

# Bi-annual Report

August 2023



## Introduction

Samaanta Foundation is a Nepal-based not-for-profit organization that promotes equality and empowerment by providing quality higher education opportunities to meritorious public school graduates from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The Foundation provides comprehensive Fellowships which cover all direct and indirect costs such as tuition fees; room and board; transportation; uniform, lab, and exam fees; language and computer training; civic engagement and leadership workshops; mentorship, and other extra-curricular activities.



## Overview: January-June 2023

The past six months at Samaanta Foundation have been busy and productive. Most recently, we have successfully selected 14 Fellows as the 12th cohort. They will be joining us at the end of July.

Our Fellows and Alumni have also been doing really well recently. For instance, Archana Giri, a fellow from the 5th cohort, now works at Skill Lab, an innovative youth organization in Nepal where she had previously interned. She has also been selected as a mentor for the Community Leadership program at Aakar Nepal, another up-and-coming service organization.

Furthermore, we are proud to announce that four girls from our 10th cohort have successfully graduated from the 9-month-long Leadership course at WomenLead Nepal, the most comprehensive female leadership program in the country.

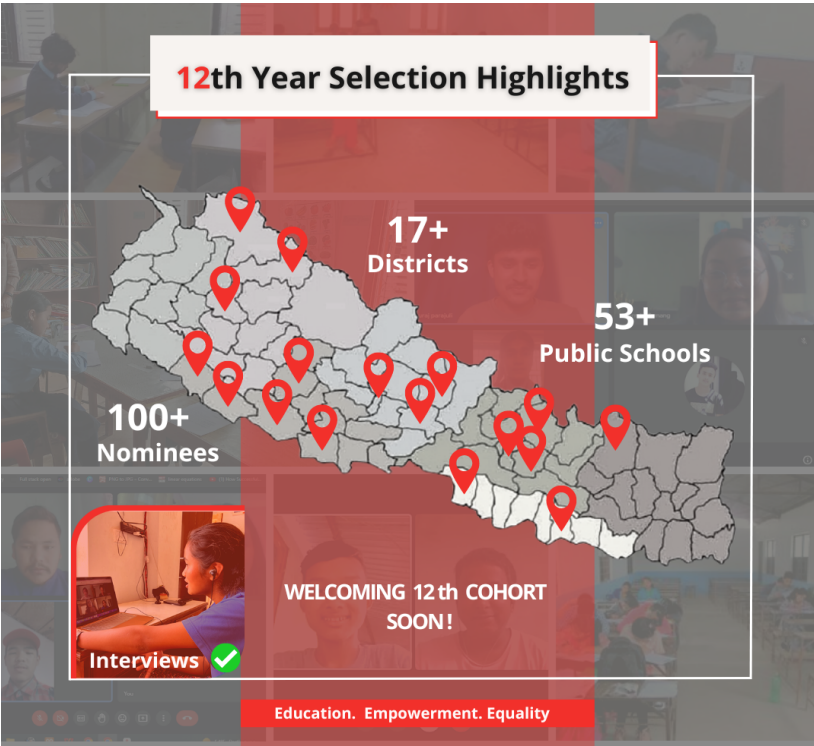
Over the last six months, we have established several new and exciting partnerships with [Pestalozzi Foundation](#) (UK), [Building Education](#) (USA), [Nepali American Center](#) (USA), and [Sharing a Smile](#) (Luxembourg), which helps widen our reach and allows us to provide further opportunities to more Fellows.

Ms. Mona Aditya and Mr. Shirijung Hang Rai have joined as members of the Board. Ms. Yukta Poudel joined as the Strategy & Partnership Officer and Mr. Bikram Bista, our 5th Cohort Samaanta Alumni, has joined as the Program Associate.

## Recruitment 2023 Update

We initiated the recruitment process for the 12th cohort in January and received an impressive 100 nominations from 17 districts. Through a rigorous selection process involving written examinations, teacher recommendations, two rounds of interviews, and countless follow-ups, we have chosen 14 exceptional candidates from diverse backgrounds to join our Fellowship journey starting July 2023.

Each candidate demonstrated their potential and strengths along with their unique story and we are extremely inspired by them. We have just conducted our first orientation with these Fellows and their families, and we are excited to welcome them to our Samaanta family!



## Welcoming the 12th Cohort



## New Partnerships

In the last 6 months, we have forged valuable partnerships with four new organizations around the world: [Pestalozzi Foundation](#), UK; [Building Education](#), USA; [Nepali American Center](#); USA; and [Sharing a Smile](#), Luxembourg.

We are tremendously excited about the potential these partnerships present, both in terms of supporting our Fellows and in terms of our strategic alignment with the values and mission of these driven and established organisations.

Pestalozzi is a UK-based charity that offers life-changing opportunities to young people from underprivileged communities around the world.

Nepali American Center is a not-for-profit established in 2009, a recent partner to the Samaanta Foundation, it aims to support Smaanta Foundation through various fundraising for the fellows through the various activities it conducts.

