



OLE Nepal Newsletter

Issue 11 | Sept-Oct 2011

We hope you enjoy this edition of *OLE Nepal Newsletter*, a bi-monthly email newsletter from Open Learning Exchange (OLE) Nepal. It provides current news and information about the organization and its activities and will keep you up to date with OLE Nepal's work to provide high quality education for children in Nepal.

OLE Global Assembly

Mexico City



The 2011 General Assembly (GA) of the Open Learning Exchange was held at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City from September 26th to 29th. Entitled "Persuading to Scale: growing billions of great learners with powerful innovations," the GA brought together OLE center directors from Uganda, Rwanda, Nepal, Ghana, and Mexico, as well as other partners and supporters of OLE's mission to achieve Quality Universal Basic Education around the world.

The Assembly opened with a keynote presentation was delivered by Dr. Marshall Smith, a graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, former dean of the Stanford School of Education, number two in the Department of Education under the Clinton Administration, Director of Educational programs for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and a senior adviser to Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan. In his address, Dr. Smith stressed the importance of developing "knowledge infrastructure" to support and assist teachers worldwide.

Antonio Puron of OLE Mexico presented the fun educational games which he hopes to scale to millions of children throughout Mexico and beyond. He emphasized the need for the seamless integration of educational materials so children do not feel these programs are simply school disguised as entertainment.

Rabi Karmacharya, Executive Director of OLE Nepal, presented the Center's mis-

sion to improve the quality of basic education through the integration of ICTs. He discussed the successful implementation of the One Laptop Per Child program in partnership with the Nepalese government, teacher training efforts, and their focus on development and dissemination of interactive digital learning activities and digital library containing nearly 3000 titles. He discussed OLE Nepal's encounters with various issues hindering the ability of OLE Nepal's innovative programs to scale effectively.

Jacques Murinda presented on OLE Rwanda's ongoing activities and how the XO and TeacherMate programs fostered excitement, increased innovative learning, centered the teaching on students, and helped fill in gaps that teachers were not adequately addressing. He acknowledged that there were associated challenges, such as low levels of English proficiency, resistance to new teaching methods, curricular restrictions, and limited time in school. In order to counter these obstacles, he suggested adapting content to Rwanda, implementing programs that allowed students to use technology at home, and integrating the use of ICTs into the regular curriculum where possible.

Kofi Essien of OLE Ghana shed light on the challenges posed by different aspects of the status quo of education in Ghana such as stagnating enrollment figures, superficial CSR efforts, the limitations of government and CSO initiatives, and other barriers preventing effective education. He argued that the solution to these problems is to increase the demand for quality education among students, families and teachers as well as expanding access to educational materials.

Latest Developments

- » OLE Global Assembly, Mexico
- » Digital Learning Activities for Grades two to six science in progress
- » Progressive Education Skill Development Program
- » Monitoring and Support visits to Lalitpur and Kavre
- » Network Feasibility Study Visit to Okhaldhunga
- » New faces at OLE Nepal
- » E-Pustakalaya Update
- » Upcoming activities

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Vincent Kizza represented OLE's newest center in Uganda. Vincent reported on the state of the Ugandan school system, which includes a high number of poorly educated children with high student-teacher ratios. He proposed tackling these problems by strengthening the accountability of stakeholders for learning outcomes, enhancing school supervision, policy revision, undertaking school improvement projects centered on improving the quality of education, and establishing clear educational standards that are currently lacking in Uganda.

Chris Rowe presented OLE's School Basic e-Learning Library (School BeLL) by guiding participants through its basic functionality, as well as explaining its' necessity and uniqueness. At the core of the BeLL is the idea that it provides a two-way flow of knowledge, with content being provided not only by the administrators, but also being supplied and modified by users, thus

increasing the utility of content as well as the sense of ownership at a local level.

