

**Youth and Emerging Global
Challenges**

Youth Policy Conclave

**Event Report
Supported by British Council
Implemented by AYON**

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Introduction

Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON), with support from the British Council, organized a youth-led policy dialogue to discuss contemporary issues youths in Nepal are facing and the leadership role youth can play to action against global challenges like the climate change.

The project aimed to bridge the gap of involvement of young women and men in policy advocacy and climate action, by building their capacity as well as providing them platforms and networks. The project provides skills and capability to young people, provides connections to young changemakers to enable them to take actions, and provides them with voice and skills to deliver outcomes in their communities.

The event aimed to provide opportunities to discuss the issues faced by Nepal's youth and the way forward, to identify areas, issues, and solutions for youth engagement for actions against global challenges like the climate change, to sensitize stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities towards climate actions, and to provide opportunities for networking, information sharing and constructive dialogue.

Program Schedule

AGENDA	Responsible
Tea Cookies/ Registration	AYON volunteers
Welcome and overview of the Policy Dialogue	AYON
Opening Remark	Ms. Shahida MacDougall, Country Director, British Council Nepal
Presentation on contemporary youth status	Bikal Rai, President, AYON
Chief Guest- Remarks	Hon'ble Dig Bahadur Limbu, Minister, Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)
Panel Discussion	<p>Panellists</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hon'ble Pradip Poudel, Member of Parliament 2. Surendra Basnet, Vice President of NYC 3. Rupa Upreti, Social Activist <p>Moderator: Naresh Sharma Awasthi</p>
QA Session	Panellists, Moderator and Participants
Presentation of a letter of demand by AYON to the government	Bikal Rai, President, AYON
Youth role and participation in climate action initiatives	<p>Panellists</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hon'ble Biraj Bhakta Shrestha, Member of Parliament 2. Dr. Buddhi Sagar Poudel, Joint Secretary & Chief, Climate Change Management Division, Nepal Government 3. Silsila Acharya, Climate Activist <p>Moderator: Deepshikha Shrestha</p>
Q&A Session	Panellists, Moderator and Participants
Vote of Thanks	AYON

Opening remarks by Ms. Shahida MacDougall, Country Director, British Council

'It gives me a great pleasure to speak at this youth policy conclave on youth and emerging global challenges organized by AYON with support from the British Council.

The British Council, as the UK's international organization for cultural relations and educational opportunities, is committed to support Nepali government and young people in Nepal through its projects and programmes to create opportunities for the youths. We have been supporting this through our work in education, arts and culture, and English language, in over 64 years of our existence in Nepal. British Council's support to this policy discussion event is a part of our Young Leaders programme where we have been providing opportunities to young leaders and influencers to contribute to trust-building, cohesion and stability in their societies and work collaboratively to address global issues. Our climate change work in Nepal is bringing people from the UK and Nepal together, to meet the challenges of climate change. Through arts and culture, education, and the English language, we are raising awareness, and creating opportunities for policy discussion, innovation, and social actions for youths to be able to action to combat effects of the climate change.

Nepal currently has a youthful population, with around 35% of the Nepali population within age group of 16 to 35 years old, and more than 60% of population below 35 years.

This poses several opportunities and challenges for a country like Nepal – to develop its youth to their full potential and to effectively mobilize them for country's development. On one hand Nepali youths have demonstrated strong resilience against various political, economic, and environmental shocks over last couple of decades or so. On the other hand, different studies have shown growing frustrations among the youth population due to lack of opportunities. On top of this, today's youths face global challenges like the climate change, which disproportionately affects young women and girls.

Amidst this context, the themes to be covered today are very relevant. The first session will dwell upon issues today's youths are facing. The second session focuses on the effects of climate change and how youths can play an active role with positive climate actions to limit, adapt and respond to the global climate crisis. We have diverse panellists and speakers for today's event with representation from lawmakers, senior government officials, chief of national youth council, and youth leaders. I believe this policy dialogue will not just be one event but part of a campaign for youth leadership to actively engage and action against global challenges.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your participation in this event. I hope you will enjoy a very fruitful event and you will have useful takeaways from today's discussion.'

Address by Chief Guest, Dig Bahadur Limbu, Minister of Youth and Sports

'On the first day of my tenure, I put my signature on a proposal to revise the Youth policy. I want to know what the policy is about, and what the youth feel about it. We should be making the policy together, the youth should be involved, I want to speak not just to the youths in hotels here, but to youths everywhere, we can have this discussion on the street.

