govinda and his team bought and delivered to their home: 25 kgs rice, lentils, salt, tea, sugar, eggs, and oil. Govinda informed that both these essential supports for the two households were possible with the additional donation gifted to the Sehari team by PC, during his fall 2021 visit.

Fundraising:

In honour of her late husband, * **Dhiraj Lamsal <3**, Susan donated Rs. 200,000 to Padmalaya, and Rs. 300,000 for the NA Peace Endowment Fund.

This month, our only fundraising was in Sehari, where Rs. 8240 was collected from local contributions in the piggy bank. Thank you, Govinda and the Sehari NA team!

Others:

Padmalaya offers a place of creative respite and healing where the local people in all diversity of ages, ethnicity, and class, are now gathering for a sense of community!



We feel that peace building is happening every moment in this space - through mutual listening, sharing, and understanding. We are in appreciations this New Year – 2022!

Owing to the passing away of * **Dhiraj <3**, this was one of our saddest

and most difficult months. While we honour * **Dhiraj's** <3 spirit, work, and memory, – we offer our healing prayers and love to Susan and their daughter Anusha. May time and NA's collective support and love among others, help heal their hearts and bodies!

Bank Information:

If you wish to make a gift to help build the PBM&LC, please inform us in advance so that we have records for follow-ups with the bank:

Name: Siddhartha Bank,
Address: Satdobato, Lalitpur, Nepal
Account Name: Nagarik Aawaz,
Account No: 01815090950
Swift Code: SIDDNPKA

***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Govinda Acharya*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 28th February 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – February 2022

Nepal Context:

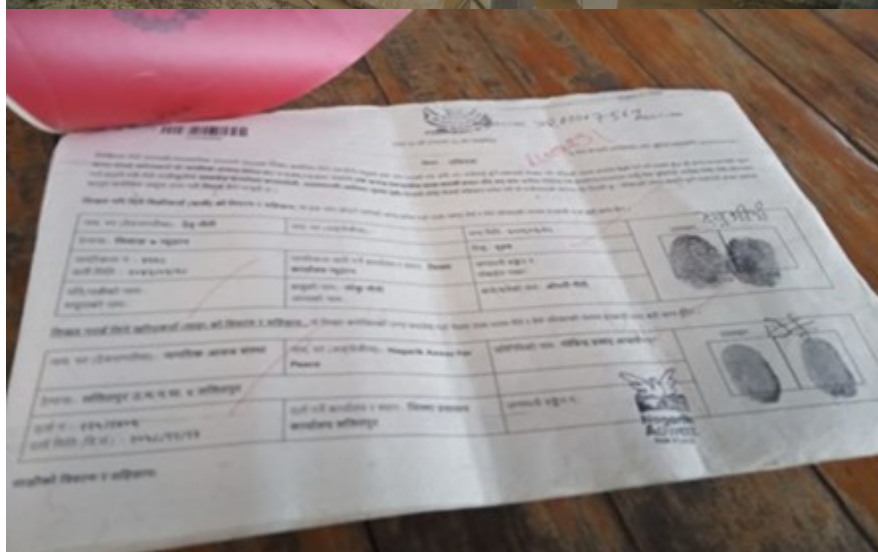


Local Level Elections have been announced for the 14th of April. It will be completed in a single day. Patrol prices have risen again for the 4th time in less than 2 months. This country is in deep trouble now that the Millennium

Challenge Corporation (MCC) of the USA (*picture credit from online weekly paper RECORD*) was endorsed in the Parliament. I am convinced that it will jeopardize the sovereignty of Nepal and we will be in deepening trouble. Protests and divisions are happening at every level here. **And now we all have to bear and live with the bombings of Ukraine and all else it will implicate at its wake!**

Work with the Land:





Susan, Rita, Ganga, & Hari visited

Padmalaya in Nawalpur during 6 – 8th. The Purpose of this visit were the following:

Reflect on the holistic intended programme aspects of the **Padmalaya**;
To oversee the ongoing construction

related work aspects of **Padmalaya**, and finalizing to buy the new land which we have been negotiating for the past few months. Our team from Kathmandu met up with Govinda and on arrival promptly sat together to review and reflect on **Padmalaya's**

journey so far and what would be required at this stage of shaping it from a programme perspective.

Based on the outcome of this collective reflections and

some conclusions we agreed we meet with the staff and shared what we had arrived at for their inputs if any and collective ownership. It was good to know that the

Nawalpur staff found the name **Padmalaya** very relevant and easy to be widely understood and pronounced in the Nepali context.

Govinda gave us a thorough update on the programme activities and the current status at **Padmalaya**. Although we were huddled in a freezing hall, we were in a circle of warmth emanating from a close-knit team who were happy to see us all, especially Susan. Govinda tells us that work has progressed rapidly since we last visited. Particularly after we met with the contractor Rishi Ram Itani with the engineers. I will include updated pictures in the next update. **After 3 days of official processes, Govinda supported with the NA team, Ganga, Hari, and Merita, completed the buying of the new land (3 ropanis, 1 aana, and 2 paisa only) in Kawasoti, Nawalpur district HQ on the 23rd, some 1 km away from the highway. This cost us Rs. 1,39,50,000 approximately equivalent to US \$ 116,250. Thanks to the RBC Trust via our donor/friend PC. NA Sehari had to further pay a tax of Rs 570,000 in the local Land Revenue Office and an additional Rs. 12,000 had to be spent in the organizing of official papers.**



On the 15th NA team, Hari, Ganga, Susan, and Rita met with Prabal and Emil to: 1) brief them about the recent site visit, and 2) plan necessary actions and activities in relation to **Padmalaya**.

At the end of the meeting the following activities were planned: 1) proceed with the renewal of contract for Prabal and Emil; 2) meet with the contractors to brief them and point out some observations; 3) meet with the Core Group for necessary endorsements and official actions; and 4) plan and organize a site visit with Prabal and the engineering team in early March.

At present 5 men and 7 women continue to be engaged in the production of the interlock bricks. 5400 bricks have been produced this month and now NA has accumulated more than 19,000 bricks in storage – much more will of course be required for our buildings. In terms of farming at **Padmalaya**, the larger lot mustard is ripening, while from an earlier lot, 150 kgs have been harvested.

Programme Update at Padmalaya:

While regular work and activities with the women and youths in all the programme/s are ongoing this month, 6 families have benefited directly from income generating activities through the distribution of goats, chicks, and ducks as per their choices. Also, this month from the gift of money PC gave, a victim of violence has been gifted with mattress, pillow, sheets, mosquito net, and a drinking water vessel.

Omicron education in local language and the distribution of masks benefitted the communities. The youths composed the messages and lent their voices in the radio.



AUD-Youth's message in tharu lai

Fundraising:

Owing to unavoidable circumstances in the past months, our financial report to our donors has been forever delayed. I send you all my deep apologies. With Susan's and Merita's hard work, we have managed to get a very good financial report this month. Although I wish to share this in a transparent way, I will only do so once we are able to tally each gift with all the donors, which means I will share this only in the March Monthly Update. As of now in our bank after the purchase of the land, we have a balance of Rs. 74,48,185.92 (rupees seventy-four lakhs, forty-eight thousand, hundred and eighty-five rupees and ninety-two paisa only). But thanks to the RBS Trust advised by PC, we have been informed that this year's support of US \$ 400,000 is in the process of being disbursed.

This month a precious gift of UK Pounds 1000 came from Jenny Hodgson in the memory of Late Dhiraj Lamsal.

Rs. 8405 collected from the Sehari NA Office is being deposited in the NA Siddharth Bank account in Lalitpur.

Others: Too depressed after MCC & the bombings of Ukraine. Pls forgive me!

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Address: Satdobato, Lalitpur, Nepal

Account Name: Nagarik Aawaz,

Account No: 01815090950

Swift Code: SIDDNPKA

Note: Photo Courtesy: Ganga Sagar Rai, Govinda Acharya

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 31st March 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – March 2022

Nepal Context:

“Khai – ke bhannu!” translating somewhat to – “what to say only!” Only if there was one significant thing to talk about...

All I can say is that we are far from thinking about Covid-19. Mostly we continue to be in a coping mode. Prices have skyrocketed with total impunity. My personal experience and estimation is 20-25%. The MCC (for those who have followed) was tabled and passed – I can’t imagine how – amongst all the protests!

