

2025

Nature Based Solutions Innovation Challenge and Business Incubation Program





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Foreword

At the heart of sustainable development lies a simple yet profound truth: nature has always been our greatest ally. As the Executive Director of the Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI), I am honored to introduce this work that underscores the transformative potential of nature-based solutions (NbS) in shaping green, resilient, inclusive, and thriving communities.

In a time marked by escalating climate crises, ecological degradation, and deepening social inequalities, we are called not only to act—but to act wisely. Nature-based solutions offer us that wisdom. They remind us that innovation is not always about building new systems, but about rediscovering the ones that have sustained life for millennia. From restoring wetlands that naturally mitigate floods, to planting urban forests that purify air and foster community wellbeing, NbS weave together ecological integrity with human development.

At IEDI, we believe that development must be deeply rooted in integration—of disciplines, communities, and ecosystems. We are proud to be part of a movement that does not see nature as an obstacle to progress, but as its most powerful partner. Through rigorous research, inclusive policy advocacy, and grassroots collaboration, we aim to mainstream nature-based approaches as a cornerstone of development thinking in Nepal and beyond.

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This publication is more than a document—it is a call to action. A call to planners, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and young change makers to reimagine our future through the lens of regeneration, not exploitation. Let it serve as both a compass and a catalyst, guiding us towards a development model that honors the intricate balance of people and planet. Together, let us invest in a future where nature is not just protected—but empowered to protect us.



Er. Umesh Kumar Gupta,
Executive Director
Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI)

Foreword

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in fostering sustainable economic development and resilience, particularly in the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region, where nature-based solutions (NbS) can offer pathways to both environmental and economic sustainability. Recognizing the need to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem, ICIMOD has been working to support institutions like the Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) in Nepal to build their capacity in running incubation programs tailored to NbS enterprises.

Our collaboration with IEDI was driven by a shared commitment to enhancing the support system for entrepreneurs working in sectors such as bioprospecting and agroecology. To achieve this, ICIMOD provided strategic and technical assistance in the development of an operational guideline specifically designed for seed fund disbursement. This document ensures that the process remains transparent, structured, and scalable, enabling IEDI to provide consistent support to startups. A key objective of this effort was to create a strong foundation for the government to eventually take this initiative forward as part of its broader entrepreneurship development agenda.

To implement this program effectively, ICIMOD engaged KGS Inc. as a service provider to support IEDI in rolling out the pilot NbS incubation program. This included the launch of a seed fund challenge, which saw an overwhelming response from aspiring entrepreneurs. Out of 27 applications, 20 were shortlisted for an immersive boot camp, culminating in the selection of 10 winners including five women-led enterprises. These enterprises received seed funding, mentorship, and incubation support to help scale their businesses. Additionally, a series of capacity-building activities, including masterclasses and networking sessions, were conducted to enhance the knowledge and skills of the participating entrepreneurs.

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Through this initiative, ICIMOD aimed not only to foster the growth of individual enterprises but also to contribute to the larger goal of strengthening Nepal's entrepreneurial ecosystem. By building the capacity of IEDI and developing structured operational guidelines, we envision a more robust and inclusive support system for emerging startups in the NbS space. Moving forward, we encourage policymakers and institutions to adopt and expand such models to ensure that entrepreneurs continue to receive the necessary support for sustainable business development.

We are grateful for our collaboration with IEDI in making a significant impact on policy and practice. IEDI has been a strategic partner in the success of this initiative, and we deeply appreciate their efforts. We remain committed to supporting innovation and enterprise in the Nature-based Solutions (NbS) sector and thank IEDI for establishing the NbS Incubation Hub to promote NbS-based businesses.

Looking ahead, we are eager to collaborate with IEDI under MOICS, Government of Nepal to develop an enabling environment for micro and small enterprises and to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem.



Anu Joshi Shrestha
Rural Enterprise & Value Chain Development Specialist
ICIMOD

Foreword

In a country as rich in natural beauty and biodiversity as Nepal, the solutions to some of our most pressing challenges – particularly those related to climate change, environmental degradation, and rural livelihoods – can often be found in nature itself. Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) represent a powerful approach to climate action and sustainable development. By working with nature rather than against it, we can restore ecosystems, safeguard communities from climate shocks, and simultaneously unlock new avenues for green economic growth. Our forests, rivers, mountains, and indigenous knowledge systems hold immense potential to drive an economic transformation that is inclusive, resilient, and regenerative. For Nepal, we deeply believe that this is not just an opportunity, it is our competitive advantage.

The Nature-Based Solutions Innovation Challenge is born out of this vision – to support a new generation of entrepreneurs who are building solutions rooted in nature, yet powered by innovation. These entrepreneurs are showing us that sustainability and enterprise can go hand in hand, and that local ideas can solve global problems when given the right support.

We are deeply honored to have had the support of ICIMOD, our funding partner, whose regional leadership in sustainability and resilience has been instrumental in shaping this initiative. We also extend our sincere thanks to the implementing agency IEDI and all ecosystem collaborators who have helped bring this program to life. Special thanks to Briddhi, for onboarding an amazing pool of mentors who are all exemplary leaders in Nepal and committed to enabling a nurturing environment for entrepreneurship.

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At KGS Inc., we are proud to have supported this effort as part of our ongoing mission to strengthen Nepal's entrepreneurial ecosystem. We deeply believe in fostering businesses that not only create jobs and drive innovation, but also contribute meaningfully to environmental protection and social wellbeing. The Nature-Based Solutions Challenge is a reflection of this commitment.

As you explore the stories, ventures, and ideas presented in this booklet, we invite you to imagine what's possible when entrepreneurship is grounded in the wisdom of nature and driven by the ambition to build a better future for all.



Gaurav Shrestha
Co-Founder
KGS Inc.