This year, we are working together with the National Youth Council and working on a new modality. There is a proposal to define youth as those between 18-35 years of age. We will discuss that. We are not very liberal when it comes to the youth. We need to discuss so that we hear all kinds of views.

I entered politics to defend freedom. So, you should not just demand, but sit down with us and work together. It is your responsibility to build the country, so be ready for it. The youth should be active in all fields. We commit to working with the youths.'

Presentation on contemporary youth status

AYON President Bikal Rai gave a presentation regarding status of youth in Nepal today. He discussed the following points.

Problems of the Youth

- i. Unemployment and Brain drain
- ii. Lack of Opportunity and Enabling Environment
- iii. Education and Skills Gap
- iv. Barred Situation of Youth in Political Decision Making
- v. Gender Inequality and Social Inclusion

The real problem: The National Youth Policy 2072 BS and the National Youth Vision 2025 address every issue and recognize it. However, the problem lies in not knowing what to do or where to start.

Problems in budget

- i. Budget for Ministry of Youth and Sports is 0.16% of total budget
- ii. The total budget is NPR 2.875 billion, of which 85% is for sports
- iii. The budget is 380 million lesser than last fiscal year (79/80).

Major recommendations

1. Invest More on Youths
2. Add authority to Nepal Youth Council and MoYS.
 - i. Cross cutting issue requires higher authorities and power in the state
 - ii. Lowest prioritized ministry of Nepal is MoYS where Nepal is a youth bulge country
 - iii. Establish powerful youth structures in all three tiers of Government
3. Concentrate and create a one door system for all services and facilities provided through different ministries.
4. Rethink and revise Youth Vision- 2025 in a practical manner: Is a policy a good policy when that can't be implemented?
5. Youth leads youth

Panel Discussion 1: What Should the Youth Do?

Panellists:

- Hon'ble Pradeep Paudel, Member of Parliament
- Surendra Basnet, Vice President, NYC
- Rupa Upreti, Social Activist

Moderator: Naresh Sharma Awasthi

Moderator: Quote "Youths are backbone of Democracy. Now it's time for the youth to change their mental status and situation".

Like our president said, this discussion will be focused on what youth should do now. Especially youth's participation in politics, policy making, youth vision, climate change, gender justice etc. To make this discussion more interesting we will have a few questions from our youth participants. My first question is for Pradeep sir. Currently we are seeing that the participation of youth has increased in politics. Let's look at local election, there are many elected youths. There are also many youths elected in parliament and government. But we are not seeing youth participation in policy making, decision making and leadership posts. Do you think it's time to change that structure and include more youth in important decisions?

Pradeep: I think the important question is not what youth should do. The important question is what tasks the nation should make youth to do? It's the nation's lack of guidance which made youth run away from the country. This issue is not only related to participation in politics, but also to job opportunities, participation in nation development. Policy is failing to attract youth. We have failed to create an environment where youths are obliged to stay in the country and work for nation. We have massive youth population. Youth are greatest asset of our country. We are unable to include youth in nation development process. We don't have clear policy and due to unfavourable situation, we are unable to develop one. It's not possible if youth are not in the position of decision making. Politics doesn't have content and vision to mobilize youth in development. Although youth are more active and thoughtful, it's not important. Age doesn't matter, in politics what's important is who brings the content? Who addresses the issue of youth properly? It's not that only young people understand and brings content. Sometimes older people can also understand the issue properly and raise their voice effectively. Who will make favourable and attractive environment in the country for the youth to stay, and end their elopement? Last year in Kartik, 74,000 people went abroad which was the highest number till date. Nine lakhs people went abroad within a year. Even though I am not considered 'youth' anymore I strongly raise my voice for the youth in the parliament. I got a chance to participate in allocating budgets for youth, I shared my concept - opening youth development bank - which will connect with youths who are abroad to send remittance through this bank. When they will return and if they want to start a business, manufacture or agriculture, the government will add some amount to their deposit to start their business.

Moderator: Thank you for your thought. National youth council is a common platform for youth. I want to know from Surendra Ji, how is National Youth council is working with center level and local level governments? Is NYC able to reach out in the local level actively?

