

Saathi Teachers Programme NEWSLETTER

February-May, 2024



Saathi Teachers Programme, run by HELP, is a dedicated initiative with the aim of strengthening the quality of education in primary level schools in rural Nepal. Saathi Teachers Programme believes that teachers should be friendlier with their learners in order to create an enabling and an effective learning environment. The three pillars that make Saathi Teachers Programme work are its Saathis themselves, the local government partners and our national and international funding partners.

Saathi teachers are passionate teachers committed to improving students' numerical and literacy skills and focusing on developing 21st-century skills in the primary classroom in a child-friendly way through applications of various extracurricular activities, the arts, and cultural activities. Saathi Teachers Programme work in collaboration with the partner local governments and the schools to assist the overall growth of the school and the students. Currently, we have 26 Saathi teachers working in three different Municipalities: Panchpokhari Rural Municipality (Sindhupalchowk), Tripurasundari Rural Municipality (Sindhupalchowk), and Abukhaireni Municipality (Tanahun).

The beginning of 2024 marks the beginning of the 6th year of operation of the Saathi Teachers Programme and with this, we bid farewell to our 3rd cohort and welcomed our 5th cohort. It's been quite a journey ever since the inception of the programme with 10 Saathi working in 5 schools of Paanchpokhari Thangpal Rural Municipality and now having 31 alumni who have already completed their Saathi journey and 26 Saathis now on their journey. With this, we would like to extend our gratitude to all our supporters, and we are pleased to present to you all a round-up of all the major activities that you have directly or indirectly been a part of over the past four months.

Onboarding the 5th cohort

Our fifth cohort, 'Ek' has been our most diverse cohort ever. Hailing from 6 provinces of the country, our amazing 13 Saathis of the 5th cohort come from 10 different districts and consist of almost equal numbers of males and females. Each of them bring with them their own unique story, be it Shreejana Duwal is the mother of a 2-year-old daughter, who aims to pursue her goal of teaching English and making a difference in students' lives, especially in remote areas where resources are limited, or Namrata Singh, who aspires to be a mentor and plays a significant role in her students' lives and provide them the guidance she herself couldn't get while she was a student, or Roman Shrestha, wants to inspire curiosity and lifelong learning in the students. These Saathis bring with them such an inner drive to contribute to education and the belief that primary should not be secondary.

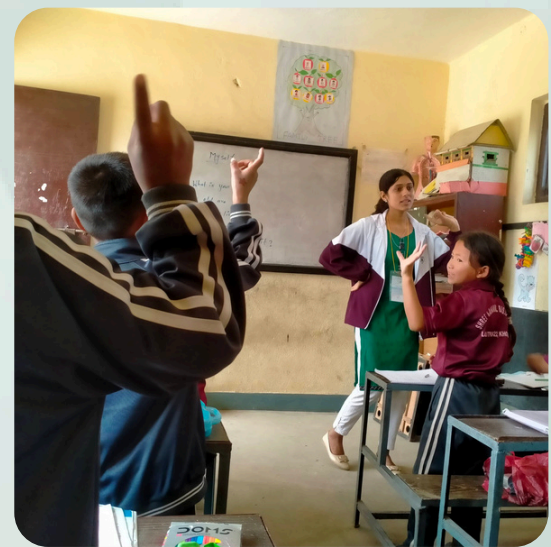


Recruitment started as early as September 2023 and closed in January 2024. With 5 info sessions conducted at different colleges, we received a total of 240 applications. With initial screening, we held phone interviews with 149 applicants and invited 72 for a full day of Assessment of Saathi Candidates (ASCs) over 5 rounds. After this rigorous and careful selection, we had 15 candidates in Saathi School, out of which 14 graduated and 13 are now placed in their schools.

After completing two events for the prospective candidates, one of them being the Parents' Event on March 02, where the parents of selected Saathi candidates are invited and connected to the Saathi programme. It was also an opportunity for us to communicate our vision and address any concerns or queries they might have had, thus helping them build trust in our program.



After the Parents' Event, we had our 21 days of residential pre-service training, at Saathi School for the prospective candidates, where they gain holistic knowledge about the education system and curriculum of primary education, and learn various teaching approaches and methodology. Saathi School started on March 18 and concluded on April 6 with a graduation ceremony.



Saathi School was divided into different themes and relevant sessions were built under these themes. Some of the core sessions included Understanding mission and vision, Understanding National Education Goals and Primary Education system, Child Psychology, Curriculum and Assessment, Planning and Execution, Classroom Management, Subject session and Practice Teaching, ICT and AV documentation, Knowing your community, Self-management as a teacher, and Technical orientation and first-aid.