Acknowledgement

The team at the Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) extends its heartfelt gratitude to all those who made the Nature-Based Solutions Innovation Challenge and this accompanying booklet possible. This publication celebrates the stories of ten inspiring entrepreneurs who participated in our incubation program, and it stands as a testament to the power of collaboration in promoting nature-based innovation and sustainable enterprise development.

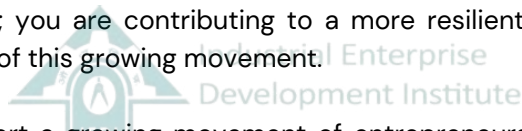
This initiative was conducted under the HI-REAP (Himalayan Resilience Enabling Action Programme) program, and we are especially thankful to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) for their continued partnership and trust. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to Ms. Anu Joshi Shrestha, Rural Enterprise and Value Chain Development Specialist at ICIMOD, for her unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the journey.

We are also deeply grateful to KGS Inc., our technical partner, in providing support in the implementation of the program. Our thanks extend to Byapar Briddhi Bikalpa, the mentorship partner of KGS Inc., for enriching the incubation process with dedicated mentorship that helped shape the entrepreneurs' growth and learning.

Acknowledgement

We are indebted to the jury members of the innovation challenge for their thoughtful evaluation, valuable feedback, and for helping us identify promising ideas with the potential to create real impact. Our sincere thanks go to all the trainers and facilitators who generously shared their knowledge, time, and experience—helping to shape the entrepreneurial journey of our participants.

Most importantly, we extend our deepest gratitude to the entrepreneurs themselves—the soul of this program. Your passion, creativity, and commitment to nature-based solutions are a source of hope and inspiration. You are not only building businesses; you are contributing to a more resilient, equitable, and mindful future for Nepal. Thank you for being a part of this growing movement.



Together, we are proud to support a growing movement of entrepreneurs leading the way in nature-based solutions.

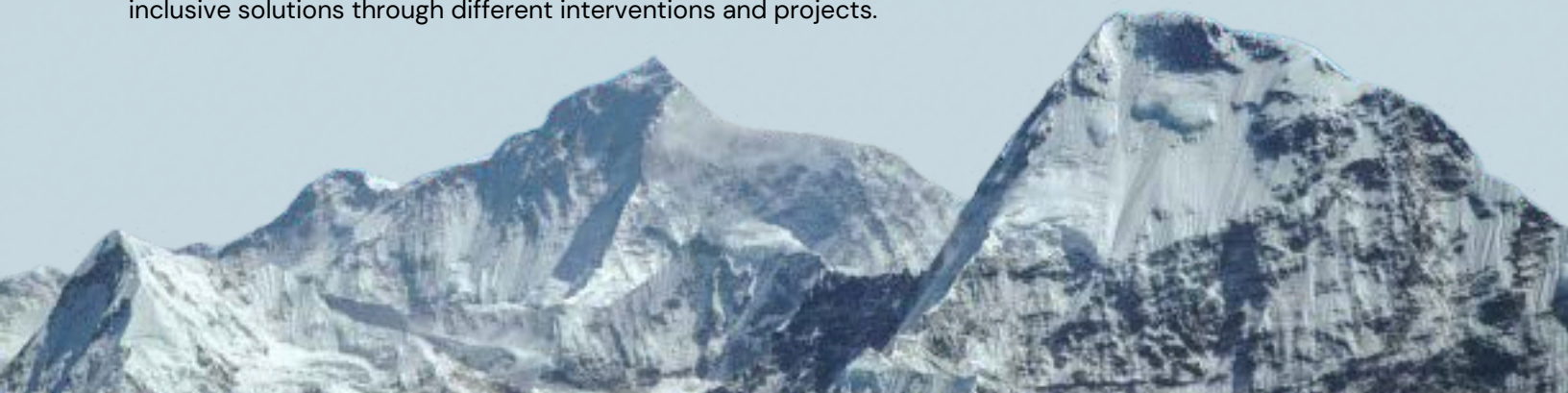
With Gratitude
IEDI Team
Industrial Enterprise Development Insitute

About **HI-REAP** Project

The Himalayan Resilience Enabling Action Programme (HI-REAP) is an ICIMOD implemented nine-year program, funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) to transform lives and livelihoods, and reduce exposure to risks, of millions in the region and working to promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for socio-ecological resilience, low-carbon economies, and improved air quality in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, and building on knowledge and learning from China.

HI-REAP aims to ensure communities are better prepared to cope with shocks and more able to adapt to change. One key focus area of HI-REAP is the wider-scale adoption of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and promotion of them as key climate solutions, especially rangeland management, and bioprospecting businesses to conserve ecosystems and biodiversity.

HI-REAP's work on NbS is well aligned with ICIMOD's Strategic Group '**Resilient Mountain Economies and Landscapes**', which focuses on delivering environmentally sustainable, but economically viable and socially inclusive solutions through different interventions and projects.



About NbS Innovation Challenge

The Nature-Based Solutions Innovation Challenge and Business Incubation Program was designed to support innovative entrepreneurs and startups in developing sustainable business models that leverage natural resources, processes and ecosystems. The goal of this program was to empower businesses that creates solutions to mitigate the threats of climate change, enhance biodiversity, and promote sustainable land and water use. The program supported enterprises working in two sectors: bioprospecting and agroecology. With the support of ICIMOD and technical support of KGS Inc., the program was implemented by Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI), Government of Nepal, tasked for the development and promotion of startups in the country.