Surendra: Thank you for your question. First, I would like to thank AYON for providing this common platform for group discussion. In Nepal the age group of 16-40 is described as youth by the National Youth Policy 2072. According to 2068 Census, that age group was 40.5% of total population. And now in 2078 Census, that number is slightly increased and has reached 42.56%. In 1999, an international meeting of Ministers of youth affairs was held. It recommended that August 12 be declared 'International Youth Day' and from 2000, this day is celebrated as International Youth Day. After that, some activists and youth leaders started discussing about the necessity of a youth ministry in Nepal. It started as a small wing of education ministry and was later established as Youth and Sports Ministry.

In 2066 Youth policy was developed and updated later in 2072. After that we are actively working at the central level. After establishment of federal government, we are slowly reaching out in the local level. We have so far reached in 3 provinces which are Bagmati, Lumbini and Far West, and established National Youth Councils in the provinces. We are working to establish NYC in the remaining provinces. We are also discussing the necessity of reaching out to all 753 rural municipalities and establishing local youth committees so that center, province, and local levels can work hand in hand. We are in a prime stage and full of youth resources at this moment. This may not last long. This is the perfect time for us to increase opportunities for the youth in employment, self-employment, skill development and political involvement. We are talking about youth, but also, we are not allocating enough budget for the youth, the youth received only 0.16% of total budget. That's why today's youth see more opportunity in other countries and are moving in search of opportunities. We must address this issue and attract youth in our own country and create environment and opportunity here.

Moderator: From around 10 years Rupa ji is working in the field of gender justice, youth, and women empowerment. She has worked in self-led organization as well as youth-lead organizations. What kind of difference do you find in activism 10/12 years ago and activism today?

Rupa: Thank you for your question. Talking about activism, I can see repetitive issues. That's all I have to say about your long question. There are minor changes and development in the issues though. I was a founder member of NYC. I worked in various organizations as an activist. I took a break from social media for 7 months. I was thinking, maybe there are some changes in the issues we advocate, but when I came back our issues were same. As I stated earlier, there are some positive changes. Development of youth policy is one of the major achievements. I assume you have already been through the 10-year strategy. If not, look. I notice some changes and work have been done for youth. We are talking a lot about the youth, making plans and policies, but it is not showing any major outcomes. What opportunity did it create? Let's ask this question to ourselves. I came from small village in search of opportunity. I am turning into a middle-aged woman but the issues we are talking about have not changed. It hurts a lot. We get emotional, but are we reflecting that emotion in our actions? The Hon'ble Pradeep Ji said that we need policy that forces youth to work in Nepal. We don't need a policy that forces youth to do anything, we need policy which will create opportunity among youths.

Moderator: We may not have strong policy. We may not have implemented existing policy properly. But through existing policy, how can we mobilize our youth in different levels and different sectors in creative and inclusive way?

Pradeep: I said "policy that forces youth to work" intentionally. I do not mean it as literally, what I mean is we must develop policy which will attract youth to stay in the country and motivate them to do something. As we all know, we do not have the environment, employment, economy, health facility for human empowerment. The main problem of our country is that youth do not shed their sweat and tears in our land. Our country is failing to develop appropriate environment for youth to work in the country. Surendra Ji is doing a great work from his side which I really appreciate. Our problems cannot be addressed from this limited approach because our problems are connected to employment, economy, education, health of manpower. The main question is, are we able to implement youth friendly policy? Do we have appropriate agenda, policy, and order?

Youth lack interest in agriculture. Agriculture has no relation to certificates. The narrative in our society is that it is a 'low job' and we disrespect farmers. This is the main reason youth are not interested in agriculture. To attract youth in agriculture, the government should provide funds for actual farmers and punish those who are not farmers but get government funds using their contacts. Lack of financial gain and security is another problem in agriculture. The government should ensure market for their product and ensure security for their hard work.

Moderator: What are the policies to produce skilled manpower?

Surendra: Let's talk about local government. It's like a silver lining in the black clouds that in the last election, 41.34% youths who are below 40 were elected, which is good news. We have started working with them. Our hon'ble minister has signed and approved a revision of the national youth policy as his first task after his appointment as the Minister for Youth and Sports. In consideration of the youth's changing perspective and needs, this task is ongoing, which will try to address the voice of today's youth. I think this program organized by AYON will also give us important feedback. Not only the Ministry of Youth and Sports, but other ministries are also trying to address youth in their various youth related programs.