Work with the Land:

As planned in the earlier month, Susan, Ganga and I went on a site visit with noted



structural engineer Manohar Lal Rajbhandary, and our architect Prabal S. Thapa. We were met at the site by Govinda and Emil, who had gone in advance. This proved to be a most useful visit, allowing the architects to have Manohar ji’s expertise and experience in their field of work. We had the opportunity to show him the newly bought piece of land. Govinda and his team also organized a little introductory programme for him at Padmalaya. We



consider it our privilege to have Manohar ji visit our site! So thankful he could!

Starting 25th, the props for the ground floor casting for the library building is being taken out. Likewise, the waterproofing and the concrete-treatment has been completed in the water tank. The inside plastering and the top cover casting is also



being prepared. 5 men and 6 women are continuing to produce the interlock bricks, and so far, we have more than 24,000 bricks in storage.

Fulfilling all legal and fiscal requirements, NA has successfully purchased a land in the city center

– **Kawasoti**, the district headquarter, as we had planned for some months. It is less than a kilometer away from the main highway which is now under expansion. This land is also being ploughed to sow maize. Over 80 kilos of ripened mustard grown in Padmalaya has also been harvested.

In Emil's technical report and in his own words I send you the following brief: "Following the concreting works, the construction works took a slow pace mainly, owing to the drawing's revision. The contractor provided shop drawings for the steel formworks on the 6th which did not comply with the provided drawings and site conditions. A new set of revised drawings was asked for. The contractors are yet to provide the drawings and continue with the formwork fabrication. This formwork is crucial for the construction of the main shear wall enclosing the staircase in the building. In the meantime, the contractor transported the first batch of steel structural members on the 11th of the month. Around the end of the month, the formworks for



the ground floor slab were removed. At present, pressure grouting in the exposed honeycombs and waterproofing works for the submerged exposed concrete structures are being carried

out. Also, the first running bill of amount Rs. 1,01,98,080 (Rs. 85,82,950 for library building and Rs. 16,15,129 for water tank) was received from the contractor on the 20th of the month. Presently, the bill is being reviewed by IFID Pvt. Ltd.

The trenching works for the cox culvert (picture above) over the irrigation canal, started from the 4th of the month. By the 7th of the month final construction drawings with quotes for the culvert construction was provided by the contractor, which were later verified from IFID Nepal Pvt. Ltd. By the first half of the month, the construction was completed. The culvert cost Rs. 3,43,714.

On the 16th of the month, the electrical engineer, Er. Shailendra Kumar Jha was contracted to prepare the electrical/communication masterplan. The consultant is contracted for the amount of NRs. 1,50,000. The contract term is for six weeks, ending on the end of April. Detailed architectural design drawing works for the dormitory and restroom block has started and is in progress”.

Programme Update at Padmalaya:

Everyone is keeping good health at Padmalaya. The team celebrated the festival of Holi with activities and games. Celebrating the International Women's Day on 8th March with the local communities has become a tradition. Local officials/leaders/security personnel, community members and youths participated. The local women's club, **Gunras Samuha**, hosted the meeting for which they earned around Rs. 70,000. Similarly, another women's group in the vicinity the **Jan Sudhar Women's Group** was supported with Rs. 15,000 to build a women's toilet. They were also given seed money of Rs.12,000 to buy raw materials to begin a stool weaving training for interested women in the community.

Ongoing regular monthly work, such as review and planning meetings, and reporting and review of the three Peace Centers located in Nawalpur have been accomplished.

Sharumaya Tamang and her baby daughter who were abandoned by her family, were supported with necessary beddings, and utensils. Through all the key programme/s being conducted in Nawalpur, the Padmalaya team also supported entrepreneurial activities for the most disadvantaged families in the local communities. 200 chicks and feed, 1 goat each were supported to 3 families, and 3 pairs of ducks were supported to another 3 families during this month.

Fundraising & Financial Update:

Thanks to the **RBC Trust, we received another grant of US \$ 400,000** this month. Therefore, at present (30th March 2022) **we have US \$ 564,530.85 remaining in the Padmalaya balance**. Something I have tried doing in the past but unsuccessfully so, is to send you a consolidated financial statement. I am happy to be able to do this now and **have attached our consolidated financial status report for Padmalaya. Please kindly take a look** at the list of donors so far – and verify your gift/s and the amount/s. If you see discrepancies or if you are missing, please do get back to me.

Also, everything else except the summary sheet is in Nepali rupees. What we calculated there with the current exchange rate is obviously not correct owing to the fluctuating rates over the years, but it will give you all a fairly good idea. I was only able to do this with the support of **Merita Kansakar (quite new with NA), NA's Senior Admin/Finance Manager** and Susan who has overseen and guided Merita. I will be sending you an updated financial report on a bi-monthly basis. This year the next one will come with the December Monthly Update.

This month, the monthly fundraising at Padmalaya totaling to Rs. 5575 has been deposited. Also, income from the sale of agricultural produce at Padmalaya, and other fundraising and savings in Nawalpur, totaled to Rs. 60,300. Rita Pledged her **annual gift of Rs. 100,000 for 2022** to Padmalaya.

Others:

Days seem to be flying. We have been monitoring the Community Safety Net, CSN, programme under Tewa. During one such visit to Nala, Kavre District, going past



Bhaktapur (which many of you have visited), I was astounded by this scene. Rebuilding after the earthquake, **All women!**

Something I thought I would never see! I could not stop to enquire, but I am so glad I took the picture which needs no words – to speak volume about our life in Nepal, and may be in many other parts of our world now!

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***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Emil Shrestha, Ganga Sagar Rai, Govinda Acharya, Rita Thapa*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 30th April 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – April 2022

Nepal Context:

The Nepal's situation continues to be mixed. Inflation is skyrocketing – shortages of essential commodities e.g., cooking gas, and electricity supply is getting us all worried. The price of petrol is now Rs. 160 per liter and Nepalis pay Rs 60 as tax to the government for every liter! But the recent successful **opening of the Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini district since 22nd April**, gives us hope and even more so, since it will only be an hour drive from Padmalaya! The local elections are only 13 days away. Never before have 5000 independent candidates decided to stand up in the elections. Political parties are forming unholy alliances between the extreme left and right and are further jeopardizing women's chance of being elected by giving tickets primarily to men.

Alarming news/study regarding Nepal's topsoil & environmental hazards are most worrying. Recently, a typhoid shot rolled out by the Health Ministry to children indiscriminately, is raising alarm as cases are being reported of neurological problems and weakening of muscles around the legs.

Work with the Land:



Owing to the festivals like the Nepali New Year – 2079, Holi and the Ramazan, the labourers have not been consistent, and work has progressed slower than what was targeted earlier. According to the recently revised date of completion, the

library building is now expected to finish within October.

In the meantime, the underground water tank has been completed, after working on all the feedback received during Manohar ji's last visit to the site. Likewise, with the library building, the first-floor shear walls are being readied for casting in a couple of days. There are currently 5 men and 7 women working in the production of the interlocking bricks, the strength test for which has been done in the lab. Although the test came out positive, the engineers are going to see if they can input to further enhance its strength. We have over 32,000 CSEB bricks in storage so far, which will be adequate to begin the 2 residential dormitory blocks, the detailed drawings of which are now being readied.



The good news this month is that on the 28th - after much lobbying and trying with the local municipality, the community and NA secured 2 Hume pipes from the local government - which means that these will save us the cost of building another otherwise necessary culvert.

On the 28th morning, a meeting was held

with Prabal and Emil to primarily scrutinize and review the 2 dormitory buildings (marked here with orange dots), the detailed drawings for which are now being readied for necessary official and tendering processes. We provided our inputs on the practical use of the buildings which will be incorporated by the architects as will be best. We also discussed possible roofing materials. Learning that our choice of material is in scarce supply, we have requested one of our contractors, Rishi Ram, to survey the market to find out whether we can buy what we need in advance. Earlier this month, during Emil's weeklong visit to the site and in his words: *"a few machines and tools were purchased at Butwal for setting up a workshop at the site. The workshop is intended to support repair and maintenance of infrastructure at the site and assist the ongoing construction works. Around 20 bamboos were sourced from around the site and were processed to fabricate prototypes for sun shading fins for the library building. The production design for the sun shading fins is being currently looked into for durability."*

Regarding Padmalaya's agricultural activities, the corn crops in both the plots, have been weeded the first time (weeding is required a second time). In the Padmalaya storage, we now have 300 kgs of mustard, 10 quintals of unhusked rice, and 50 kgs of small peas ready for sale.



