Community Network Xchange - Asia Pacific Nepal Chapter 2024

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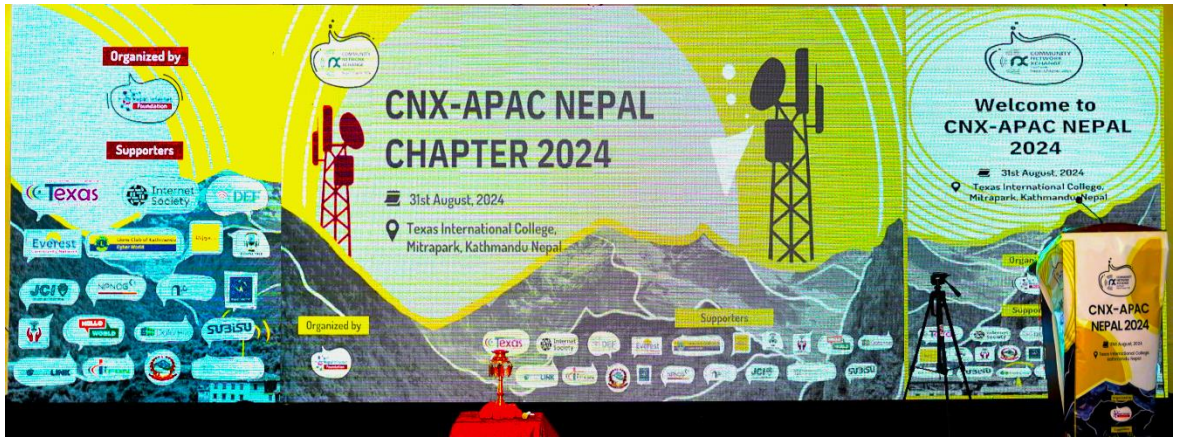
COMMUNITY NETWORK XCHANGE
AsiaPacific
Nepal Chapter 2024



Nepal Internet Foundation

Internet Society

DEF
DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT foundation

Event Overview

Title: Empowering Voices, Connecting Communities: Community Networks for Social Change.

Date: August 31, 2024 (Saturday)

Time: 08:30 AM - 05:30 PM

Venue: Texas International College, Mitrapark, Kathmandu, Nepal

Organizers: Nepal Internet Foundation in collaboration with Digital Empowerment Foundation and Internet Society

Theme: Empowering Voices, Connecting Communities: Community Networks for Social Change

Participants: Community network initiators, creators, practitioners, experts, advocates, and policymakers from Nepal, Asia Pacific region, and international organizations

Introduction

Community Network Xchange (CNX) - Asia Pacific Nepal Chapter 2024 marked the first-ever CNX event in Nepal. Themed "Empowering Voices, Connecting Communities: Community Networks for Social Change," the event brought together community network initiators, creators, practitioners, and enthusiasts to explore the transformative potential of community networks in fostering social change. The event was a platform to raise awareness, facilitate knowledge exchange, build capacity, foster collaboration, and advocate for policies supporting community-driven Internet connectivity in Nepal, especially in marginalized and underserved communities.

For the first time ever in Nepal, the Community Network Xchange event bring together community network practitioners and supporters of community-driven Internet connectivity with the goal of exchanging ideas, knowledge and working as an inspiration for the grassroots connectivity movement. The event's goal is to continuously use the power of information, knowledge and the expertise of community networks to empower communities-especially those that are marginalized and lack access to information-across Nepal. The Community Network Exchange event in Nepal aims to bring together community network initiator, creator, practitioners and enthusiasts to discuss the potential of community networks for social change. The conference, titled "Empowering Voices, Connecting Communities: Community Networks for Social Change" will convene stakeholders, experts, practitioners, and advocates to explore how community networks can be leveraged for social change in Nepal. Key goals include raising awareness, facilitating knowledge exchange, providing capacity-building opportunities, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and creating a platform for advocacy and policy dialogue.