I attended a college program once and asked the students about their future. Almost everyone shared they are planning to go to abroad soon after finishing their education here. This is a sad picture of our country. This is not their fault, It's the unfavourable situation and our government which is responsible for this situation. We prioritize imported goods over producing in our own country. On the one hand our young manpower is leaving the country and on the other hand, we import everything from toothpick to *Janai*. We must start promoting local products, and for that we also have to revise our education policy which will ensure skills improvement in manpower.

Moderator: In your opinion, how are you seeing women's participation in decision making and policy making at the local level?

Rupa: I see many positive changes in the participation of women in decision making. But when we see overall and qualitative perspective, it is not satisfactory. Men are more active in informal chitchat in tea shops where they discuss important things and the ongoing situation of the government. They form likeminded groups which exclude women. Not only women but minority groups, intersectional minority groups are also excluded. I am afraid if our female representative is guided by male members. Important posts are held by influential and upper-class males. Females who get opportunities also face disrespectful behaviour

and are taken as unskilled and lacking in knowledge. There is a long way to go until our society is balanced and more inclusive of castes, class, and gender.

Moderator: In every election we hear about voting rights for foreign employee youths. What can be done to include youth - who are abroad for employment and education - in active politics? Please share your view with us.

Pradeep: In my view, participation is increased these days. I also think the same about the participation of women. But we are not able to be satisfied by their participation. We are not able to interfere in policymaking. We must be able to make appropriate changes in current policy. We must implement skill development programs for the public and youth. We must create employment for them after they complete their learning process. There are opportunities, structures, and ongoing developments, but we lack skilled manpower. We are outsourcing manpower from other countries. We must make a policy for service which will be beneficial if people are willing to go to rural areas. For example, if a doctor or engineer agrees to be posted in rural area, the government will provide scholarship for their further education. If we develop this kind of program, I believe people will be attracted to work in rural areas. I am not saying that we must force them, but we must make a policy so that people will not move abroad in search of opportunities. Let's have a discussion from the aspect of policy. We are discussing the voting right for youth abroad, but there are many obstacles. But I believe they should be granted voting rights.

Moderator: As we discussed earlier, more than 42% youth were elected in local election. We also discussed youth-oriented policies and programs. How do our policies and programs address the problem of brain drain, entrepreneurship, skill development, etc? please share your thought.

Surendra: The government is determined to direct youth towards entrepreneurship, skill development, empowerment, awakening of youth, self-employment and independency through structure and policy. Even though there are 42.56% youth elected, the budget allocation for youth development, youth-oriented programs and policies are not enough and satisfactory. I can see our hon'ble minister is trying his best to include youth-oriented program and policies. There are possibilities in tourism sector, sports tourism, etc, but we must develop effective strategy to promote tourism. We must attract youth towards Yoga and meditation. 60 Lakhs youth are abroad working for other countries, and we are highly dependent on their remittance. We will be in a huge crisis after a few years. At this rate there will be only senior citizens left in our country, who cannot work actively. Before that happens, we must include those 60 lakhs youth in our policy and attract them to build the nation. We must create opportunities for the youth so that they will stay and help the government built the nation.

Moderator: As we can see, there are a few youths oriented policy and programs, which is not enough. But we are hopeful that there will be more youth-targeted developments will be included in programs. Now we are opening our forum to take a few questions from our youth participants.

Question and Answer Session

Arun Chaudhari: I am hearing about inclusion from the beginning but when I saw names of panellists, I did not see inclusion. It would nice if there were diverse panellists and an inclusive panel. And, you are talking about a future that is unpredictable, like this will be done, this will be included, we will do this and that. But please give us concrete answers and timelines about the implementation of policies and programs.

Gautam Sharma: My question is for everyone. There is a policy about the Chure Exploitation. I want to know about government's program and actions to prevent Chure exploitation. There was a person named Dilip Mahato who was an activist against Chure exploitation who was brutally killed by mafias, and the incident was disguised as an accident. Although the murderers are behind the bars, my demand is to call him 'conservation martyr' to honor his good deeds. Another question is for Bikal Ji. We discussed the budget allocated for youth, which is 0.016%. I want to know if AYON advocated about the budget before allocation.

Participant: There are many youth clubs formed by INGOs, NGOs and private organizations. But I want to attract your attention about forming youth clubs in colleges under the government so that we can work as bridge between youth and government.