Programme Update at Padmalaya:

Susan and Hari paid a visit to Padmalaya during 25 & 26 of April with Nichole and Petra of the NA funding German Agency, **Bread for the World**. During this visit, meetings and interactions were conducted with different groups of programme youths and women, local communities, and members of the local government, from whom particularly, the visitors heard many words of appreciation for NA's work in the district.

Other ongoing work at the Padmalaya: e.g., providing entrepreneurship opportunities for income generation to the most disadvantaged people; providing counseling services in the local communities; regular programme work, and meetings are ongoing. This month the uninterrupted continuity of the all-around work is even more



impressive about Govinda's leadership since Govinda has been personally dealing with the illness of his wife. We all pray and hope for her speedy recovery!

Fundraising & Financial Update:



Since I did not hear back from anyone else, with the inclusion of Daniela Bachi's gift we now have a correct Padmalaya financial report. Thank you, Daniela Bachi (Mexico), for writing: *"I hope this*

message finds you very well! I took a look at the list of donors for Padmalaya, and I noticed that my donation is missing. I made a donation of \$1,055 USD (about 127,000 Nepali Rupees) in March 2019. I'm attaching a copy of the bank receipt which I retrieved from our messages dating back to 2019, in case it's helpful for your records". With this feedback from Daniela, I am attaching the updated/corrected report herewith that Merita has just sent me, for your final look.

This month at Padmalaya, Rs. 5800 was collected in the piggy bank. which was duly deposited in the NA bank account.

Others:

For the 13th May local elections, **out of the 46,693 nominations, only 4,851 are women.** Many of our women leaders were either not given tickets or are being replaced by men candidates by the political parties, even as of now. Although in the 2017 elections women won 38% of the seats only a little over 8% took up executive positions, the rest e.g., Dalits and 1 ward member was mandated. This time women's representation will fall dismally – challenging Nepal's constitutional provision of 33%. Inclusion in general may too be severely jeopardized. The above picture is at a workshop conducted by Tewa in Rautahat district, women at all levels are hitting the glass ceiling. But they are learning and are determined to work for their rights.

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***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Emil Shrestha, Govinda Acharya, Anju Baral (Tewa), & Rita*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 31st May 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – May 2022

Nepal Context:

Local level election on the 13th was the highlight. For the first time ever, over 12,700 independents fielded candidacy, demonstrating people's sheer disgust with the major political parties and a wish for an actualization of democracy in their lives. Overall, on an average 63% voted. **Balendra Shah¹** (independent) and **Sunita Dangol**, both in their early 30s, are now Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively with a double the margin of votes! As against the constitutional mandate, parties fielded lesser number of women. This percentage share and analysis is yet to be done.

The price of petrol went up by Rs 20 per liter this month. Its impact on everything necessary for our lives is beyond imagination being unprecedented in Nepal's history.



Work With the Land:

On the 17th the technical team sat together to discuss on the various aspects of the construction work, fiscal, and legal aspects of the Padmalaya. Emil with due inputs from Prabal, walked us through the details of the two residential building for which the architectural details are now completed. Prabal and Emil have now given the drawings to Manohar ji for the designing of the structural details. Work had stopped for a week again owing to the local elections, but they have just



¹ Popularly called Balen is a civil engineer and a rapper. He defeated a congress alliance and the key opposition candidate by over 20,000 votes.



begun to pick up and the first-floor casting is expected to finish during the first week of June. There are so many details to look into and think through as prices soar, and the monsoon arrives on the heels!

As you can see from above in the pictures, finally the construction related work at Padmalaya has resumed. The steel formworks on the stairs were removed after casting of the shear wall, and the preparations for the casting of the ground floor of the Library Building is being done. Earlier, even the inhouse production of our interlock bricks stopped for a week owing to the elections. There is a lot more going on here than meets the eye. All the necessary follow-up work with contractors, electrical engineer, and the entire work that is necessary with the acquirement and management of a new land is being done. Emil is playing a good role in coordinating all the various technical aspects. As Emil says: *"The formwork for the water tank slab was removed (picture above). The inside of the water tank is being cleaned for waterproofing and cement plaster works. On the 11th of this month, a letter was sent*

to the contractor for consideration of a quote for deep water boring, which was missed earlier in the contract document. The

contractor is asked to execute the work for NRs. 1,169,550 with a discount of 7.5%”.

Such negotiations are not easy when prices of construction materials are soaring! This month the paddy saplings are being sown for the

upcoming rice plantation. the corn plantation in the new land and Padmalaya have been weeded and are doing well.

Programme Update:

Govinda reported that at the district level, this month was full of election activities. Likewise, in Nawalpur, each political party was canvassing for their candidates and trying to win over the voters by hosting parties and going door to door. Nothing else could be done! But after the local results were out, on the 25th, NA at Nawalpur, went to all the local wards and municipal offices to congratulate the newly elect officials.

Mayor Vhim Lal Adhikari, Deputy Mayor, Purnakala Chowdhary, and the local Ward Chair and members were felicitated.



Taking the opportunity of Lord Buddha's birthday on the 16th, the entire Nawalpur NA team, celebrated by conducting a documentary show on the life of the Buddha, meditation, and the lighting of lamps. Over 40 youths, staff, and community members participated in this programme. All

expressed the value of being in reflection regarding the teachings of Lord Buddha for daily peace in their lives, and in their communities.

According to Govinda, all the other 3 ongoing programme in Nawalpur by the Padmalaya Team, are going well. Despite the disruptive local environment, they were able to conduct all necessary activities in a timely manner along with the election canvassing and vote-counting work that was going on. Regular meetings, counseling

for the community members needing this service, and support for those who have fallen through the safety nets have also been well accomplished this month.

Fundraising & Financial Update:

Subha Pandey (Susan's sister) contributed the remaining Rs. 50,000 of her pledge this month. Thank you very much **Subha!** This month, from the sale of rice and donations **Rs. 27445 have been collected and deposited in the NA bank account.** Merita did send me the updated financial report in a timely manner. However, I am choosing not to send it to you all so as not to clutter your inbox. But now on we will have an updated financial report each month, so if any of you wish to have the report on a monthly basis, please do ask – and we will be happy to send it to you!

Others:

The month was overflowing with major happenings. In the local level elections, IGFF was represented to participate in the election monitoring. The sheer number of independents who fielded candidacy and won – mostly youths - in key positions, is definitely a warning to political parties saying, “enough is enough”! **Unveiling an eight-year-old rape and persistent six-month long following rapes and abuse when she was only 16, Sushmita Regmi** through her sheer courage, helped unravel other such incidents in high schools, enabling the arrests of perpetrators and the calling for the revision of laws, by youth-led demonstrations and advocacy! Although much lesser women candidates were fielded by political parties, a greater number of women **won key positions as Mayors (13) (and Village Development Committee Chairs (12))**! Like never before, it seems like the youths are owning politics! I feel hopeful – we may yet have a future in Nepal!

Included in these mailing groups now, are **Sabine Meitzel** (re-establishing communications after more than 25 years) and **Margareta Funder**, who recently visited Nepal. Welcome!

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***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Emil Shrestha, Govinda Acharya, Ganga Sagar Rai, Rita Thapa*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 30th June 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – June 2022

Nepal Context:

What's there of Nepal or any other place for that matter. America's ruling on abortion, Norway's shooting, ongoing bombing of Ukraine, and the Afghanistan earthquake killing at least 1000. Here, the monsoons arrived, and the damage/disasters have begun. The price of petroleum rose up to Rs. 199 and has just come down to Rs. 179 per liter. Even that is beyond what an average Nepali can afford, counting all the unabated inflation on consumer items it brings about! The price of the dollar is the highest it has ever been at over Rs. 125 per dollar. People say we are heading in Sri Lanka's direction – the government says nay. But who believes them anyway!

The good things here is that the independent candidates are walking their talk against all odds, and most Nepalis are doing their best to hold each other together. This has set a precedence for the upcoming elections within the next 6 months, where other independents and emerging parties have declared candidacy. All these forebode good things to come, but only if we collectively are able to absorb and outweigh the costs of these significant transitions! Still, we now have HOPE!