Introduction

The event focus on rural connectivity, last-mile accessibility, and services for indigenous, tribal, hilly, and mountain communities. The event will showcase the stories of diverse community networks, highlight the role of women, and explore the involvement of telecom service providers and ISPs in extending connectivity to the last mile. It also aims to organize local-level exchange programs for learners and barefoot VSAT, wireless, coaxial cable, and fiber network engineers to exchange knowledge and experiences. The CNX also supports national-level gatherings, organizes annual CNX event every year from this year onwards, and forms a consortium for sustainability in Nepal. It also advocates for policy by developing briefing papers on regulatory issues, bringing community networks to policymakers' attention, and discussing sustainable business models.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the CNX-APAC Nepal Chapter were:

1. **Raise Awareness:** To highlight the importance of community networks in empowering marginalized and underserved communities.
2. **Facilitate Knowledge Exchange:** To provide a platform for sharing ideas, experiences, and best practices among community network practitioners and supporters.
3. **Capacity-Building:** To offer training and development opportunities that enhance the skills and expertise of community network builders.
4. **Foster Collaboration:** To encourage partnerships and cooperation among stakeholders, including community members, experts, advocates, telecom service providers, and ISPs.
5. **Advocacy and Policy Dialogue:** To develop and promote policy recommendations supporting the growth and sustainability of community networks in Nepal.

Key Focus Areas

The event emphasized several key focus areas:

- **Rural Connectivity:** Addressing the challenges and opportunities related to extending connectivity to rural and remote areas, including last-mile accessibility.
- **Services for Marginalized Communities:** Exploring ways to provide essential services to indigenous, tribal, hilly, and mountain communities through community networks.
- **Role of Women:** Highlighting and supporting the involvement of women in community network initiatives.
- **Involvement of Telecom Service Providers and ISPs:** Discussing the role of these entities in extending connectivity to underserved areas.

Event Highlights

Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony commenced with a welcome address from **Mr. Bikram Shrestha**, President of the Nepal Internet Foundation. The event was officially inaugurated by **Chief Guest Hon'ble Prithvi Subba Gurung**, Minister of Communication and Technology, followed by remarks from distinguished guests:

Event Highlights

- **Special Guest:** Mr. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister of Education, Science, and Technology
- **Guest of Honor:** Mr. Dr. Shaligram Parajuli, Manager/ Director of Nepal Telecom
- **International Guests:** Mr. Naveed Ul Haq from Internet Society and Mr. Saurabh Srivastava from Digital Empowerment Foundation
- **Guests:** Mr. Vimal Kumar Hoda, Chair Person, Kathmandu Metropolitan, Ward 7 chair.

The session featured a **video presentation** showcasing the importance of community networks in Nepal. Speakers emphasized the need to expand community networks to marginalized communities and stressed the importance of sustainable connectivity models.

Keynote Speakers

The event featured keynote speakers from international experts:

Mr. Naveed Ul Haq, Regional Infrastructure and Connectivity Director, Internet Society
Mr. Saurabh Srivastava, Deputy Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation, India

Their presentations emphasized the global importance of community networks and the role of technology in fostering social inclusion and economic development in underserved areas.

Panel Discussions

Panel 1: Shaping the Future of Connectivity in Nepal and South Asia

Moderated by **Mr. Bikram Shrestha**, this panel featured experts discussing the technical, social, and policy challenges of connectivity. Panelists included:

- **Dr. Shaligram Parajuli**, Nepal Telecom
- **Dr. Pradip Paudyal**, Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA)
- **Mr. Chehen Lama**, CEO of Technology for All
- **Mr. Keshav Nepal**, CEO of Worldlink Communication Ltd
- **Mr. Babu Ram Aryal**, CEO of Delta Law Firm
- **Mr. Saurav Srivastava**, Deputy Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation

Discussions revolved around expanding internet infrastructure to remote areas, the role of telecom service providers, and fostering digital inclusion

Panel Discussions

Panel 2: Bridging the Gender Digital Divide: strategies for inclusivity connectivity

Welcome by Ms. Roja Kiran Basukala Deputy Director, NTA & WIIT executive member and Moderated by **Ms. Shikha Shrestha**, the panel focused on strategies for bridging the gender digital divide and fostering inclusivity in community networks. Panelists included:

- **Ms. Lena Kansakar**, CTO (Acting) of NCELL
- **Mr. Rajan Parajuli**, Executive Director of NREN
- **Anuj Rai Petter**, Program Coordinator of Blue Diamond Society
- **Ms. Dev Kumari Parajuli,** General Secretary of Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA)

The session explored the role of women in community networks and emphasized the importance of gender-inclusive strategies in driving social change.

