



Peace
Corps



Annual Report 2019

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The Peace Corps **Mission**

[Mission: *To promote world peace and friendship through community-based development and cross-cultural understanding*

Since its establishment in 1961, the Peace Corps has been guided by a mission of world peace and friendship. The agency exemplifies the best of the American spirit by making it possible for Americans to serve - advancing development and building cross-cultural understanding around the world. Through this unique approach to development, the Peace Corps is making a difference in the overseas communities it serves, in the lives of its Volunteers, and back home in the United States. More than 220,000 Volunteers have served in 140 countries since 1961.

The Peace Corps advances its mission through the work of the Volunteers, both during and after their term of service. Rather than providing monetary assistance to countries, the agency sends Volunteers to share their skills and experience while living and working alongside local individuals and communities. This day-to-day interaction provides Volunteers with a unique perspective and the opportunity to partner with local communities to address their development challenges and to strengthen mutual understanding.

The Peace Corps Act (1961) articulates three core goals that contribute to the Peace Corps mission of world peace and friendship:

1. **To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.**
2. **To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.**
3. **To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.**



U.S. Ambassador Randy Berry interacting with PCTs during Pre-Service Training



[Message from the Country Director



Namaste!

As the Country Director of Peace Corps Nepal, I am delighted to share with you through this 2019 Annual Report not only my own joy about returning to a country I love but a few words about the accomplishments that Peace Corps has achieved working hand in hand with community counterparts, government liaisons and other partners over the past year.

Having also worked in Nepal from 2001 to 2004 with the Peace Corps, I am not at all surprised by what Nepalis and Americans can do when they unite to address a shared goal. As part of our collective efforts to improve the food security status of villages in 11 districts of the country, and the English learning and teaching capacity in schools in 4 districts of the country, I would highlight the following:

- Over the past year, over 5,500 Nepali farmers (nearly two-thirds women) have worked with Peace Corps Volunteers to spread awareness of innovative agricultural technologies and management practices. Over one-half of these farmers have already applied these technologies and practices to increase food production and profitability.
- As an example, to promote the use of vegetable gardening management practices such as composting, bio-pesticides, fencing and small-scale water conservation, more than 2,500 community members have been trained on best practices and 75% of them have applied them.
- Eight local school committees have worked with Peace Corps Volunteers on the establishment of school gardens to teach interested students about the benefits of organic gardening and other innovative gardening practices.
- Education Volunteers are currently working with more than 40 English teachers at government schools on formal and informal communities of practices, and implementing collaborative strategies and tips for effective English teaching or general teaching skills.
- By working together with English teachers, more than 2,000 students from grades 4 through 8 have been taught and/or co-taught English at government schools from 4 districts.

None of these achievements would be possible, of course, without the support of our community counterparts, government liaisons and other Nepali partners and their willingness to engage so actively and positively with us. We are deeply grateful.



Peace Corps is also appreciative of the support from the Ministries of Agricultural Development, Health and Population, Education, Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Home Affairs for their support and from USAID for its small grant program that helps improve the lives of Nepali communities working in collaboration with Peace Corps Volunteers.

Finally, we would like to applaud the hard work and dedication of the 248 American men and women who have set aside 27 months of their lives to serve in Nepal as Peace Corps Volunteers since the program re-opened in 2012. As many of you know, behind the Volunteers is a very talented and dedicated group of Nepali staff members who provide them with programing and training support, safety and security, medical and administrative support they need to be productive and successful.

In this report, you will find data, information and stories that illuminates our progress in meeting our goals and objectives of our Food Security and Education projects beyond the highlights above.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sherry Russell

Country Director

Peace Corps Nepal



Peace Corps Nepal Staff, 2019



Volunteer assisted to demonstrate waste water collection for kitchen garden

[Peace Corps Nepal Food Security Project

The Peace Corps arrived in Nepal in 1962, one of the first countries to welcome Volunteers after the creation of the agency by President Kennedy in 1961. Since then, almost 4,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in schools, government agencies, and NGOs. The program suspended operations in September of 2004 due to security concerns but returned in 2012, at the request of the Government of Nepal. Currently, Peace Corps Nepal is implementing Food Security and Education Projects. Since September 2012, more than 200 Peace Corps Volunteers served in rural, mid-hill communities of Nepal.

THE FOOD SECURITY PROJECT

Food and nutrition security are key priorities for the Government of Nepal (GON). The Agriculture Development Strategy of the Government of Nepal targets to reduce stunting, under-weight and wasting to 8%, 5% and 1% respectively by the end of 2030. Similarly, the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan of Government of Nepal aims to reduce malnutrition from 36% to 28% by 2022. The World Bank estimates that undernutrition causes losses of up to 3% of economic development. Thus, improving nutrition is a precondition to break the cycle of poverty and for sustainable economic development.

Peace Corps Nepal's Food Security Project is built around four pillars of food security: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. Peace

Corps' approach to Food Security is in line with the U.S. Global Food Security Act, which was signed into law in July 2016.

The purpose of the Food Security Project is to improve the food security of rural families, especially for the most vulnerable populations in targeted mid-hill communities of western Nepal. The key components of the framework are soil conservation/management, bio-intensive gardening, fruit tree promotion, and nutrition education.

There were 55 volunteers during the time of reporting and with the decision of PC HQ to temporarily evacuate the volunteers, there are no any volunteers serving in the field.



Volunteer assisted women farmers group to establish vegetable nursery



Goal 1 - Improving Soil Health

Judicious soil management is the key and fundamental aspect of increasing production and to ensuring food and nutrition security. Towards this end, Volunteers help local farmers to employ sustainable and climate smart soil conservation and management techniques in their gardens. These interventions enhance overall soil productivity by enriching soil fertility, increasing water capture, and improving water distribution.



FACT SHEET

In 2019, Volunteer led Soil management activities built in the capacity of:

- **1,449** individuals in organic methods of disease/pest management
- **1,884** individuals in small-scale irrigation practices

In 2019, working together with government stakeholders and community partners, Peace Corps Volunteers trained more than 2,600 individual farmers on organic practices that promote soil fertility and productivity. Some of the key activities included promotion of improved composting, Farm Yard Manure (FYM), cover cropping, green manuring, mulching, botanical pesticides, small-scale water management, fodder and forage plantation.

Project Highlight 1 - A Community Leader's Dream to End Dry Season Nightmares

"We have a huge water insecurity problem here. In the past, other organizations have provided us with the education on rainwater harvest, but they could only provide the school, health post and a few homes with drums to share. We all know in rainy season we can collect enough water to last us through dry season, but we have little capacity to store it. Can we solve this with Peace Corps Volunteer's help?"