Work With the Land:



On the 13th the Padmalaya team met with the engineers to get an update on the progress and to think through and plan. Emil shared about his site visit and the details for the 2 upcoming residential buildings, which have now gone to Manohar ji's for the structural and electrical designing. Procurement issues with fluctuating prices, inflation, and foreseeable hurdles, were talked about for resolving in the best way one could. We

also agreed on regularizing our bi-monthly meetings (upcoming one scheduled now for 1st July), to include Govinda on zoom, and the contractor Rishi Ram, for the initial updating part.



A dozer was hired for 20 hours, in order to level the waterbody surrounding the library building and the multi-purpose community hall, as well as to create the necessary drainage. The staircase to the first floor has been casted and the preparations for the casting of the ground floor has just been accomplished today. Work is still not moving with the required speed - partly owing to local-level elections; unprecedented, unpredictable, and instable price hikes of raw materials; more recently incessant monsoon rains; and something more going between the contractors themselves, which we can only guess! This month the production of CSEB bricks is on hold.

In his technical report, Emil in his own words says: *“electrical engineer, Shailendra K. Jha submitted a draft for the masterplan around the end of last month. On the 21st of this month a meeting was held between the architects and Shailendra in order to discuss on the proposed drafts. Comments and suggestions were*

provided to the engineer who will be incorporating them in the final submission to be completed as soon as possible. On the first day of this month, architectural detailed design drawings were forwarded to the MRB & Associates for structural, electrical, and sanitary

design drawings for the dormitory and restroom block/s. The engineering consulting firm was also asked for the preparation of Bill of Quantities for the buildings. The consultant is expected to complete the work by mid-July and is being contracted for the amount of Rs.

350,000 excluding taxes.”



Programme Update:

Promptly after the election results came out, everyone in Nawalpur is busy with the rice planting tasks. Luckily so far, the weather has been good. Although the rains in the Chure hills have swelled the Narayani River to some extent, so far the waters are contained and the community has been engaged in building barricades and also in erecting a wire mesh wall so that crops can be safe from animals from the surrounding Chitwan National Park.



Farming at Padmalaya is going well with harvesting crops of corn in both the lands, preparation for rice planting, and an additional corn crop is being now planted interspersed with string beans and other suitable vegetables.



Govinda and Lamsal met with **Mayor Bhimlal Adhikari** to congratulate him and familiarize themselves with the mayor, on behalf of Padmalaya and Nagarik Aawaz.

This month, from among the youths who have been

involved in Sehari for 3 years, **Sangita Poudel**, **Elisha Lamichhane**, and **Sunita Pariyar** have been appointed as staff in various programme posts that have opened up as programme expanded in NA/Nawalpur. Regular meetings as well as planning meetings for the new programme/s have taken place. meetings for sharing of learning and experiences among staff and youths are also ongoing. Ten second generation youth women, suffering violence in many ways have been chosen in the Women Living in Dignity programme. Now all together 25 women/youths are benefitting from this programme in terms of practical support, and mental health support. All the three NA Peace Centers located in Nawalpur are conducting free counseling services in the local communities which is increasingly gaining the community's trust and confidence.

Govinda has shared so much more, and this update can only offer you a tiny glimpse of all that is happening in Padmalaya in Sehari, Nawalpur. The credibility and visibility Padmalaya has gained over a relatively short period of time, speaks of Govinda's able and strategic leadership. We owe him a big applause!

Fundraising & Financial Update:

This month Padmalaya collected Rs. 3090 in the NA bank. My friend Sabine Mietzel, with whom I reconnected after over 25 years, has said that she will make a personal gift to Padmalaya! Thankyou Sabine, for your pledge of a gift. We value all our gifts - and even more, our connections.

Yes, Merita has sent me the financial update. It will be sent to anyone who asks for it. Or I will send you only the December one.

Others:

We wish to share with you this picture that planting some trees very early on is literally bearing fruits! A few mango trees in Sehari are already loaded with mangoes!



p

We have another surprise! The Padmalaya logo is more or less finalized. The logo depicts the following for the name it embodies: **padmālaya** (the home of the lotus) in Sanskrit: **adma** (lotus) + **ālaya** (place, sanctuary, residence).

As Keshar Joshi, our designer shares: “The Padmalaya logo depicts a lotus in a minimalist outline form - defining

its simplicity, humility, and grace. As the eye flows from the starting point on the graphic - the stem, it rises and continues in an infinite loop within the lotus petals, symbolizing that any good action is not a one time doing, but lends to a continuous process - manifesting further goodness. It is symbolic of how we can all emerge from muddy waters and bloom like the lotus. Arising from any given hardships to radiate love, peace, and progress, in our communities”. Please see attached. We hope you like it as we do!”

Bank Information:

If you wish to make a gift to help build the PBM&LC, please inform us in advance so that we have records for follow-ups with the bank:

Name: Siddhartha Bank,

Address: Satdobato, Lalitpur, Nepal

Account Name: Nagarik Aawaz,

Account No: 01815090950

Swift Code: SIDDNPKA

***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Emil Shrestha, Govinda Acharya, Ganga Sagar Rai, Rita Thapa*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 31st July 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – July 2022

Nepal Context:

As always, there has never been a dull moment in our lives. But somehow, I am not moved to write. May be key words can describe better – irregularities, inflation, impunity, instability, insecurity, floods, landslides - and in all fields, inconsistencies. By the way Nepal seems to be vying to be a geo-political hot bed for the USA, China, India, military, and political show of strengths while our lost politicians know not what they seem to be doing for their own good – leave alone for Nepal.

Work With the Land:

On the 1st the Padmalaya team met with the architects and the logo designer Keshar Joshi. This proved to be a very useful meeting where a possible very broad, long-term use of the logo, and possible mediums were discussed. On the 18th the team met again to discuss progress, upcoming issues of inflation and what needed doing in order to cope with these realities in relation with the construction work of the Padmalaya.



Owing to some problems with the joint venture/s of the contractors, we have been very worried that the construction work has moved very slow despite one of them suffering some health issues. NA has sent them a second warning and is also looking into other options. Most recently Emil reports that the formworks have finally resumed.

In Emil's own words:

“Around the middle of the month, draft structural drawings and reports were received by the architects from MRB & Associates. The firm is entrusted with structural, electrical, and sanitary design drawings and estimates for the dormitory and restroom block. The drafts were screened by the architects and forwarded back to the engineers for corrections and missing drawing details. Final submissions are expected by the first half of the coming month. On the 25th, architects, Prabal Thapa and Emil Shrestha had a meeting with the roofing material dealer at Prabal's office. The discussions were on reliable delivery of the desired roofing materials, alternatives for the materials, and rates.”



As a team, overseeing Padmalaya, we are now meeting regularly on a bimonthly basis with the architects. This is useful especially for us as non-technical people. Taking the opportunity of the rainy season, Padmalaya accomplished planting some 12 fruit trees like lemon, mango, pomegranate, lichee, dragon fruit, and pineapples. The community is engaged in rice planting, and other related farming activities. So far there has not been a major disaster owing to flooding or landslides in Nawalpur, yet people fear the worst and are staying vigilant. Rice was planted in the lower parts of Padmalaya, and the new land in the city center - the Nawalpur staff team and youth volunteers made a big contribution to make this possible. This year the estimated 300 kgs of corn crop has been harvested and partially shelled. On a sad note, Ain

Kumari's buffalo was struck by lightening and died instantaneously. Luckily her mother and Ain escaped with minor injuries. Many time during our visit to Nawalpur Ain served us



milk.
Compensations will be made but we want to say, **“thank you & rest in peace”!**

Programme Update:

Out of the 4 programme/s running in Nawalpur at present, there are 5 peace centers and all together there are 52 women and peace youth volunteers who are engaged. In the Padmalaya, programme/s have been shared with the local government office bearers, which has helped in building mutual trust and understanding for all the NA programme/s. In all these programme/s, the regular monthly meetings are ongoing. these are for sharing of experiences and making self-assessments. Sometimes the community members also participate in these meetings lending to transparency and enhanced understanding.

Most of the conflict affected women who join the Nawalpur programme need ongoing counseling services.

Therefore, the youth peace ambassadors are given regular and ongoing orientation on counseling by Nawalpur counselor/staff, Devi Pun. this month 7 orientations on mental wellbeing were given at the level of the local communities by the peace volunteers. In order to enhance income generation at the level of the families, two families of Bal Bahadur Bote and Pabitra Thapa received 2 goats each. The total cost of which was Rs. 18,000.

NA longtime partner Kurve Wustrow (Germany) has extended its support until 2025. Therefore, Padmalaya is also in the process of recruiting additional necessary staff, youth volunteers, and renting out space for an additional peace center. Padmalaya's ongoing activities have helped create trust and credibility in the local communities.