Lightning Talks

Experts shared their insights on the challenges and solutions to providing connectivity in rural and mountainous areas of Nepal. Notable speakers included:

- **Mr. Bikash Khatri**, Program Director, Nepal Internet Foundation
- **Ms. Melina Shyaula**, Hello World
- **Mr. Rabi Raj Khadka**, Technology For All

These presentations showcased successful community network initiatives and underscored the role of local innovations in addressing connectivity challenges.

Flash Talks: Empowering the Next Generation

Youth speakers, including **Mr. Anand Gautam**, **Mr. Ashirwad Tripathy**, and **Ms. Kabita Bahing**, discussed the potential of young people in driving the future of community networks. They highlighted the need for more youth-focused training programs and opportunities in digital technologies.

Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony was presided over by Closing Chief Guest **Mr. Gagan Kumar Thapa**, Member of the House of Representatives of Nepal and General Secretary of the Nepali Congress. He offered closing remarks, highlighting the government's commitment to improving connectivity in rural areas and supporting community-driven initiatives. The event concluded with a **vote of thanks** from the Nepal Internet Foundation, followed by certificate distributions group photo session, Cultural dance and singing

Key Outcomes

- **Increased Awareness:** The event succeeded in raising awareness about the critical role of community networks in connecting marginalized communities in Nepal.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Attendees benefitted from the exchange of best practices and case studies from successful community network initiatives.
- **Capacity Building:** The event provided training opportunities and helped enhance the expertise of community network practitioners through knowledge sessions and hands-on workshops.
- **Policy Advocacy:** The event helped advance the dialogue on policy recommendations to support the growth and sustainability of community networks, engaging both policymakers and practitioners in meaningful discussions.
- **Strengthened Collaboration:** Partnerships were fostered among diverse stakeholders, including telecom service providers, government officials, community leaders, and international experts, ensuring ongoing cooperation in extending connectivity to remote and underserved areas.