Program Objective:

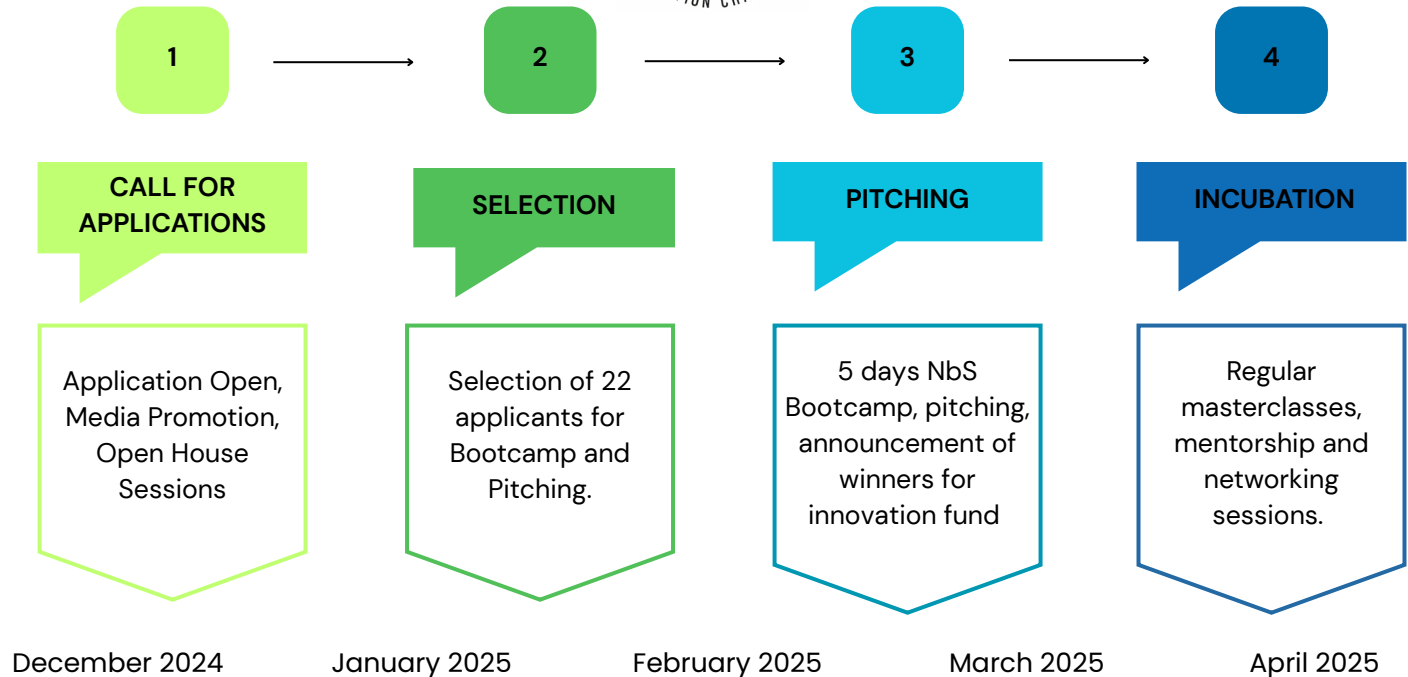
- Foster innovative enterprises that offer Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in bioprospecting and agroecology as nature-based solutions for green and resilient livelihoods in Nepal.



Program Highlights



Program Rundown



NBS PROGRAM'S MENTORS



Mr. Anil Keshary Shah
Chairperson
Lead Nepal



Mr. Ajit Bikram Shah
CEO/Director
Lotus Holdings



Mr. Ghana S. Gurung
Country Representative
WWF Nepal



Mr. Niraj Khanal
BOD
Byapar Briddhi Bikalpa



Ms. Reetal Rana
Managing Director
Mid-Valley Intl College



Mr. Kush Kumar Joshi
MD, NEEK;
BOD, Byapar Briddhi
Bikalpa



Mr. Saurabh Jyoti
Chairperson
Syakar Trading Company



Mr. Arun Dev Pant
Director
Design Cell



Mr. Tashi Tenzin Norgay
Founder
Nepal Green Tara
Foundation



Ms. Sushama Sharma
CEO & Co-Founder
Phool Prasad

The background image shows a lush green mountain valley. In the foreground, there are dense green trees and shrubs. In the middle ground, a small yellow house with a dark roof is visible on a hillside. The background features more mountains, some of which are shrouded in mist or low clouds. A dark teal rectangular overlay covers the left side of the image, containing the text 'Entrepreneurs' Profile' in white.

Entrepreneurs' Profile

Nature Based Solutions Innovation Challenge and Business
Incubation Program

ANJANA MALLA

DEEGO NEPAL

Anjana's childhood was shaped by the rhythms of nature and the lush natural environment in Bardiya. Growing up in this rich ecological landscape, she developed a deep appreciation for the environment and the communities that depended on it and her passion for sustainability is fueled by her upbringing. After completing her Bachelors of Arts in Social Work and her MA in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Tribhuvan University, she worked for several years in the development sector. Witnessing the adverse effects of unsustainable practices across 17 districts during her fieldwork, Anjana was moved to take meaningful action for the environment and the society.

She realized a pressing need for change and discontinued her job at the INGO and co-founded Deego Nepal, a social enterprise that is dedicated to combating plastic pollution and promoting sustainable living in Nepal. Shortly after launching Deego Nepal, Nepal entered lockdown due to COVID-19, creating an uncertain future. However, Anjana's determination and her everlasting passion to create impact is the reason Deego Nepal is still sustaining.

They have since introduced a range of sustainable products like Loofah body scrubbers, Bamboo straws and Bamboo toothbrushes, Lokta paper pencils and pens, and many such products that are eco-friendly alternatives to everyday essentials.



Mentor
Mr. Anil Keshary Shah

She has collaborated with over 100 artisans from seven districts across Nepal, 90% of whom are women. Together, they have created over 80 unique products, each reflecting Deego Nepal's dedication to sustainability and social impact.