Partner Presentations

Paola Robles, Project Director at *Empresarios por la Educacion* in Peru, discussed her organization's challenges in increasing quality basic education in Peru and how entrepreneurs in her country are funding her organization to tackle these problems. *Empresarios* focuses on working closely with teachers and regional leaders, public/private partnerships, and local-level policy making to enable advances in Peru's educational system that are not only sustainable, but also scale and can be replicated elsewhere.

Miguel Brechner of Plan Ceibal in Uruguay joined the meeting via Skype video chat to discuss his success at scaling the One Laptop Per Child digital inclusion program. He discussed his ability to garner support for Plan Ceibal and to persuade the government to adopt it into law, thereby allowing every child in Uruguay to own a laptop. This has had many positive impacts in Uruguay, including increased connectivity and use of the Internet at home, increased computer literacy, and increased access to online educational materials. Plan Ceibal has transformed in Uruguay what used to be viewed as privileges into rights.

Padmanabha Rao shared his experience scaling the R.I.V.E.R program, designed for a one-room, one-teacher, multi-grade school, to over 12 million children in India. Rao and his wife Rama were able to create a program that views teachers as "facilitators." They reorganized the curricula into small, interesting group activities with-

out the use textbooks using a self-paced "learning ladder" to create milestones for each student as they work through the curriculum at their own pace.

Silvia Schmelkes, a Dean in the education department at the *Universidad Iberoamericana*, discussed the social and political implications of making changes to education, particularly in Mexico. She highlighted the effectiveness of involving the same people who designed a program in the implementation process in her analysis of the Transition Team 2000 project and went on to show how specific conditions such as a confluence of political and social pressures, local involvement with policies, continuity of policies, and visible results greatly increase the chances of success.



Speakers at OLE Global Assembly 2011 in Mexico City

Braulio Torres presented as a representative of Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), an organization that designs and evaluates programs to fight poverty with the goal of scaling. Braulio presented the organization's initiatives in studying enrollment rates in Ghana. IPA conducted a scientific study of the impact of various programs on educational attainment and enrollment. In this study, they were able

to show which programs were responsible for the largest gains and subsequently scale those programs.

Rodriggo Arboleda of One Laptop Per Child Mexico presented an overview of the OLPC program, the focus on digital inclusion, and its initiatives in Mexico and throughout Africa. He spoke about the impact technology can have on the lives of children, providing an "antidote to ignorance." He also pointed out the specific advantages children have over adults in picking up technological skills and how this can enable them to become content creators in addition to consumers.

Sean Southey and Brenda Campos presented from Media Impact in New York, an organization dedicated to "Entertainment-Education and social change communications." Media Impact focuses primarily on television and radio programs in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, using entertainment to educate viewers and listeners on health, environmental, and social issues. Their presentation highlighted several different examples of the power of messaging in popular media programs in significantly altering public perceptions of social issues.

Fernando Martinez of Intel Mexico presented Intel's significant contribution to ICTs in education, focusing on professional development for teachers. He believes that education is in need of a systematic transformation in the areas of policy, curriculum and assessment, professional training and development, ICT, and research and evaluation.

(Excerpts taken from www.ole.org).

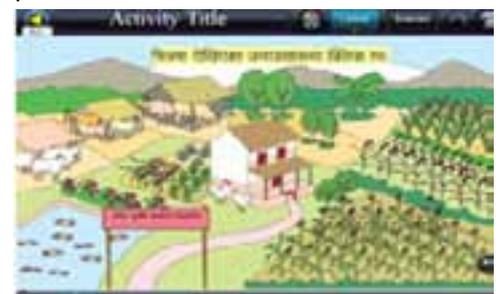
Digital Learning Activities for Grades two to six science in progress

OLE Nepal has recently started creating interactive digital learning activities for Grade 2, 3, 4 and 6 (Grade 5 activities have already been completed) for the entire academic year designed to teach children about agriculture, food and nutrition, with special emphasis on the need for balanced gender roles in agriculture and food production. These activities are being developed in both English and Nepali languages, and will be correlated with the 'Science, Health and Physical Education' subject prescribed by the Curriculum Development Center (CDC). The development of these activities are scheduled to be completed by July 2012.