Fundraising & Financial Update:

Promptly after sending the update Sabine Meitzel wrote: *“As announced, I have just transferred my gift of 200 CHF (approx. Nepalese Rs. 26330) to Padmalaya (copy of UBS Bank transfer attached for ease of reference and follow-up)”*. Thank you very much Sabine – we value your support and trust.

Likewise, our donor activist friend of almost 3 decades, **Marta Drury** (Marta (L) with me in



1992 – already burnt-out activists!) **also made a gift of US \$ 2500 to NA Padmalaya.** Marta said she is finally winding up her philanthropic giving after 35 years and this will be her parting gift to NA. **The NA Board led by Dr. Chhatra Amatya, the staff led by Dr. Susan Risal,**

and the extended NA team all over Nepal, along with me send you our respects and a deepest bow and salute your tireless support to help strengthen the women's global movement Marta. It was my honour to get to know you and be in activism with you across often unsurpassable global divides and be supported by you in more ways than one **Marta.** **Marta Drury is named one of the 1000 Peace Women Across the Globe!**

As luck would have it, through my old colleague – donor and volunteer at Tewa – **Sunil Basnet, Kalpana Mahat & Amrit Khadka** pledged Rs. 50,000 for Padmalaya. Welcome Kalpana & Amrit to the Nagarik Aawaz family and I now have taken the liberty of keeping

[you on my monthly update list](#). At NA we are deeply grateful you are choosing to support us! Thank you both very much! This month Padmalaya so far has collected **Rs 21,100** from sale of produce and donations received from the communities - there is more to collect after which it will be deposited in the NA account.

Others:

<https://youtu.be/fpIIVAbtsjk> Susan shared that: *"NA's small video prepared by Ganga and Shikha has been selected as a finalist for the 2022 Voices of SDG16+: Stories for Global Action campaign under the theme of Women's political participation by UN - High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). They have invited us to participate and speak at the Voices of SDG16+ official side-event at the 2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Shikha spoke at the event on the 11th - the video is about the impact of Building Leadership for Women, Peace, Security and Equity funded by ifa/Germany".* Please find the link attached herewith for your viewing pleasure!

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***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Emil Shrestha, Govinda Acharya, Ganga Sagar Rai, Rita Thapa*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 31st August 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – August 2022

Nepal Context:

The Constituent Assembly elections have been announced for 20th November, and the struggle for power among political parties, each with different strategies, has begun. Many more independents will be contesting this election. But it is clear that women will still not be able to increase their rightful share in the parliament. Despite women parliamentarians now building up pressures on the top leadership/s, none of the parties so far have any intentions or the willingness of enabling women's representation – leave alone equitable.

Work With the Land:

On the 5th the Padmalaya team met again. We expressed frustrations at how the work has moved too slow. By the end of this meeting, as well as through several following consultations, eventually over the month, NA arrived at the following conclusions: 1) NA would enable the strengthening of the supervision/monitoring of the overall construction work. 2) A separate local contractor would be contracted to begin (after



the Dashain holidays in early October) the work on the two residential buildings. 3) The official approval processes for the structural designs will promptly be begun by Govinda. This will mean that the residential buildings and the remaining library building work will go on simultaneously. NA will advise/ensure the use of local human resource/s as far as possible. NA feels confident that with Prabal's and Emil's oversight and technical inputs and with Emil's ongoing field supervision and monitoring, who will also be coordinating with Govinda and the local skilled workers to initiate this process as in the past, we have a good chance of



making up for some of the time lost.

During 24 – 25th we were delighted to go on a field visit to Padmalaya with PC and brief him about all the developments at the Padmalaya, Nawalpur. We also visited the new land, which was emerald-green with the newly planted paddy.



The architects **Prabal and Emil** visited Padmalaya 22/23 and Emil stayed back in Padmalaya to brief PC and us. During this visit of PC, 2 fruit trees were planted by PC and CEO - Susan.

According to Govinda's report, in August, Padmalaya was busy with farming responsibilities: from weeding rice and other plants, to harvesting a crop of corn.

Programme Update:

Right now, NA's work has expanded in Nawalpur to cover 5 Peace Centers and 4 programme/s with youths and conflict affected women and children. Through these programme/s women, youth peace volunteers, and peace ambassadors, are being mobilized to serve the local communities. There are now 12 staff persons working in Padmalaya. During her visit, Susan also gave a team building training to all the Padmalaya staff on the morning of the 23rd.

On the 18th, the newest Peace Center was inaugurated - for which the **Ward Chair, Tilak Ram Neupane** was present. The **NA Senior Counselor, Sudip Sigdel** visited from Kathmandu for the occasion. The event was also very well represented by the local community.

*In the picture above, our first batch youth peace volunteers who have now graduated to be peace ambassadors are seen. **Alisha Lammichhane** is conducting the meeting with the conflict affected women – so rewarding to see her in action!*

*During 26-28th, the designated **officers from the Social Welfare Council (SWC)** came for their monitoring visit to Padmalaya. During this time, **NA Finance Manager Merita** also visited with the **senior auditor, Agni Khatri**. To say the least Govinda and his team have been kept on their toes throughout the month. Thanks to **Govinda's leadership and management!***

Fundraising & Financial Update:

Our friend and supporter Lynne Brennen wrote on the 18th that noted Canadian pacifist *“**Madeleine Gilchrist's** gift of \$530 CDN arrived. I sent the global etransfer a few minutes ago. The amount of her gift is **is \$530 CDN = 49737 Nepali rupees.**”* Madeline we are all saying, *“**Namaste - thank you very much!**”*, and sending our warmest regards to you.



During his visit, **PC** gifted **Padmalaya US \$ 500** for anything that may come up for the Padmalaya community emergency fund. Govinda and team expressed their appreciation for this thoughtful and supportive gift. This month **Rs 3000** was gifted/saved in the Padmalaya piggy bank. Also, **Rita Thapa** pledged an annual gift of **Rs. 50000 for Padmalaya** - until its overall completion – as many years as it may take.

Others:

*It has been an unusually busy month for NA staff and teams as I have observed. We were all very happy to have our donor for Padmalaya, **Patrick Cheung (PC)** visit us and familiarize himself with all the work happening in Padmalaya and his other engagements in Nepal. The NA*

team expresses their gratitude to PC for his ongoing support and interest in the work of Padmalaya and NA.

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Account No: 01815090950
Swift Code: SIDDNPKA

***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Prabal S Thapa, Govinda Acharya, Ganga Sagar Rai*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 30th September 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – September 2022

Nepal Context:

Nepal's biggest festivals **Dasain & Tihar** are upcoming from early October, and first, I on behalf of the Padmalaya Team, would like to **wish each and every one of you/us a very happy Dasain & Tihar!** May the **Goddess Durga** give us the strength and the fortitude to always be on the side of what is right and good!

The Nepali rupee continues to devalue against the dollar at \$1 = Rs. 131. But owing also to the war, this is no longer a new thing for all of us in our world in our world – implying how life will continue to get harder on the financial side with implications all around, especially for those who are or may get in perilous conditions. For this each of us needs to spread the safety nets we can to the limits we can – as all of us are already doing!

Work With the Land:

The Padmalaya Core Group (primarily Trustees, key management staff/s, and Board members) met at Patan Dhoka at 11am on the 23rd. This was an opportune moment to meet with PC (our donor/ally/friend). It was also a time for all the NA key persons, to



reflect on Padmalaya as its work moves on. Basically, what was summarized from the notes Shikha took reads as: "Padmalaya has the potential to be a global center for peacebuilding work across ages and diversity/s. Visitors, academics, and peace practioneers, from throughout the world will come to visit Padmalaya, which will further

strengthen peace work as a living practice, as well as helping promote Nepal's tourism owing also to its proximity with Lumbini (birthplace of the Buddha) and other natural and historical heritage sites. Time has tested that resilience is an inherent quality of the Nepali people. Therefore, the Padmalaya will help us model and showcase the human ability to overcome all adversaries including our 10 year-long armed conflict. While doing all these, we have the possibility to move forward in the best interest of our community/ies and the greater humanity". Thank you Shikha for your notetaking.