Her commitment to sustainability and social impact has earned her widespread recognition. Anjana has emerged as a leader in green entrepreneurship, winning Idea Studio Season 5 (2021), the Green Startup Award (2022), and the Emerging Leaders Award (2024).



100+
Artisans Family Supported



**PLASTIC POLLUTION
REDUCTION BY
UTILIZING
NATURAL MATERIALS**



Anjana envisions scaling Deego Nepal's impact both locally and globally, staying steadfast in its mission to promote sustainable living. She aims to expand the reach of eco-friendly solutions, empowering communities economically while protecting the environment. Through Deego Nepal, Anjana seeks to lead the charge in transforming consumer behavior and creating a ripple effect across industries, making sustainability not just an ideal, but a way of life. By continuing to drive innovation in sustainable products, she is committed to positioning Deego Nepal as a key player in the global fight against plastic pollution, inspiring change and fostering a greener, more sustainable future for generations to come.

RAJIYA BANU

AGRA INDUSTRIES

Being deeply aware of the struggles faced by the Chepang communities in Raksirang Rural Municipality, Nepal, Rajiya Banu and her team Ankita Shah, Gomesh Singh Upreti initiated a flagship project to mitigate landslide risks using nature-based solutions. By introducing broom grass cultivation, she not only stabilized slopes but also provided sustainable livelihoods to over 1,610 marginalized individuals, 80% of whom were women. This initiative reduced landslide risks by an impressive 90%, showcasing the potential of combining indigenous knowledge with modern ecological practices. However, Rajiya's vision extended beyond disaster risk reduction. Recognizing that 70% of broom grass stalks were discarded as waste, often burned or dumped into rivers, she saw an opportunity to address this environmental challenge.



As a visionary entrepreneur with a passion for sustainability, the team co-founded Agra Industries Pvt. Ltd. to address environmental challenges while uplifting marginalized communities. The journey represents the power of innovation, resilience, and a deep commitment to creating a better future for both people and the planet.

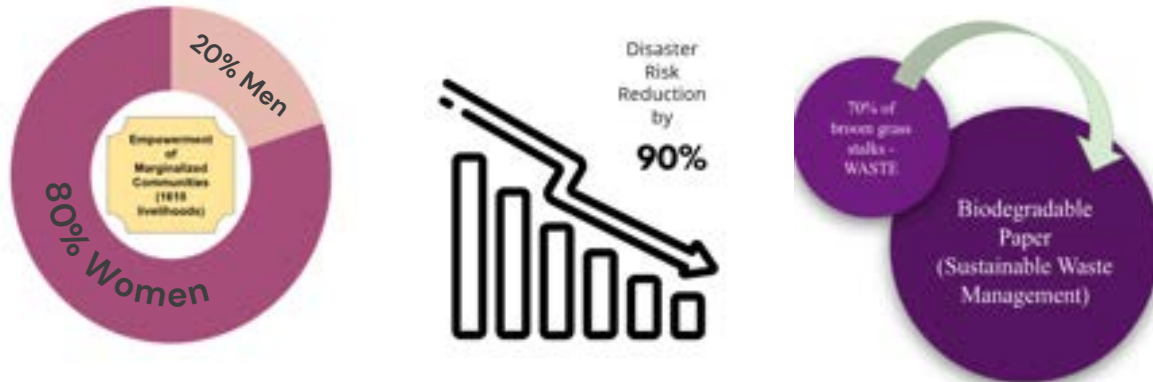
Determined to find a solution, the team innovated a process to transform this agro-waste into biodegradable paper. With the support of the British Council, Agra Industries successfully prototyped eco-friendly paper, turning waste into a valuable resource and aligning with the principles of a



Mentor
Mr. Ajit Bikram Shah

circular economy.

Agra Industries stands as a shining example of how innovation can drive both environmental and social change. The company has not only created eco-friendly products but also uplifted the living standard of marginalized communities, particularly women, by providing them with sustainable livelihoods and empowering them to lead enterprises. The initiative has reduced environmental degradation, addressed waste management issues, and created additional income streams, reinforcing the company's commitment to zero-waste solutions.



Rajiya and her team envisions expanding Agra Industries' sustainable enterprise model to other regions, addressing climate change, disaster risks, and poverty. By integrating advanced technologies and exploring innovative markets, she hopes to deepen the company's impact on environmental resilience and economic prosperity. Her ultimate goal is to create a future where communities thrive alongside nature, ensuring a lasting and meaningful impact for generations to come.

PREM BAHADUR BOHARA

YAMIR YARCHA AGRO

Prem Bahadur Bohara's journey began in the remote mountains of Nepal, where, at just nine years old, he joined his family in harvesting yarsagumba—the rare, high-value fungus prized globally. As he crossed icy rivers and climbed steep cliffs, he witnessed firsthand how local communities risked their lives to gather a resource from which they barely benefited. Despite its high market value, profits were mostly pocketed by middlemen, leaving harvesters with little return.

After completing higher education and working for over a decade in social organizations, Prem returned to his community with a renewed perspective. He saw that the decline in yarsagumba harvests had left mountain farmers without reliable income. Determined to change this, he established Yamir Yarcha Agro Pvt. Ltd. in 2022—a social enterprise focused on empowering local farmers through high-altitude agriculture and fair market access.



Yamir Yarcha Agro promotes organic farming and fair trade for mountain-grown herbs, vegetables, cereals, and fruits. The enterprise also offers training and consultation services, helping farmers adopt sustainable and agro-ecological practices. With a base in Thulibheri Municipality-5, Dolpa, and a coordination office in Kathmandu's Thamel, the company connects remote farmers to wider markets seeking organic and sustainable products.