-Bandana Sijapati Magar
Community Leader

Bandana Sijapati Magar shared this with a Peace Corps Volunteer living in her village in the infamously dry Surkhet district, and both watched as the community tap trickled drier and drier over the following 6 months. Not only was the tap up to a mile walk roundtrip for some of its dependents, waiting for a turn as dry season continued took hours in itself. During the driest period, the average woman spent 2-3 hours a day fetching water. Crop fields were scarce. For a village of semi-commercial and subsistence farmers, wallets and bellies suffered. It was not just a water insecurity problem, it also affected women's development, girls' education, food security and financial stability.

Together, community leader Bandana and the Peace Corps Volunteer identified the village





Two women farmers pose with their newly acquired 5,000 liter tanks



farmers as having the highest volume water needs between household use and land use. The Volunteer studied extensive research on rainwater harvest in order to provide the Farmer's Group members with information on best low-cost practices to collect potable water while mitigating environmental damage. To alleviate the water scarcity of 21 farmers and their families, the community used a Peace Corps Partnership grant that allowed each farmer to receive a 5,000 liter drum. Community members contributed more than 25% of total budget to install a rain water collection system.

While the community once spent hundreds of hours retrieving water from the tap, they can now

use this time on activities that further positive nutrition, health, and economic outcomes. As a compliment to the many other collaborative projects happening in this Peace Corps Volunteer's village, the community also looks forward to further enhancing girls' education now that the village is more water secure and girls do not need to spend many hours collecting water.

With a sparkle in her eye, an empowered Bandana says to the Peace Corps Volunteer: "When we close out this project with our success story program for the Farmer's Group, I am excited for you to tell everyone that this was my idea. Everyone needs to know that when we women speak our minds and share our ideas, we can make good happen."



Tank delivery day! Four farmers look on in joy as their drums are unloaded. Project leader Bandana Sijapati is pictured second from the right



Goal 2 - Promoting Bio-Intensive Gardening and Fruit Tree Cultivation

In 2019, Peace Corps Volunteers primarily worked with smallholder farming families, including women and school-aged children, to sustainably increase production of diverse and nutrient dense food crops. Volunteers have promoted bio-intensive gardening by promoting year round gardening, establishing vegetable nurseries, promoting seed saving, increasing mushroom cultivation, and introducing new and nutrient

rich vegetable varieties. Each Volunteer also established an improved vegetable garden as a demonstration plot for community members to replicate.

Volunteers have been instrumental in promoting different varieties of trees at the community level. In 2019, Volunteers facilitated tree cultivation activities including the establishment of new



Before and after volunteer's interventions on establishing health post garden



Participants learning on fruit tree propagation techniques



Happy Volunteer with Turnip harvest

and small scale fruit tree orchards, and also maintained existing trees and orchards. Towards this end, Volunteers helped farmers to rejuvenate orchards through intercultural management and top working. Volunteers have also promoted the planting of fruit tree varieties specific to the soil and climate condition at the sites where Volunteers are placed. Some common varieties of trees promoted include moringa, citrus varieties, macadamia, mango, jackfruit, litchi, fodder trees, walnut, kiwi, avocado, plum, and peach.



Community participants with certificate at the end of fruit tree cultivation training



FACT SHEET

In 2019, of the **5,529** Nepali farmers who collaborated with Peace Corps Volunteers on agriculture:

- **64%** were women.
- **65%** have already applied improved agricultural technologies or management practices for better food production
- **1,384** people planted **6,951** trees, mostly fruit trees
- **2,293** farmers received training on mushroom farming and **72%** of the those farmers planted mushroom using improved cultivation techniques
- **Eight** student-led school gardens were established in collaboration with local schools
- **2,761** community members were trained on improved vegetable garden practices, with **75%** applying these practices
- On an average, each Volunteer worked with **61** people on bio- intensive gardening and **33** people on fruit tree promotion.



Happy women with the new species of fruit tree saplings

Project Highlight 2 – Putting Down Roots: Diverse Orchard Establishment in Rural Nepal

In a charming village of 1,500 or so people overlooking the sacred Kali Gandaki Valley, a Peace Corps Volunteer works with a community of mostly subsistence farmers who are hardworking, cheerful, and forward thinking. For the last ten years they have been trying to establish a market for oranges, a popular crop within the district. When the mountainside orchards were dying during monsoon season, the Volunteer facilitated dialogues among smallholder farmers, community health volunteers, and leaders within the community. The villagers had already demonstrated a desire to improve nutrition among residents, reforest the area to prevent erosion, establish a new form of income, and provide the village men an opportunity to stay home with their families and avoid venturing abroad for additional income, as is common in Nepal. Through dialogue, the community decided that fruit tree cultivation was the answer. Species diversity is key to success in fruit tree cultivation. In lieu of orange trees, which continue to die off despite the villagers' best efforts, the high altitude village showed vast potential for the introduction of several new fruit crops, including kiwi, walnut, and apple.

Coordinating with the Government of Nepal horticulture farms, the Volunteer worked with her counterparts in 5 separate hamlets to make these seedlings available at government's subsidized prices to villagers. 76 families invested

in improved variety of seedlings. Of those 76 families, 42 are headed by women. Each family acquired an average of 4 new fruit trees each. Along with the trees, families received trainings on planting, pruning, and future care for their investment. They also received small packets of seeds to establish small home nurseries, and several community leaders have voiced the possibility of a community-run nursery initiative.

A year after the Volunteer's arrival to this Himalayan village, the orange trees are still dying. The kiwi, apples, and walnuts, however, are flourishing. There are now plans to add peaches, pears, and plums in the coming autumn, and the Volunteer is making plans with her community leaders to create a sustainable, long-term fruit tree cultivation industry within this tiny, but ambitious, Nepali village.



Bhamati Phagami stands alongside her two newly planted kiwis during the monsoon season



Lal Bahadur begins planting





Project Highlight 3 - Introducing Thai Spinach to a Community in Nepal

Just down the hill from the house of a Food Security Peace Corps Volunteer, a community in Nepal has a vibrant, well-organized mothers' group with both long-standing members as well as new mothers with small children. While observing how the community struggles to prepare nutrition-dense meals during the long monsoon season, this Volunteer collaborated with Nepali farmers to introduce a water-loving variety of Thai Spinach known as Kangkung.

When the Volunteer arrived at 7:05 on the morning of a scheduled training, a cluster of women were already gathered at the entrance. "Friend! You're late!" bellowed a jolly farmer from amidst the group. Together, the Volunteer and participants dug two 2-meter long nursery beds. The two lead farmers have a knack for taking a backseat while the mothers' group drives trainings. The women in attendance jumped right in to help dig and were eager to plant and learn. All the while, the farmers and Volunteer worked together to respond to questions from the group. Energy was high and the day concluded with participants demanding that the Volunteer share seeds from his limited supply. The Volunteer was happy to oblige and was certain that the seeds would be put to good use in the homes of the participants.



