

THREE AND A HALF DECADES OF NEGAAS JOURNEY

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Introduction

In early 1980s, there were only a handful of scholars in Nepal who had studied in Germany. Among them Dr. Basanta Lal Shrestha was a prominent physician in Kathmandu who had undergone medical study in Albert Ludwig University, Freiburg/Beisgau, Germany. Upon his return, he had realized the need for an alumnus organization of Nepalese professionals who had studied in German universities, so that it could serve students aspiring to go to Germany for further studies while also effectively channeling the returnees in the development of the country. In 1981, he shared this vision with his friends late Prof. Dr. Dayananda Bajracharya and Dr. Chandra Bahadur Joshi, so that they all could together formulate a plan for establishing such an organization. Prof. Dr. Dayananda Bajracharya had earned a Doctorate Degree from Albert Ludwig University, Freiburg/Beisgau, Germany and was working in the Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, while Prof. Dr. Joshi had received his engineering from the Technical University Berlin, Germany and had been working as a Mechanical Engineer at Research Center of Applied Science and Technology (RECAST) at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.

The trio embarked on the mission. In 1983, with the help from other fellow returnees from German universities, they formed an Ad-hoc committee and assigned it the responsibility of suggesting an appropriate name for the association, drafting its constitution and registering it with the government.

Pre-Registration Activities:

The Ad-hoc committee proposed a name as “Nepal German Academic Association (NEGAAS)” and drafted its constitution in cooperation with the then senior advocate and current Member of Upper Parliament Hon. Radheshyam Adhikari. It took five further years until the association could be registered with the government of Nepal in the year 1987. The Panchayat regime of that time did not easily register organizations with a name that included a foreign country’s name. This problem however did not stop NEGAAS from carrying out its activities during the pre-registration period. Meetings were held regularly and the alumni kept on working on accommodating new members, collecting information on Nepalese students studying in Germany and the ones applying for studies in German Universities.

Post-Registration Activities

Immediately after the registration of NEGAAS an Executive Board was formed by its first Annual General Meeting in 1987 with Er. Chandra Bahadur Joshi, as the President and NEGAAS went into full swing. New formal relationships were created with Nepal-German related organizations including German embassy in Nepal, German Agency for Technical Cooperation, (GTZ today German Corporation for International Cooperation, GIZ), German Volunteer Services (GVS), German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) office in New Delhi. Talk programs, seminars, workshops were held by inviting experts from Nepal and Germany from various walks of life. Annual news bulletins, brochures, booklet, souvenirs, journals etc. were published (see Annex 1). Honorary memberships were conferred to German Ambassadors (s. annex 2), welcome and farewell parties to German dignitaries were organized.

Social programs like annual picnics were organized. Meanwhile, the organization also dedicated itself to promote societal welfare programs like donations in cash and goods to 1988 earth quake victims in Dharan, East Nepal.

German Embassy also came forward to strengthen its cooperation with NEGAAS by inviting experts from among its members in their committee to select Nepalese candidates applying for German scholarships. The relationship between the German embassy and NEGAAS became stronger after its members were given audience by the visiting State Chancellor Dr. Helmut Kohl in 1987 recognizing the role that NEGAAS was playing in promoting the relationship between Germany and Nepal. On the occasion of German Chancellor's visit, articles of and interviews with the NEGAAS members were published in local Newspaper, and interaction programs were held in Nepal Television (NTV).

The second Executive Board was formed in 1998 with Prof. Dr. Dayananda Bajracharya, as the President in 1998.

The Ups and Downs of NEGAAS

In June 30, 1999 NEGAAS lost its Vice-President and Founder Dr. med. Basanta Lal Shrestha*. His untimely demise was a severe blow to both his family and NEGAAS. This event seriously affected NEGAAS' activities to the point that it even failed to call its Executive Board meetings, and also its Annual General Meeting. As a result NEGAAS could not get renewed with the government for years and its financial strength weakened significantly. Still worse, several active members who were frustrated by such a sad situation left the organization and no steps were taken to stop them.

* If something other than this in relation to the Founder of NEGAAS is mentioned elsewhere, the readers are requested to correct it.

Unfortunately, this was also the time when other German returnees who did not have diploma had been trying to get memberships of NEGAAS, but due to the strict regulation limiting its membership only to the candidates possessing diploma certificates from German Universities, they were not provided the membership.

Even the German Embassy in Nepal was not happy about it. All these led to the formation of a new alumni organization of German returnees called Society of Nepal German Alumni (SONGA).

