

ALUMNI SMALL GRANT (ASG) 2025

Project Summary Report



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
ASG 2025 Project Details.....	3
Koshi Province.....	3
Madesh Province.....	4
Bagmati Province.....	5
Gandaki Province.....	7
Lumbini Province.....	8
Karnali Province.....	9
Sudhurpaschim Province.....	10
Acknowledgement.....	12

Introduction

The Nepal-U.S. Alumni Network (NUSAN) successfully implemented its flagship initiative, the **Alumni Small Grant (ASG) 2025**, designed to empower U.S. Government (USG) Exchange Alumni to lead impactful, community-based projects across Nepal. The ASG program provides alumni with an opportunity to enhance their professional and leadership skills while contributing to local development through innovative, sustainable, and community-oriented activities.

The ASG 2025 aimed to strengthen the U.S. alumni network by fostering collaboration among alumni, the U.S. Embassy, and local stakeholders. It focused on three central thematic areas: combating illegal immigration, creating job opportunities, and promoting entrepreneurial skills.

This year, NUSAN received 35 competitive applications from alumni across the seven provinces of Nepal. After a rigorous review and selection process, seven outstanding projects — one from each province - were selected for funding and implementation. These projects showcased the creativity, commitment, and leadership of U.S. alumni who utilized their expertise to address pressing community challenges.

UNITED STATES EMBASSY

WINNER

NUSAN

ALUMNI SMALL GRANT - 2025

Celebrating the 7 Winners from 7 provinces!

Name	Province	Project Description
Basanta Adhikari	Koshi Province (IVLP - 2024)	"Educating and Empowering Students on the Values of Entrepreneurship and Economic Freedom"
Asish Thakur	Madhesh Province (ISUSI - 2023)	"Shaping Youths in Entrepreneurship"
Santona Malakar & Navina Gyawali	Bagmati Province (JOMAD 2024)	"चुलोको युवा-उज्जालो / Chulo ko Yuwa - Ujjalo"
Arbab Chaudhary	Lumbini Province (IVLP - 2024)	"Deukhuri Udhym Sangam (Deukhuri Entrepreneur Conclave)"
Bhawana Bhandari & Prakriti Dhakal	Gandaki Province (ICE - 2022)	"उठ्ठे शाला: Enhancing Entrepreneurial Acumen"
Susmita Giri	Karnali Province (IVLP - 2023)	"Lead with Language: English for Future Entrepreneur"
Aayush Awasthi & Lal Bahadur Kunwar	Sudurpaschim Province (Hubert Humphrey Fellowship 2018)	"From local to Global: Enabling Rural Producers for E-Commerce Success"

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Each initiative contributed to local economic empowerment, youth capacity building, and the promotion of entrepreneurship - aligning with NUSAN's vision of fostering an engaged, resilient, and well-connected alumni community. The successful execution of the ASG 2025 demonstrates the collective strength of the alumni network and its dedication to advancing U.S.-Nepal partnership goals through local action and sustainable community development.

ASG 2025 Project Details

Koshi Province

- **ASG Recipient:** Basanta Adhikari (*IVLP*)
- **Title:** Educating and Empowering Youth on the Values of Entrepreneurship and Economic Prosperity
- **Location:** Biratnagar
- **Beneficiaries:** Students from Grades 7-10 (*Government and Private Schools*)

This project aimed to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among young students, equipping them with foundational knowledge and motivation to explore entrepreneurship as a viable career path. Strategic planning meetings were first conducted with local collaborators and education officials to finalize the program's framework, roles, and responsibilities. Letters of coordination were then issued to schools in Biratnagar and nearby areas to secure participation.

Sessions were conducted for students in grades 7 to 10 on key entrepreneurship topics such as the meaning and importance of entrepreneurship, pathways to business creation, challenges in the Nepali market, and the value of economic freedom. Over 1,056 students from 15 schools participated in these sessions.

The final program, held at American Corner Biratnagar on August 14, 2025, brought together 87 enthusiastic students for an interactive learning event. Through group discussions and practical exercises, students learned how entrepreneurship can drive community growth and personal empowerment.

The initiative successfully inspired young learners to view themselves as creators and innovators rather than solely job seekers. By integrating knowledge, critical thinking, and practical exercises, the project helped lay a strong foundation for youth-driven entrepreneurship in Biratnagar.



Madesh Province

- **ASG Recipient:** Asish Thakur (*SUSI*)
- **Title:** Shaping Youth in Entrepreneurship
- **Location:** Janakpur
- **Beneficiaries:** Youth aged 16–40

This project provided hands-on entrepreneurial training through a two-day pickle-making workshop designed to introduce local youth to small-scale business models and product development. The program combined theoretical instruction with hands-on practice to deliver a comprehensive learning experience.