These activities, developed with support from the UN World Food Programme (WFP), will be included in the larger collec-

tion of similar learning activities E-Paath that OLE Nepal has developed for grade 2, 3 and 4 English, Nepali and mathematics, grade 5 English, science and mathematics, and grade 6 English and mathematics. OLE Nepal's curriculum experts will work together with CDC officials to ensure close relation to the learning objectives outlined in the national curriculum. Such alignment with the Science, Health and Physical Education curriculum will increase the likelihood of the activities being used regularly by teachers and students in daily classroom teaching-learning process. Experts in agriculture, food and nutrition, health and hygiene will also be consulted to ensure that relevant issues are adequately and properly presented to students at various grades.

These new E-Paath activities, like all our other activities, will be accompanied by teacher notes detailing how to integrate the lessons and exercises package as well as suggested practical hands-on activities children should do outside the classroom to promote exciting and effective teaching practices.



Snapshot of a science activity

Monitoring and Support visits to Lalitpur and Kavre

A team of OLE Nepal members, Subir Pradhanang, Tikaraj Karki, Basanta Shrestha, Kayomars Billiamori Puri, and Bikash Bhusal set out to Lalitpur and Kavre program schools in the month of September and October for a monitoring and support visit. The main objectives of the trip were to monitor the status of OLPC program at the schools, provide technical support, and address issues brought up by schools in conducting E-Paati-integrated classes.



A total of eight schools, including five in Lalitpur and three in Kavre, were visited during the period which stretched across several weeks. The five program schools monitored in Lalitpur district were Bashuki School in Lakuri Bhanjyang, Navajyoti School in Jharuwarashi, Siddheswor School in Godawari, Sringeri School in Sisneri and Vishwamitra School in Jyamirkot.

Similarly, the three program schools monitored in Kavre were Binayak Bal School in Badal Gaon, Janajyoti School in Janagal, and Navin School in Khanalthok.

Among the various issues brought up during the course of group discussion, which took place with the head teachers and E-Paati-related teachers in the respective schools, was the problem with damaged chargers in Binayak Bal School and Sringeri School. It came to our knowledge that incidence of damaged chargers were high when students were allowed to take the chargers home along with the laptops. The schools have decided to stick with the original plan to keep the chargers at schools. It is also worth mentioning that Siddheswor School, in coordination with OLE Nepal, has already bought some chargers, of the same specification, from local market to replace some of the irreparable ones, and that Binayak Bal School too plans to follow suit. This greatly goes to show the schools enthusiasm in contributing to the continued success of the program.

During the course of the visit, the laptops were updated with new E-Paath package and school servers were updated with latest E-Pustakalaya content. In addition to that, the team also provided pedagogical and technical support to the schools, and

returned back the repaired laptops and chargers to the respective schools. At the same time, the network team provided networking support to some of the program schools in Kavre.



The trip to Lalitpur schools took place in direct coordination with the District Education Officer of Lalitpur district, Mr. Narayan Prasad Bhattarai. As a result, the visit to Navajyoti School in Jharuwarashi, Lalitpur was jointly conducted by OLE Nepal team and a Resource Person from DEO Lalitpur, Mr. Ishwar Thapa. A visitor from Room to Read, Mr. Sushil Adhikari, also accompanied the team to learn about the implementation of OLE Nepal's digital library, the E-Pustakalaya, and its effectiveness in increasing access to learning materials in schools.

Network Feasibility Study Visit to Okhaldhunga

At the request of a German organization, Kinder in Okhaldhunga, Nepal e.V., OLE Nepal's network team carried out a feasibility study to bring Internet connectivity to Maidane in Okhaldhunga district. During the six day visit from Oct 19 to 24, the team surveyed various locations in Okhaldhunga and adjoining Solukhumbu district to establish wireless networking link from Phaplu, Solukhumbu to Maidane, Okhaldhunga. Once the network is established, students from Navajyoti High School and local community from Maidane can access Internet via an Nepal Telecom's ADSL connection available in Phaplu.