Later NEGAAS had changed its membership criteria to be more inclusive. According to the new criteria, those who had studied, got some training or done research work in Germany, they could be the member of NEGAAS. But it was too little and too late for the German returnees who had already joined SONGA. Dr. Novel Kishor Rai, the former Nepalese Ambassador to Germany, had led an effort to merge these two associations. But it was unsuccessful and NEGAAS had almost come close to dissolution.

Revitalization of NEGAAS

In 2003, NEGAAS elected its third Executive Board, with Prof. Dr. Chandra Bahadur Joshi as the President. The main responsibility given to this Board was to revitalize this association. It was a herculean task, because NEGAAS was not renewed for last several years and the office of the Chief District Officer (CDO) was not ready to reregister it under the same name.

But with the combined efforts of the team, especially those of Prof. Dr. C. B. Joshi, Dr. Roshana Shrestha and Mr. Surendra Dhakal, the authorities got convinced and it was reregistered with the Government

under the same name "NEGAAS". Later the team also became successful in increasing its membership, strengthening the financial capability and re-establishes its credibility through different activities. The team remained in the office until February 2006.

In March 2006, the 18th Annual General Meeting elected a new team with Prof. Dr. Sekhar Gurung as the President followed by a team with Prof. Dr. Dilip Subba as the President in May 2008.

A very sad event occurred during that period. One of NEGAAS' most active, young and dynamic Executive Members Dr. Thaneshwor Gautam, who was always given responsibility to coordinate programs such as seminars and workshops and which he had done successfully for many consecutive years, suddenly passed away. His unfortunate and untimely demise caused NEGAAS a big loss and resulted in a complete halt of organizing workshops and Seminars by German Professors for two consecutive years.

In 2012, the 24th Annual General meeting elected a new team of NEGAAS with Dr. Roshana Shrestha as its President. Immediately following her tenure, the team with Mr. Surendra Dhakal as the President led NEGAAS from 2016-2018 and thereafter the team of Prof. Dr. Ramesh Kumar Maskey as its President from 2018-2020. From 2021 onwards a new team with Prof. Tanka Nath Dhamala as its new President has been leading this association.

The composition of teams and their major activities are listed in annexes 3 and 4.

Major Outcomes of NEGAAS Activities

NEGAAS has persisted despite the ups and downs in its three and half decades primarily due to the dedication of its founders, members, executive teams, friends and good wishers of NEGAAS. It thrived under the leadership of the two most active secretaries - Mr. Surendra Dhakal and Ar. Rupesh Shrestha - who successfully navigated NEGAAS through the challenges and obstacles creating a successful forum where all the academicians trained in Germany could come and work together to fulfill its objective including strengthening the relation between Nepal and Germany, and assist people studying and working in various sectors as and when needed.

The great achievements made in the past has resulted into ever growing friendship with the German Embassy in Nepal, German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) and many other Nepal German related organizations in Nepal and abroad. With this it has become easier for NEGAAS to organize increasing number of events for the welfare and benefit of several people from all walks of life in both of the countries.

From the series of talk programs, trainings, seminars, workshops, exhibitions etc* held in the past by inviting noble laureates, renowned professors and academicians from both the countries, a number of people in government and non-government sectors in Nepal has been benefitted. These activities have established its credibility in Nepal and have attracted many members.

(*Except the talks delivered by NEGAAS members and other local academicians all other programs were funded by DAAD)

Future of NEGAAS

NEGAAS is a self-supported non-profit organization funded solely through its membership fees which are low. Because of a lack of a strong revenue source, it has not been able to establish its own dedicated

office building from where central coordination of its activities could be maintained. Despite this apparent weakness NEGAAS has been successful in carrying out a lot of activities of public benefit. It boasts of its membership with the highest numbers of post graduate degrees including Humboldt Fellows. NEGAAS holds a bright future by further coordinating and channeling the members' expertise for the development of the country and forging a fruitful relationship with other related organizations in Nepal and Germany promoting bilateral relationship and social welfare.

Meanwhile NEGAAS is privileged to have two DAAD Research Ambassadors, Prof. Dr. Ramesh Kumar Maskey and Prof Dr. Tanka Dhamala and two young DAAD Ambassadors, Ar. Rupesh Shrestha and Er. Sabina Khatri.

NEGAAS is currently being led by Prof. Dr. Tanka Nath Dhamala. The plans and programs put forward by the new team and the ways they are being implemented show a great hope for the future of NEGAAS.