On the first day, participants learned fundamental concepts, including ingredient preparation, cutting and drying techniques, spice measurement, and hygiene standards - emphasizing quality control and consistency. The second day focused on practical application, where participants produced pickles, experimented with packaging and storage, and discussed marketing and pricing strategies.

A total of 38 youth participants benefited from this interactive program, which also included energizing group activities to encourage creativity and teamwork. The training empowered participants to explore entrepreneurship through traditional local products and to recognize business potential within their communities.

By merging skill-building with creativity, the initiative demonstrated how local food processing can become a profitable and empowering business model, particularly for rural youth and women.



Bagmati Province

- **ASG Recipients:** Santona Malakar (IVLP) & Navina Gaywali (UGRAD)
- **Title:** Chulo ko Yuwa – Ujjalo
- **Location:** Kathmandu
- **Beneficiaries:** Culinary Youth Startups

This project provided culinary and entrepreneurial training to young chefs and food enthusiasts, including visually impaired cooks, with a focus on skill enhancement, creativity,

and cross-cultural exchange. In partnership with SATH (*Supportive Action Towards Humanity*), the project organized two comprehensive workshops on July 12 and August 22, 2025.

Participants gained hands-on experience in food preparation, presentation, and customer service. The sessions also emphasized communication, hygiene, and client engagement – vital skills for building successful culinary enterprises.

A highlight of the project was its international collaboration with U.S. teen chef Braden Burby, who shared a motivational video on his culinary journey and the use of digital platforms for global exposure. A panel discussion at iHub, Kathmandu, brought together Public Affairs Chief Mr. Mike Harker, Chef Santosh Shah, and SUSI alumna Ms. Kritika Lamsal, who discussed the intersection of food, culture, and entrepreneurship.

Following the discussions, participants showcased their creations at a food stall exhibition, gaining practical customer interaction experience. The project concluded with a digital storytelling campaign documenting participants' journeys, fostering visibility, and amplifying the voices of young culinary entrepreneurs in Nepal.



Gandaki Province

- **ASG Recipients:** Bhawana Bandari (CEE) & Prakriti Dhakal (CEE)
- **Title:** उद्यम Shala: Enhancing Entrepreneurial Acumen
- **Location:** Pokhara
- **Beneficiaries:** Youth Startups and Entrepreneurs

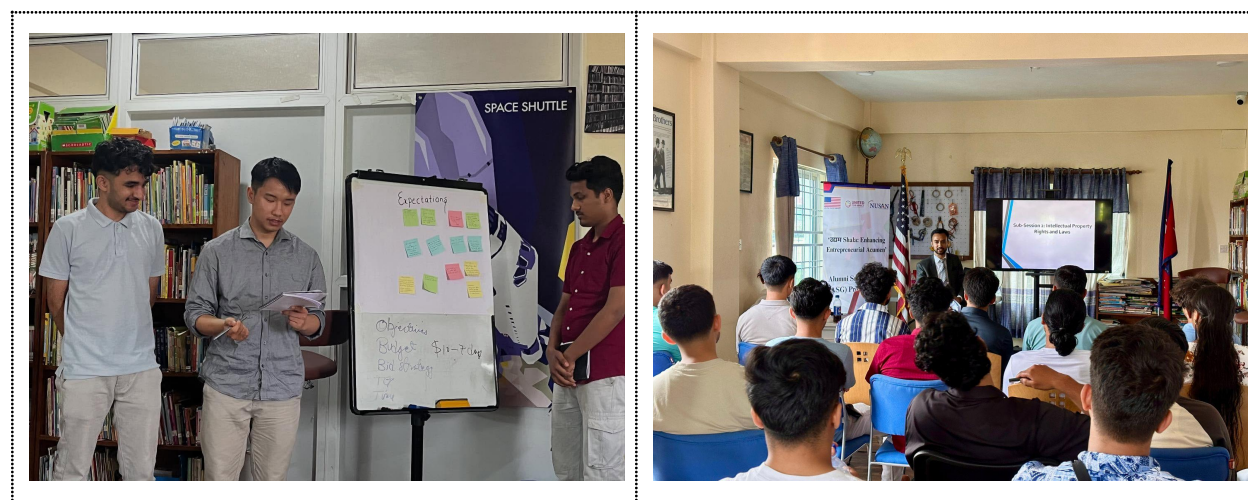
This initiative strengthened the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Gandaki Province through a series of workshops and mentorship sessions focusing on e-commerce, digital marketing, and ethical AI practices.

Following open calls and shortlisting, 20 young entrepreneurs were selected to participate in workshops hosted at American Corner Pokhara. The sessions addressed critical topics such as business registration, intellectual property, marketing strategies, and responsible technology use.

The first workshop (July 19, 2025) introduced participants to legal and operational aspects of e-commerce, while the second workshop (July 20, 2025) focused on digital marketing and ethical AI tools. Pre- and post-assessment surveys captured measurable learning improvements.