Along these core sessions, there were also yoga, meditation, open networking sessions, and daily closing circle reflections. The Saathi school graduated 14 out of 14 Saathi candidates.



Graduation for 3rd cohort and welcoming 5th cohort

We had a graduation ceremony on the 21st day of Saathi School, where we bid farewell to our 3rd cohort as they completed their 2 years of Saathi journey. The graduation ceremony took place at the Grand Norling Resort, Mulpani, bringing together a total of 89 participants, including graduating Saathi teachers of the 3rd cohort and 5th cohort, our national adviser such as Hon. Gagan Thapa, local government partners, parents, headteachers, and media representatives. We also welcomed our 5th cohort into the Saathi journey.

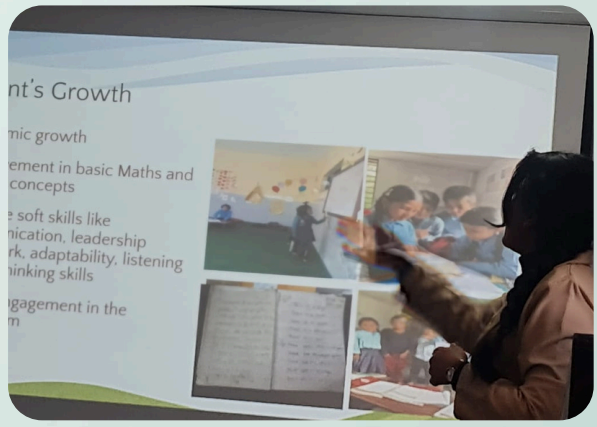


Closing off the year with annual review meetings



We held annual review meetings in Tripurasundari and Anbukhairesni with all our stakeholders of the rural municipality, ward, and schools. This was an opportunity for us to reflect on the impact, outcome, and effectiveness of the Saathi Teachers Programme, review our roles, and plan for future direction.

From the review meeting, we got first-hand information about the impact Saathi Teachers have on student engagement and learning outcomes. We are pleased to continue our partnership in all three RMs for this year and look forward to collaborating with other avenues.



Cluster activities in retrospect

Learning Fair



Our Saathi teachers co-led and organized two Learning Fairs (Sikai Mela) in Panchpokhari Rural Municipality and Tripurasundari Rural Municipality. At Panchpokhari, this was the fifth time that such an event has been organised under the banner of Panchpokhari Sikai Mela sponsored by the Rural Municipality itself and with Teach For Nepal Fellows.



Similarly, for the first time ever, the Learning Fair at Tripurasundari Rural Municipality was led by our Saathi Teachers at Tripura Cluster (Cluster Beans) and supported by Tripurasundari Rural Municipality, where 18 schools of the RM participated.

These two events were so beautiful in itself to bring in exposure and build the 4C skills in the students. From thinking creatively and critically about things to present at the fair, collaborating with peers, and then presenting their work to the guests and answering their questions, the students have come a long way and our Saathis have been nothing but proud of their students.



Support Visits and TUBUs



Our Teacher Development Coordinators (TDCs) for three clusters have been consistent in their support visits. They have observed the classrooms, helped the Saathis to see their work, and offered a lens on how educational experience can be further improved for their students.

The TDCs have also planned and executed the Tune-Up Build-Up, TUBU meets to bring the cluster together and share stories, and learn from each other's practices. TUBUs are a space for our Saathi to find their community and find support and for the Saathi team, it's an opportunity to know what gaps are there and how we can address those gaps.

Retreat for 4th Cohort



We had a two-day retreat for our 4th cohort who had completed one year in their journey. The retreat was not only a space to recharge ourselves, which was important but it was also the space for us to reflect with the 4th cohort on their first year and celebrate their accomplishments, understand their challenges, and hear about their plan for the second year. This retreat also helped us to know the 4th cohort even more and strengthen our bond with them.

The 7 Intentions of Belonging: Reflective Practice for Educators

The training on ‘The 7 Intention of Belonging: Reflective Practice for Teachers and Educators’ took place from April 24-26th, 2024, in collaboration with Go Global Vermont and Saathi Teacher’s Program. It aimed at establishing enduring partnerships with Nepali teachers and educators.





The training was facilitated by Denise Russell and Kim Chouinard. Ms. Denise Russell, with over a decade of educational leadership experience working with teachers implementing the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), currently serves as the principal of Northfield Elementary School in Vermont.