Volunteer helping on planting seeds to his fellow community members

As the Volunteer visited gardens in the following months, he saw several houses with patches of flourishing Kangkung plants that participants had started from the seed he had given them, providing families with access to a fresh and easy source of iron and vitamin C in the middle of monsoon. As the plants grew, one farmer planted the cuttings. In the heaviest part of the rainy season, his garden contained eight open-air beds full of market-ready greens, an anomaly in their particularly rainy corner of Nepal.

This particular farmer says he is interested in expanding his operation for this coming year. He sent Kangkung to market twice this past monsoon season, and saw a small profit both times. He has been happy with the results, and is looking forward to harvesting seeds from a few plants that were uncut, sprouting them early next year, and doubling production. In the meantime, the success of the plant has won the Volunteer a new level of trust with the mothers' group that will surely open doors for other, more intensive trainings in his second year of service. "Can I get more Kangkung seed?" "What other new plants do you have for us?", and "When's your next training?" are all questions the Volunteer receives regularly. While continuing in his work, the Volunteer feels a sense of pride and responsibility in helping the community to further positive nutrition outcomes.



Kangkung field after few months of planting



Project Highlight 4 - Good Food for a Good Life

On a given day, locals in one village in mid-west Nepal might find two Peace Corps Volunteers working in the Health Post demonstration garden wearing “kodo-ko dhindo-ko shakti-le” and “phapar-ko roti-ko shakti-le” t-shirts that promote traditional nutrient-dense staple foods. There are two murals entitled “millet food is good for health” and “eat colorful fruits and vegetables everyday” on the side of the building behind them as they hand out orange-fleshed sweet potato cuttings and emphasize the importance of nutrition for healthy brain development to a new mom. “Eat good food, to develop well, to study well, to get good jobs, to live well.” This is the message they are spreading.

Their village does not have much access to fruit, and often vegetables are absent on the plate. The doctor at the health post noted early on that people are not eating enough vegetables. This sparked a kitchen garden initiative that helps families to construct kitchen gardens and to grow nutrient dense vegetables. The Volunteers are always asking community members why. Why grow vegetables? Everything is centered on nutrition sensitive agriculture. Teaching nutrition has been a great success. The Volunteers partner with their Health Post staff during

large trainings given to pregnant women and new mothers, emphasizing Essential Nutrition Actions (ENAs) such as increased vitamin A and Iron consumption, and an increase in traditional grains such as millet and buckwheat. They have taught over 50 mothers in the thousand-golden-days window, the time between initial pregnancy and when children reach their second birthday. The Volunteers delivered nutrition lessons during an all-day medical clinic hosted at their local school, ending the day with a dance performance. They have gone to a dozen different classrooms and have given nutrition lessons to well over 100 students. Students are very engaged in the lesson on a balanced diet, while the dangers of junk food are also covered. Many of the kids in village have heard the message of good nutrition for a good life through the Volunteers’ interactive lessons using dozens of colorful food cards.

Originally, the Volunteers established a demonstration garden at their health post as it was a central location with constant traffic. The health post demonstration garden provided the model and inspiration for others. The Volunteers have participated in mothers group meetings sharing about healthy food and child development, and they have explained that they could help them create gardens like the demonstration gardens. There was interest in many different communities, so they began



A Volunteer in front of nutrition slogan at the Health Post



constructing low-tunnels and double-dug beds within fenced-in areas. They have now worked with over 44 women including 8 women with children under 5 and 1 pregnant woman whom have double-dug and constructed plant nurseries following bio-intensive practices. The Volunteers have given trainings in 8 different villages, and have created more gardens in villages an hour walk in each direction, and this has helped to generate interest among families who live farther out.

The Volunteers hope that, at some point, people may begin seeing kitchen gardens as

something “everyone’s doing,” and that this may bring about meaningful behavior change. They have distributed orange-fleshed sweet potato cuttings and Thai water-spinach to 66 women, most of whom are new moms. They have distributed seeds saved in the health post garden during immunization days, and they are working towards increasing vitamin A and Iron consumption in the village to reduce childhood malnutrition and anemia. By collaborating with a very motivated community, the Volunteers are helping the community to meet their goal of improved nutrition and well-being – or having good food for a good life.



Goal 3 – Promoting Nutrition Education

In 2019, Food Security Volunteers primarily worked with smallholder farmers, particularly women of child-bearing age and children under 5, along with families and school-aged children, to adopt one or more new food consumption or feeding practices and behaviors which ultimately improve nutrition outcomes.

PCVs worked with their Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs), health post staff, school teachers, mother and farmer groups to train and coach individual smallholder family members in evidence-based nutrition practices included in the World Health Organization’s Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) framework.



*A baby with
a mushroom
harvest-
excited for the
yummy Dinner*



Volunteer briefing about nutrition dense vegetables



FACT SHEET

In 2019, of the 3,438 people reached by Peace Corps Volunteers through nutrition activities:

- **69%** were women
- **66** were direct caregivers of children under the age of 5
- **1,188** were children under the age of 5 who benefited from caregivers who attended nutrition sensitive interventions

The key activities PCVs conducted under this objective included informal one-on-one and group trainings in homes, health centers, and schools. These trainings promoted access to and the consumption and feeding of diverse and nutrient-rich foods. Through follow-up sessions, PCVs reinforced lessons and confirmed an increase in dietary diversity among participants.

At the household level, Volunteers worked with host families and smallholder families to plant home and community gardens. By implementing the garden-to-plate concept, PCVs facilitated cooking demonstrations during home visits and this led to an increased consumption of nutrient-dense vegetable species. Volunteers also collaborated with schools and health posts

to develop height measuring murals and murals about food groups that include nutrition-related messages.

In addition to individual counseling, Volunteers have also been promoting nutrition-dense vegetable cultivation through their agricultural interventions. Some of the nutrient-dense varieties promoted by Volunteers in 2019 include moringa, orange-fleshed sweet potato, Thai spinach, kale, mushroom, asparagus, and other dark green leafy vegetables.