A mentorship program ran from July to October 2025, pairing participants with alumni mentors from legal and entrepreneurial backgrounds. Through monthly virtual check-ins, mentors provided technical advice, motivational support, and guidance on applying new skills in practice.

The project not only expanded participants' entrepreneurial knowledge but also built lasting connections within the alumni community. Some participants have already registered their ventures and adopted structured digital strategies - a strong indicator of the project's long-term impact.





Lumbini Province

- **ASG Recipient:** Arnab Chaudhary (IVLP)
- **Title:** Deukhuri Udhyaami Sangam (Deukhuri Entrepreneur Conclave)
- **Location:** Deukhuri, Dang
- **Beneficiaries:** Youth Entrepreneurs / Startups

This dynamic conclave brought together entrepreneurs, policymakers, and development partners for a one-day event focused on innovation and economic resilience in Lumbini Province. After multiple planning meetings with local authorities, private sector representatives, and civil society groups, the event was successfully hosted on August 30, 2025.

The Deukhuri Entrepreneur Conclave featured seven storytelling sessions, four panel discussions, and a business exhibition, drawing active participation from local entrepreneurs and government officials. Participants explored topics including investment readiness, youth-led innovation, and sustainable business models.

The exhibition highlighted local enterprises in agriculture, handicrafts, garments, and food production. Through these engagements, the conclave strengthened collaboration between financial institutions, government bodies, and entrepreneurs — emphasizing the potential of Deukhuri as a regional innovation hub.

The project not only celebrated local entrepreneurship but also catalyzed discussions on scaling up rural enterprises, unlocking access to finance, and promoting youth-led innovation.



Karnali Province

- **ASG Recipient:** Susmita Giri (IVLP)
- **Title:** Lead with Language: English for Future Entrepreneurs
- **Location:** American Spaces, Surkhet
- **Beneficiaries:** Youth

Recognizing that communication is key to business success, this project connected English language learning with entrepreneurial development. It aimed to build participants' confidence in using English for professional, networking, and business purposes.

A total of 30 aspiring entrepreneurs participated in a two-day training program that combined workshops and panel discussions. On Day One, a panel of experts discussed how English proficiency enhances entrepreneurship and access to global opportunities. This was followed by sessions on business email writing and SWOT analysis, equipping participants with practical tools for business planning.

Day Two featured a presentation by a young agricultural entrepreneur on using English and social media for business promotion. A hands-on session using Canva AI taught participants how to design promotional flyers and branding materials.

The project concluded with the launch of “Entrepreneurship Talk”, a monthly forum at the American Corner in Surkhet, which continues to foster collaboration, professional growth, and community learning.



Sudhuraschim Province

- **ASG Recipients:** Ayush Awasthi (EIMUN) & Lal Bahadur Kunwar (*Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship*)
- **Title:** From Local to Global: Enabling Rural Producers for E-Commerce Success
- **Location:** Dhangadhi
- **Beneficiaries:** Local Entrepreneurs

This project empowered rural entrepreneurs by enhancing their digital and e-commerce capabilities, helping them expand their market reach and connect with national and global buyers.

A seven-day outreach campaign identified 19 promising rural entrepreneurs from over 70 candidates across Dhangadhi and nearby wards. A three-day training program followed,

covering social media marketing, Facebook Business Page setup, product photography, storytelling, and online branding.

The training was highly interactive, with alumni mentors and guest speakers sharing practical e-commerce experiences. A final business exhibition allowed participants to showcase their products and engage with potential customers and partners.

By the end of the project, participants had developed new digital business profiles and marketing materials. The program ignited confidence among rural producers to expand their enterprises and explore new opportunities in digital commerce.



Acknowledgement

The Nepal-U.S. Alumni Network (NUSAN) extends its deepest gratitude to the U.S. Embassy, Nepal, for their invaluable financial and strategic support in implementing the Alumni Small Grant (ASG) 2025 across all seven provinces. This initiative would not have been possible without their continued partnership and encouragement.

Special thanks are due to the ASG Sub-Committee members, Swarna Tamrakar, Nikesh Balami, and Gargi Nepal, for their leadership in the announcement, selection, and orientation process.

We sincerely acknowledge the dedication of all ASG 2025 recipients: Basanta Adhikari, Asish Thakur, Santona Malakarm, Navina Gaywali, Bhawana Bandari, Prakriti Dhakal, Arnab Chaudhary, Susmita Giri, Ayush Awasthi, and Lal Bahadur Kunwar for their exemplary implementation and commitment.

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Special acknowledgment goes to the American Spaces in Koshi, Bagmati, Gandaki, and Karnali Provinces for providing venues and coordination support, and to Smita Singh and Nikesh Balami for compiling and editing this report.

Together, these collective efforts ensured the success of the Alumni Small Grant (ASG) 2025, reinforcing the spirit of collaboration, innovation, and community development within the U.S. exchange alumni network in Nepal.