Emil who visited the site for the casting of the second-floor slab wrote in his report:

“The month started with assembling the steel beams and joists for the second-floor slab. The assembled welded joists were painted with epoxy-based primer. This was followed with

installation of plywood formworks in the second half of the month. Once the formworks were arranged, reinforcement bars were laid. The contractor had been employing local labors from the village for most of the recent works. On the 25th of the month concrete was casted for the slab. Ready mix concrete from Kawasoti was used. After a couple of days following the casting, the contractor team left for their homes to celebrate the Dashain festival.

Furthermore, Emil also reported on other meetings and follow-up technical works such as: *“This month, a second revised draft for the structural drawings of the residential buildings was received from MRB & Associates. The architects, (Prabal and Emil) met on the 12th of the month to discuss the revisions made. The following day the architects went to MRB & Associates’ office to discuss and finalize the structural drawings with Er. Manohar Rajbhandari. The consultant is yet to submit the final set of drawings (structural, sanitary, electrical and BOQ) for the building. The long pending contract signing procedure with the consultant was finally concluded in the beginning of this month. The contract revised the term from 22 August 2022 until 30 September 2022 for the amount of NRs. 350,000”.*

In Padmalaya, Govinda tells us that the paddy harvest is largely good - although to a lesser degree some paddy crop is affected by the yellow disease. but elsewhere in Nawalpur, most of the farmers have been significantly affected and are very worried.

Programme Highlights:

Govinda’s monthly report is full of all the good work that continues to be done in the Nawalpur office. Despite the many challenges and instability it is truly wonderful to see how our youths are inspired, how the communities are taking ownership of NA, and credibility continues to grow! **Govinda’s leadership, and the Padmalaya team’s hard work** needs to be applauded! All the regular and ongoing meetings have been conducted in a timely manner in Nawalpur, with the active leadership and participation of the NA Peace Ambassadors and the local youths and communities, who are now well bonded with the ward level peace centers of NA.

There were four community based and led programme/s carried out by women facilitators in



different wards of the Municipality - on leadership; peace & conflict; mental health; and prevention of stress and suicide. On the 18th, our Peace Ambassadors and youths organized and facilitated the celebrations of the **Jitiya annual festival**, celebrated by the local **Tharu** community/ies and the on the 21st the International Peace Day. Over 800 persons participated in the local level programme/s,



devolved to the 4 different ward levels. Owing to the upcoming constituent assembly elections, to be held on the 22nd November, other interactions, before the Dasain holidays have focused on key election issues e.g. women's political participation, and election monitoring from a gender and an equity lens.



During 21 – 24th NA brought together in Pokhara, the Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and other staff from Madhyapur/Nawalpur; Godavari/Lalitpur; and Bagmati districts, for an orientation workshop on local governance policy, laws, and the

constitution. Forty-two office bearers participated in the 3-day programme **facilitated by Lalitpur CDO Jaya Narayan Acharya, and advocate Trishna Thapa.**

Fundraising & Financial Update:

With **Merita's** inputs, at the Padmalaya Core Group meeting, we learned that from the NA Board, Members, PC and Trustees, **from January - September 2022. Padmalaya received a total of Rs. 850,000.** Out of this sum, on the 23rd itself, **Rita fulfilled her annual pledge of Rs. 50,000; Shobha Basnet (Past Chair) gifted Rs. 50,000; Sharad Babu Shrestha gifted Rs. 51,000; Chhatra diju (Chair) gifted Rs. 11,000; while Roshani Karmacharya (Treasurer), and Sukumaya Bohra (Member) each gifted Rs. 10,000 each for this year - 2022!** The Board and members and even the staff of NA, have in a continued way demonstrated their commitments to Padmalaya! Being in the moment **PC, announced his gift of Rs. 100,000 to Padmalaya!**

Related to Padmalaya, frugality in running programme/s, gifts from the community, and sale from our produce at Padmalaya, **enabled a deposit of Rs. 37,700 in the piggy bank,** which now Govinda informs, is already deposited in the NA account.

Others:

What can we say when 22-year-old **Masha Amini** dies 2 hours after being arrested on 13th September in Tehran by morality police for not covering her head! Protests have intensified in Iran and throughout the world – by women burning their hijabs and cutting their hair in the protest demonstrations. Iranian State repression has resulted in arrests, injuries, and many indiscriminate deaths have been reported. These and the ongoing war are tugging at our hearts as we cope with what we continually do.

This month I have included **Bina, Priti, & Merina, from the IGFF volunteer/staff team,** on the Padmalaya monthly update mail group/s. a warm welcome to each one of you!

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Account Name: Nagarik Aawaz,
Account No: 01815090950
Swift Code: SIDDNPKA**

***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Shikha Bhattarai, Ar Emil, Govinda Acharya*



To: All
From: Rita
Date: 31st
October 2022
Subject:
Padmalaya
Monthly Update –
October 2022

Nepal Context:

The Constituent Assembly elections are coming up on the 20th November! Early October saw unprecedented late rains causing damage to crops, floodings, and landslides dampening to some extent the festivities of Dasain. Tihar and Chhath festivals are just over, and now the biggest buzz going nationwide, is the forthcoming elections!

Work With the Land:

The highlight of the month was the visit of **Hope Chigudu** (our expert backstopping team member)! On the 20th Hope visited NA¹ and was updated and briefed on the work of NA and Padmalaya. On the 21st, the Padmalaya team – Susan, Prabal, Ganga, Emil, Rita, with Hope met to decide and finalize on the modus operandi of the expanding ongoing Padmalaya. After necessary technical discussions we went into very deep reflections with Hope – beginning with when we began; where we have arrived; and where we envision Padmalaya going. Hope gave us many useful and thoughtful insights, as well as observed that from the last time she visited Nawalpur, there was good progress with the grounding of Padmalaya in the local community both in terms of programme/s and the process with the structural aspects. We think we have something brewing with Hope and her expertise in relation to Padmalaya, but only time will tell. Thank you hugely for your insights, generous time and visit, Hope – we hope to see you soon!

Despite the couple of days of flooding, our rice harvest was bountiful – we are all thankful and pray all can remain this bountiful!

¹ (L-R) Susan, Rita, Shikha, Hope & Hari in the picture with Ganga behind the lens!

Emil who visited the site during the casting of the 3rd floor says in his report: *“Construction work/s came to a pause in the first week of the month as the workers returned home to celebrate Dashain. The work/s paused again for the last week of the month for the Tihar and Chhath festivals. Despite these, steel formworks for the shear wall on the second floor were assembled with the vertical reinforcement bars tied and readied for concrete casting. On the 23rd of the month a ready mixed concrete was used to complete the concrete casting for the shear wall. In the meantime, steel columns and periphery steel beams for the third-floor slab had been assembled as well. The officially extended time duration for the construction work/s, as requested by the contractor has been over and the contractors will now be subjected to the penalties as agreed in the contract document.*

*By the end of the last month, drawings, estimates and structural reports from **MRB & Associates** were received. The received necessary documents are being processed for legal construction permits and tendering documents.”*

Programme Highlights:

Govinda reports that the whole district, like the entire Nepal is teaming up with the



constituent assembly election campaign now due on the 20th November. The month was also filled by celebrating the Nepal's biggest festivals of Dasain, Tihar, and Chhath. The farmers have been busy with harvesting paddy. NA is going to harvest in two lots in the two different lands and will be using the newly bought thresher machine this time.

Owing to ongoing rains during the Dasain festival, the district was affected by flooding and some 200 homes were affected including Padmalaya. But now finally things have returned to normalcy.

During the 12-14th, Padmalaya had NA donors Peter and his 3 colleagues, (Manfred, Julia, and Regina) from Kurve Wustrow, visit with Susan. They took a keen interest in the work being done in Sehari and the Nawalpur district and after all their interactions with the local bodies and the communities they said that this is exemplary work needing to be replicated.

As always, all the regular team meetings were conducted during this month. 4 major community interactive programme/s where altogether over 500 community members and youths participated, were also accomplished. These programme/s were designed according to the prioritized needs (drug rehabilitation, counseling, community harmony, and personal health & well-being) of the local communities. They were all conducted and coordinated by

the peace ambassadors with some backstopping support from the Sehari NA staff. Peace volunteers from the 2 districts: Nawalpur (12) and Lalitpur (18) came together for a 2-day



workshop in Sehari for a refresher's course in relation to building long-term peace (picture above).