Participant: Today we are facing a problem because of lack of mental health awareness. Mental health problems faced by youth are a very serious problem. How is the government addressing this issue?

Parash Khadka: In 7 months, there were 50 thousand youth who went abroad in search of better opportunity. It is a sad reality that we are losing competent human resource. After finishing +2 and bachelor's youth are planning to go abroad. Is it their wish? Obligation? Or frustration towards government and politics? I want to know from Pradeep sir, what do you think about this situation? In future how will you address this issue?

Answers

Surendra: NYC has a provision of including 50% female and 50% male mandatorily, which is a good initiation. NYC is working hard to address the issues of the youth and looking for a way to address the issue more effectively. As there was a suggestion about advocating and lobbying with the government before budget allocation, which I think is a good suggestion. I am taking it in account for future. Thank You.

Rupa: I agree with Pradeep Ji about attracting youth through policy to increase opportunity and entrepreneurship within the country. We will work hand in hand to address the issue. There was a question about mental health. I am not a professional counsellor, but I attended a counsellor training in 2020 and I do understand mental health is a serious issue. If anyone needs my help, I am here for you. I will try to help you using my knowledge and experience. As we all know we are in a process of updating youth policy 2072. I want to request hon'ble minister, Hon'ble parliament member, vice president of National Youth Council to discuss, assist and participate in the process of updating the policy before finalizing first draft. AYON is inclusive today. But I also request AYON to be more inclusive in future events and program.

Pradeep: I am very serious about Chure exploitation. I also raised a voice in parliament about the seriousness of Chure exploitation. We must stop Terai from turning into desert.

This is very important issue, and we are aware of its consequences. Age is just a number. Age does not determine the knowledge and awareness in person. An 80-year-old can be very knowledgeable about the needs of the youth. We have a separate Ministry for Youth and Sports. But one ministry is not enough and capable to address the issue of youth. Most of the people assume that buying few footballs and sports materials will be enough for youth, but that's not true. The ministry is developed to address more serious and vast issues related to youth. Youth issue is broad concept. People should be elected based on knowledge and capacity to address the issue, not because how long they have spent in politics. I also commit to lobby and advocate about declaring Dilip Mahato a Conservation Martyr.

Presentation of Letter of Demands by AYON to the government

On behalf of AYON, AYON president Bikal Rai presented a letter of demand to government officials, including Minister for Youth and Sports Dig Bahadur Limbu. The summary of his letter of demands is as follows.

The percentage of youth in Nepal is more than 40%. Despite Nepal being a country that can reap benefits of population dividend, their potential remains underutilized, and many youths are migrating abroad. The government should do the following things to improve the situation for the youth.

1. Implement youth-related policies and make provisions for the development of youth in all three levels of the government.
2. Formulate youth-friendly policies and provide for seed capital for unemployed youth.
3. Remove age restriction from all sectors. Let migrant youth vote.
4. Operate professional and technical trainings and provide loans through a one-door policy.
5. Involve youth in the planning of sustainable development localization.
6. Ensure the proportional, inclusive participation and leadership of youth in all three levels of government.
7. Have sex education accessible to all youth inside and outside schools through various media.
8. Define youth as those between 18-35 years of age.
9. Ensure the access of youth, women, and people with disabilities to basic health services, safe abortion services and information.
10. Ensure the rights of LGBTIQ+ and differently abled communities to live with dignity and equality. Implement the Supreme Court's decision to register same-sex marriage.
11. Make separate policy and structure for the meaningful participation of youth at the local level.
12. Ensure the rights of migrant youth to vote.
13. Ensure the participation of youth in the policymaking and implementation of disaster risk mitigation and climate change adaptation processes.
14. Make digital services citizen-friendly and develop mechanism to control misinformation.

Panel Discussion 2: Youth and Climate Change

Panellists:

- Biraj Bhakta Shrestha, member of Parliament
- Dr. Buddhi Sagar Poudel, Joint Secretary & Chief of Climate Change Management Division, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Nepal Government
- Silsila Acharya, climate activist and waste entrepreneur

Moderator: Deepshikha Shrestha

Moderator: Biraj, Climate Change is not just a climate crisis. It is also a social justice crisis. What kind of strategies do you have to address this crisis in the parliament? How do you plan to plead this case in the parliament? What measures can you take to ensure climate justice?