References-

1. Joshi, Chandra Bahadur, "Twenty Five Years of Nepal German Academic Association (NEGAAS)", NEGAAS Journal, Silver Jubilee Special Issue, December 2014, Kathmandu, Nepal.
2. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/GecTNPBqaVdjAQw18>)
3. Minute books of NEGAAS executive board meetings
4. NEGAAS News Bulletins
5. www.negaas.org.np

Annex 1: NEGAAS Publications:

1. Interviews with and articles by NEGAAS executive members on the Education Systems in Germany, published in Rising Nepal in 1987
2. A booklet on “Alternative Energy Technologies in Nepal” by Dr. C. B. Joshi, published in collaboration with Goethe Institute, Kathmandu, 1987
3. NEGAAS News Vol. 1, No. 1, September, 1994 - Vol. 16, No.1, November 2018?
4. NEGAAS Souvenir Issue, 2011
5. 25 Years of NEGAAS, Silver Jubilee Special Issue, December 2014
6. 29 Years of Nepal German Academic Association, NEGAAS’s Professional Journal 2017
7. NEGAAS Journal 2019, published on the "Occasion of 60 Years of Diplomatic Relations - 60 Years of Friendship”, Sept 2019

Annex 2: List of Dignitaries Receiving Honorary Membership of NEGAAS

1. H. E. Dr. Klaus Barth, German ambassador to Nepal
2. H. E. Franz Erwin Ring, German ambassador to Nepal
3. H. E. Verena Graf von Roedern, German ambassador to Nepal
4. H. E. Franz Myeke, German ambassador to Nepal
5. H. E. Mathias Meyer, German ambassador to Nepal
6. H.E. Roland Schaeffer, German ambassador to Nepal
7. Prof. Dr. Klaus von Klitzing, Director of Max Planck Institute for Solid State Research, Stuttgart and Nobel Laureate.

Annex 3: List of Ad-hoc Committee and Executive Boards

Ad-Hoc Committee (1983)

1. Prof. Dr. Chandra Bahadur Joshi - President
2. Er. Ashok Ratna Tuladhar - Vice-President
3. Prof. Dr. Dayananda Bajracharya - member
4. Dr. med Basanta Lall Shrestha - member
5. Er. Binaya Kushle- member

First Executive Board (1987 – 1998)

1. Prof. Dr. Chandra Bahadur Joshi - President
2. Er. Ashok Ratna Tuladhar - Vice-President
3. Prof. Dr. Dayananda Bajracharya - member
4. Dr med. Basanta Lall Shrestha - member
5. Er. Binaya Kushle - member
6. Dr. Roshana Shrestha - member
7. Er. Narendra Bhupal Malla - member

Second Executive Board (1998 – 2003)

1. Prof. Dr. Dayananda Bajracharya - President
2. Dr. med. Basanta Lall Shrestha - Vice-President
3. Er. Jitendra Gurung - member Secretary

4. Er. Sandhya Regmi - member Treasurer
5. Mr. Santosh Bikram - member Shah
6. Dr. Shekhar Gurung - member
7. Dr. Pradeep Bhattarai - member
8. Prof. Dr. C.B. Joshi - member
9. Dr. Roshana Shrestha - member
10. Er. Ashok RatnaTuladhar - member
11. Er. Binaya Kushale - member
12. Er. Narayan Bahadur Shrestha - member
13. Er. Hari Kumar Shrestha - member
14. Er. Rishi Shah – member

Third Executive Board (2003 – 2006)

1. Prof. Dr. Chandra Bahadur Joshi - President
2. Mr. Santosh Bickram Shah- Vice-President
3. Mr. Surendra Dhakal – Secretary
4. Dr. Shashi Shankar Rajbanshi - Treasurer
5. Er. Rishi Shah - member
6. Dr. Roshana Shrestha - member
7. Er. Ashok Ratna Tuladhar - member
8. Dr. Tribickram Bhattarai- member
9. Er. Hari Kumar Shrestha - member

Fourth Executive Board (2006– 2008)

1. Prof. Dr. Shekhar Gurung - President
2. Er. Rishi Shah - Vice-President
3. Mr. Surendra Dhakal - Secretary and
4. Dr. Roshana Shrestha - Treasurer
5. Prof. Sharada Shrestha - Member
6. Dr. Tribikram Bhattarai - Member
7. Dr. Thaneshwor Gautam - Member
8. Dr. Tanka Dhamala - Member
9. Mr. Hari Kumar Shrestha - Member
10. Mr. Mahesh Gongol - Member
11. Mr. Ashok Tuladhar - Member
12. Dr. med. Anil Bahadur Shrestha - Member
13. Dr. med. Shankar Suri - Member