Fundraising & Financial Update:

Susan, invited by the Interfaith Cooperation Forum, to Chiang Mai, Thailand as a resource person, pledged to make a contribution of **Rs. 50,000** to Padmalaya from her honorarium. Everywhere, this has been a month of huge spending owing to the festivals. So, the Padmalaya piggy bank collected only **Rs. 700**. As per earlier consultations with the Core Group, Susan and Merita have skillfully deposited Padmalaya amounts in Fixed Deposits which will further facilitate ongoing work and will also generate safe interests.



Others:

Once more IGFF took the advantage of having Hope in Nepal and hosted a talk programme titled **Feminisms & the Value of Feminist Movement in Our World**. Over 60 intergenerational feminist participants listened, put forth their experiences and thoughts, and we all re-energized!

This beautiful rangoli wishing everyone a Happy Diwali/Tihar was made by the youths of Sehari that Govinda sent us. I, with the entire Padmalaya NA family sent you our belated best wishes – may love, light, and peace fill our lives, and shine our paths. At NA we know that this journey was well begun in 2001!

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***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Ganga Sagar Rai, Ar Emil, Govinda Acharya & Rita*

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 30th November 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – November 2022

Nepal Context:

Except for incidents of violence in 4/5 places, and repolling in 15 places, the 20th November CA elections were accomplished peacefully. Probably owing to the disgust with their party leaders and lack of other options, voters' turnout was very low for Nepal at 58 - 61%. Also except for some old (age) leaders, the public preferred to vote in youths. The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) – a party founded only 4/5 months back by a television presenter Rabi Lamichhane, won a record 7 seats in the CA - fielding women candidates like lawyer Shobita Gautam, and doctor, Toshima Karki, as young as being well under 30 years old. But broadly, in this first-time huge sweeping of significant wins by professional youths who are diverse and daring, what is in transition for us and Nepal?

Incumbent PM Deuba, with CPN Maoist Party led by Prachanda – will probably form the government with the unholy alliance of 5 parties, formed earlier for this election. This may continue – but can this happen without inter and intra party feuds and hustles – it is worrying for the country's stability and progress! So much time has already been lost!

The full results for the province level elections are almost all out - except in a few places in Dolakha district – where repolling is due on 1st December. We have yet to take stock of why the number of women has fallen far too short. But it will be done – and Nepali women will ask why and how this could happen?!

Work With the Land:



In Nawalpur, out of the 2 CA seats and 4 Province seats for the 20th November CA elections, 2 Congress party men won the CA elections, and 3 men and 1 woman, all from the UML party, won the elections.

Work with the Library Building has been very slow (festivals, elections, and farm

work). Only after the elections, construction work resumed with 6 labourers, who have begun work in laying out the beams for the casting of the third floor ceiling. The boring for the deep well (60 meters) was completed on the 28th, and it is expected to take an additional week in order to complete the necessary remaining work.



Govinda shared that in total 3000 kgs of paddy have been harvested from our fields this year. The straw has been exchanged for necessary manure, which has already been used to sow mustard in the now empty fields in Padmalaya and the other land. Some 12 liters of mustard oil from the previous harvest will be gifted to key volunteer members

of the NA.

As per Emil, on the 2nd of the month, he visited Ganga at NA, and Shanta Kumar Shrestha at IFID Nepal Pvt. Ltd. to proceed with the contracting administration works for the construction of the two residential buildings. During 5 – 8, Emil made a site visit for necessary supervision. On the 11th, Prabal with Emil visited NA to discuss work progress/s (Rita being absent), the construction works at the site, and the consulting works for the upcoming two residential buildings.

Regarding the building of the two residential blocks, in Emil's own words: *"The engineering drawings, reports and basic estimates received from MRB & Associates around the end of the last month were discussed with IFID Nepal Pvt. Ltd. for the preparations for the tendering processes. IFID Nepal Pvt. Ltd. was contracted for the term of three months for the contract sum of NRs. 150,000 without taxes. The consultant is to revise the drawings, prepare estimates, specifications, draft contract documents, and facilitate the tendering processes and bid evaluation processes for the construction contract of the dormitory buildings. On the 3rd of the month, engineer, Shanta from IFID Nepal Pvt. Ltd. and Emil visited MRB & Associates to discuss the engineering drawings. Likewise, on the following day, Shanta and Emil held a meeting with Prabal to discuss the architectural details and material specifications. Besides, the tendering procedure, procedures for municipal legal permits were also looked into. On the 6th, Emil visited the municipality, discussed the considerations for the legal construction permit procedure with the concerned authorities, and had his name enlisted as a consultant to facilitate the legal construction procedures as required. Revised drawings are now being compiled for the Municipality permit procedures".*

While construction work has been very slow primarily owing to a lack of coordination and cooperation between the 2 contractors, this will be resolved by ending working with them once the present Library Building contract ends.

Programme Highlights:



Govinda shares that the regular ongoing meetings, orientations, and team-building initiatives are being carried out both - in the 4 Peace Centers in Nawalpur and at Padmalaya.

The 16 days campaign against VAW, is also being now conducted in 15 Wards of Nawalpur, in conjunction with

NA ward-level women and children groups. The Deputy Chair, of the VDC Purnakala Chaudhary, presides over the committee formed for this campaign.

This month, counselling and related services have been extended on a need-based basis to 12 women who have suffered domestic and other types of violence. Five community level awareness- raising interaction programmes related with the prevention of all types of violence, suicide, as well as peacebuilding and community leadership for VAW have been conducted. In the picture above, Sandeep and Kamala Devi Tharu from Nawalpur district, were the proud recipients of recognition/award for being the best gender-sensitive couple while playing their roles. Community women leaders took leadership in the organizing and the running of these programmes, and some 200 community members (including men) participated in these events.

Shova Basnet – a mediation expert, and also the immediate past Chair of NA, conducted an eight-day long training on mediation to 6 peace ambassadors as a part of enabling them to be resource persons for all the emerging related work in the district. **Govinda** also conducted a training for 20 youths from conflict and violence affected families from Nawalpur and Lalitpur districts, during 2 - 4 November. Related to this 10 youths were supported with income generation, medical, and relief support as was found to be necessary, to the tune of Rs. 80,000.

One of the Peace Centers located in Madhyabindu Village Development Committee (VDC), is being now being run by a 9-member committee (5 women and 4 men) and is Chaired by the local VDC Chair. Among the many exemplary initiatives accomplished this month, a counseling room has been established in the local Elementary Peace School, for the ongoing use of the students who come from landless and laborer families. Another, noteworthy

initiative taken, during the 16 days, is a radio play being aired for awareness on violence against women. This play has been prepared by the women and youths engaged in NA programme in Nawalpur.

Fundraising & Financial Update:

Early in the month, we were delighted to receive a large gift of **USD 5000, from one of our longtime ally and donors – who chooses to remain anonymous** – gratitude! Shortly after, this was followed by news from **Lynne Brennen who has for ever been hosting the Nepal/NA teas with Elizabeth Wickwire**, in her home in Toronto Canada. Lynne sent us **Can \$ 7000, which included a generous gift of \$500 from Angela Miles, PhD** – again a long-time ally/supporter. Merita, informed me that **this amount is an equivalent of Rs. 6,97,127.45!** We are humbled and strive to work as best as we possibly can, inspired by the consistent dedication of Lynne, Elizabeth, and all our supporters in Toronto – thank you all! Likewise, Susan's friend **Peter Dietzel, Country Coordinator of KURVE Wustrow (KW) Germany**, mobilized friends and KU to send Padmalaya/NA **a huge gift of 27,000 euros**. Thank you first, Susan for making the case, and Peter with your friends for your very kind and generous support. We hope you will visit Padmalaya, Nawalpur, this coming new year 2023 – to note our progress!

Sweetly one of the senior programme management staff at NA, **Hari Dhami**, informed that when he surprisingly received a modest honorarium for his assistant role with Susan, in the Bangkok Peace & Conflict Regional Training, **he is now enabled to gift Padmalaya Rs. 15,000** - as he had always hoped to do! This is a precious gift Hari – thank you!

The **Rs 17,085 collected at Padmalaya this month, through the sale of produce or donations have also been deposited in the NA bank account**. Well in a month of Thanksgiving, as we receive precious gifts from so many well-wishers at Padmalaya, and as harvested grains fill all our granaries in Nepal, we are in grateful thanksgiving!