A PCV promoting nutrient dense crop- Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato – Cultivation to Consumption





Project Highlight 5 – Local Garden and Nutrition Education

A truly food secure community depends not only on agricultural advancements, but on the nutritional content of the food being produced and consumed. In a mid-hills village in western Nepal, a Food Security Peace Corps Volunteer felt happy to see many farmers already using several advanced agricultural techniques. At the same time, he noticed an opportunity to further enhance the nutritional balance in the diets of many community members, particularly children. At meal times, many children in his community forego their servings of nutritious pulses and vegetables, eating only rice with milk. Similarly, most students at the local primary school eat only noodles or chips as a school snack, once again neglecting important vitamins and proteins for healthy growth and development. While many members of the community have the skills to cultivate healthy food, people have less nutritional knowledge to maintain a healthy diet for themselves and their children.



Students planting eggplant and tomato seeds in their nursery

To address this issue, the Volunteer began working with his local school to promote nutrition education and to create a school garden. Students at the school received interactive nutrition lessons focused on the three primary food groups: energy giving (carbohydrates), body building (protein), and body protecting (vitamins) foods. Students learned about common healthy foods by sorting sample food items into their respective food groups, and by drawing pictures of their favorite healthy foods from each group. These lessons also included open discussions about why each of these food groups is important for healthy development and how we can improve our health by paying attention to the foods we choose to eat.

With the help of two other Volunteers, this Volunteer painted a nutrition mural at the school. This mural depicts common village food items separated into their respective food groups, as well as two happy, healthy-looking children. The Volunteer hopes that students and teachers will use this mural as a visual reference for the three

A Peace Corps Volunteer engages students in activities related to nutrition, double digging and soil amendments in the school garden





Mural depicting the three essential food groups: energy giving (carbohydrates), body building (protein) and protecting group (vitamin) foods

food groups, and that nutrition-focused lessons will continue after the Volunteer concludes his service in the community.

The school garden has been established and consists of orange fleshed sweet potato, eggplant, tomato, spinach, beans, peppers, carrots, and gooseberry fruit. In the garden, students receive a hands-on education on improved agricultural techniques and the nutritional benefits of home gardened vegetables. By getting their hands dirty and helping to plant a variety of healthy vegetables, students are learning about soil amendment, vegetable nursery establishment, fruit tree cultivation, and nutrition. In addition, students have taken home orange fleshed sweet potato cuttings, eggplant, and gooseberry seedlings to plant at home using techniques learned in the school garden. The main goal with this school garden is to teach students about the essential links between healthy soil, healthy crops, and healthy humans. By educating young children about the connections between improved agriculture and nutrition, the Volunteer hopes to promote a future generation of advanced and nutritionally conscious farmers.

Project Highlight 6 – Community Health Begins with Women’s Health

In June of 2018, a Peace Corps Volunteer settled into a rural village in the mid-western region of Nepal to begin her 2 year service focusing on food security. The food security project works closely with women who have children under 5 years of age and establishes sustainable initiatives geared towards nutrition, agriculture, and capacity building amongst community members. This Volunteer’s community is a vibrant environment consisting of a cluster of several villages alongside the Bheri River. While the community is quickly developing in terms of education, infrastructure, and agriculture improvements, there is a great amount of need surrounding maternal and child health. The community is addressing this need through the meaningful work of the Female Community Health Volunteers.

The Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV) program, instituted by the government of Nepal in 1988, is now a national program expanded to all 77 districts of Nepal. As advocates for healthy lifestyles, FCHVs actively provide community members with family planning devices (birth control pills and condoms), iron tablets, vitamin



PCV and FCHV demonstrating nutritious food



A capsules, and Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS). These dedicated women act as a bridge between the villagers and the health post, connecting people to available resources. They have a monthly meeting at the health post to report data, discuss concerns, and brainstorm positive community health solutions. After attending several community meetings, this Volunteer became familiar with Bindu Ruchal, the lead Female Community Health Volunteer in the area. The Volunteer noticed Bindu Ruchal's strength as an empowered female leader and hoped they could work together to provide comprehensive trainings for the mother's groups. Bindu oversees all of the other FCHVs in the area and is well respected because of her willingness to help neighbors and provide access to healthcare, information, and resources.

Initially, Bindu and the Volunteer spent time together making observations and conducting home visits to determine the needs of the community. They learned that individuals and families lacked important knowledge about breastfeeding, pregnancy, sexual health, and early childhood nutrition/care. Bindu and the Volunteer first collaborated to host trainings at the mother's group Bindu was already leading.

These trainings focused on topics such as menstrual health management, menstrual pad sewing, nutrition awareness, cooking demonstrations, and education about diseases such as uterine prolapse disorder. There was a pressing need to reach "1,000 days mothers," a name that refers to women who are pregnant or have children under 2 years of age. Their children are in the first 1,000 days of life, an extremely vulnerable and important time to emphasize maternal and child health, nutrition, and wellbeing. Bindu and the Volunteer have also worked closely with Mina Acharya and Kalpana Gyawali from Suaahara, an organization dedicated to improving many facets of health across Nepal. With the combined efforts of the FCHVs, Suaahara, and the Volunteer, the healthy mother's group has now received trainings on topics such as breastfeeding techniques, hygiene and sanitation in the home, jaulo and lito cooking demonstrations, dental hygiene, and sexual health/family planning. It is the goal of the community to continue making strides towards health and wellness. The development of this healthy mother's group has opened a unique outlet for interested women to learn how to provide the best care for both their young children and themselves in a safe environment.



Mothers with their babies attending nutrition training



[Peace Corps Nepal English Education Project

THE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The MoEST (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology) and education leaders know that having qualified English speaking instructors in rural areas will enhance the ability of the education sector to meet its goals of increasing English learning opportunities for all citizens, and that furthering positive education outcomes among students will require the professional development of teachers. MoEST also notes that Peace Corps Volunteers are well suited to further positive teaching and learning outcomes for teachers and students in government schools. Peace Corps Volunteers are fluent, highly proficient English speakers trained in student-centered, interactive teaching practices, and in methods of engaging entire communities in developing authentic, meaningful English use.

At the request of the Government of Nepal, therefore, Peace Corps Nepal launched its English Education Project in February 2019 bringing 23 Education Volunteers to Nepal and placing them in government schools with Nepali counterparts to teach English to students in grades 5-8. While the project is still in its first year, the first group

of 23 Education Volunteers have begun to engage in meaningful reciprocal teaching and learning relationships with Nepali counterpart teachers, students, supervisors, and the broader community.

Peace Corps Nepal's English Education Project aims to strengthen English language knowledge and communicative skills among students so they can access academic and professional opportunities. To achieve this outcome, the Peace Corps English Education Program activities focus on building English language teaching and learning capacity among teachers, students, and community members in government schools in rural Nepal.

As of January 2020, there are 23 Peace Corps Volunteers teaching English to students in Grades 5-8 in four districts. The second group of Education Volunteers will arrive in February 2020, and after completing their Pre-Service Training, they will be posted to their respective schools in April 2020. In 2020, Peace Corps Nepal's Education Project will expand the number of districts it serves from 4 to 6..