Fifth Executive Board (2008– 2012)

1. Prof. Dr. Dilip Subba - President,
2. Dr. Roshana Shrestha - Vice- President,
3. Mr. SurendraDhakal - Secretary and
4. Dr. med. Anil Bahadur Shrestha - Treasurer
5. Mr. Rishi Shah - Member

6. Dr. Thaneshwor Gautam - Member
7. Dr. Narayan Adhikari - Member
8. Dr. Shankar Prasad Suri - Member
9. Dr. Tribikram Bhattarai- Member
10. Er. Ashok RatnaTuladhar- Member
11. Er. Nitesh Shrestha - Member

Sixth Executive Board (2012– 2016)

1. Dr. Roshana Shrestha - President
2. Dr. Saroj Krishna Shrestha – Vice-President (2012-2014)
3. Dr. Tanka Nath Dhamala - Vice-President (2014-2016)
4. Mr. Surendra Dhakal - Secretary
5. Prof. Dr. Jyoti Devkota – Treasure
6. Dr. RameshworAdhikari –Joint Secretary
7. Prof. Dr. Tulasi Pathak – Member
8. Mr. Yubaraj Bhusal – Member
9. Mrs. Sharada Shrestha – Member
10. Mr. Ganga Datta Nepal – Member
11. Er. Ashok RatnaTuladhar – Member

Seventh Executive Board (2016– 2018)

1. Mr. SurendraDhakal - President
2. Er. Narendra Bhupal Malla - Vice-President
3. Dr. Rajendra K.C. - Secretary*
4. Sharada Shrestha - Treasurer
5. Prof. Dr. Tulsi Pathak - Member
6. Prof. Dr. Novel Kishwor Rai - Member
7. Prof. Dr. RameshworAdhikari - Member
8. Er. Sushma Bajracharya - Member
9. Dr. Samir Shrestha - Member
10. Er. Sandhya Regmi - Member
11. Babita Poudel – Member

(*After some time Dr. Rajendra K.C. was transferred to West Nepal and President Surendra Dhakal himself took over the responsibility of the Secretary, Dr. K. C. for the rest of his tenure).

Eight Executive Board (2018 – 2020)

1. Prof. Dr. Ramesh Kumar Maskey - President
2. Er. Sandhya Regmi - Vice-President
3. Ar. Rupesh Shrestha - Secretary
4. Er. Sabina Khatri - Treasurer
5. Prof. Dr. Tribikram Bhattarai- Member
6. Dr. Rajendra Joshi- Member
7. Dr. Babita Poudel- Member
8. Ar. Sharmila Shrestha - Member

9. Er. Sushma Bajracharya - Member
10. Mr. Rajendra Kumar Karki - Member
11. Mr. Simon Kumar Shrestha – Member

Annex 4: Major Activities

Major Activities (1998-2003)

1. An official get-together with Dr. Roman Herzog, the then president of Germany in Bhaktapur during his state visit to Nepal in the year 1996.
2. Invitation to German Nobel Laureate Prof. Dr. Klaus von Klitzing in the year 2009 to deliver a talk on “Effects of Climate Change and Importance of Alternative Energy Sources”. On this occasion, the NEGAAS members had an interaction with him on his work on integral Quantum Hall effect.
3. Publication of first NEGAAS journal, a copy of which was handed over to the visiting German President as well.
4. Conferring honorary membership to highly intellectual academicians and diplomats from both Nepal and Germany.

Major Activities (2003 – 2006)

1. A two day long exhibition on “Einstein and His Contribution to Science and Mankind”
2. Organization of Talk Program on "Contribution of Einstein for the Development of Science and Mankind",
3. Participation in an interaction program on "Einstein’s contribution to research and to the development the mankind" broadcasted by Nepal Television,
4. Organization of a Nation-wide Essay Competition on Einstein Contribution to Science and Mankind, and
5. Publication of articles on Einstein by NEGAAS members in local Newspaper throughout the year 2000.

(These programs were held to celebrate the "Einstein Centenary" throughout the year 2005 on the occasion of the publishing of "Einstein's Theory of Relativity". Among them the first program was launched at the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) under the financial support of DAAD. The program was a joint initiative of NEGAAS and the Federal Government of Germany).

