NRNA Knowledge Investment
Skill Knowledge and Innovation (SKI)'s- Review and Recommendation

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1.   Background

In about a decade since its founding, Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) has emerged as an influential force in the social and economic landscape of Nepal. The credit to this outcome goes to the pioneers and visionaries of NRNA who inspired Diaspora mass to deploy its skills and resources on to the motherland. Today, NRN movement has made its presence felt now in business, philanthropy and several skill and knowledge investment initiatives in Nepal. It is now able to mobilize Nepali Diaspora having diverse interests and competencies. Among this diverse set of participating interests within NRNA, there emerged a group of scientists, researchers and knowledge workers that identified skills, knowledge and innovations as worthy products transferrable from the NRN community to Nepal. The efforts of these people resulted in the formation of Skills, Knowledge and Innovation (SKI) Task Force during the 4th NRNA Global Conference in Kathmandu in December 2009. This was a major paradigm shift in NRNA International Coordination Council's policy commitment and priorities to utilize skills, knowledge, innovations and experiences of Diaspora community for the advancement of Nepal.

Through declarations of its regional and global conferences since 2009, NRNA has emphasised the importance of Diaspora role in knowledge sector. Consequently NRNA is set to invest productive ideas, innovation, skills, and experiences of Diaspora for promoting science and technology capabilities, which are considered important in Nepal's long term prosperity. In forming the SKI Task Force, NRNA pledged to work jointly with the Government of Nepal (GoN) and national stakeholders. In 2014, NRNA ICC (International Coordination Council) made a decision to transform SKI Task Force into a SKI committee of permanent status. A new committee has thus been formed and its ToR (Terms of Reference) is approved by the ICC. The goal of the SKI Committee has been to mobilize NRN's intellectual and physical resources in transferring of Diaspora knowledge, skills, experience and innovation to Nepal through varieties of project initiatives as feasible.   The SKI Committee holds its meeting every six months and reports its progress to the ICC on quarterly basis. General information on SKI committee has been made available in

the NRN website: **www.nrn.org.np**. The committee envisages ahead working closely with NCC and RCs to help establish regional committees to develop a strong SKI networking at NCC levels.

In the last five years, SKI has gone through many consultative processes and deliberations within NRNA and has signed MoUs (Memorandum of Understanding) with Ministry of Education (MoE) and Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) for a foundation building work [1-12]. Two major flagship projects launched by NRNA in SKI initiatives during this period have been: 1) Open University of Nepal Initiative (OUNI) which led to an OUN Infrastructure Development Board (OUNIDB) to be formed by Government of Nepal, and more recently, NRNA ICC has formed a separate OUNI Task Force that will closely collaborate with both OUNIDB and the SKI Committee and 2) Nepal Science Foundation Trust (NSFT) that has been registered as a philanthropic organization in Nepal and is funded by SKI Committee and reports to SKI Committee directly. Along with these major initiatives, some other projects have also been underway, such as SKI inventory of Diaspora professionals, Annual SKI Brain Drain Seminar series with Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST)/Biotechnology Society of Nepal (BSN).

2.   SKI Committee Goals for 2014-16

a) Short Term (2014-15)

1. Develop skills data bank of NRN professionals

2. Align skills and execute plans on:
   -Open University Nepal Initiative (OUNI)
   -Nepal Science Foundation (NSF)

3. Gain representation in Nepal's S&T policy and research institutions

4. Continue SKI Conference program activity with NAST/SBN

5. Solicit proposals from Diaspora scientists and technologists, select them for implementation, and set them into implementation mode

b) Long Term (2015-16)

6. Identify potential projects for co-investment, particularly in Biotechnology, Agriculture, Health, Energy and Climate Change areas in collaboration with relevant institutions in Nepal

7. Explore and encourage NRNA's regions to take one project each and align them with SKI objectives

8. Establish strong linkages with S&T and Education institutions both public and private, in Nepal and abroad

9. Advise Government on Education and S&T policy matters

The new SKI committee structure within the NRNA and the team members' representation spread around the world are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively. The committee members are selected from the NRNA's regions while the task force team will be formed on project basis with required skills. Current members of the SKI Committee are: Navin Vaidya, Hem Raj Sharma, Saroj Ghimire, Rajesh Rana, Pramod Dhakal, Gokul Pokhrel, Drona Rasali, Shree Napit, Jagadish Timilsena, Betman Bhandari, Krishna Giri, Ambika Adhikari, Ishara Mahat, Sunita Chaudhary, Dharma Acharya, Tharka Sen, Suraj Thapa, Ratan Jha (Co-chair), Jeetendra Bothara, S Baniya, Devi Basnet, BK Khanal, S Chettri, Dinesh Gautam, Lok Raj Sharma, Raju Adhikari (Chair).

