

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2024

WHY DIGITAL BRIDGES? A REFLECTION



BY JEEVAN GURUNG

Initially, I asked the same question. Then it dawned on me that the right answer was “why not,” for DB4N is quietly making revolutionary changes by installing Collaborative Learning Environment Center (CLEC) in public schools in Nepal.

Public schools in Nepal suffer from a lack of resources, inadequate training for teachers, and overall poor quality of education. Education is almost always imparted through the lecture method, which research has shown isn't very effective. No doubt, the dropout rates are high and these students perform poorly in board exams. DB4N's

approach, therefore, is to remedy the problem by bringing 21st century teaching practice into schools of Nepal through its CLEC program.

WHAT IS CLEC?

CLEC is a unique concept, which combines innovative classroom design, IT equipment, and teaching approaches that empowers students' learning through peer and group collaborative learning. Teachers promote collaborative learning through various activities and teaching approaches that allow students to tap into their own knowledge and build on that through research and collaboration with their peers.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Collaboration, however, isn't just limited in the classroom. Installation of CLEC is in itself a collaborative effort. DB4N makes sure that the stakeholders are the school administration, local municipality, and the diasporic Nepali community.

CLEC IS A BRIDGE

In sum, CLEC is a bridge – it is a bridge for Nepal's public school students to catch up with the rest of the world, it is a bridge that brings government school teachers on par with teachers around the world, it is a bridge that connects schools and the local community, it is a bridge for Nepali diasporic community to help build and bring Nepali education into the 21st Century, it is a bridge for interested donors to make a difference in the lives of intelligent, curious, and resilient Nepali students, who just need the opportunity to tap into immense possibilities.

DB4N is my way of giving back to the community that means a lot to me. I distinctly remember Paul and Yasuko, an elderly couple, who were very kind to me and my wife when I first arrived as an international student to the U.S. When we asked how we could repay them for their kindness, they smiled at us and asked us to give it forward. I would like to do better and grow that circle of giving. DB4N is my way of doing exactly that. Let it be yours too.



NEW PROJECT KALIKOT



INTERVIEW



Read what DilRam Gurung, the teacher of Thonche, Manang shared during the interview with DB4N.

The biggest challenge the school is facing currently is floods and landslides. As this school is located between Marsyangdi and Dudhkola, in 2078, the school faced a lot of damage due to flooding. Another

challenge is a social challenge. Students are leaving this place in search of modern education. So another challenge we face is providing them with good quality education so they can remain [in their communities].

Talking about collaboration, humans are social beings. They cannot live alone. A lot of skills can be learned collaboratively. Students are always excited about CLEC. One of the reasons is the design of the furniture in which they can sit in a circle and see each other's faces. I give them the topic and let them do their research. First, they do their research and they ask me when they get confused. They have learned a lot of things collaboratively. The computer and Internet in our school have helped students a lot. Modern technology provides them with more than what traditional methods were giving. Students do their research on Google about the things that they do not know. Some of the students are more talented than us even from playing computer games. If we do not change the method of teaching and learning in our changing life we will fail. We are not changing the methods which is why after passing the universities, the students migrate to foreign countries. Education should be practical.

I dream of the internet joining family members, making people happy, and thinking of a humane society. I am determined to give my 100% to it [the CLEC] and my experience has been very beautiful/positive, as I already said. It also helps us collaborate as teachers, and it enables students to work in groups.



Find out what Sudip Lamichhane, the students from Shree Siddhakali Secondary School, Gorkha shared during the interview with DB4N.

When we research the course in the CLEC class, we learn more than what the teachers have taught us as there's an internet

facility. I am happy to use those facilities. If we want to know about something we move to the CLEC class and do the research by ourselves.



In partnership with the Karnali Resilient Initiative Nepal (KRIN), a non-profit organization working in the area of education; the local municipality; and the school administration of Shree Madhav Secondary School in Kalikot District, Nepal, DB4N is set to establish a Collaborative Learning Environment Center (CLEC) in Shree Madhav Secondary School, which is located in Tilagupha Municipality in Kalikot district within the mountainous terrain of Karnali Province. Kalikot District, spanning 1,741 square kilometers with a population of 145,292, faces daunting challenges, including high disaster vulnerability, low income, and multidimensional poverty, evidenced by its low HDI of 0.374 and high rates of malnutrition (7.5%). The region also grapples with significant unemployment and migration, as reflected by a migration ratio of 1.18 and an unemployment ratio of 0.88. Furthermore, Karnali Province, where Kalikot is situated, holds the highest Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in Nepal at 0.169, translating to approximately 636,200 MPI poor individuals in 2019.