Major Activities (2006– 2012)

1. On the occasion of 50 years of Nepal German Diplomatic Relation, NEGAAS, as one of the member organizations of the steering committee, coordinated in collaboration with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to:
 - mint a commemorative coin of Rs.1000.00
 - print postage stamp and
 - publish a souvenir aimed at celebrating 50 Years of Nepal German diplomatic relations in the year 2008.
2. Under the successful coordination of Executive Member Dr. Thaneshwor Gautam and his Social Science Research Foundation (SOSREF) :
 - Talk program on “Thinking like a Social Scientist: learning from the Advanced Research Tools”, and

- two days Seminar cum Workshop on “National Identity and Inter-group Conflict: Causes and Intervention”*
- Talk Programs, Workshops on Disaster Management and Seminar on Emergency Planning.

Major activities (2012-2016)

1. A four days seminar on “Emergency Mitigation Using Optimization and Simulation Methods” with Prof. Horst W. Hamacher, Dr. Marc Goerigk (both from University of Kaiserslautern), and Prof. Dr. Gerta Koester (Munich University of Applied Sciences).
2. A workshop on “Learning by Interactive Knowledge Channels between the University and its Environment” with Prof. Yvonne Zajonzt from the Cooperative State University Baden-Württemberg.
3. Seminar on “Nutrition today: A Struggle between Obesity and Malnutrition”. The principal Resource Person was Ms. Barbara Bjarnason, Nutritionist, Germany.
4. Talk programs on:
 - Nepal in Nuclear Age
 - Engineering Education and Research in Nepal
 - Nano Technology
 - Conflict Management and Peace and Development, and
 - Mind Management

*Speaker of House of Parliament, Mr. Shubhas Nemwang and the Ambassador of Federal Republic of Germany, Her Excellency Verena Graefin von Roedern had graced this event as Chief Guest and Guest of Honor respectively.

The first three events were financially supported by DAAD, University Grant Commission (UGC) Nepal, National Planning Commission and some colleges of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

Major activities (2016-2018)*

1. published "NEGAAS Professional Journal (2017)" to mark its 29th AGM.
2. conducted three days workshops on "Migration in Nepal (Long Distance Migration & Environment Changes) in Kathmandu from 21-23 July 2017. It was sponsored by DAAD. The resource person was Prof. Dr. Beatrice Knerr of University of Kassel, Germany.
3. Donated 800,000,-Rupees to Bhumi Devi Madhyamic Vidhyalaya, Talakhu, Nuwakot to reconstruct its building completely destroyed by the devastating earthquake of 2015 A. D.
4. participated in the Sixth Asia Pacific Conference of Young Scientists held in Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu.
5. participated in the "Workshop on Blended Learning Program on Start-Up Entrepreneurship" jointly organized by German Alumni Association Nepal (GAAN) and giz (October 21, 2016).

* A period of post earthquake and trade embargo

Major activities (2018-2020)

1. participated in a number of events in Nepal and Germany.
2. signed two MoUs for the first time in its history:
 - the one with GZK with the purpose of promoting academic exchange programs and making NEGAAS more familiar to German diplomatic circles and external organizations including the other alumni organizations and
 - the second one was with Association of Nepalese Alumni from Australia(ANAA) with the aim of collaborating each other on activities ranging from academic, technical, social, cultural, diplomatic engagement and development-related topics
3. attended the events like "Celebration of 60 years of Nepal German Diplomatic Relations" and "Germany Day".
4. started together with German Embassy the counseling for postgraduate and Ph. D. scholars at GZK going to Germany for further studies under DAAD scholarship.
5. started a new session called "Meet the Alumni" in collaboration with GZK.
6. participated together with Goethe Zentrum Kathmandu and German Embassy in the " Everest Hackathon 2019 " event.
7. participated as one of the collaborators in the webinar "World Science Day 2020" organized by Renewable Energy Confederation of Nepal (RECON).
8. participated in the webinar "Science Diplomacy in the 21st Century".
9. donated fifty thousand Rupees to Corona Virus Pandemic Prevention, Control and Treatment Fund.
10. distributed educational materials to the students of marginal families studying in Shree Dhara Primary School of Pokhara, during Pandemy.
11. held a short course on writing a scientific proposal at RECAST with Joern H. Kruhl, Prof. of Technical University, Muenich, Germany, as the resource person.
12. donated fifty thousand Rupees to Kirtipur Municipality on April 24th 2020 to buy essential items for students at Kirtipur suffering financially from the Corona virus crisis.
13. published NEGAAS JOURNAL 2019 on the occasion of 60 years of Diplomatic Relations