Mentor
Mr. Ghana Shyam Gurung

Prem's mission wasn't without challenges. Difficult terrain, harsh climates, and poor infrastructure made it hard for smallholder farmers to transition to organic methods. Market access also posed a challenge, with few buyers offering fair prices. To address this, Yamir Yarcha Agro prioritized education—training farmers in sustainable practices that improved both yield and quality. The company also built networks of buyers and stakeholders, positioning itself as a trusted supplier of organic mountain products.



At the core of Yamir Yarcha Agro's operations lies a commitment to quality, sustainability, and ethical business practices. The company strictly avoids chemical fertilizers, instead promoting agro-ecological farming methods that protect soil health and biodiversity. Its approach integrates sustainability and conservation, ensuring that farming practices contribute to environmental well-being while supporting farmers' livelihoods.

Since its inception, Yamir Yarcha Agro has significantly boosted the income and well-being of many mountain families. Looking forward, it aims to expand its product line, engage more farmers, and scale impact nationally and globally. Plans include launching agri-tourism, enhancing sustainable practices, and exporting premium organic products. Prem also envisions stronger partnerships with like-minded institutions to embed nature-based solutions into Nepal's agricultural future.



RAMCHANDRA AGASTI

AGASTI AGRO FIRM

Ramchandra Agasti's journey from working in South Korea to becoming a successful agripreneur in Nepal is a testament to his vision and perseverance. While abroad, he gained hands-on experience in modern farming techniques, sparking his interest in sustainable agriculture. Upon returning to Nepal, he saw an opportunity to transform his family farm in Nuwakot into a thriving agricultural business. Unlike traditional crops, he chose to focus on ash gourd—an underutilized vegetable with immense health benefits.

Determined to make this a success, Ramchandra started small. He cultivated, harvested, and personally transported his produce to Kathmandu, delivering fresh ash gourds to the Raithane Farmer's Market in Durbar Marg every Saturday. Through direct interactions with health-conscious consumers, he built strong relationships and expanded his customer base. As demand grew, so did his supply, leading to the official establishment of Agasti Agro Firm in November 2024.



Ash gourd was traditionally used only during festivals and rituals, and many were unaware of its nutritional value. When Ramchandra introduced his focus on this crop, people mocked his decision, questioning why he would invest in something so undervalued. Even his own family was hesitant to support him, and he faced challenges in transporting the bulky produce to market. But Ramchandra remained steadfast, determined to change perceptions. Through awareness campaigns and



Mentor
Mr. Niraj Khanal



continuous engagement with farmers and consumers, he gradually built trust and increased demand for the vegetables.

Committed to quality and sustainability, Ramchandra developed customized farming tools such as fertilizer applicators and weeding equipment to improve efficiency. He minimized chemical fertilizers and focused on organic farming to maintain soil health. Understanding the importance of collaboration, he encouraged other farmers in his village to cultivate ash gourd, assuring them he would help sell their produce. This collective approach benefited

his business while also providing local farmers with an additional source of income. His innovative methods and community engagement led to a valuable connection with an agricultural company, now in the process of partnering with him to produce and market his customized farming tools.

Agasti Agro Firm supplies fresh organic ash gourd and produces value-added products like ash gourd juice and masaura (fermented, sun-dried vegetable balls), promoting its detoxifying and digestive benefits. As the business grew, local farmers adopted his methods, boosting the village economy. Agricultural colleges are now collaborating with him to develop an educational booklet on ash gourd cultivation.

Looking ahead, founder Ramchandra aims to expand organic farming, raise awareness about nutritious crops, and support rural farmers in adopting more profitable models. With plans to scale production and reach markets beyond Kathmandu, he hopes to impact Nepal's agricultural sector meaningfully.



SUJATA SHRESTHA

SAKAL BIOENZYME NEPAL

Sakal BioEnzyme was founded on January 10, 2024, as a women-led social enterprise dedicated to environmental sustainability and public health. The company was established by three core founders—Dr. Namita Maharjan, Sujata Shrestha, and Sarala Maharjan—along with a team of dedicated supporters, including single and specially capable women from local communities. Inspired by a personal loss to cancer, the founders were driven to create safe, natural, and eco-friendly alternatives to chemical-based products. Their vision was to harness the power of bioenzymes—natural solutions derived from organic waste like fruits, flowers, and herbs—to develop cleaning and personal hygiene products that promote sustainability and well-being.



Understanding the growing concern over chemical pollution and its effects on health, Sakal BioEnzyme introduced a range of biodegradable, non-toxic, and effective alternatives. Their product line includes Sakal Natural Surface Cleaner, Sakal Natural Floor Cleaner, Sakal Natural Dish Wash, and Sakal Natural Hand Wash. These bioenzyme-based solutions contain live microorganisms that break down dirt, grease, and stains without the need for harsh chemicals, making them safe for both people and the planet. Through their work, the founders aim to contribute to the circular economy by reducing waste and repurposing organic materials into valuable products.



Mentor
Ms. Reetal Rana

Launching such bioenzyme-based solutions in a market dominated by traditional chemical cleaners posed a unique challenge. Consumers were often skeptical about their effectiveness. In response, the Sakal team prioritized community engagement—organizing product demos and awareness campaigns to highlight the long-term environmental and health benefits of their offerings. Operationally, the company faced difficulties in sourcing organic waste consistently and fine-tuning fermentation processes for scalable production. Through ongoing research, innovation, and collaboration, they improved both efficiency and product quality.



Sakal BioEnzyme places strong emphasis on ethical sourcing and sustainable production. By providing employment opportunities to women—especially from marginalized communities—the company empowers them with new skills and a steady income. This social impact, combined with its environmental focus, underlines their mission to advance conservation, climate resilience, and healthier lifestyles. Their work has also sparked institutional interest in nature-based solutions, with researchers and organizations exploring the wider applications of bioenzymes.