Goal 1 — Increasing Capacity of Nepali English Teachers

Education Volunteers collaborate with Nepali counterpart teachers to support them in building their English language skills, increasing the use of evidence based teaching practices, and promoting student centered teaching and learning.

In addition to co-planning and co-teaching classes, Education Volunteers and their Nepali counterpart teachers engage in Communities of Practice, where two or more teachers share a common interest or passion to enhance their teaching practices. These collaborations can be formal or informal, and members may not see themselves as formal “members” but rather as teachers who have found they can discover (or rediscover) their interest and pleasure in teaching by sharing their trials and successes with other teachers.

Project Highlight 1 – Teaching Lecturers to Become Teachers

Working with a team of English teachers, an Education Volunteer dedicates five periods out of the day for observing, assisting, and modeling an engaging English environment. While many teachers lean on more lecture-based methods, some teachers have become enthusiastic adopters of communicative and interactive lessons.

One of these teachers is Mr. Sudip. While lesson planning with the Volunteer, Mr. Sudip often went on tangents about the importance of explaining complex grammar rules and structures. No matter what attempts were made to guide him in a different direction, Mr. Sudip was set in his ways. Despite these differences of opinion on how best to teach English, Mr. Sudip and the Volunteer continued to share a class, alternating lessons with the other teacher present in the classroom.



FACT SHEET

Within the first 5 months at their schools, Peace Corps Education Volunteers have engaged **41** Nepali teachers in:

- Communities of Practice
- Informal and/or formal English learning

After nearly a year of successes and failures, one day Mr. Sudip came strutting into the classroom fumbling with many small strips of paper. Surprised, the Volunteer sat at attention in the back of the classroom, drawn in by this sudden change in teaching style. After Mr. Sudip briefly explained the grammar structure of the day, he created an interactive lesson that had each and every student engaged in the class. With the strips of paper, the children excitedly began to create sentences from the fragments. From then on, instead of pleading with the Volunteer to be their teacher, students were running up to Mr. Sudip asking what will they learn today.

In a school where teachers do the best with the methods that they have known for a lifetime, one cannot expect change to occur overnight. It





Students participating in a language game



Teachers help students develop their writing skill



can be overwhelming and scary to try out new teaching practices. Change is not easy and it is for this reason that Mr. Sudip is inspiring. How wonderful it is to witness the excitement of the

students now when he comes into the classroom ready to engage them in interactive lessons that motivate them to learn and help them communicate effectively in English.



Goal 2 - Increasing Achievement of Nepali English Language Learners

While partnering with Nepali Teachers, Education Volunteers model best practices through direct classroom teaching, pull-out groups, and one-on-one tutoring. This includes collaborating with teachers to design, adapt, and pilot learning materials. Outside of the formal classroom, Volunteers enhance student engagement with the larger learning community by organizing

recreational activities such as theater, music, and games.



FACT SHEET

Within the first months at school, Peace Corps Education Volunteers:

- Taught more than **1,805** students in public school settings
- Facilitated student-friendly, communicative learning environments for nearly **1,500** students between **10-14** years of age.
- Observed significant improvement among their students in English language skills.



Volunteer and counterpart teachers adopt gender equitable teaching practice



Project Highlight 2 – Out of the Textbook and into the Community

“Tell me about your challenges in business,” eighth grader Sneha read from her group’s colorful poster.

“At first I knew nothing about business. Then my uncle helped me. I got information from the Internet about business and I opened my hotel,” her classmate, Shika, replied.

One Education Volunteer’s eighth grade students were reenacting their English translation of an interview they had done with a local female business owner. This was the final day of a week-long project they had been working on, applying what they learned about interviewing from their English textbook. Visiting the local bazaar, students had interviewed the barber, the stationary shop owner, the butcher and a hotel owner. In class, students used dictionaries and support from the Volunteer’s counterpart English Teacher, Dipak. They then made posters, practiced presenting, and shared what they had learned.

Most students at this Volunteer’s school are already bilingual, some trilingual, before beginning to learn English in school. They speak Nepali, Tamang, and a local Newari dialect. Seamlessly switching between languages, the Volunteer’s students continually impress her with their linguistic abilities.



Students develop and present their projects

Seeing an opportunity to build on these strengths, the Volunteer has found that community-based project work engages all students, regardless of their English level. For the interview project, beginner level students, who often hesitate to participate in English class, helped conduct interviews, designed posters, and practiced presenting with their groupmates. At the same time, more advanced students were able to push themselves by taking the lead on challenging tasks such as translating interview answers. All students exercised agency over their learning, contributed different skill sets, and practiced collaboration. This increased engagement is, in part, because project work approaches



Class 8 students display their local business owner interview poster



English language learning communicatively, shifting away from the traditional lecture-based, grammar-focused model. Students feel a wonderful sense of pride in their work and it is a joy to witness their excitement for learning as their skills improve.

In line with the Government of Nepal's Curriculum Development Center, the Peace Corps Education Volunteers have begun collaborating with Nepali counterpart teachers to make and use instructional materials and activities that lead students to practice and apply language skills in meaningful, real-life contexts. Below are some examples of locally available low-cost and no-

cost materials that Volunteers have designed and used in their classrooms.



Students develop and present their projects



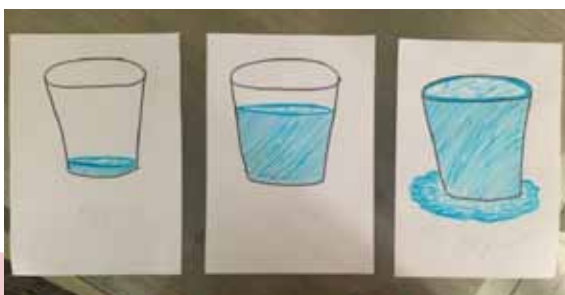
Goal 3 - Increasing Community Involvement in Promotion and Appreciation of English Language Learning

Moving student learning out of the classroom and into the community often motivates learners. Similarly, the more that the community goes into the classroom, the more the benefits of schooling are seen and understood. This community engagement shows students how their studies are important to the community and how they relate to daily life in that community.

While Education Volunteers have focused on strengthening teacher capacity and increasing student achievement during these very first months, Volunteers and their counterpart teachers and students have begun to plan and implement extra-curricular and co-curricular activities that will engage students and the larger community.