Building Education is a not-for-profit organization based in San Francisco, US that supports projects which provide education to youth or women in Nepal.

Sharing a Smile is a group of committed optimists who are determined to ensure a secure, healthy, and educated future for all children.

## Success Stories

We take great pride in the achievement of our Fellows. Their performance is our primary barometer of impact, and their success defines us as an organization.

Manisha Deshar from the 4th Cohort was selected to participate in #HackCorruption, a 5-day residential boot camp, where she and her teammates worked on their Project, “Support My School”, an initiative that aims to establish accountability within public schools regarding infrastructural development. She has also been selected as one of only 9 young women from across the country to participate in a Women's Leadership Mentorship Programme, hosted by senior international diplomats stationed in Nepal. She has been paired with the Head of USAID, Sepideh Keyvanshad, as her mentor.

Four of our Fellows from our 10th cohort, Ranjita Ramtel, Shobha Adhikari, Dila KC, and Deepa Amgai, have successfully graduated from the 9-month-long Lead course at [WomenLead Nepal](#). Ranjita has been recognized further with the “Most Committed Award” in her cohort.

Sunita Nepali from the 9th Cohort graduated from [UWC- Red Cross Nordic](#) in Norway and has accepted a full scholarship to attend [Whitman College in Washington](#), USA to pursue her undergraduate degree in Fall 2023.

Gyanmaya Tamang, an 11th Cohort Fellow, has been awarded a full scholarship to pursue an IB Diploma degree at the prestigious [United World College-USA](#).

Gyanmaya was born in the Sindhupalchowk District of Nepal in 2007. She grew up in the village with her parents and seven siblings. The 2015 earthquake hit her family hard, claiming the lives of her beloved mother and brother. Amid such hardship, she was able to balance her academic pursuits and the demands of her family well. She scored the highest marks in her eighth-grade examinations in Melamchi Municipality. This outstanding achievement is a testament to her determination and resilience in the face of adversity. She completed her 10th Grade from Shree Batase Secondary School.

She embarked on her journey as a Samaanta fellow in 2022. While being actively engaged in the fellowship, she completed the rigorous application process for the United World College (UWC) scholarship. She has been selected for the prestigious scholarship to complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma from UWC, USA.

Gyanmaya's journey has been defined by several challenges and heartbreaking loss but also incredible resilience and unwavering commitment. We congratulate her and wish her the best for her journey ahead. We are confident that she will continue to achieve greater success and be a force for change.



Gyanmaya Tamang  
11th Cohort Fellow  
UWC-USA

## Fellows Updates

Currently, we have 50 active Fellows, 41 based in Kathmandu and 9 residing abroad. With the addition of 14 Fellows from the 12th cohort this month, our total number of active Fellows will increase to 64.

10th Cohort Fellows have completed their higher secondary education, and are waiting for their results. They have put in a lot of hard work and effort over the last two years, and we are very proud of their efforts and performance.

Ankit Giri, 8th Cohort fellow, received the highest grades in his class in his first semester exams. Ankit is pursuing Bachelor's in Computer Application at Thames College.

11 Fellows from the 11th Cohort have been selected for the Community Leadership Program at Aakar Nepal. They will gain hands-on learning experience in community leadership that will aid their personal growth and development.

Four Fellows from the 5th and 6th cohorts are on their way to graduating from Thames College and King's College with their Bachelor's degrees this year.

## Updates on Dipesh Bhujel (4th Cohort)



- From Sisneri, Lalitpur
- Completed Bachelor's in computer science and Information Technology in 2022 from St. Xavier's College securing 77% in his final semester

**Dipesh** is currently working as the Application Developer at Foreveryng Nepal located in Sanepa, Lalitpur. Foreveryng is a beauty product-related for-profit company. Alongside, Dipesh also runs his own online business where he sells handmade art and craft.

Dipesh continues to engage in Samaanta's programs including Fellow-led programs on facilitating art & craft workshops, leadership and team building, computer skills, and supporting Samaanta's external relationship management tasks.



## Updates on Sharmila Tamang (4th Cohort)



- From Tikabhairab, Lalitpur
- Completed Bachelor’s Business Administration from Thames International College in 2022

### Academics

Term	GPA
7th Semester	3.75
8th Semester	3.89

Sharmila is currently working as the Project Manager at Sharing a Smile. Sharing a Smile is a non-profit organization founded in January 2020 by six students aged 18-21 from Luxembourg. The primary objective of this organization is to fight against the harmful consequences of poverty by supporting the Helpless Children's Home orphanage in Nepal in order to guarantee a better future for orphans.

Sharmila is enjoying her work and she is sharpening her soft skills such as communication, coordination, report writing, and planning. She has also been actively participating in Samaanta’s programs including fellow-led programs on goalsetting, public speaking, leadership and team building, content writing, and supporting Samaanta program management tasks.

Notably, Sharmila was instrumental in establishing a partnership between Sharing a Smile and Samaanta Foundation whereby Sharing a Smile has pledged to support five Fellows for high school and undergraduate programs over the next four years. Sharmila's contribution is exemplary in terms of being an Ambassador for Samaanta and helping expand our work.