Biraj Bhakta Shrestha: I was once in a committee for Industry, Tourism, Forest, and Environment at the Bagmati Province Assembly. We did some progressive things there. We passed an environment Act that we are proud of. However, policymaking and delivery are two different things. The government should be more active when it comes to execution.

The world is a global village now. I believe in "Think Global, Act Local".

Issues like disasters and glacier melting are being raised in the parliament but are not given high enough priority. My team has been implementing some solutions locally, and it has been more effective. In Raksirang, we have used bio-engineering methods to control floods. The local Chepang community is utilized, and we have made a dam using the amliso plant. Later, the remains of the plant are also used to make paper, so it's a circular economy. So, there are things happening, but we need to do better.

Moderator: Buddhi, how can Nepal promote biodiversity, agriculture, and wildlife and water management?

Buddhi: In Nepal we have a national Climate Change Policy, an adaptation plan, and an NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution). The aim is for Nepal to become Net Zero by 2045. The policies give priority to agriculture and nature-based solutions. Today, we are facing multiple environmental crises together: reduction in biodiversity, pollution, and climate change.

When it comes to adapting to Climate Change, we need to work at the local level. We have a national document called NAPA (National Adaptation Plan) 2010 which discusses agriculture, forestry, and water resources. We need to focus more on agriculture and water management, and take the implementation to the most affected areas, in Karnali and Far West, according to their level of vulnerability. Though the document is created by the Ministry of Forests, it focuses on agriculture and water.

Today we say that water is adaptation and vice versa. We need to start gathering resources to implement these plans at the province and local levels. We have excellent policies but have low financial resources and budgets to implement them. There is a huge gap between needs and implementation. We have very little technology and finances. We need international resources.

The greatest impacts of climate change can be seen either on the highest peaks or on the areas near oceans. On the Hindu Kush Mountains, if climate change continues unchecked, ¾ of the snow will be gone by 2100. If we can implement the Paris Agreement and limit climate change to 1.5 degrees, we will still lose 35% of our snow. We will have a lot of water till 2050, but none after that. Agriculture, tourism, all depends on water. All are very sensitive. So, after 2050, the future is uncertain. Our policies should have water at the center.

Water has a multiplier effect. We use it but do not conserve it. But if we are unable to conserve it, water-related disasters will increase. We need eco-system-based adaptation. The landscape needs to become resilient.

Moderator: Quote – "The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth."

Silsila, how can youth effectively engage with policymakers and community members to implement climate strategy? Can you give some examples? What are some practical steps to reduce our carbon footsteps?

Silsila: I have campaigned for 11 years against plastic bags. The campaign is revived every year, but the objective has not been achieved. We don't have time to meet the Paris Agreement, things will be irreparably damaged by then. Individual action takes too long. How to drive systemic action? That is the question.

Issues should be led by those facing it. By those who feel it, in politics, bureaucracies, businesses, legal fields, etc. During the COVID Pandemic, we had designed and delivered a class called Understanding Sustainability. In the next five years, we need 1 lakh climate leaders to emerge, without that, we cannot have changes fast enough. A survey we did during the local election said that 75% of the respondents felt that climate change should be a top priority of the government. The political leadership needs to take ownership of this issue.

Water is a major issue, and human-wildlife conflict is increasing. How to solve these problems? Sustainability is key. How to link environment with the economy? We need to create jobs. How to work green? We need to connect the environment with day-to-day life.

Moderator: Quote – "The best time to plant trees was 20 years ago, the next best time is now."

Biraj, dumping waste on rivers impacts the rivers badly. How can we ensure that our Bagmati and Bishnumati remain clean?

Biraj: When I was young, we used to rinse carrots in Bishnuati river and eat them. That is unimaginable today. When a river dies, a generation dies. We should think of tomorrow and make best use of our rivers. It would have been better to process Bishnumati's water for Kathmandu Valley, rather than bring in Melamchi water from Sindhupalchowk. We are suffering from the bad leadership of 30 years ago. Let us redefine development. Development is not all about construction. Digging too many roads leads to landslides. The leadership is foisting the burden of loans on us with unnecessary airports and irrelevant roads. This is also fostering corruption.

Green jobs are important. Today, AI is replacing humans in many fields, the global paradigm is shifting, at a cost to nature. The earth has a self-healing mechanism, but human extraction has damaged it far beyond its capacity to heal itself.