The team consisting of engineers Basanta

Shrestha and Ram Krishna Singh were accompanied by Kinder in Okhaldhunga's local representative, Mr. Anikesh Magar. In addition to scoping various points for relaying the link from Phaplu to Maidane, the team looked into the availability of power sources and the prospects of using solar power at these points. Following the visit, the team has proposed connecting Maidane to Phaplu using two relay stations located at Hotel Danda and Chyalsa Monastery, powered by solar backup at both points.

OLE Nepal also had a brief meeting in Kathmandu with Kinder in Okhaldhunga's board member, Mr. Martin Camps, regard-

ing maintaining and supporting the solar power system in Maidane. The meeting discussed the present system and ways to ensure its proper functioning in future.



OLE Nepal engineers with local representative from Maidane

New faces at OLE Nepal

OLE Nepal recently welcomed three new staff members: software developers Raj Kumar Ranabhat and Bikee Mahajan, and graphic designer Sitaram Shrestha. The trio will be working with the curriculum team to develop science content for grades two to six.



Bikee Mahajan



Raj Kumar Ranabhat



Sitaram Shrestha

Progressive Education Skill Development Program

Progress can only take place when we adapt to changes. OLE Nepal's initiative to integrate ICT in classroom teaching is being successfully delivered through the ten day Progressive Education Skill Development Program. Following the positive response from the first such program held in July 2011, OLE Nepal organized a second program at OLE Nepal's office in Sanepa from September 5 to 16, 2011. The training was facilitated by Ms. Kamana Regmi, Ms. Achala Pokhrel and Ms. Usha Joshi, with enthusiastic participation from school principals, vice-principals, coordinators and teachers. Participants shared their ideas about how to improve the educational standards of their schools and discussed strategies to make learning fun and meaningful.

Participants for this round of program came from Galaxy Public High School, The Excelsior School, Bridgewater International School, Rhododendron International Boarding School, Pathshala Nepal, The



Participants at the Progressive Education Training at OLE Nepal

Elite's Co-ed School and Brihaspati Vidya Sadan.

Here is what the participants had to say about the program:

How will ICT integration in the classroom enhance children's learning?

- "It helps to teach concepts in less time."
- "ICT integration is very good for ongoing assessment."

ing assessment."

- "Since it's the computer age, children will learn best through technology."
- "Use of ICT in the classroom will help teachers make their lessons more interesting."
- "It will also save their time in trying to make any difficult lesson into an interesting activity."

What are some strategies from the program that you will take back to your classroom?

- "Provide a classroom structure where children are free to learn."
- "Involve children in various fun filled activities to make learning purposeful."
- "Understand zone of proximal development and clearly observe and specifically examine the type of help needed by children at the right time and give support in the right way."

E-Pustakalaya Update

OLE Nepal has recently uploaded two audio books to E-Pustakalaya: Nepal's first audio book An Autobiography of Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala and Diamond Shumsher Rana's iconic novel Seto Bagh. Both books have been divided into small short chapters that load quickly and do not require high bandwidth allowing for smooth online streaming. We believe these books will also lead to a higher demand for audio

OLE Nepal has also established partnership with E-Learning for Kids, a not for profit organization which helps kids between the age groups of five to twelve learn various subjects by providing interactive learning modules online on the Internet. The partnership enables OLE Nepal to host these modules in offline E-Pustakalaya servers, hence making them accessible to thousands of students in

exploring the possibility of collaborating with OLE Nepal in creating interactive materials that will help illiterate people learn techniques that will improve their day to day lives.



*Titles that have caught our online users' attention during the whole of October**

Title	Author	File Downloads
Muna Madan (Nepali)	Laxmi Prasad Devkota	160
CK-12 Biology Teacher's Edition	Jean Brainard and Douglas Wilkin	105
Ritubichar (Nepali)	Lekhanath Poudyal	101
Chyau Kheti Pravidhi (Nepali)	Keshari Laxmi Manandhar	100

**Does not include the downloads from the offline servers in our program schools*

books in Nepal and pave the way for more writers being interested in uploading their books in audio format.