Despite high school enrollment rates (99%), Tilagupha struggles with high dropout rates, poor learning outcomes, and inadequate school infrastructure. The average literacy rate in the district is 71.3%, but many parents are not educated enough to support their children's education. Employment is limited, with most people engaged in agriculture or seasonal migration. The area faces severe poverty, impacting nutrition and educational resources for children. Schools lack essential facilities, and teaching is mostly lecture-based due to insufficient training and resources. There is a need for SMART classrooms and better-trained teachers to improve education quality.

Initial preparations for establishing CLEC include drafting a factsheet, blueprint, and conducting feasibility scouting post-MoU finalization. Through installation of CLEC, community engagement, and monitoring, DB4N endeavors to improve educational standards and employment opportunities, ultimately fostering sustainable development and uplifting the socio-economic status of the region.



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Participating in the CLEC Short Course by Kathmandu University and Digital Bridges 4 Nepal was an enriching experience. Collaborative learning, cultural elements, digital skills, and a supportive environment made it memorable. Grateful for the opportunity.

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- NEELAM SHAH,
TEACHER FROM BIRATNAGAR

CLEC SHORT COURSE GRADUATION

On May 3, 2024, Digital Bridges 4 Nepal (DB4N) and Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED) celebrated the successful completion of the CLEC Short Course Graduation. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Prof. Dr. Bal Chandra Luitel, Shesha Kanta Pangenji, PhD, and Rebat Kumar Dhakal, PhD, representing the Research and Innovation Center (RIC), alongside other esteemed members of KUSOED. Additionally, Mr. Craig Frischling, President of DB4N, Edmond Antoine, Founder, and former President, and other distinguished board members from DB4N participated virtually, despite the late hour.

During the graduation ceremony, educators from Gorkha, Biratnagar, and Manang had the privilege of attending the event in person, while teachers from Jomsom participated virtually. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all the graduating teachers for their dedication, willingness to learn, and hard work demonstrated throughout the course. Additionally, we congratulate all

the participants for their participation and belief in the mission of Digital Bridges 4 Nepal (DB4N).

The graduation ceremony was held in the newly upgraded CLEC room in KUSOED's new building. The teachers were excited to see new changes in the room. The CLEC room is now well-equipped and efficiently managed, thanks to various equipment upgrades and the addition of new tables. This ensures a more convenient learning environment for students, enabling them to excel in their studies. We handed over the project to KUSOED officially, with the presence of the Dean, marking a significant milestone in our partnership.



Join Us for a Transformative Journey to Nepal with Digital Bridges 4 Nepal!

Dear Supporters,

We are excited to invite you on a unique Donor's Journey to Nepal from Sunday November 17th to Saturday November 23rd, 2024, organized by Digital Bridges 4 Nepal (DB4N).

This seven-day adventure blends travel, culture, and impactful work, providing a rare opportunity to connect deeply with Nepal while contributing to the educational development of its rural communities. You will explore the stunning Himalaya region and vibrant Kathmandu, meet local students and teachers, and witness the transformative work of our Collaborative Learning Environment Centers (CLEC).

INSIGHTS YOU WILL GAIN:

Cultural Understanding: Immerse yourself in Nepal's rich heritage by visiting historical sites, engaging with locals, and experiencing traditional customs.

Educational Insight: Learn about innovative educational practices and witness DB4N's Collaborative Learning Environment Centers (CLEC) in action, gaining valuable insight into global education challenges.

Leadership Development: broaden your leadership insights by interacting with

local leaders and educators, learning about effective community-driven initiatives.

Community Engagement: Build meaningful connections with students, teachers, and residents, fostering a sense of global citizenship and shared purpose.

Personal Growth: Experience profound personal transformation as you reconnect with nature, reflect on your journey, and contribute to a greater cause.

ITINERARY HIGHLIGHTS:

DAY 1: Arrive in Kathmandu, settle in, and enjoy a welcome dinner.

DAY 2: Visit Kathmandu University's CLEC and Swayambhunath Monkey Temple.

DAY 3: Explore Shehchen Monastery, Durbar Square, and travel to Pharping.

DAY 4: Experience Newari culture, enjoy a hilltop picnic, and relax at a nature resort.