SKI's primary role is to support the SKI flagship projects, provide policy direction, develop future strategy and represent NRNA ICC in S&T areas. The above outlined initiative will be SKI's strategic priority to meet its objectives. In the new structure, SKI will endeavour to proactively advocate, engage and champion SKI activities at NCC level and involve them in flagship projects. SKI committee structure, fund raising scheme are outlined in Figure 1 and 2 and will be driven on projects basis.
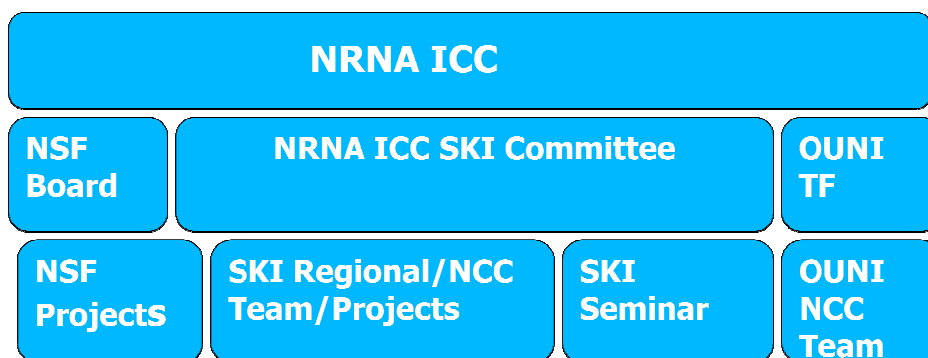

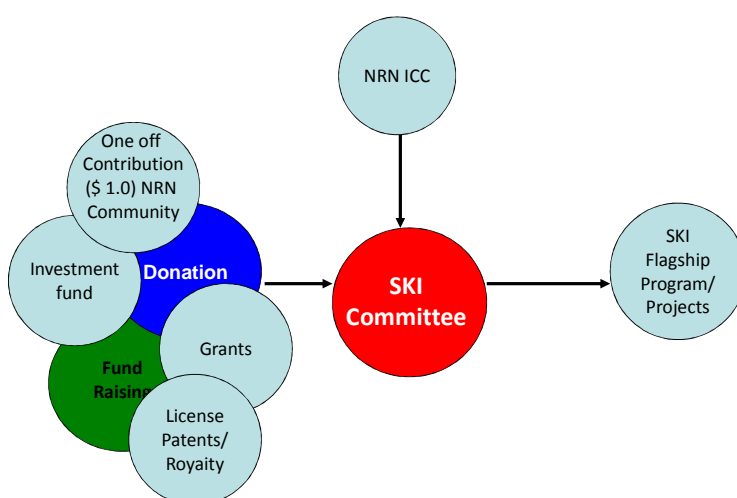*Figure 1. SKI Committee structure and projects*

Figure 2. SKI proposed fund raising mechanism

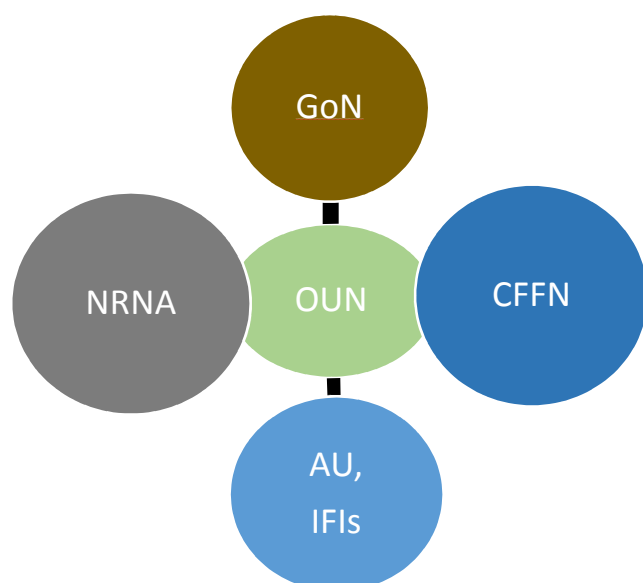## 3.   The Flagship Project: Open University Nepal Initiative – (OUNI)

Figure 3. OUNI partners
- *OUN – Open University Initiative, AU= Athabasca University, CFFN= Canada Foundation for Nepal, GoN= Government of Nepal, NRNA- Non Resident Nepali Association, IFIs = International Financial Institutions*

3.1   Introduction

Open University Initiative is a NRNA project developed over the last seven years and brought to NRNA community in the last five years. This project was declared as "NRNA Flagship Project" by NRNA Houston Conference 2010. A White Paper on the Open University Initiative was prepared along the way as a compilation of ideas generated through workshops and studies made during this period. The White Paper was submitted by the NRNA Open University Project Champion Pramod Dhakal to the NRNA ICC project evaluation committee formed in 2013. The committee recommended the work of the initiative to be worthy of continuation by the NRNA. Subsequently the Chair of the Open University Initiative Task Force (OUNITF) was appointed. The Chair of the OUNITF presented Terms of Reference to the NRNA ICC President for the approval of the organization and was subsequently endorsed by the ICC.