Room to Read Nepal has recently provided E-Pustakalaya with digital versions of 24 new children's books that were published by the organization. All these books are fully illustrated and are designed for children to learn basic concepts such as measurement, colours, light, water etc. Most of these books are in Nepali and few of them are bilingual.

schools and users in community libraries that do not have access to the Internet.



OLE Nepal and Practical Action have also agreed to work together in preparing and disseminating relevant local materials to students and communities. Apart from providing most of their informative materials for E-Pustakalaya, Practical Action is

The level of interest in Laxmi Prasad Devkota's works during the month of October was also due his 102nd birth anniversary being celebrated on October 26th. We marked this occasion by uploading another of his verse novel Prometheus. Such was the writers popularity that four of his works were amongst the top ten downloaded items.

Overall there were 11,015 downloads in the month of September and 9656 downloads in the month of October.

E-Pustakalaya also has a facebook fan page with over 550 fans and a twitter account. After uploading Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's audio book we have received several requests to upload audio books of writer Parijat. We are trying our best to make this happen. Please feel free to comment on our twitter link at <http://twitter.com/epustakalaya> and facebook with suggestions and recommendation.

Upcoming activities

OLE Nepal AGM

The fourth Annual General Meeting (AGM) of OLE Nepal will be held on November 13, 2011. The organization's annual progress report for fiscal year 2067-68 and plans for fiscal year 2068-69 will be presented at the AGM along with the audited financial report for 2067-68 and proposed budget for 2068-69. The AGM will also appoint auditor for the fiscal year 2068-69.

Fundraiser in Goshen, Indiana

The annual OLE Nepal fundraiser dinner will be held in Goshen, Indiana on November 19, 2011. It is a private event planned, organized and hosted by Ram KC, and the invitees include family members, friends, and coworkers from IU Health at the Goshen Heart and Vascular Center. Ram first learned about OLE Nepal from his classmates at his high school reunion in 2007 during a visit to Nepal. Since then he has been following OLE Nepal's projects and activities, and he recently wrote, "I am convinced that OLE Nepal has undertaken one of the most innovative basic education initiatives that exists in Nepal, utilizing both elementary education curriculum, and information technology to teach children." Upon returning from another visit to Nepal last year, Ram shared the story of OLE



Mr. Ram KC

Nepal with his inner circle of family and friends and got some momentum to do help OLE Nepal in its efforts to transform the landscape of education. Ram held the first event last year in his home, and together with the help from his wife Karen James, parents Min and Maya KC, Daryl and Maxine Zook, sisters Tonja and Trista, Dr. Mark & Vicki Smucker, and his friends the Shetlers, Moores, Metzlers, and the Miller-Milanese, they were able to raise funds for OLE Nepal.

This year the event is being held at Dr. Mark and Vicki Smucker's house who share the vision of OLE Nepal and are generous beyond measure. Talking about the event and the group, Ram adds, "We are a core group of family, friends, and coworkers that share the worldview that we can indeed use our resources to provide educational opportunities for young children in rural Nepal. All of us that participate in this annual event hold the belief that ordinary citizens can improve the lives of young children by making basic education accessible even if it is one laptop per child at a time. There is no question that we enjoy a privileged life in America beyond the reach and measure of billions of people young and old around the world. Billions of young children will come and go without ever knowing and realizing such good fortune simply because of where they are born in poverty, lack of access, opportunities, and awareness of the human potential for self actualization. The fact that

the leaders of OLE Nepal happen to be my friends from childhood, and Nepal as my birthplace adds to my personal attachment to this cause. We are committed to doing what we can, and we will continue to support OLE Nepal."

