



Newsletter

of the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal

January 2017



Dear readers,

Returning to live in Kathmandu after nine years of absence I traveled through time. Kathmandu has changed and at first appearance not for the better: engorged traffic, dust and air pollution have reduced the quality of life of city dwellers. Power is available though and the Melamchi water will soon flow towards the capital. Outside the valley connectivity has highly improved: mainly on bumpy and badly maintained roads residents of many districts can now reach Kathmandu or other major cities in less than a day. Economic activity is vibrant along the main highways and prosperous cultivations of vegetables dominate the landscapes. Long queues of migrants at the airport and in front of labour offices remind us however that the real source of

relative prosperity, macroeconomic balance and abundant liquidity is the hard work provided abroad by millions of invisible women and men. Nepal desperately needs to generate endogenous economic growth. The pursuit of this objective requires political stability and an effective administration. We believe that the new constitution, if implemented carefully and with the support of all Nepali, can deliver those critical public goods. Switzerland is committed to support those processes through diplomatic activities, development initiatives and the encouragement of the numerous private contacts and collaborations that persist between Nepal and our country.

Jörg Frieden
Ambassador

Online counter for Swiss citizens living abroad

We are pleased to inform that the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) offers the possibility to all Swiss citizens living abroad to access an online counter with a range of consular services. Through the online counter, one will have the possibility to enter his/her data themselves independently at any time or from any place. One can also view the data at any time, place orders for consular services and make payments via e-Payment with the credit card.

The counter can be found on the FDFA website www.eda.admin.ch under the heading "**online counter**" and on the individual websites of your Swiss representations abroad.

In order to ensure data protection for the users, registration is made in the online counter in two ways:

- Two-factor authentication via SMS to a mobile telephone number
- SuisseID

The registration is performed with digital identity verification. Information on Suisse ID can be obtained at www.suisseid.ch. The online counter has been designed according to the principle of responsive web design and is compatible with PC and all mobile devices (notebooks, tablets and smartphones). We intend to continuously expand the offer of services provided through the online counter and we hope this innovation will make it easier for the Swiss living abroad to communicate with their Swiss Representatives abroad and to bring them closer.

Arrival of the new Ambassador

The Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal is happy to announce the arrival of the new Swiss Ambassador to Nepal, His Excellency Dr. Jörg Giovanni Frieden. On 10th of November 2016, Ambassador Frieden presented Letter of Credence to Her Excellency the Right Honourable Ms. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Ambassador Frieden was born in Lugano, Ticino in 1953 and holds a PhD in economics from the University of Freiburg. From 2003 to 2007, Ambassador Frieden served as the Country Director of the SDC in Kathmandu. Before taking up this assignment, Ambassador Frieden was the Executive Director for the World Bank (IBRD) in Washington.



Cluster workshop – a knowledge sharing platform

Staff from SDC and Swiss supported projects, including field based staff from the districts of Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga and Khotang, took part in the cluster workshop held in Buipa of Khotang from 22nd to 24th November. The objective of this workshop was to coordinate and to enhance synergy among different projects and programmes from the three districts. It was an opportunity to look at the context of the three districts and share about different achievements and challenges faced by projects and programmes. In addition to their achievements and learnings, the teams from districts raised issues such as implications on implementation of development activities due to Switzerland's reduced budget and implementation challenges of the Constitution of Nepal, particularly, more so in regards to local level restructuring. Diepak Elmer, Deputy Head of Mission, assured that these issues will be taken into consideration in the new Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Nepal (2018-2022) in 2017.

SDC introduced the cluster approach in August 2005, to strengthen the synergies between the Swiss-funded projects in the districts. This approach has proved to be very helpful to enhance synergies among the projects as well as security through the visibility of Swiss programme and joint local risk assessment.

Photo Kathmandu 2016



For the second year, the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal funded Nepal's very own international photography festival, Photo Kathmandu 2016. Over 50 international photo practitioners from more than 22 countries shared their ideas, enthusiasm and professional expertise from 21st October to 3rd November 2016. Photo Kathmandu 2016 invited Swiss photographer Yann Mingard to do a three day workshop along with Zurich based German curator Lars Willumeit. This year the festival was extended for 14 days as compared to only 1 week in 2015. This year again the festival was hosted in Patan but in

different localities for exhibitions and slideshows than last year with continued focus to bring visitors and locals together to explore photography. The next Photo Kathmandu edition is planned for 2018.

Strengthening the accountability of local governments

The Strengthening the Accountability of Local Governments (SALG) Project was a bilateral project between the governments of Switzerland and Nepal, implemented by SDC. The difficult political transition, weak accountability and transparency indicators, increasing irregularities at both central and district level and absence of elected representatives, triggered SDC to design and implement the project from 16th July 2013 to 15th July 2016. The project covered the nine districts, namely; Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga, Khotang and Sindhuli on the east and Surkhet, Achham, Kalikot, Jajarkot and Dailekh on the west. The total amount spent over the project period was about CHF 2.65 million.

The main objective of the project was to empower the people to claim their developmental rights and empower the local civil society organisations (CSOs) to hold their local governments accountable by applying various social accountability tools such as Public Hearing / Public Audit, Social Audit, Public Expenditure Tracking Survey etc.

The project contributed to institutionalise the targeted budget implementation in the districts and to intensify the use of social accountability tools at the local level. As a result, more than 80% of Village Development Committees, the lowest administrative body in Nepal, allocated and spent the targeted budget for women and disadvantaged groups as per the government guidelines. Additional achievement that can be attributed to the project is its efforts to institutionalise the compliance monitoring of local bodies in the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). The compliance monitoring of local bodies will be continued by MoFALD even after the phasing out of the project.



A participant voices her issue during a Public Hearing event held in Puranagau



**For the New Year, we wish you all the best, creative power, and good health.
The staff of the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal**

Weblinks

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