Consequently, OUNI Task Force was created within the NRNA ICC which carried over the work undertaken by the OUNI Project, the OUNI Steering Committee, and the OUNI Strategic Committee formed before the steering committee. NRNA ICC and NRNA OUITF submitted the White Paper prepared by the Steering Committee to the Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal for official adoption in April 2014 and it has been endorsed as an official document by the Government of Nepal on June 18, 2014. This document was produced by a collective effort of NRNA, CFFN, Athabasca University, and Government of Nepal.

A MoU has been signed between NRNA and the Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal (MoE), in June 10, 2010 which formalized on how the 2010 Resolution and 2012 MoU on OUNI signed by MOE and NRNA would be implemented. This new agreement has already officially been adopted by the OUNIDB on June 18, 2014. On the basis of this agreement, NRNA will take the lead role in the academic program management and operation of the OUNI. Consequently, NRNA and NRNs are positioned to be major players in the making of the Open University of Nepal, which is conceived to be executed as a collaborative initiative of multiple institutions.

Conceived to be executed as a collaborative initiative of multiple institutions, outlined here in this paper are major elements of the project that concern with the NRNA and NRN community.

3.2   Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives

i)   Vision

"Igniting the spirit of learning and harnessing the excellence in every human being for building an intellectual, prosperous, sustainable, and always-learning society"

ii)   Mission

Establishing a comprehensive research university of open learning in Nepal with extensive involvement of Nepalese Diaspora community

iii)   Goals

1. to take university to people's homes and communities with a robust technological foundation,
2. to remove all barriers to higher learning opportunities including those of income, disadvantageous social circumstances, geography, and readiness by mode of open learning,
3. to meet informational, educational, technical and vocational needs of people by connecting learners with sources of knowledge and skills that may be found anywhere inside or outside the country,
4. to convert the raw knowledge and skills found in the nature, society and culture into formal knowledge by means of distributed knowledge production, co-development and collaboration,
5. to continue educating and training youth that take foreign employment by facilitating lifelong education and learning,
6. to convert brain drain into brain gain by mobilizing Diaspora people in education, research and transfer of knowledge and skills,
7. to offer a learning system that scales to rising enrolments and efficiently adapts to population movement,
8. to bring people residing outside big cities into the mainstream of knowledge economy through education, transfer of skills, and entrepreneurial knowledge,

9. to become the model open university of the 21st century,
10. to democratize education and diversify learning by making it possible to educate all people.

IV)   Objectives

1. Establish Nepal's National University of higher learning: a public open university by 2015
2. Mobilize in-country and Diaspora contributors for distributed educational content development and delivery by 2015
3. Secure broadband communication infrastructure in 12 districts in Muktinath-Lumbini corridor for first pilot operation of the university by 2015, and throughout Nepal by 2018
4. Offer at least 3 academic degrees of rural interest, 2 degrees of urban interest, and 1 degrees of workers-abroad interest by 2016
5. Secure technical collaboration and assistance from the best distance learning institutions to establish best practices and best technological solutions by 2016
6. Provide technological foundation, content foundation and bridging programs to school systems for improving primary and secondary education by 2020
7. Become the university with the largest range of program offerings in Nepal by 2025

3.3   Stakeholders, Roles and Responsibilities

Through agreements of September 20, 2010 and October 07, 2010, NRNA has entered into partnership with the Government of Nepal – Ministry of Education, Athabasca University Canada, and Canada Foundation for Nepal with regards to establishing the national Open University in Nepal. All partners sincerely contributed to the mission and brought the mission to prominence. However, the dissolution of the first Constituent Assembly before passing necessary law for the establishment of the Open University and formation of the Open University Infrastructure Development Board (OUNIDB) without dissolving the Open University Initiative Steering Committee formed in October 2010 and subsequent transfer of government fund to the OUNIDB led to less than desirable situation arising out of the digression from the main course of the targeted mission. That happened especially because the OUNIDB executives did not uphold the spirits of the past agreements and that of the works of the Diaspora, thereby creating some stress and unforeseen delays in the mission. Nevertheless, the Diaspora initiative persisted until the scenario was changed. Consequently, NRNA was able to re-negotiate with the MoE to uphold the spirits of the past agreements. There was a positive response from the MoE and, as a result, a MoU was signed again in June 10, 2014. This new agreement MoE set the role of NRNA in the initiative by using its power to give directives to the OUNIDB. The board meeting of the OUNIDB has already adopted the MoU for implementation. In another fortunate turn of event in the way forward, the top three political parties represented in the legislature parliament of Nepal have made written commitment to establishing the Open University through their respective election manifestos, and

the most parliamentary parties of Nepal have spoken of their support for establishing the OUN, which is also a top priority project of Ministry of Education.

The most recent situation has been that NRNA has re-negotiated with the government to claim the stake in the leadership of the mission for a fixed number of years and establish the university under its leadership. At the time OUNITF ToR was written the TF Chair had proposed that NRNA should re-negotiate with the government for the following kind of distribution of roles.