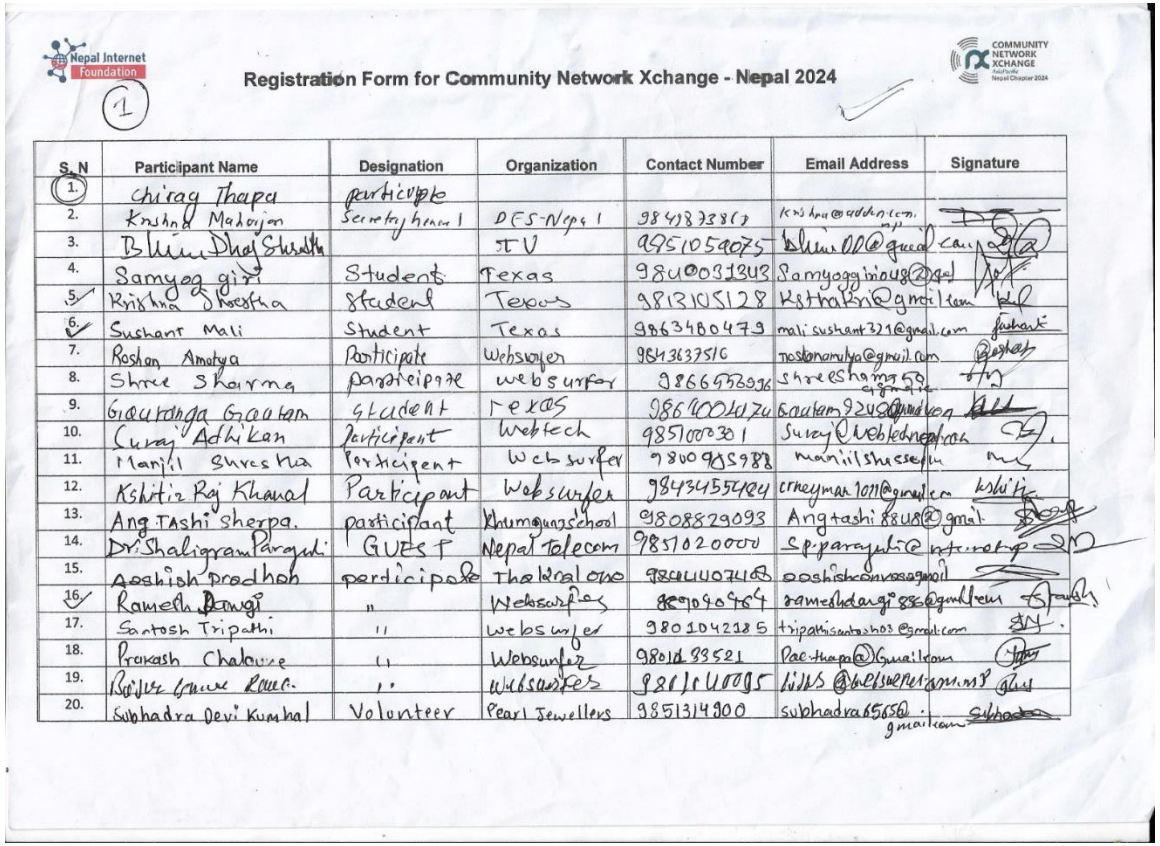
Conclusion

The **Community Network Xchange - Asia Pacific Nepal Chapter 2024** was a successful initiative, fostering collaboration, capacity-building, and advocacy for community-driven connectivity in Nepal. The event provided a crucial platform for stakeholders to come together, exchange ideas, and discuss strategies for empowering marginalized communities through community networks. With plans for annual CNX events, the momentum generated by this event is expected to continue, contributing to the long-term sustainability and expansion of community networks.

Acknowledgments

Nepal Internet Foundation extends its heartfelt thanks to all the speakers, panelists, sponsors, participants, and partners, including the **Digital Empowerment Foundation** and the **Internet Society**, for making this event a grand success.

Annex 1: List of Participants



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(1)

S. N	Participant Name	Designation	Organization	Contact Number	Email Address	Signature
1.	Chirag Thapa	participate				
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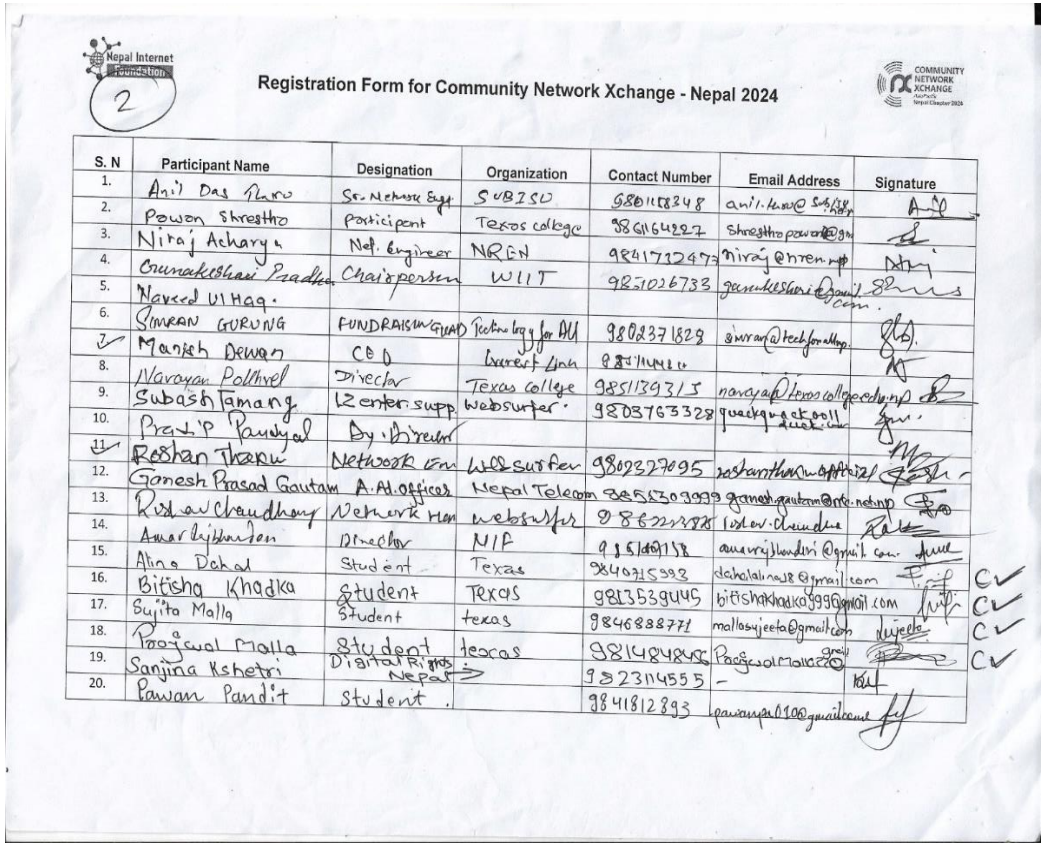
19.	Rajiv Kumar Rauta	"	Websurfers	9811640095	[illegible]	
20.	Subhadra Devi Kumbal	Volunteer	Pearl Jewellers	9851314900	subhadra65858@gmail.com	