DAY 5: Travel to Gorkha district, visit Gorkha Bazar, and stay overnight.

DAY 6: Visit a CLEC school in Bhimsenthapa, meet local educators, and return to Kathmandu.

DAY 7: Depart or continue your exploration of Nepal.

Join DB4N Founder Ed Antoine and contribute to our future CLEC programs. This journey offers a profound personal experience while supporting equitable education and technology access in Nepal's remote areas.

Spaces are limited! For more details, contact Ed Antoine at edantoine@gmail.com or visit our website <https://www.digitalbridges.org/events.html>. We look forward to embarking on this incredible journey with you!

DB4N & CPEC COLLABORATION

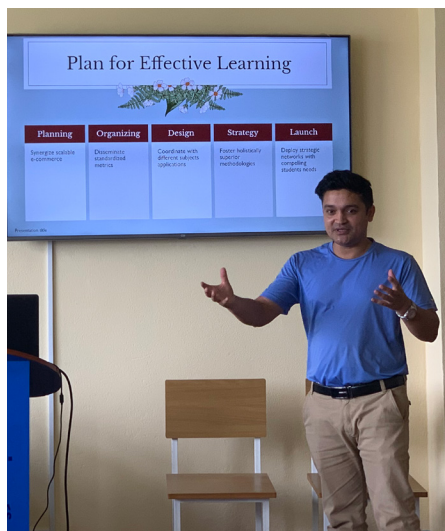


Digital Bridges 4 Nepal (DB4N) and Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED) are collaboratively working to reduce the technological and educational gap in rural and underserved communities of Nepal. United by the mission “STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION,” they focus on initiatives like the Collaborative Learning Environment Center (CLEC) and short course training for teachers, enhancing collaboration and peer-to-peer learning and developing digital skills to create digital learning hubs for students and communities. So far, they have developed a 3-credit hour short course for teachers from different rural schools, undertaken different baseline and impact assessments to measure the impact of CLEC on students and teachers, developed a research

article based on the assessments and evaluations, and recently upgraded CLEC room in KUSOED and installed advance equipment, which will facilitate more collaborative work in the future.

KUSOED, through its Continuing and Professional Education Centre (CPEC), is continuing its partnership with DB4N to elevate the knowledge and skills of teachers, educators, and leaders. These courses are designed to promote the CLEC approach in teaching and learning, facilitating the development of digital learning environments in schools.

CPEC, the official training unit of Kathmandu University (KU), offers Continuing and Professional Education Programs (CPEP) to empower learners from various disciplines and backgrounds. Utilizing participatory and non-participatory methods, CPEP addresses the evolving professional needs of teachers and educators, enhancing their practices and transforming their professions.



DB4N and KUSOED through its CPEC unit will provide a range of individual and group-based activities, including short courses, workshops, webinars, seminars, research, tools, and materials, to improve education quality. As a community partnership program of KU and a transdisciplinary program of KUSOED, CPEC awards PGDE or Master's degrees through the Credit Accumulation Framework, supporting the continuous development of educational professionals. CPEC and DB4N are currently collaborating to develop a short course for the Principals and assistant principals, which will allow them to explore their potential collaboratively and build something greater together.



A NOTE FROM CLAUDE OUR TREASURER

On behalf of DB4N we would like to thank all of you who continue to support the work we do in Helping Strengthen Nepalese Communities Through Education.

One of our most important accomplishments in 2023 was strengthening our partnership and completing an in-depth research study with Kathmandu University School of Education. The resounding conclusion of the research was that all stakeholders from students to teachers, administrators, and local governments want and need to modernize their approach to education.

I invite you to view the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QqKMBLwn9o> and see the impact your support is having on real people's lives.

Today we have opened 6 CLEC (Collaborative Learning Environment Center). Our ambition for 2024 is to continue on this growth trajectory, to continue building the organizational foundation that is necessary for us to scale sustainably.

We have already completed our first project, a brand new CLEC for the local government of Bhimsen Thapa, a community high in the Himalayas with an ambition to become a digital nerve center for the regional economy.

Our plan is to add 3 additional CLEC in 2024 we look forward to your continued support to achieve our goal, please visit our website to donate. <https://www.digitalbridges.org/donate.html>

Digital Bridges 4 Nepal is a 501c3 organization. Donations are tax-deductible. Our Tax ID number is: 47-5248950

Warm regards,

CLAUDE ROUSSEL
Treasurer, Digital Bridges 4 Nepal