3.4   NRNA

1. Negotiates with the Government of Nepal for the renewed commitment to the agreement made in October 2010,
2. Assumes the leadership of the mission for minimum of five to ten years, puts its financial, academic and technical expertise into establishing a world class Open University in Nepal;
3. Develops plans and solicits national and international funding in collaboration with other national and international partners;
4. Establishes a fully functioning and world class Open University in Nepal by 2020;
5. Works with other national and international academic, philanthropic, and development partners to implement OUN plans;
6. Hands over the institution to the people of Nepal through a governing body duly formed as per the law made by the Legislative Parliament of Nepal at the end of its term;

(**Note:** In the subsequent weeks after the presentation of this document to the President of NRNA, one round of negotiation has already been done with the Ministry of Education. We have received unequivocal words from the Ministry that (1) the spirit of the past agreements will be honoured, (2) NRNA contributions will be duly acknowledged, and (3) the bill to the parliament will be tabled with acknowledgment and space for NRNs.)

3.5   Government of Nepal

1. Provides necessary legal outlet to establish OUN as an autonomous public university and to set up a dedicated endowment fund and accounts;
2. Exempts custom duties on equipment and supplies imported for the use of OUN by NRNA, its sister organizations, and partner institutions be they newly purchased or be free of cost transfer of already operating technological equipment, mobile computing devices, data servers and machinery previously used by other international institutions;
3. Permits equal opportunity for Nepalese Diaspora to contribute through their academic, administrative and management roles in the operations of OUN as Nepalese nationals;
4. Allows academics and professional experts to render services to OUN physically or virtually from Nepal and abroad and be financially compensated as per contracts made between OUN and the contributors;

5. Recognizes NRNA as the lead partner organization for establishing OUN and supports NRNA's efforts to mobilize agreed international funding, in-kind support and expertise for the development and operation of OUN.

3.6   Athabasca University, CFFN, and Other Potential Partners

1. Collaborate in developing plans, seeking funding for the establishment of the Open University;
2. Partner in the implementation of the agreed upon components of the OUN plan;
3. Adapt courses and processes and translate open knowledge and courseware applicable to the OUN;
4. Develop open content, tutor and collaborate in research, program development and program delivery;
5. Collaborate in training of OUN faculty and staff in open education;
6. Take other roles as may be mutually agreed. Task-Force Team

At the time of this writing the proposed negotiation has successfully taken place and some results have already started to show up.

3.7   Initial Task Force Members

Pramod Dhakal, Canada, Chair and chair of the first TF, Drona P. Rasali, Canada, Co-chair and member of the first TF, Ambika P. Adhikari, USA, member of the first TF, Raju Adhikari, Australia, member of first TF and Chair of SKI, Ashok K Shrestha, Australia, Bishal K Sitaula, Norway, Devi B Basnet, Korea, Dharam KC, Saudi Arabia, Dina Bangdel, USA, Gokul Bhandari, Canada Ishara Parajuli, Thailand, Jeet Joshee, USA, Krishna Chandra Prasad, Netherlands, Krishna Hamal, Australia, Mahabir Pun, Nepal, Ram Giri, Japan Rana Lama Yonjan, Netherland, Eknath Khatiwada, Zambia

3.8   Task Force Advisors

1. NRNA President, Shesh Ghale
2. Kedar Bhakta Mathema, Ex Vice Chancellor TU,
3. Bidyanath Koirala, Professor TU
4. NRNA Regional Coordinators

3.9   Team expansion and development approach

The tally above is the team dedicated to provide immediate traction in the project. Upon ratification of this TOR by the ICC, the regional coordinators will be asked to communicate with Deputy Regional Coordinators, ICC Members and NCCs to provide one coordinator per country. The country coordinators of the region will then select among themselves the regional coordinators to represent the ICC Task-Force to honour the kind of system NRNA has established for its everyday functioning.

The country coordinator thus selected will take lead role to form NRNA country chapters named OUNI Country Chapter. Subsequently, the member of the Country Chapter will select/elect their own Country Chapter Coordinator. The NRNA ICC Member, NRNA country chapter President, and Regional Coordinator and Deputy Regional Coordinator applicable to that chapter will be advisors to each chapter. From each region two people will be selected to represent the region to the main task force. Once the team is formed in that manner, the Task Force will be reformed at that moment.

3.10   Resources and financial plan

i)   Office and Human Resource:

1. OUNTF Office Unit at the NRNA ICC Secretariat or some appropriate place in Nepal, with basic computing and printing facilities.
2. Internet connection in the office and WiMax based Internet facility to take around the pilot area and to OUNI programs to facilitate Diaspora member participation in programs.
3. Four full-time staffers (a, b, c) and one part time staffer (e) reporting to the Task Force Chair with the following responsibilities on a semi-volunteer basis:
   a. Technology and Communication: Develops website, implements mass communication and social media solutions, integrates technology solutions for pilot programs, acquires and assembles Open Source content libraries, installs the technology solutions and delivers training in pilot area.
   b. Administration, Program Development and Outreach: Writes articles, utilizes social media for outreach, sends and receives emails and processes them, organizes workshops, recruits volunteers, interfaces with media, takes minutes, manages volunteer works, manages program development.
   c. Office Assistant: keeps accounts, transcribes conversations presentations, keeps office records, receives and delivers documents, prepares record of programs and proceedings, edits and archives pictures, videos and audio recordings, handles immediate needs of visitors, keeps office open and organized.
   d. Distance and Open Learning Course Coordinator: Works closely with Nepali Diaspora academics around the world under the leadership of TF Co-Chair in designing, adaptation and adoption of the courses for the pilot programs.
   e. Grant Writer: Collect data, interface with experts, write grant applications, submit grant applications and follow-up.