Orientation program in Tandrang, Gorkha

OLE Nepal will be partnering with Children of the Mountain (CoTM), a UK registered charity, to provide training and support to teachers from all ten schools in Tandrang VDC in Gorkha district. OLE Nepal's team of trainers will visit Tandrang in November to give an orientation to stakeholders, to assess the needs of schools and teachers, and to collect their feedback on the content of the training program that OLE Nepal has developed with inputs from CoTM's resources. They will hold meetings with School Management Committee Chairs, Parent-teacher Association Chairs, school principals, teachers, and community members in Tandrang during the visit. The stakeholders' views and needs will be incorporated in the final training program that will be launched in early 2012.



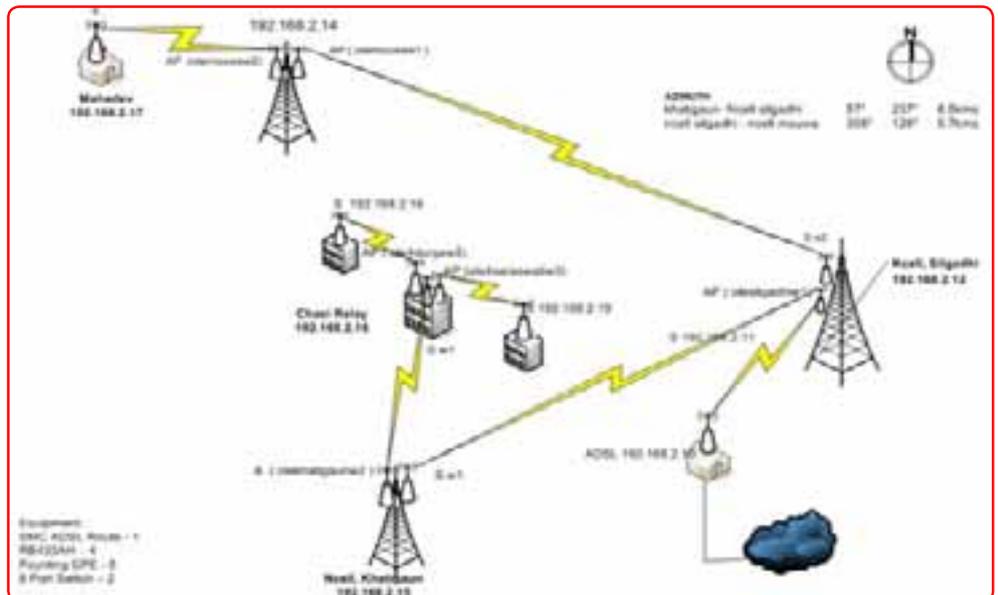
Network installation in Doti

OLE Nepal's Network team will be visiting the remote far western district of Doti in November to connect the three program schools to the Internet. The OLPC program was introduced at these schools at the beginning of the current school year in April 2011 in partnership with the UN World Food Programme. The schools, Mahadev Primary in Mauwa, Durga Primary and Shree Sarswati Primary in Banjh Kakani, are also beneficiaries of UN WFP and Nepal Government's Food for Education program.

The network team had planned and designed the network for the schools based on their visit to Doti last April to assess the possibility of connecting the schools to the Internet. Subsequently, equipment required for the network were sent to the WFP Sub Office in Dadeldhura. However, the actual installation had to be delayed till now due to monsoon rain and festival season. The plan calls for subscribing Internet through Nepal Telecom's ADSL service in

Silgadhi, Doti, and relaying to the schools through repeaters places in NCell towers in Silgadhi, Khatigaun, and Mauwa. NCell has kindly agreed to allow OLE Nepal to use its

three towers to install network equipment and antenna to bring Internet connectivity to these schools located in remote parts of the country.



E-Paath is a set of curriculum-based interactive digital learning materials developed by OLE Nepal

E-Pustakalaya is OLE Nepal's education-centered digital library consisting of books, reference materials, school wikipedia, etc.

E-Paati is the Nepali name for the XO laptops used in OLPC program schools