Using dice to enjoy playing games while learning language



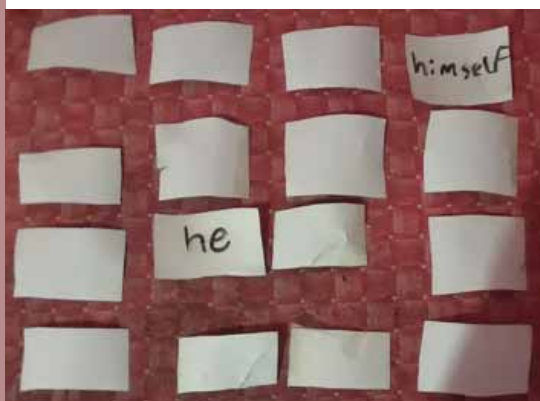
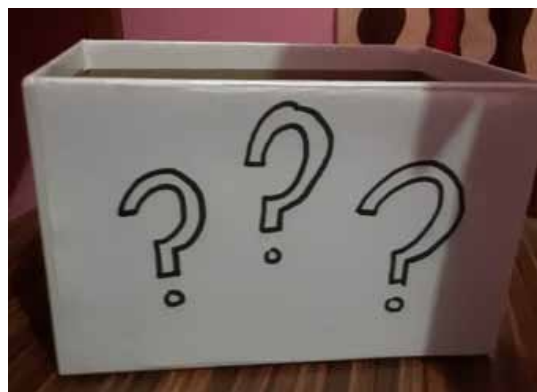
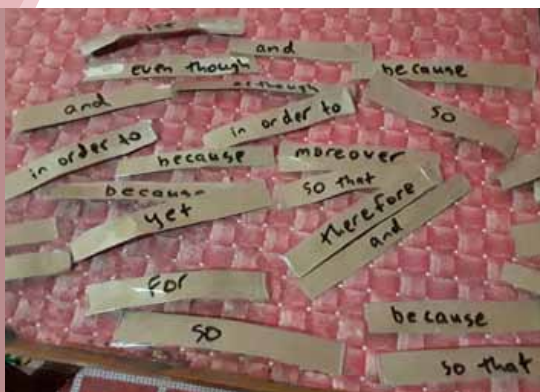
Drawing pictures to teach adjectives



Using a map to teach prepositions of place



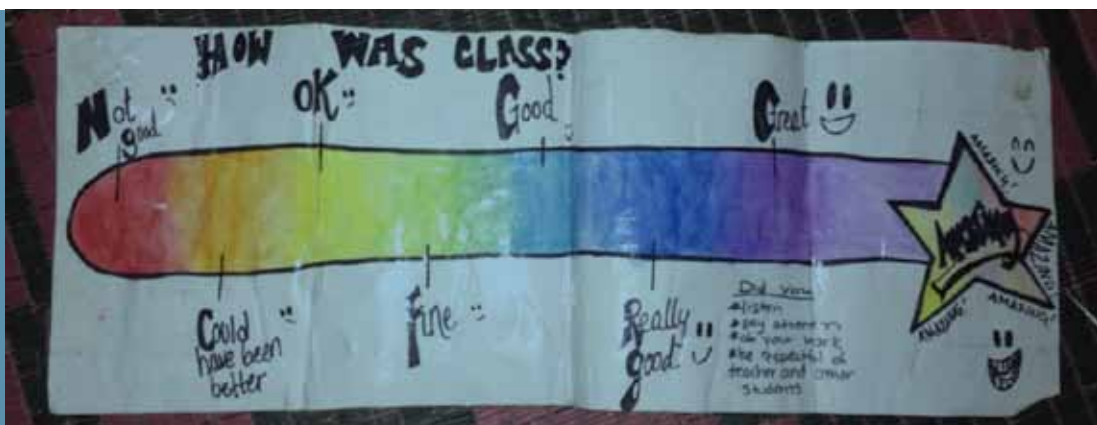
Students use paper strips and rocks for language games



Using pictures extensively to get across meaning



Students share their feelings about their class visually





PCV working with girl students in Myagdi on reusable pad sewing training

[Other Peace Corps Nepal Initiatives

Cross-Sector Programming Priorities

Cross-Sector Programming Priorities (CSPPs) are cross-cutting areas that Peace Corps Volunteers in Nepal emphasize and integrate into their work, regardless of their primary project. The CSPPs represent long-term strategic commitments of the Peace Corps world-wide. Referring to the country context, Peace Corps Nepal has prioritized two CSPPs: Gender Equity & Women's Empowerment as well as Youth as Resources.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

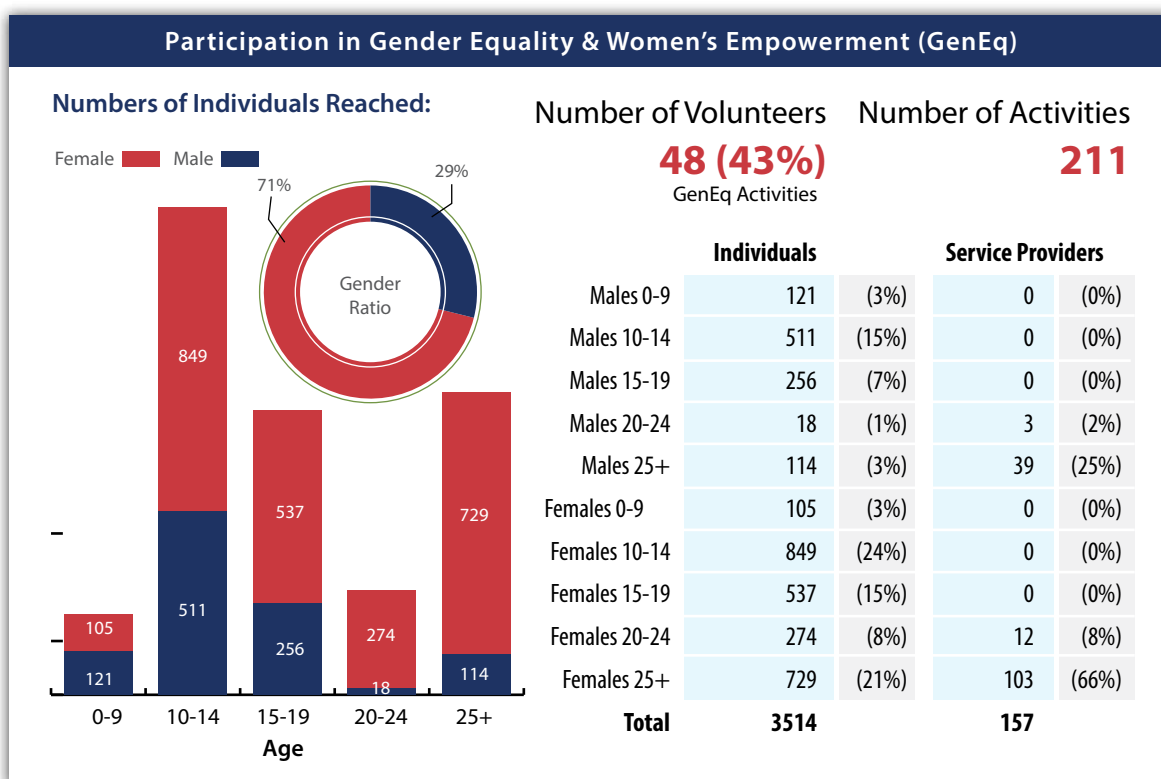
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GenEq) is one of the Cross-Sector Programming Priorities (CSPPs) for Peace Corps Nepal. GenEq activities integrate gender considerations, promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and reach groups of women, men, girls, and boys who have been traditionally excluded from access to skills, benefits, and opportunities.