ii)   Financial Resources

Minimum Resources:

1. The staff be supported with a small token salary of Rs 10, 000 per month per person (Rs, 40,000 in case of Course coordinator).
2. Internet and phone communication costs incurred on the mission.
3. Office expenses and basic travel expenses of volunteers and staff.
4. Cost of organizing public programs and those with policy makers.
5. Cost of printing and distribution of OUN related publications made by the task force.
6. Cost incurred in pilot open education program.
7. Cost incurred in the initial travel for fund and awareness raising among NRNs.

We estimate that about $20,000 will be needed to demonstrate visible NRNA impact.

Actions Requiring Significant Resources:

1. About $100,000 is required to professionally develop a Semi-Comprehensive Operational Plan of the Open University that will be good enough to solicit funding from international agencies and to position NRNA as the frontier institution to develop the university.
2. Pursue and acquire fund for developing comprehensive operational plan and, through it, develop the fully developed comprehensive operational plan.
3. Write grant applications for achieving component goals and associated activities as required to implement the plan,
4. Acquire land for the OUN, mostly public land; but nearly always there appears a need to also purchase some private land adjoining or enclosed in the public land for enhancing the land use, gaining adequate size for future, and cleanly avoiding any future boundary disputes and access issues ($100,000 - $300,000).
5. Develop pilot programs along with human resource, communication infrastructure and computing infrastructure for their implementation ($50,000).

(Note: Much of this fund will have to be raised among NRNA community, which will be practicable once we gain traction in implementing the 2010 agreement made with the Government of Nepal. As soon as the government eases on its exclusive grip on it and accepts NRNA as an official and lead developer force, it will bring back the excitement there was in Nepal and among NRN communities during 2010-2012.)

3.11   Work breakdown and schedule

1)   Immediate term plan (6 months):

 1.   NRNA delegation negotiates with the government and reclaims the ownership of the initiative on behalf of NRNs such that NRN team will lead the initiative during its establishment phase,

2. Finalize OU White Paper in participation with major stakeholders and advance it along with the Open University Bill to the parliament as a key instrument to educate about the advantages of Diaspora mobilization,
3. Create a 3 member ICC team to oversee OU matters and develop Terms of Reference for forming and running NRN OUNI Country Chapters,
4. Lobby with leaders of major political parties to reclaim NRNA stake,
5. Prepare a document outlining changes required in the proposed bill to ensure full and honourable participation of NRNs in the future of Open University, especially including:
a. Using Diaspora skills, knowledge, and innovation to be one of its stated goals,
b. Participation of NRNs as equals to resident Nepalese in the academic and administrative positions,
c. Freedom to co-develop and co-own programs, materials, resources, research-output and innovations with similar foreign institutions,
d. Upholding the principle of openness in knowledge and information,
e. Open ownership of inventions and innovations with fair and democratic system to reward innovators,
f. Government obligation to ensure affordable access to broadband Internet by all Nepalese learners irrespective of their location and economic standing.
g. System of total openness in continuing, technical and vocational programs and a balance of inclusion and competitive entry in professional and advanced academic programs.
6. NRNA take initiative to create "Parliamentary friends of Open University" to further its claim and expedite the passage of the bill.
7. Establish a NRNA Open Education Project Office as an NRNA arm operating full-time in NRNA office premises or at some suitable location.
8. Launch pilot programs on "use of open content in transformation of schools and college education" and "collaborative knowledge creation", which will immediately popularize open education as well and NRNA brand among Nepalese people.

2) Near term plan (1 year):

1. Establish OUNI chapters in at least in 6 countries.
2. Clinch NRNA and Diaspora stake in OU governance by putting necessary instruments in Open University Bill.
3. Intensify lobbying for accelerating the passage of OU bill.
4. Select a location for OU Central Campus and establish citizen's group involving resident and Diaspora members.
5. NRNA apply funding application to launch "Diaspora Collaboration in Open Curriculum and Open Content Production" with donor agencies active in Nepal.
6. NRNA call for Diaspora faculties and professionals willing to collaborate with local schools and colleges in content production, tutoring, research and mentoring.

7. NRNA launch a baseline data collection and resource mapping projects integrated with school, college, and local development in one municipality and one village development council.
8. NRNA provide training on screen casting, podcasting, and multimedia content development to 60 students and teachers of six schools and colleges in the pilot area.
9. OUNI launches a series of pilot academic programs in collaboration with Athabasca University and other academic institutions in Nepal and abroad.