Involvement of disabled and single women



Looking ahead, Sakal BioEnzyme plans to broaden its product line and extend its reach across Nepal. The founders are exploring applications in agriculture and industry, aiming to promote bioenzymes as a versatile and essential component of sustainable living. Their long-term goal is to reduce dependence on harmful chemicals, raise public awareness, and embed eco-conscious habits into everyday life—paving the way for a cleaner, healthier future.

PUSHPARAM GHIMIRE

PUSPANJALI NEPALI HATE KAGAJ UDHYOG

Resilience, inventiveness, and a strong dedication to conserving Nepal's cultural legacy while advancing sustainability characterize Pushparam Ghimire's journey. By fusing traditional craftsmanship with contemporary entrepreneurial vision, Pushparam has elevated the family business to new heights as a co-founder of Puspanjali Nepali Handmade Paper Industry, which was founded in 2075 BS by his father, Bishwaram Ghimire.

The narrative of Puspanjali starts with his father, who had 19 years of expertise in the field and had an idea for a company based on community empowerment and sustainability. He overcame early obstacles to create a

successful business. Motivated by his father's ambition, Pushparam joined the company with the goal of growing its influence while adhering to its basic principles of social responsibility and sustainability. Puspanjali Nepali Handmade Paper Industry specializes in producing eco-friendly Lokta paper, sourced from fast-growing shrubs like Lokta and Agreli. These materials not only preserve the ecological balance but also provide a sustainable alternative to traditional deforestation. The company's unique ability to match customer-desired colors with precision has earned it a loyal market base and exceptional reviews, both domestically and internationally.



Mentor
Mr. Kush Kumar Joshi

Every facet of the business's operations, from ethical raw material sourcing to generating revenue for regional farmers and craftspeople, demonstrates its dedication to sustainability. By cutting out intermediaries from the supply chain, Puspanjali maintains traditional papermaking methods while guaranteeing equitable remuneration for nearby people. Pushparam's vision extends beyond business success. He is deeply committed to empowering rural communities, particularly women, by providing them with employment opportunities and skill-based training. The company's products, including Lokta paper, photo frames, notebooks, and greeting cards, have found demand in European, American, and Asian markets, reflecting the pride of Nepal's craftsmanship on a global stage.



Use of Turmeric, Walnut, etc
for color dyeing



Sustainable Paper Production
using Lokta plant (*Daphne Shrub*)



Income Generation for
Marginalized Community

Pushparam hopes to increase Puspanjali's production capacity, investigate new markets, and enhance the standard of its products in the future. In the long run, he wants to establish Puspanjali as a world leader in sustainable handmade paper production while also uplifting rural areas and conserving Nepal's cultural legacy. Developing a scalable model for moral entrepreneurship that strikes a balance between environmental preservation and economic growth is his dream.

MITESH SHRESTHA

YARSA AGRO RESEARCH

As a dedicated researcher and entrepreneur, Mitesh's passion for Nature-based Solutions (NbS) stems from his upbringing in a family with an agricultural background. Having witnessed firsthand the suffering of his family members, who endured burnt skin from the use of toxic chemical pesticides, he developed a deep commitment to finding sustainable alternatives.

He has received several research grants for the development of biofertilizers and biopesticides, fueling his passion to further pursue entrepreneurship in this field. In 2020, he and his team co-founded Yarsa Agro Research Pvt. Ltd. with a vision to position it as Nepal's leading research-driven production company for

biofertilizers, biopesticides, and biostimulants. His goal is to uplift farmers economically while promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Mitesh is also currently pursuing his PhD in the development of biofertilizers and biopesticides at the Central Department of Biotechnology, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

The excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has been a major contributor to soil degradation and ecosystem imbalance. Mitesh and his team is determined to change this by promoting agricultural sustainability through biofertilizers and biopesticides. As the Research and Production Development Manager, he plays a pivotal role in developing



Mentor
Mr. Saurabh Jyoti



microbial fertilizers and biopesticides that address challenges related to nutrient uptake and disease control in crops.

Yarsa Agro Research Pvt. Ltd., has introduced seven market-tested products, including bio-fungicides TreeDevi and Psumo, nematicidal microbes (NemoDown), phosphate-solubilizing bacteria (Ferti-P), and biomass decomposers (Maato-G). These alternatives have been extensively tested on crops such as tomatoes, potatoes, and bananas offering farmers a sustainable and effective replacement for chemical inputs.



Unlike chemical fertilizers and pesticides, biofertilizers and biopesticides take time to show results, making farmer adoption a significant challenge for Mitesh and his team. However, he firmly believes that the only sustainable way forward is to curb the use of harmful chemicals. The unwavering dedication to research-driven innovation by its founders has positioned Yarsa Agro Research as a changemaker in pest management, promoting healthier crops, soil regeneration, and long-term environmental sustainability.



Mitesh is part of a highly skilled technical team, all with strong scientific backgrounds, ensuring smooth execution of operations. However, he soon realized that technical expertise alone was not enough and navigating key business aspects and building a strong network were equally crucial for scaling his venture.

Yarsa Agro Research aims to expand production, enhance farmer outreach, and advocate for sustainable agriculture in Nepal. By advancing microbial solutions, strengthening distribution, and collaborating with agrovets and institutions, the team seeks to integrate biofertilizers into mainstream farming—bridging scientific innovation with practice for a more resilient, sustainable agricultural future.

AAKASH SHILPAKAR

ATL NEPAL

Aakash Shilpakar, an entrepreneur driven by a passion for Nature-based Solutions (NbS), draws inspiration from his deep connection to the land and his commitment to developing systems that integrate human well-being with ecological sustainability.