Kim Chouinard, a veteran special educator with 30 years of experience, is known for her dedication to creating inclusive and strengths-based educational environments at Northfield Elementary School. Eight educators from Vermont participated with 17 Nepali Educators, five participants being Saathi alumni, three current Saathi teachers, and nine educators from public and private schools in Nepal.



The seven intentions revolved around belonging, the purpose of educators, cultural influences, systemic barriers, systemic change, obstacles in learning, and sustainability in teaching. They explored how culture shapes perceptions, the evolving purpose of educators, systemic barriers in education, envisioning inclusive classrooms, overcoming obstacles to learning, and maintaining. Overall, the training was a meaningful exchange of ideas and experiences, strengthening bonds between educators and paving the way for continued collaboration to improve education opportunities and outcomes in both Vermont and Nepal.



Placement 2024



Our Saathis from the 5th cohort are finally placed into their schools and are in the classrooms with their students.



We wanted to place our Saathis as soon as the academic year started off at school as it would give them enough time to settle down and a chance to observe the school procedure from the beginning and connect with the school and the community.

We are also glad to have three of our Saathis- Chanda Thapa, Himali Jirel, and Pusparaj Chaudhary from the 3rd cohort continue their 3rd year with us along with the 5th cohort. Best wishes everyone for your upcoming journey!



CHANDA THAPA



HIMALI JIREL



PUSPARAJ
CHAUDHARY

First support visit and TUBU meet 2024

We are glad to have completed our first support visit, classroom observation and TUBU meet in all of our three clusters- Shuvaarambha cluster-Tripurasundari RM, Panchpokhari cluster and Aarambha cluster-Aanbookhaireni RM. Our Teacher Development Coordinators have visited all the schools in these three clusters, supported our Saathis in their classroom. The first TUBU meet brought all the Saathis from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th cohorts together in clusters, where they shared their journey of the first two months of the year.



Aarambha cluster had it's TUBU at Chandi Devi Basic School, Purlung, Aanbookhaireni-6 on May 24-25 and the with the main agenda of the meet was to build connection in the cluster, reflect on their responsibilities, share their plans and find solutions for common challenges.

This TUBU was also a space for them to celebrate their little successes, discuss their challenges, and build a support system for each other. The TUBU meet helped our Saathis to reflect together and plan for the upcoming months.



In the Panchpokhari cluster, the TuBu Meet was held on May 17, 2024, and focused on the theme "Coming Together as a Team," providing an opportunity for cluster members to discuss specific agendas related to classroom functioning and reflect on their teaching journey.



As for the Shuvaarambha cluster, the TUBU meet was held at Shree Ganesh Basic School, Latu on May 17-18. This TUBU was aimed at understanding the team members and team building. This also gave an opportunity to exchange learning and reflection upon their teaching practices and their experiences. These meetings aimed to strengthen bonds among Saathi teachers, promote subject-specific sessions and foster rapport among colleagues.

Bhotenamlang School Vision Setting and Team Building Workshop

A three-day workshop by the whole school approach was held for 20 teachers and the administration team of Shree Bhotenamlang Secondary School, Panchpokhari Thangpal-7, Bhotenamlang, Sindhupalchowk, which is one of our Saathi partner schools. Our relationship with the school has gone a long way since 2012 and we at HELP were a major part of supporting the school in its major school rebuilding tasks after the 2015 Earthquake. The workshop was a result of the proposition made by the school in the last academic year and was supported by our partner, GoGlobal Vermont.





The workshop was held from May 23-25, 2024 and the main objective of the workshop was to build a stronger team between the teachers, work on setting its vision, and come up with two to five years of actionable plan.

The participants have created and developed their own short and long-term action plans. They have together worked to recognize the strengths and opportunities of the school, shared their personal stories and challenges, and recognized the role of each person in contributing to the change they have envisioned.



We are grateful to the entire team of Gyanodaya Secondary School, Bafal, Kathmandu for offering a space for the school visit and shared learning and to its former Head Teacher Mr. Dhananjay Sharma for sharing his experience in building the school, and team building. We are also thankful to Mr. Bijaya Mani Paudel from Sutra for Leaders for co-designing and co-leading the workshop. Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to our funding partner, Go Global Vermont for supporting us and our work.

Looking forward to next trimester



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our partner municipalities, wards, schools and communities for supporting our work. We are deeply thankful to our funding partner Mondo Foundation, Interhands and ITA for their continued support in our work.

Thank you everyone who have been a part of our work and supported us in your own ways. It's with the help of your continued support and the collective efforts that we can continue making a difference.