3) Short term plan (2 years):

1. Establish OUNI chapters in at least in 20 countries.
2. NRNA launch a Diaspora volunteerism in enhancement of public school education, where NRNA provides the connection between the schools and volunteers and experience sharing platform; the expenses are covered by volunteer themselves.
3. Establish parliament sanctioned entity, Open University, with Diaspora stake in it.
4. Develop "Diaspora Affairs Unit" within Open University dedicated to engaging NRNs in education, research, innovation and collaboration building.
5. Develop one bridge-course on each on Science, Mathematics, and English to cater to students who wish to independently study to qualify for Open University programs at Technical and Vocational Diploma or Bachelor's level.
6. Identify the plans and curriculum for at least five technical and vocational programs that can modernize existing trades and bring in terrain-specific engineering and technology.
7. Collaborate with other stakeholders to develop one broadband wireless corridor with at least 50 schools and colleges to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of the open education programs.
8. Develop one hundred rural-youth podcasters, screen casters, and multimedia content developers dedicated to open education.

4) Near-long-term plan (5 years):

1. Establish OUNI country chapter in 70% countries with NRNA NCCs.
2. Engage 500 Diaspora faculties, scientists and professionals in Open University and open education associated research, innovation and academic collaborations.
3. Engage two dozen Diaspora faculties in "massively open online courses".
4. Develop a comprehensive plan for academic programs for OUN
5. Make Nepal a country where every student has affordable access to broadband wireless connectivity in collaboration with other national and international stakeholders.
6. Make Nepal a country mobile learning, where every student has smart mobile learning device with access to Internet, open content, and open education programs.

3.12   Risks and risk mitigation

Risks:

1.   If adequate space for NRNA and NRNs could not be secured in the Open University Initiative through committed negotiation with the government, the synergy, momentum, and enthusiasm required to accomplish the mission may not be created among NRNs.
2.   Risk of exclusion, lack of funds, lack of government support, delays in passage of bill in the parliament, loss of quality, and loss of team unity would be risks to the program success.

Mitigation Strategies:

1.   Team expansion and country chapter formation will commence only after properly negotiating with the government, and securing written commitment to honour the October 2010 resolution.
2.   The task-force will widely disseminate information to NRNs to raise awareness.
3.   Regular bimonthly updates will be circulated among NRNs and wider public as were done until the government takeover of May 2012.
4.   Interactions will be held in sufficient numbers and the institutional design discussions will be held in Internet based public forums.
5.   Inclusion strategies and programs will be developed through public and participatory forums, and will be implemented as per decisions thus made.
6.   Mechanisms will be created to make donations to qualify for charitable status (for tax-exemption on income).
7.   Avenues to match the donations from other corporate or philanthropic sources will be sought to encourage contributions.
8.   Maximum initial mobilization of Diaspora from the region that will have the honour to host the headquarters of the OU will be done in fundraising among Diaspora community.
9.   Colleges and buildings will be allowed to be named by donors if they contribute to the majority of expense required to build or establish them.
10.   Maximum transparency and openness will be practiced to keep our collective enthusiasm intact.
11.   TF team events will be organized along with NRNA programs to maintain team unity.

4.   Nepal Science Foundation (NSF) Trust-Flagship Project [1-3, 12]

4.1   Background

The concept of the Science Foundation Trust was initiated in 2009. Following several rounds of discussion and meetings [1-3], a formal presentation was made in NRN ICC regional conference in Sydney in 2010 which culminated in the NRN declaration to

form the Foundation as a non-profit Trust. Nepal Science Foundation initiative is now on a take-off stage. Open University Initiative and Nepal Science Foundation have made debut as NRN Diaspora's gifts to Nepal. At the initial phase, a MoU was also signed with Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) in 2011 to promote collaboration between SKI and Nepal in the areas of S&T. In the NRNA global conference 2013, SKI conducted a joint workshop on OUNI and NSF. As the 2013 conference was wrapping up, Nepal Science Foundation formally became a registered legal entity as a Trust incorporated in Nepal under the prevalent laws.

4.2   Nexus with NRN fraternity

The Act of incorporation mentions clearly the role and initiative of NRN fraternity in founding "the Trust for the advancement of knowledge, science and technology, skills and applied researches for the larger benefit of the peoples of Nepal".

While the structure is framed as an autonomous entity with liability among the members, the following points explain further its strong links with the NRN global body:

(a) The incumbent president and founder president of NRN-ICC will be patrons of the Executive Committee and the Governing Council;
(b) The letterhead of the Trust clearly mentions: NRN global initiative for skill, knowledge and innovation (SKI) transfer.
(c) The membership is open to all NRN members.
(d) The present coordination committee is comprised of former or standing members of NRN-ICC body and is given a global character by encouraging regional geographic representation (see the composition of present Committee).
(e) The members, by their academic standing and experience, give high credibility to the newly formed body and NRN-ICC.
(f) NRN policy body plays significant role at the general body meeting of the Trust.
(g) NRNA has room to enhance its role in a befitting manner in the management of the Trust.