In 2019, Peace Corps Volunteers in Nepal expanded current outreach efforts on gender to include activities that increase public awareness of gender integration in their primary and secondary activities. In total, 48 Volunteers (44%) carried out various activities to promote girls' leadership and women's empowerment, and this benefited 3,514 individuals (M: 1,020 and F: 2,494) and 157 service providers (M: 42 and F: 115).

Peace Corps Nepal primarily focused its gender integration efforts through youth-leadership activities at schools and through camps and clubs. Food Security Volunteers facilitated two camps that promoted



leadership among 67 girls between 12 and 20 years of age. In addition, Volunteers delivered classes about menstrual hygiene and sexual reproduction, reusable pad-sewing, established girls' leadership clubs, engaged girls through extracurricular activities including clubs and after-school classes, and mobilized young female students through school gardens and world map mural projects. Many Food Security Volunteers also facilitated nutrition awareness classes for pregnant women and lactating mothers, and trained women in cultivating mushrooms and off-season vegetables for income generation. Education Volunteers worked with their English counterpart teachers and other school stakeholders to promote gender equitable classroom practices in their respective classrooms.



Youth as Resources

Youth as Resources (YAR) activities engage young people to contribute to community improvement, health promotion, environment and other civic projects.

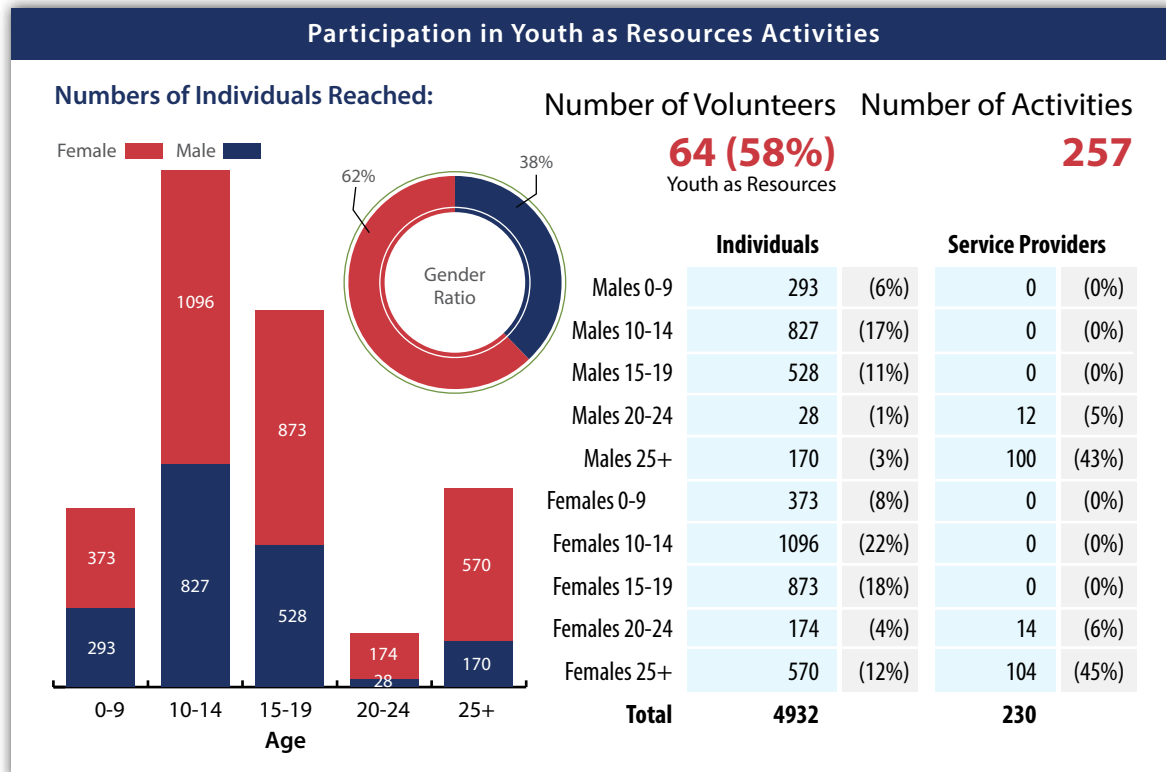
In 2019, 64 (58%) Volunteers carried out youth development activities in different parts of Nepal, benefitting 4,932 individuals (M: 1,846 and F: 3,086) and 230 service providers (M: 112 and F: 118). Almost 70% of the youth that Volunteers worked with were between the ages 10 and 19.

Volunteers worked with their counterparts, community partners, and youth groups to conduct youth leadership trainings, health trainings, sexual and reproductive health classes, public speaking classes, leadership trainings, youth mentorship sessions, environmental protection campaigns, sports and other physical activities. In school settings, Volunteers also facilitated health and sanitation campaigns, the establishment of school gardens, school cleanup campaigns, and organized youth-



focused agriculture and nutrition camps. Volunteers also worked with students and teachers to establish various activities that included nutrition clubs, yoga clubs, after-school youth clubs, art clubs, and English clubs.

The majority of youth-focused activities carried out by the Volunteers focused on developing life skills and promoting healthy behaviors among youth, primarily between the ages of 10 to 19.



PCV planting rice with local women in her community



Volunteer Placement

In 2019, a total of 118 Volunteers served in 14 districts—11 districts were covered by Food Security Volunteers and 4 districts were covered by Education Volunteer. 50 new Volunteers began their two years of service in Nepal —26 for Education and 24 for Food Security. Similarly, 28 Food Security Volunteers completed their 2-year assignment. As of December 2019, 78 Volunteers serve in communities in rural mid-hill communities across Nepal.