Others:

Learning from our women candidates who are connected to us in multiple ways e.g., via



Tewa, IGFF, and even NA, that they are finding it very difficult financially to canvass, we promptly raised Rs. 400,000 (Tewa/NA/2 Individuals) and disbursed Rs. 25,000 each to 15 candidates in our above-mentioned networks. After the passing away of **Kamla Bhasin** (above), the **Sangat Core Group** (from 5 countries: India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Nepal), met in the Kamla Hall in Deep Yogini, the Tewa Center over 2 weeks. This time taken to reflect, review, and strategize forward, regarding our structure/s and Sangat key tasks were of great value. Finally, at least we could feel that the transition is now moving into a stronger

more stable Sangat. We also greatly valued being together to bring a closure to Kamla's mourning and rekindling our connections at a deeper level. Needless to say, that the worrying situations of all our nation states and how it is impacting on all of us – but most on those disenfranchised and disadvantaged is difficult to process and deal with.

Our significant news at NA is that Ganga & Shikha, both defended their 2-year long applied MA Peace & Conflict course in ACTS/Cambodia with flying colours! Congratulations Ganga & Shikha – we are so proud of you both!

Bank Information:

If you wish to make a gift to help build the PBM&LC, please inform us in advance so that we have records for follow-ups with the bank:

Name: Siddhartha Bank,

Address: Satdobato, Lalitpur, Nepal

Account Name: Nagarik Aawaz,

Account No: 01815090950

Swift Code: SIDDNPKA

Note: Photo Courtesy: Govinda Acharya

To: All
From: Rita
Date: 31st December 2022
Subject: Padmalaya Monthly Update – December 2022
& **HAPPY NEW YEAR - 2023**

Nepal Context:

The voter turnout for the CA elections 20th November, was much lesser than it has ever been at 60% - also with a high percentage of invalid votes. Although this election also brought in many first timer youths in politics, the key oldies were also voted in 😞! Congress had the highest representation & majority votes. But despite this, owing to the redundancy of the ruling party leadership coupled with the conniving cunningness of Oli (making him the kingmaker), in a last-minute grand design, PM Deuba was ousted, and the congress party was left high and dry. A coalition of the UML and the Maoists – making Prachanda the PM, and the newest party led by Rabi Lamichhane as Deputy PM & Home Minister have been sworn in along with two other DPMs and 7 ministers. This has left us all with gaping mouths!

In this unexpected turn of political events, we can rest assured that this transition will create a inter and intra party struggles (as is well begun), with people like Lamichhane, who is saying that he has taken on this position to be in apposition even within the Cabinet and the Ministry – in case of wrongdoing/s! In my recent trip to the Far Western Nepal, people continue to live in unnecessary hardships simply owing to the lack of basic infrastructures and services! When then can Nepalis have stability - the building-up of a nation ravaged by an armed conflict, disasters, and a constantly down sliding economy!

Work With the Land:



Govinda sent me his report from Nawalpur including beautiful pictures! He informs us that

even as the vote counting concluded, political parties were analyzing the unexpected results and were also bringing out celebration rallies for those candidates who won the elections. The community farmers are now busy planting seasonal vegetables, lentils,

mustard, and wheat. Also owing to the cold, people collect driftwood from the rivers. Padmalaya fields have also been sown with mustard. Ain Kumari with the help of others is also planting seasonable vegetables to ensure that we have a good crop of vegetables for the



staff meals at Padmalaya.

On the 23rd the casting work of the 3rd storey of the library building (much delayed), was completed under Emil's supervision. Work has begun for the casting of the 4th storey. Work has finally picked up speed with 10 labourers at work on a daily basis. We have also begun to produce bricks, and at present half size bricks, required for the corners, are being produced by 6 local labourers who are engaged on a daily basis. Anyway, our architects calculate that work on the new building blocks will surely begin in early February 2023.

Emil in his monthly technical report shared: “The bid

documents, specifications and estimates were discussed with lead architect Prabal Thapa. Emil, (in line with all the technical background work he has been doing), visited IFID Nepal office on the 20th and 21st of this month to finalize the bid documents, specifications, estimates, and the drafts for the contract documents. In the meantime, a bid notice for the construction for the two units of residential blocks and the restroom block, was published on the 21st in a daily newspaper. More details on the bid procedure are also published on Nagarik Aawaz's official website: <https://nagarikaawaz.org.np/>. The bid submission is open until January 4, 2023, and the received bids shall be opened on the very next day. On the other hand, with the final revised drawings at hand, the drawings for the municipal permits are compiled and are readied for submission which is likely to be in the first week of the January”.

Programme Highlights:



The 16 Days of Campaign Against Violence Against Women was observed in many different ways with all the stakeholder communities. Over 1800 community members participated in the various programmes including a radio play, sharing expert knowledge on legal process regarding

VAW, discussions, debates, songs and poems, and the lighting of lamps. NA team from Nawalpur also participated in the **Cross-Cultural Exchange Learning event held in Pokhara**. Govinda shared, that at Nawalpur all returned feeling their collective roles and strengths and appreciated the timely risk-taking steps taken by the Founder that has now enabled each to peace build in their communities and make such events possible. Padmalaya also organized a 2-day interaction for conflict affected women, who all felt more comfortable and cared for since they were affiliated with NA. A documentary film has been prepared by **Ganga & Shikha** of three of these women who are **1) Resham Kumari Tharuni, 2) Tiuki Kumal, and 3) Maya Thanet**. A documentary film has also been prepared by the peace builder youths regarding their peace-building roles, their personal transformations, and how they have used Padmalaya and its doings for their own growth. This picture (Above) is of one of their reflection meetings in one of the Peace Centers. Now in two of the local schools for the landless and labourers' children, NA is conducting counseling classes and where necessary, counseling services is being provided. Besides, NA Nawalpur's ongoing work with the Peace Centers and the regular meetings are ongoing. It is quite how much is achieved each month by NA – I cannot, I know even cover here a fraction of their doings. For your interest, here is a link to the short video regarding empowerment of **Maya** – one of the conflict-affected women: <https://youtu.be/HBe5Kk3qyck!>

Fundraising & Financial Update:

In an amazingly wonderful happening at the **Cross-Cultural Learning Exchange Programme** organized by NA in Pokhara during the 12 -13 of this month, some 300+ NA Partners and Peace Builders were present from 25 districts of Nepal. Taking this opportunity, I made a call to put out a donation box to collect at least Rs.100 each for Padmalaya. **Executed efficiently by the NA team, we collected in pledges and gifts a whopping Rs. 196,536.**

Rs. 27,835 was collected in the box at the venue! NA Network partners, 1) Conflict Victim & Single Women Development Center, Kanchanpur - pledged Rs. 25,000; 2) Namuna Integrated Development Council - Rupandehi pledged Rs. 25,525; 3) NA has already received Rs. 15,515 from Nepal Women Community Service Center, Dang, which was the amount pledged at the programme; and 4) NA has also already received Rs. 25,525 from its

partner **Focus Nepal, Dhading** and 5) Rs. 5,555 from **Mukti Nepal**, Siraha. Likewise, 6) **Tharu Women Upliftment Center** has pledged Rs. 21,051 and 7) **Ekikaran Nepal, Gorkha** – also pledged Rs. 25,525! Seven institutional donors for Padmalaya!

Our Lamsal ji at Padmalaya, solicited his nephew in Japan – so **Arjun Lamsal** gifted us **Rs. 5000** promptly in Pokhara via his uncle! **Sushila Chaudhary**, representing the national network of women conflict victims, personally pledged **Rs. 5,005**, and **Prizma Tharu**, another of NA longtime partners personally pledged a gift of **Rs. 15,000** to Padmalaya! Thus, the total individual donations at the collective and the individual level came to **Rs. 52,840**, while the total institutional donations totaled to **Rs. 143,696.00**, enabling a sum of **Rs. 196,536.00** collected overnight from over 300 participants.



feminist activist has also pledged **Rs. 25,000** this month for Padmalaya! To all our donors, we say a humble “Thank you”! We will strive to make Padmalaya a globally appreciated Peace Center – and you will all one day be a part of that history!

Rs 100,001 collected at the Padmalaya, during November and December through the

sales of produce and gifts have been deposited in the NA Siddharth Bank account.

Others:

As did happen in the most wonderful and uplifting event of the **Cross-Cultural Exchange Programme** of NA, held in Pokhara, may all your lives be filled with light and love. On behalf of NA and the Padmalaya team, I take this singular privilege to wish you all a very **HAPPY NEW YEAR – 2023!**

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***Note:** Photo Courtesy: Govinda Acharya, Ganga Sagar Rai, Emil Shrestha*