## Members of the Board and Staff

We are delighted to welcome Ms. Mona Shrestha Aditya, Mr. Shirijung Hang Rai, Ms. Yukta Poudel, and Mr. Bikram Bista to the Samaanta Foundation Family. Ms. Mona has been contributing to the Samaanta Foundation for a year now and Mr. Shirijung served previously as the Program Manager. We are elated to have them as official Members of the Board.

Additionally, Ms. Yukta has joined as the Strategy & Partnership Officer, and Mr. Bikram Bista, 5th Cohort Alumni, has joined as a Program Associate.

### The Team

#### THE BOARD



**DR SHROCHIS KARKI**  
Executive Director



**JYOTI PANDEY**  
Director of Programs



**DEV MAHATO**  
Director of Finances



**MONA ADITYA**  
Director



**SHRIJUNGA HANG RAI**  
Director

#### THE TEAM MEMBERS



**YUKTA POUDEL**  
Strategy and Partnership Officer



**AKHILESH THAKUR**  
Program Officer



**BIKRAM BISTA**  
Program Associate

**+ FELLOWS AND ALUMNI**

## Challenges and Plans

Over the past year, we have encountered a significant challenge related to our office space. As our total number of Fellows has surpassed 50, conducting sessions and activities with all of them together in our space has become impossible. We rely on borrowing meeting venues from other partners which means we cannot always organize events as per our timeline. Despite our efforts, we continue to operate from the same rented space since 2016 which was sufficient when we had 20 Fellows.

Rising rent prices in Kathmandu and our limited budget present challenges in finding a suitable space. It is crucial for us to secure appropriate office space to accommodate the growing number of Fellows and create an atmosphere conducive to their holistic development. We would ideally also like to operate an expanded library and a computer lab to facilitate the growth of our Fellows, but we do not have the space or the resources yet.

In addition, the scarcity of laptops is also impacting the academic progress of our Fellows. Almost all of our Fellows are required to complete their assignments and coursework digitally. Currently, there are 11 Bachelor's Fellows in total and each one of them has their own Laptop. However, there are only 2 laptops available for the 27 High school students. The first Laptop is in the girl's hostel where 15 Fellows share it. The second laptop is in the boy's hostel where 12 Fellows share it. This lack of laptops poses a considerable challenge for them to effectively manage their academic responsibilities.

As stated earlier, we are currently exploring options to expand office space, which would result in an increase in our annual costs from US\$ 6000 to approximately US\$ 10000. Additionally, we would like to buy more laptops, which will cost us approximately US\$ 7000 - 10000, depending on what we can afford. We are also open to receiving laptop donations to support our efforts.

Financial Status

We are onboarding 14 new Fellows in the 12th Cohort and will retain several Fellows from the 10th Cohort to continue their Fellowship at the undergraduate level.

The current estimated expense for the academic year 2023/24 (Jul 2023-Jun 2024) is US\$ 120,000. This figure includes three staff and continued use of the same office space and no substantial expansion to the program we offer.

We have secured almost enough funds for this academic year, with a gap of US\$25,000. However, with more resources, we could look to recruit 25 Fellows (instead of only 14-15 Fellows we have been recruiting each year so far) to reach our target of recruiting 25 Fellows each year. Additional resources would also enable us to provide adequate laptops for our Fellows and expand the programs we offer to them.

We present a summary of our estimated expenses and income sources below.

Estimated Expenses (USD)			Estimated funds available (USD)		
1	Hostel	45,000	1	Operating Balance for the year	15,500
2	Office rent & utilities	6,000	2	<u>Home Loan Experts (HLE)</u>	17,000
3	Salary	9,000	3	<u>Foundation Care for All</u> <u>(FCFA)+ Rotary + Kin San Tai Chi +</u> <u>Legal Foundation</u>	10,000
4	<u>Fellows</u> academic expenses	40,000	4	Pestalozzi Foundation UK	13,000
5	Stipend	5,000	5	Building Education	10,000
6	Workshops & recreation	4,000	6	Sharing a Smile	11,000
7	Compliance, recruitment & misc. expenses	4,000	7	Individual contributions	15,000
8	Laptops	5,000	8	Fellows’ Parents contribution	3,500
9	Communications & PR	2,000	<b>Total</b> <b>\$95,000</b>		
TOTAL		<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>Financing gap</b> for the year 2023/24: <b>\$25,000</b>		



Thank you!

Samaanta Foundation and our Fellows have been on a remarkable journey over the past 12 years. We could not even have imagined in 2012 that we would become the most comprehensive higher education Fellowship program in Nepal, and none of this would have been possible without your love, support, and guidance. Thank you for believing in us and backing us to dare to dream, and to help level the playing field so that talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds get the same opportunities to shine and break down barriers. We are forever grateful for your partnership in this endeavour.

For more info: [www.samaantafoundation.org](http://www.samaantafoundation.org)