N 206 Group during their Initial Orientation in Kathmandu

[Peace Corps Nepal Volunteer Training in 2017

Arrival of Peace Corps Nepal Group 206

The 206th group of 55 Peace Corps Trainees (PCTs) arrived in Nepal on February 3, 2019. This group included 28 Food Security and 27 Education Volunteers. At the request of the Government of Nepal, Peace Corps Nepal re-introduced the Education project in 2019. The arrival of these Volunteers adds to the collective contributions of over 4,200 Peace Corps Volunteers who have served in Nepal since 1962.

Pre-Service Training

Trainees spend their first eleven weeks in Nepal in Pre-Service Training (PST) at the completion of which they officially become Peace Corps Volunteers. During PST, Trainees live with Nepali host families and are completely immersed in Nepali culture. They receive formal training in Nepali language, and they learn strategies to stay safe and healthy for the duration of their service as Volunteers in a Nepali village. Trainees also receive technical training for assisting their communities in identifying, prioritizing, and addressing challenges related to food security and education.

Who are the Volunteers?

Peace Corps Volunteers are American men and women who commit to serving 27 months in a developing country, living and working directly with members of their village communities during their service. Volunteers do not receive a salary, but instead receive a very modest living allowance. Volunteers come from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, and all have university degrees and experience related to their project work. Peace Corps Volunteers bring to their communities their motivation to help communities to help themselves. They bring creativity, ingenuity, and a different perspective to their work with their communities.

The main purpose of the PST is to help Trainees become equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to live and work effectively in Nepal for two years. Following a Community-Based Training (CBT) model, Trainees live with a Nepali family for 10 weeks and train in small "clusters" of 4-5 Trainees in communities that have similar characteristics to those communities in



which Trainees will eventually live and work. They eat whatever their family eats and are also involved in household activities such as cooking food, cutting grass, milking cows, and taking part in festivals and family events. Host families provide each Food Security Trainee with a small gardening space at their homes to allow them to practice gardening skills, and Education Trainees interact with and teach in government schools to learn how to effectively teach within context of Nepali government schools. The CBT model helps Trainees practice their new Nepali language skills with their host families and communities and provides a rich opportunity for learning Nepali culture and gaining cross-cultural skills. Trainees participate in technical sessions and carry out practicum activities at the end of the PST which are similar to their anticipated activities at their permanent sites. Trainees are assessed throughout their training, and upon successful completion of PST, they are officially sworn in as Peace Corps Volunteers.



In-Service Training

After a few months of service, Volunteers participate in an In-Service Training (IST). This year, IST sessions for Food Security Volunteers took place in the Far West and sessions focused on soil management, mushroom cultivation, fruit tree cultivation, and nutrition education. Food Security Volunteers bring Agriculture and Health Coordinators from their Municipalities for three days in the IST, and they develop collaborative action plans for the next nine months of service. Education Volunteers participated in a five-day IST to help enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching English and working with school stakeholders and local partners to further positive education outcomes in their classrooms.



Project Design and Management Workshop

Peace Corps Nepal facilitated a three-day Project Design and Management (PDM) workshop to prepare Food Security Volunteers, their Agriculture and Health Coordinators, and community counterparts to help their village stakeholders develop community-driven projects that align with community strengths, interests, and needs.

Mid-Service Training

After one year of service, Peace Corps Volunteers participate in a Mid-Service Training (MST) to reflect on their service and share their successes, challenges, and share best practices. This is also a time for Volunteers to assess the extent to which they are meeting project goals and core expectations for Peace Corps service. Upon completing MST, Volunteers return to their communities with clear action plans for their second year of service.



N 205 Peace Corps Volunteers at their Mid-Service Training in Kathmandu Officials

Close Of Service Conference

The Close of Service (COS) Conference is the last official training event for Peace Corps Volunteers and is usually scheduled 3 months before they complete their 27 months of service. In this conference, Volunteers reflect on their accomplishments and the various lessons learned during their Peace Corps experience. During the COS Conference, Volunteers discuss the process to close their service in Nepal and make plans for their lives after Peace Corps.



N 204 Group participating in their Close of Service Conference with Government Officials

Thank you all !

We would like to take this moment to thank every Municipality Mayor, Rural Municipality Chairperson, Agriculture Coordinator, Health Coordinator, School Principal, Ward Chairperson, Teacher and community counterpart.



**Without your support,
our Volunteers' successes would not be possible!**



PCV carrying bamboo for making plastic tunnel for off-season vegetable cultivation

[Looking Ahead to 2020

2020 promises to be a year of continued learning and growth as we strive to best serve the people of Nepal. The English Education Project enters its second year and, as we continue to learn from the experiences of Volunteers, Teachers, Principals and Students, we will continue to strengthen the project in order to improve learning outcomes.

The Food Security Project will enter into an evaluation phase, engaging stakeholders and partners at the national and local level in assessing project outcomes in order to identify what is working well and what challenges exist. The evaluation will help us to redesign the project to ensure that our work remains vital, effective and relevant now and in future.

We welcomed 53 new Volunteers to Nepal in early February of 2020, 28 Education and 25 Food Security. After completing just 7 weeks of their 3 months of language, cross-cultural and technical training, however, they were evacuated from Nepal due to the global pandemic. We hope to welcome Volunteers back to Nepal as soon as conditions permit. We know that assistance will be needed now more than ever as communities strive to cope with the impacts of COVID 19.

Acknowledgments

Project Partners

Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development
Ministry of Health and Population
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Ministry of Home Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Federal Affairs & General Administration
USAID
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Regional English Language Office
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Memorandum of Understanding

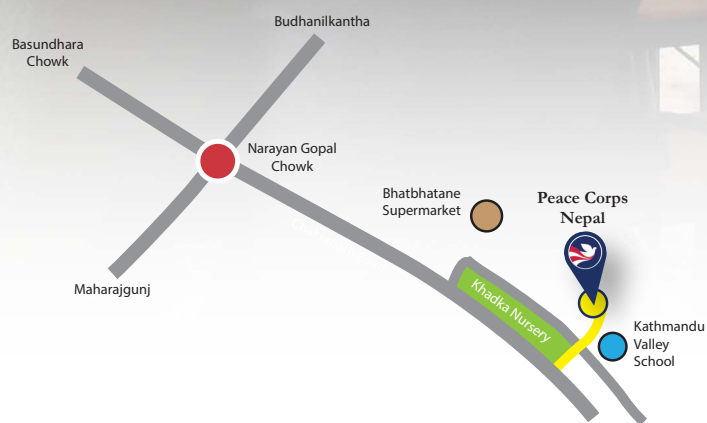
Peace Corps Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in order to launch the new Education Project. Peace Corps also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development and the Ministry of Health and Population to extend the Food Security Project for five years.







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