When it comes to Bisnumati, the jurisdiction is divided. The banks belong to one entity, the waters to another, and then you have to answer to different entities like the Urban Development Project, for example. So, it is very difficult to work, as I am finding out. But what we did do in my constituency is develop parks along the river, to create a green belt which gives shelter to sparrows that are disappearing from the Valley today.

Moderator: Buddhi, how is Climate Change political? How can we prevent disasters?

Buddhi: We are facing climate change, extreme weather, water-induced disasters. We need to redefine development. There is a Loss and Damage Fund and a Transitional Committee in COP to address loss and damage caused by Climate Change. But the sad thing is that Nepal has not claimed any of this fund. How do we tell them that the floods, landslides, and forest fires happening here are due to Climate Change? Haphazard development is also causing these problems, we need to correct our course.

Nepal is highly vulnerable to Climate Change. We are internationalizing this issue by working with other Himalayan countries. We have not been able to convince our leaders that we need sustainable development and not fast development.

The SDGs and the Paris Agreement were formulated in 2015. After such important commitments, we must change our working style and behaviour. Now, our methods are not sustainable. Digging a canal is not water management. We must reform our agriculture system. Water is seen as a threat when it is a resource.

We must work in a multi-pronged approach. We cannot ask for compensation after digging roads haphazardly.

Moderator: Silsila, how can we develop sustainable and climate friendly business? What are the opportunities and challenges? How can we support and encourage such businesses?

Silsila: There are many problems, which means there are also many opportunities to make things sustainable and climate friendly. We did an estimate of the possible green jobs in the next five years, and the number was 20.45 lakhs. Just the waste economy can be worth more than 2 billion dollars, but we are utilizing less than one percent of that now. Three lakh jobs are possible in the waste sector. The jobs would be manual and will require less investment and will be given to the most marginalized people.

The political leadership waits for foreign money. We do need international finances, but we cannot be inactive till we get it. All our budget is climate budget, not just the budget that comes under the 'climate' heading. For example, water, transportation, and all related to climate. We have the option to make these budgets climate friendly.

When it comes to challenges, there are policy hurdles. Kathmandu is sending its waste elsewhere. We need young leaders at the policymaking level. Today leaders are just focused on throwing away the waste, that's considered a success. But waste entrepreneurs must pay per kilo 1 rupees plus 13% tax. Policy doesn't address this problem. Traffic gives chit to waste trucks. Waste entrepreneurs take out loans at high percentages, up to 48% when other entrepreneurs get loans at as low as 16% interest. Why not subsidize waste entrepreneurs who are filling the coffers?

Youth and women have a critical role in votes as well. How can we bring youth and women into leadership? Without them, politicians cannot win.

Question and Answer Session

Question 1: Disasters are rising in Nepal, what is the solution to this global challenge of Climate Change?

Swostika Poudel: What is the youth policy when it comes to climate change? The future of agriculture seems dark, as more youth are leaving for foreign employment. That is the impact of climate change on agriculture. We will do what we can, but how can government help agriculture, farmers, and youth? What are the policies? Agriculture is the backbone of the country; I would like to draw attention to that.

Question 3: What can be a nature-based solution for restoring Nagdaha? A Housing is being built at the southern end of this pond, which might bury the pond. How would you act? The land around the pond is being plotted. The railing and concrete separate humans from nature.

Basudev Poudel: Climate Change is increasing in Nepal. Pollution is increasing in India and China. We get funds from China and America. But what is the use of our funds, if China and India continue to pollute, that will damage Nepal too. Why should our government continue to implement their programs? Why can't we tell the donors to take their money aback and implement programs themselves which will stop climate change? What's the point of Nepal doing anything if India is not doing much to curb pollution?

Answers

Biraj: At the point in time, we are between opportunities and challenges. We need to redefine development so that development does not harm the environment. No one is taking ownership of the country. We can develop the country without harming the environment, using bio-engineering techniques. The government has the concept of green economy, but not enough is being done to implement it. Community participation is important. The policymaking process itself needs to be more inclusive.

Silsila: The government needs to provide more incentives to entrepreneurs who create green jobs. We can develop Nepal without harming the environment, and we can do so sustainably while earning profits, but we need the government's support.

Buddhi: The government needs to collaborate with other countries facing similar issues and internalize its issues. Nepal is highly vulnerable to climate change, and we need plans, policies, funds, and budgets to combat the impacts of climate change in Nepal.

Vote of Thanks

The program ended with a Vote of Thanks by AYON.