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(2)

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18.	Prajwal Malla	Student	texas	9814848445	Prajwalmalla22@gmail.com	
19.	Sanjina Kshetri	Digital Rights Nepal		9823114555	-	
20.	Pawan Pandit	student		9841812893	pawanpan0100@gmail.com	

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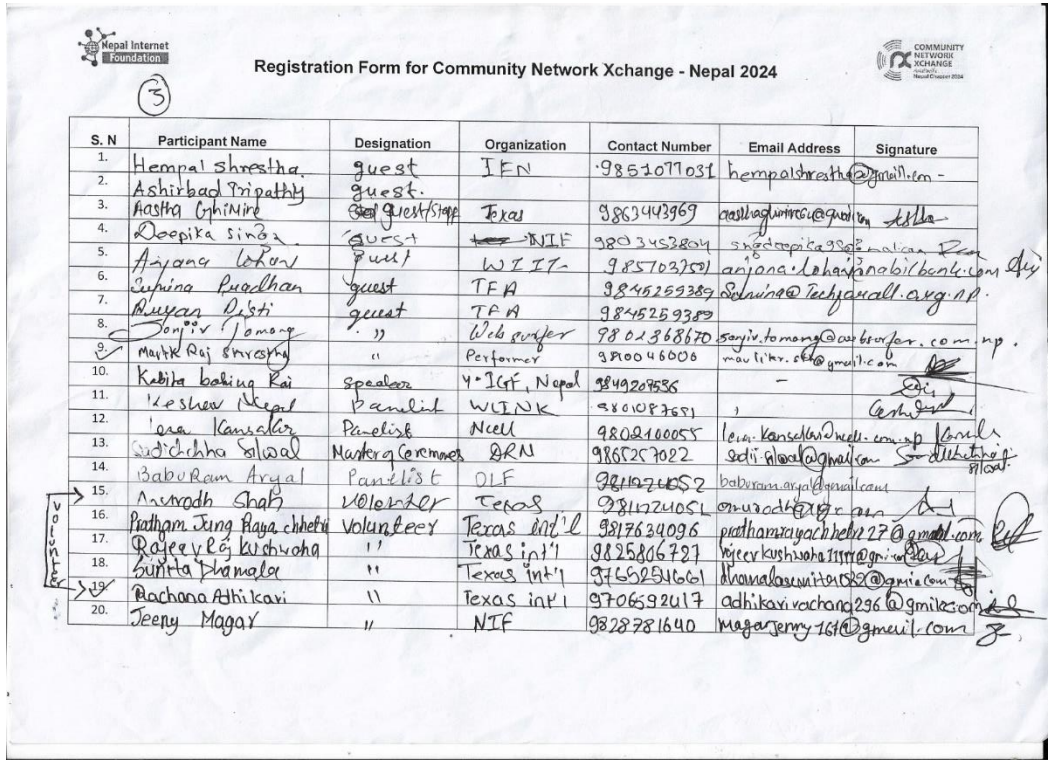

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(3)