As someone who has been deeply involved with regenerative agriculture and sustainable community development, he has witnessed firsthand how integrating NbS can transform degraded landscapes, restore biodiversity, and empower communities. Aakash's expertise lies in designing and implementing scalable, community-based initiatives that provide nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation. His social enterprise, ATL Nepal, where ATL stands for 'Agriculture, Tourism, Lifestyle' is driven by a vision to create a sustainable future by integrating NbS into communities, fostering harmony between human development and ecological balance.

Aakash completed his B.Tech in Biotechnology with a minor in Business Management from Vignan University, India in 2017 and has gained self-taught expertise in land management. With a deep passion for regenerative design, Aakash has a mission to promote regenerative agriculture, natural building, and sustainable practices through storytelling, providing education, and showcasing creative farm projects, establishing a platform to inspire and share best practices for sustainable land use.



Mentor
Mr. Arun Dev Pant

He provides a diverse range of products and services aimed at advancing regenerative agriculture and sustainable practices. His workshops and training programs offer hands-on learning experiences, equipping participants with practical expertise in regenerative agriculture. Through his Nature-based Solutions (NbS) consultancy, he delivers tailored solutions for landscape design, soil management, and sustainable community development. Additionally, his educational packages provide immersive programs for individuals, organizations, and schools, fostering knowledge and implementation of sustainable practices. Furthermore, through the NbS Farm Network, he collaborates with local farms to establish hubs for learning, innovation, and community engagement.



With a strong commitment to sustainability and innovation, Aakash Shilpakar continues to lead initiatives that bridge ecological restoration with community resilience. Through his work, he envisions a future where regenerative agriculture and Nature-based Solutions become integral to Nepal's development, creating a lasting impact on both people and the planet.

SIRJANA LAMICHHANE

KARUNA PERMACULTURE FARM & LEARNING CENTER

Sirjana Lamichhane, an entrepreneur from Sankharapur-01, Kathmandu, has always been deeply connected to nature and sustainable agriculture. While pursuing her master's degree in 2021, she took a bold step toward turning her vision into reality by establishing Karuna Permaculture Farm and Learning Center in 2021. Her dream was to create a farming system that not only preserved soil health but also provided economic opportunities for marginalized individuals in her community. With ten ropani of land, she focused on organic turmeric and Timur (Sichuan pepper) cultivation, relying solely on organic manure and compost.

From the beginning, Karuna Permaculture Farm was more than just a business; it was a platform for environmental preservation and community empowerment. Sirjana ensured that her farm adhered to sustainable agricultural practices, integrating composting, crop rotation, and natural pest control. However,

many local farmers were skeptical of organic farming, accustomed to synthetic fertilizers that promised quick results. Market access was another major hurdle, as organic products required special certification and distribution channels. Moreover, climate variability and water scarcity posed risks to crop yields.

Determined to overcome these obstacles, Sirjana actively sought solutions through different training programs, where she gained valuable insights into sustainable farming techniques, organic



Mentor
Mr. Tashi
Tenzing Norgay



certification processes, and market strategies. Her involvement in organizing a boot camp for 271 farmers and agri-entrepreneurs in Karnali Province further reinforced her belief in education and community-driven agricultural transformation. The program introduced participants to innovative soil management and water conservation techniques, helping them adopt eco-friendly practices while improving their productivity and income.

At Karuna Permaculture Farm, it is ensured that all farming practices align with environmental sustainability, preserving soil fertility while enhancing biodiversity. Her farm has also become a training hub for 71 women, directly benefiting 355 individuals. By equipping women with the knowledge and skills to cultivate and market organic turmeric powder and Sichuan pepper, she has created new income opportunities while fostering environmental preservation. Her efforts extend beyond farming, as she also promotes waste management, composting, and biodiversity conservation as integral parts of everyday life.



Karuna Permaculture Farm has not only created employment opportunities but has also strengthened the local economy by introducing organic products that fetch higher market prices. Through collaboration with local government agencies, NGOs, and cooperatives, Sirjana has been able to expand her initiatives, ensuring that sustainable farming remains a viable and profitable path for rural communities.



Sirjana aims to scale Karuna Permaculture Farm into a replicable model for sustainable agriculture across Nepal by developing demonstration plots, establishing community seed banks, and integrating nature-based solutions. Through a network of organic farmers and strong partnerships, she envisions a lasting shift toward sustainable and ethical farming.

KAMALA DHAKAL

KINNOVATION TRADING

Kamala Dhakal grew up in a small rural village, where the rhythm of life was dictated by the seasons and the hard work of farming. As a child, she watched her mother struggle in the fields, growing crops that fed the family but rarely brought financial stability. Despite her mother's relentless efforts, the family often struggled to make ends meet. This early exposure to the challenges of rural life left a deep impression on Kamala. She wondered why the hard work of women like her mother didn't translate into better opportunities for their families. After completing her M.Sc. in Physics from Tribhuvan University, Kamala realized that Nepal's agricultural potential was being underutilized.

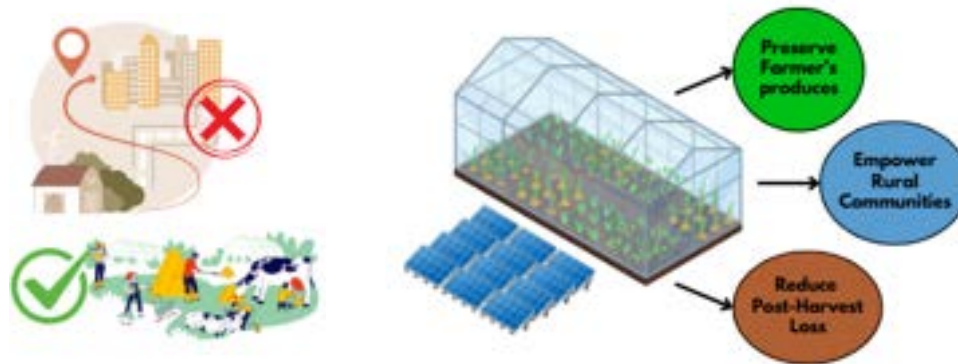
The country was spending billions on importing processed foods, while its own farmers struggled to preserve and market their produce. She decided to stay in Nepal and make a difference. In 2019, Kamala founded

Kinnovation Trading Pvt. Ltd. with a clear vision: to empower rural communities through sustainable, eco-friendly technologies. She started by introducing solar greenhouse dryers and grid-integrated solar PV systems, which not only reduced post-harvest losses but also provided rural women with new skills and income opportunities. These innovations were transformative. Farmers could now preserve their production, sell it at higher prices, and reduce food waste—all while using renewable energy.