4.3   Conceptual framework, scope and limitations

The NSF initiative is envisaged to unfold the ideas and concepts of scholars and professionals of the NRN movement pertaining to the promotion of science, technology and scholarship in Nepal. In this process, emphasis on science has a broader connotation, not only confined to the core science and technology discipline. It is intended to encompass management of resources, economic planning, behavioural changes, better governance standards, and pursuit of options that assure better quality of living for the people.

Currently NSF is operating from a small office with a very limited staff to keep the overhead expenses at the minimum. Even in the future, it is envisioned that NSF

will not be an implementing agency but will advance its mission through outsourcing, partnerships and collaboration with specialized agencies and minimise operational costs.

4.4   Policy Priorities

a.   The core fund is yet to gain its full value through payment of membership fees and transfer of previously committed funds. Some members are said to prefer the transfers to be deposited into a special income generating account providing for the use of interest accruals only to cover program overhead costs. In that case we should be raising some funds to cover basic operation cost of the organization. Members are welcome to put forward their views and suggestions.

b.   In light of above mentioned constraints, the listing of programs and activities for this year are few and many of them are intended as partnership projects. All the members are requested to assume and exercise their role as custodians of the Trust and contribute towards its development by ascertaining their sense of belonging and collective ownership.

5.0   Programs and activities

During the transitional phase of first year, some programs and activities are proposed but their implementation will be conditioned on availability of resources.

5.1   Launching a website

NSF website is almost already and about to be launched and will be upgraded and advanced over time. The website will gradually ease the functioning of the organisation, help disseminate information and unfold the prospects of partnerships, program development and linkages. Please visit NRNA website for update information or contact us directly.

5.2   Office management system development

This will involve installation of internet devices and communication equipment such as computer, printer, photocopier, etc. The office is located in Bag Bazaar. The present office bearers and members of the Executive Committee are as follows:

Patrons: Upendra Mahato, Mr. Shesh Ghale
Board Members: Raju Adhikari- Chairperson, Gokul Pokhrel-Member Secretary , B.K. Mainali, Pramod Dhakal, Shobhakar Dhakal, Hem Raj Sharma, Mana K.C. Bhagirath Yogi, Ambika Adhikari, Drona Rasali, Benu Adhikari, Rajesh Rana,.

5.3   Science Education Policy Development Conference

This is the program developed in 2013 but was postponed due to Constituent Assembly elections. The proposal developed last year is ready to be sent to

Education Ministry, GoN. Likewise, several other potential stakeholders, national as well as international, will be approached to participate in the program
.

5.4 Baseline Study on Science Information Dissemination over National Media Channels

The expansion of media networks (newspapers, journals, radio and television) will be studied in order to ascertain the potential of science information dissemination over national and provincial media networks which have made their presence all over Nepal. (Estimated cost: Rs.25, 000). Proposal outline will be available on demand.

5.5 Exploratory Expedition of Remote Nepal:

NSF intends to sponsor a "Nature trek of science lovers, students and researchers to the most remote mountainous trails of Nepal. The first proposed such route is from Jumla to Hilsa of Humla district bordering Tibet. The program will involve a 10-day trek involving both native and foreign researchers. The newly launched website will be used to reach out to potential clients, supporters and sponsors if we are to undertake this program.

5.6 General Body Meeting

This meeting is mandatory as per the statute of incorporation and law. It is assumed that NRN anniversary Day falls on 11 October. Hence, the meeting is proposed during the preceding or following week of the event. Exact date will be finalized after consultation with Trust members, NRN-ICC and SKI Committee.

5.7 Awards and commendations

During the GB meeting and Opening function, some awards and commendations are proposed as followed:

a. Publication of a brochure of information about the Trust.
b. Special souvenir and commendation plaque to founder members and certificates to general members, donors and contributors.
c. Some awards (proposed if sponsors are available):

S&T Outstanding Award for Media Excellence: Prizes will be given to a FM radio network, Television channel or newspaper for having rendered exemplary service in the dissemination of S&T information and public awakening, combat superstitions, etc. Some token commendations to outstanding science teachers, researchers of Nepal as may be feasible.

5.8 Note of Thanks

NSF acknowledges contributions received from President Shesh Ghale, Founding President Dr. Upendra Mahato, Vice-President Baban Bhatta, Mr. Chandra Yonzon,

and NRN Australia for the seed fund amounting to AD 28,000.00. We also thank the ICC for the continuous support.

5.9   NSF Membership

One of the major source of revenue for NSF is through membership drive. There are two types of membership i) ordinary membership $ 250.00 and ii) founding membership $ 1000.00 and we encourage everyone to avail the membership and support NSF activities.

6.0   Annual SKI Brain Drain Seminar Initiative [1-3]

The seminar project commenced since 2012 as a joint exercise with Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) and Biotechnology Society of Nepal (BSN). The major objective of the seminar to provide an interactive forum between Nepalese and Diaspora's professional to share their R&D experience and develop an effective professional networking, highlight and advocate importance of R&D program and forge linkages with policy makers in GoN.