S. N	Participant Name	Designation	Organization	Contact Number	Email Address	Signature
1.	Hempal Shrestha	Guest	IEN	9851077031	hempalshrestha@gmail.com	
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4.	Deepika Singh	Guest	~~Staff~~ NIF	9803453804		
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10.	Kabita baking Rai	Speaker	4th IGF, Nepal	9849208586	-	
11.	Keshav Nepal	Panelist	WINK	9801087681		
12.	Isra Kansakar	Panelist	Ncell	9802100055	isra.kansakar@ncell.com.np	
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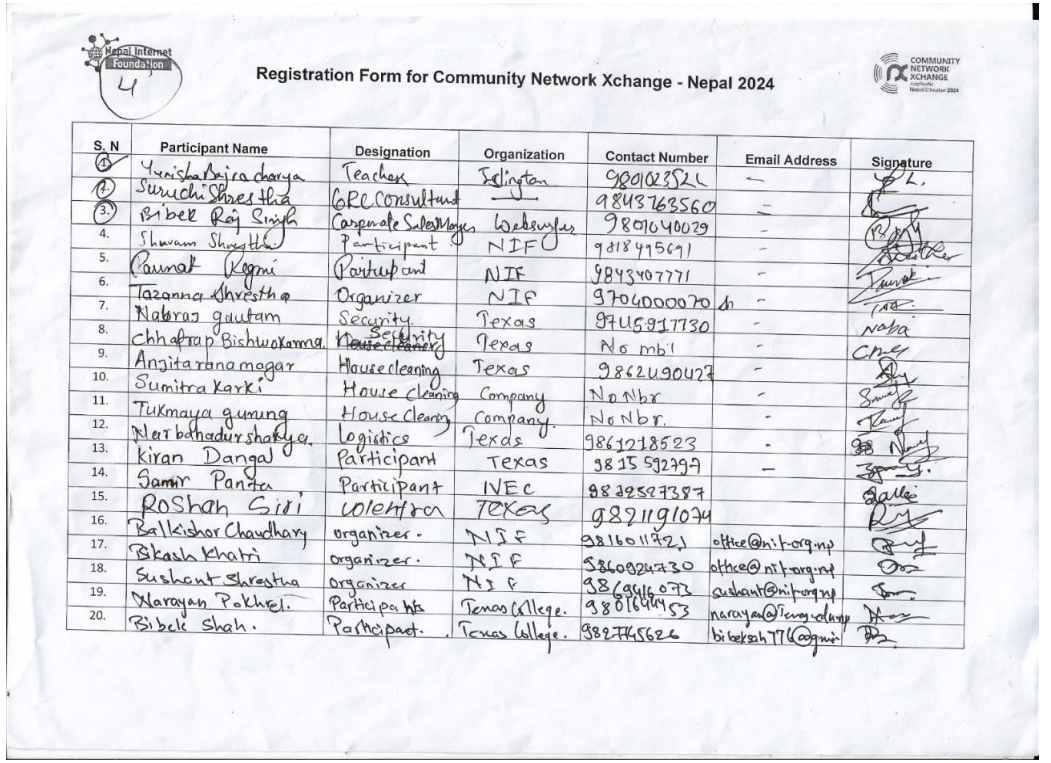
20.	Jeeny Magar	"	NIF	9828781640	magarjenny161@gmail.com	

VOLUNTEER



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(4)