Mentor
Ms. Sushama Sharma

Kamala faced numerous challenges, from securing funding to convincing rural communities to adopt new technologies. Many were skeptical at first, unsure if these innovations would work. Kamala's determination and belief in her mission kept her going. The solar dryers and other technologies have not only improved food preservation but also created sustainable livelihoods, reducing the need for migration and strengthening local economies. Her work has shown that small changes, like a single solar dryer, can have a ripple effect, transforming entire communities.



Looking to the future, Kamala envisions a Nepal where rural communities thrive, powered by sustainable technologies and empowered by their own potential. She dreams of expanding Kinnovation's impact, creating a replicable model for rural entrepreneurship that can be scaled across the country. Her ultimate goal is to reduce Nepal's dependency on imported processed foods, keeping economic value within the country while showcasing its agricultural potential on a global stage.



PUSPANJALI NEPALI HATE KAGAJ UDHYOUG
Gokulganga-4, Betali Ramechhap



STARTUP FELLOWS



Kabita Malla Thakuri



Abhinav Timsina

Startup Fellows were onboarded and matched with each entrepreneur to provide hands-on support in documentation and day-to-day business needs. Acting as a vital link between mentors and entrepreneurs, the Startup Fellows played a key role in facilitating smooth communication and coordination throughout the mentorship journey. Their proactive engagement and dedicated efforts significantly contributed to the effectiveness and success of the mentorship sessions.

About IEDI



The Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) is an autonomous entity established in 1996 under the Industrial Enterprise Development Institute Act 1996. IEDI is dedicated to developing human and knowledge resources for entrepreneurship and business promotion in Nepal through a number of impact generating quality tools such as trainings, research, consultancy, enterprise education, and management development programs.

Since its inception, IEDI has been providing services targeting intermediary organizations as well as potential and existing entrepreneurs. In the changing political and socio-economic context of Nepal, IEDI aims to reengineer its services to address the needs of different organizations and individuals involved in enterprise development.

With a view to providing sustainability and weathering the challenges of entrepreneurship and business development in Nepal, IEDI's focus rests on delivering quality services to a maximum number of organizations involved in enterprise development. For meeting this objective, it carries out R&D, testing and dissemination of Best Practices in Business Development Service to cater the needs of different groups and communities in Nepal and abroad.

'Empowering Entrepreneurs and Industries for a Better Nepal'

About ICIMOD



The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working on behalf of the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region, which spans across eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

With over four decades of experience, ICIMOD plays a pivotal role in improving the lives and livelihoods of mountain communities while safeguarding the region's unique environment and cultural heritage.

Through its Strategy 2030, titled '**Moving Mountains**' ICIMOD envisions a greener, inclusive, and climate resilient future by facilitating knowledge exchange, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and promoting evidence-based policymaking across the region.

'A greener, more inclusive, and climate resilient Hindu Kush Himalaya'

About KGS Inc.



KGS Inc. is a boutique management consulting/advisory firm based in Kathmandu, Nepal that specializes in entrepreneurship development. KGS Inc. supports startups at every stage through a range of local and global programs, mentors, and investors, to drive innovation, foster growth, and create lasting impact.

Building on a decade-long experience of working with grassroot entrepreneurs, urban startups, national level business conglomerates as well as development agency partners, KGS Inc. works with entrepreneurs, corporations and communities in crafting strategies for sustainable growth, and in building tools and systems that enable them to achieve them.

KGS Inc. envisions a world where innovative, sustainable, and inclusive solutions drive economic growth and resilience. It firmly believes that at the core of every undertaking, there are individuals and ideas that have the ability to transform societies. KGS Inc. caters to helping entrepreneurs, organizations as well as individuals achieve better evolutionary results through systematic management and capacity building support services.

‘Enabling Individual, Institutional, and Societal Transformations’

About Briddhi – Mentoring Partner



Byapar Briddhi Bikalpa Pvt. Ltd. (in short, Briddhi) was established in 2024. It is a pioneering initiative focused on fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth in Nepal. As Briddhi works to empower a new generation of innovative leaders, it recognizes the importance of mentorship in shaping their journeys and guiding them through challenges toward success.

Briddhi is an exclusive platform of experts as mentors who are firm believers in giving back to society and coming together for the growth of Nepali enterprises, with a focus on sustainable development and high impact. It is a pioneering institution aimed to institutionalize structured and organized mentorship in Nepal. Briddhi connects volunteer mentors with entrepreneurs who require guidance, network and support to grow their business.

Briddhi's collaboration as a mentoring partner with IEDI, ICIMOD and KGS Inc. for NBS Innovation Challenge has contributed in strengthening its capacity to implement a structured and formalized mentorship program. This initiative enabled Briddhi to pilot the mentorship program, involving startup fellows in the mentorship journey along with volunteer mentors and entrepreneurs. Briddhi acknowledges IEDI, ICIMOD and KGS Inc. for this collaboration towards building mentorship ecosystem in Nepal.

'Giving Back, Giving Hope'



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