The seminar has met most of its objectives, especially one of networking resident and Diaspora scientists. To-date, five seminars in various discipline of science have been held, which are held every six months. It has grown to an extent that it may be diversified from Biotechnology to other S&T disciplines. Saroj Ghimire (co-ordinator) Devi Basnet and team is currently working on new ToR and a detailed project plan to make SKI seminar aligned to SKI objectives prudently.

The seminar will be an ongoing activities and NSF is considering to promote this forum to a one day international seminar in the future to cover broader areas of S&T.

7.0   Skill Inventory Project [1-3]

SKI has embarked on this project in 2011 to prepare a comprehensive database of NRN professionals and skills to unite and utilise Diaspora human resources and recycle the brain drain to brain gain for Nepal's development. The main objectives of this project are:

To create a platform for professional networking; support skill transfer back to Nepal for the development of Nepal; create NRN's psychographic and demographic profile; explore opportunities for NRNs in the different corner of the world; and build a "Who is Who" list of people from Nepal living abroad.

A repository to store NRN's academic and professional information will be developed and will work as an online tool to connect NRNs. The database of NRN Diaspora will be made available on request to GoN and professional organisation   to connect NRN's skill and knowledge to various development projects in Nepal.

The project commenced in early 2013 with a feasibility study to develop a database program but the project could not go ahead due to technical difficulties. The data collection had been one of the major challenges so SKI committee is now developed a new ToR to work in partnership with professional organisations in Nepal on a different format. The team of Shree Napit, Lok Raj Sharma, and Drona Rasali is currently working on creating new webpage to link to the database; sharing skill information with NAST and other professional organisations; bringing awareness among NRNs. SKI inventory process flow is shown in figure 5.
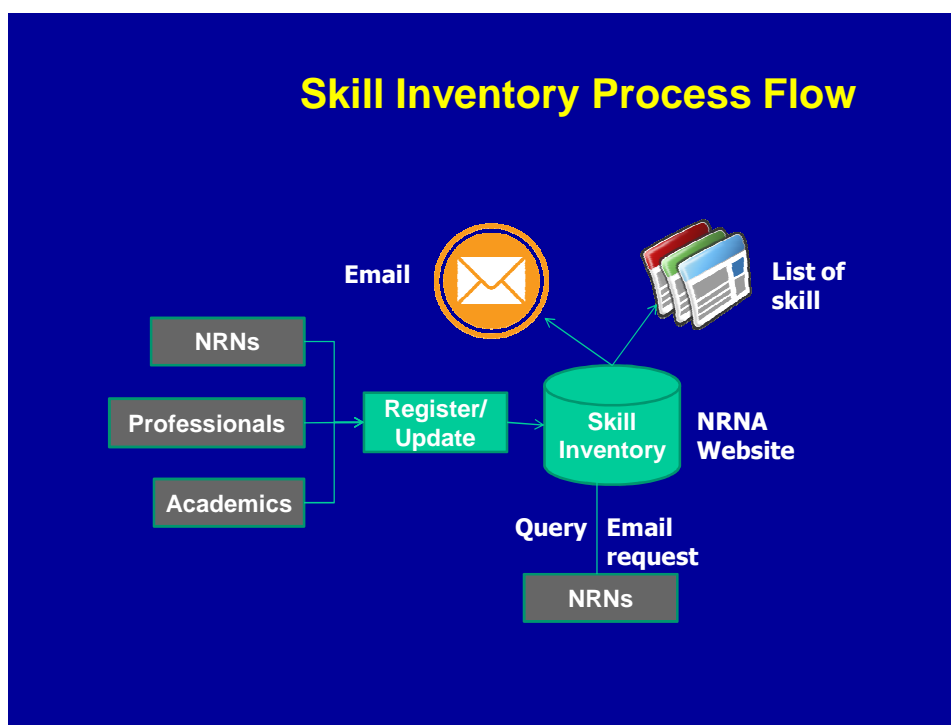

Figure 5: Skill Inventory Process flow

8.0   Miscellaneous

Beside above projects, a large number of projects at NCC levels are under discussion in areas of biotechnology, health and environment. SKI team at NCC level will work closely with SKI committee to coordinate NCC level projects.

9.0   Conclusion

As activities in SKI domain are maturing, SKI Committee is expected to motivate the Diaspora to work unitedly on a knowledge investment front to successfully execute flagship projects like Open University Nepal Initiative (OUNI) and Nepal Science Foundation (NSF) along with other projects in national priority areas. The ICC endorsement of SKI flagship projects has provided a long term commitment and NRNA support is critical for its future success and will enable SKI to play a meaningful role in Nepal's overall development.

SKI committee would like to convey sincere thanks to NRNA leaders and teams at both ICC and NCC levels, Government of Nepal and its agencies such as NAST, MoE, MoST&E, National Planning Commission (NPC), Universities, FNCCI for their ongoing support and help.

SKI committee would like to solicit your feedback, suggestions and ideas and our contact email address is.
nrnicc_ski_committee@googlegroups.com

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