S. N	Participant Name	Designation	Organization	Contact Number	Email Address	Signature
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3.	Bibek Raj Singh	Corporate Sales Mgr.	Websurfer	9801040029	-	
4.	Shuvam Shrestha	Participant	NIF	9818475691	-	
5.	Paunat Kgmi	Participant	NIF	9843407771	-	
6.	Tazanna Shrestha	Organizer	NIF	9704000070	-	
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9.	Anjitarana magar	Housecleaning	Texas	9862490427	-	
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11.	Tukmaya guming	House Cleaning	Company.	No Nbr.	-	
12.	Mer bahadur shakya.	logistics	Texas	9861218523	-	
13.	kiran Dangal	Participant	Texas	9815592799	-	
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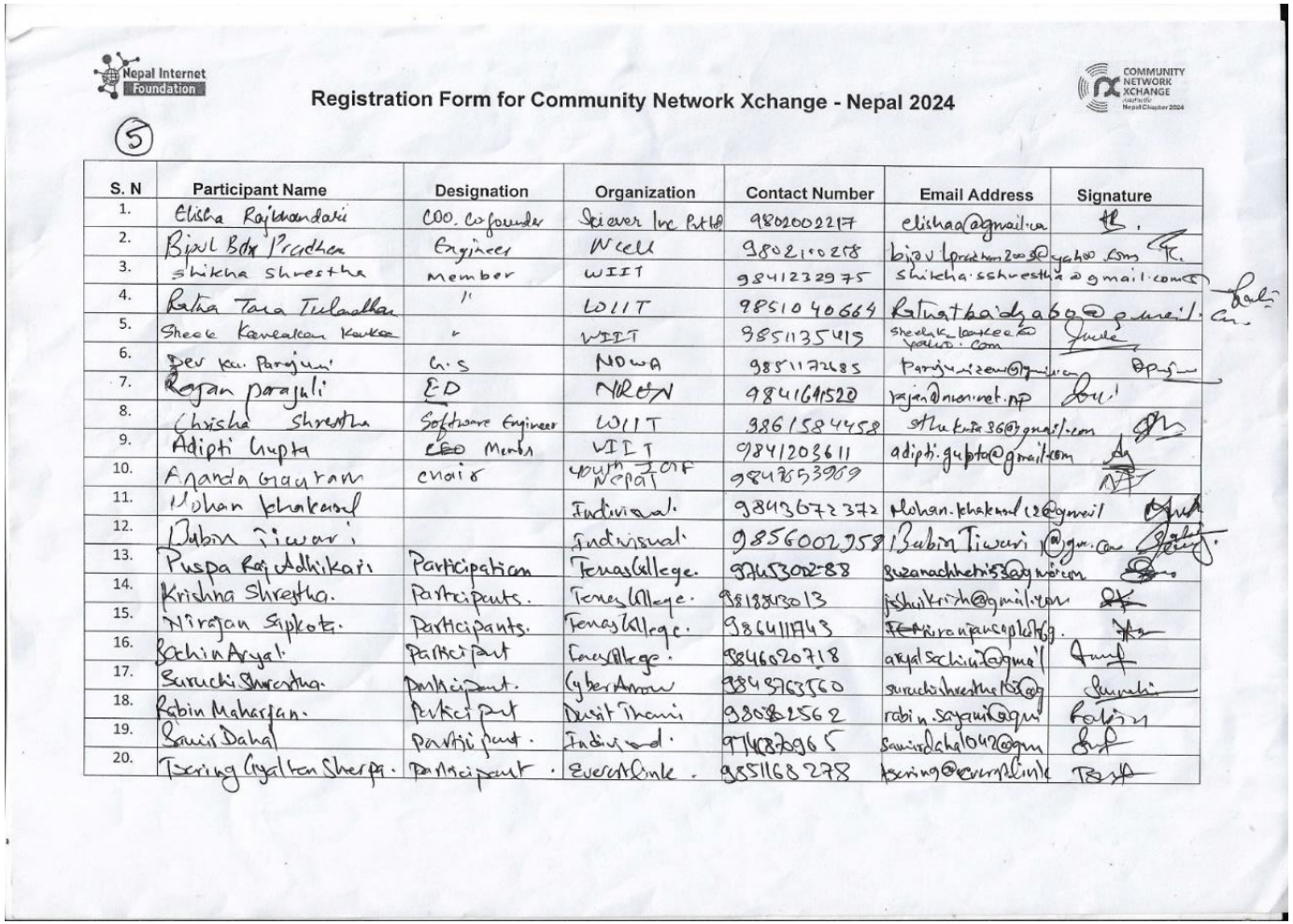

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(5)

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18.	Rabin Maharjan.	Participant	Desit Thami	9808256 2	rabin.sayami@gmail	
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20.	Tsering Gyaltsen Sherpa.	Participant.	EverestLink.	9851168278	tsering@everestlink	

Annex 2: Media Coverage Links

- https://ictside.com/2024/08/26/nepal-to-host-community-network-xchange-asia-pacific-cnx-apac-2024-uniting-leaders-to-drive-social-change-through-connectivity/
- https://www.ajakoartha.com/story/112098
- https://www.arthatantra.com/2024/08/26/188550/
- https://arthasanjal.com/106743
- https://www.onlinepana.com/content/313669/
- https://suryakhabar.com/2024/08/394256/
- https://ictsamachar.com/news/cnx-apac-nepal-chapter-concludes/
- https://ictside.com/2024/08/31/community-network-xchange-asia-pacific-cnx-apac-nepal-chapter-2024-concludes-successfully-in-kathmandu/
- https://www.sunakharinews.com/235467/
- https://arthadabali.com/2024/09/01/64686
- https://www.newskarobar.com/posts/tag/%E0%A4%9F%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%B8%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B8-%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%B2%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%9C%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%86%E0%A4%AF%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%9C%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%A4-%E0%A4%8F%E0%A4%B6
- https://dainiksamaj.com/suchanaprabhidhi/21468/
- https://np.ictframe.com/cnx-apac-nepal-pioneering-community/?utm_source=rss

Annex 3: Photos of Event

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Thank You!