

Solar for Shikha Secondary School



Shikha Higher Secondary School (Grades 1 through 12) is a public school situated in Shikha, a small village located along the Annapurna Circuit, one of the most famous trekking routes of Nepal. The village sits at an elevation of 2000 meters. Most of the people in the village are farmers who toil every day on small terraced fields growing barely enough crops to sustain themselves each year. Besides farming, the village has a tradition of sending its young men to foreign military services as Gurkhas. Bagbir Paija is one such Gurkha. After his retirement from the Royal Gurkha Rifles of Great Britain, Bagbir returned to his village with a mission to better educate the children of Shikha. In the last few years, he has been able to improve the infrastructure of the school dramatically

by helping build a library, two small dormitories, and a computer lab with 15 computers. He has also been instrumental in adding Grades 11 and 12, which came into full session two years ago. Currently, about 350 students ranging from first to twelfth grade attend Shikha Secondary School. Since qualified teachers are not available locally, six teachers from the city area have been recruited. These are all positive developments for the children growing up in this rural part of Nepal. They are now beginning to glimpse the quality education with which they may have a good shot at getting out of poverty and improving their lives.

The Problem

Despite having a computer lab with donated computers, the school has not been able to fully utilize those computers in its students' education because of frequent and long power outages. Power outages will often last for days. This has been a problem for many years now. Without the foundation of reliable power, many learning opportunities for the students at Shikha Secondary School are not possible.



The Solution

Using solar power, it is possible to provide reliable, affordable, sustainable, and scalable power to the school. Once a foundation of reliable power is available, students will be able to take advantage of educational software to learn mathematics, science, language arts, English and other subjects. They will be able to communicate and explore via the internet to create relationships and awareness of the wider world. As they acquire knowledge and skills, a range of options and opportunities will be available that they do not have today.

Making It Happen

The commitment to bring solar power to Shikha was hatched at Seattle's Knowledge Mosaic Inc., where Tilak Pun, an alumnus of Shikha Secondary School, is employed. Now in his early 30's, Tilak grew up in Swanta, a neighboring village of Shikha. He walked an hour every day from his village to Shikha to attend Shikha Secondary School. After graduating from 10th grade, Tilak was recruited as a Gurkha. While stationed in Singapore, he taught himself during his free time and took GCE O level examinations as a private candidate securing five distinctions. Tilak then retired from the Gurkhas to attend college in the United States, where he earned a B.S. in Computer Engineering from the University of Washington. Tilak maintains a strong connection to his village in Nepal, and like Bagbir Paija, is driven by a vision to help the kids in his village get a quality education.

Clif Swiggett, also at Knowledge Mosaic, was inspired by Tilak's vision and passion. Together, they decided to work out a solution to bring reliable power to Shikha Secondary School. A supportive community has formed around this goal. There are now concrete plans to install a solar power system for Shikha Secondary School in late summer this year.

Project Timeline

By April 31st 2011 complete fund raising, system design, and plan for shipping/customs

By May 31st 2011 procure the complete system, test it out, and ship it

August 15th to 31st 2011 install the system in the school and train teachers and students to operate and maintain it

Project Cost

Costs are estimated as follows:

Solar array, batteries, and other components (320Kwh/month):	\$15,000
Replacement parts:	\$1,500
Shipping & Customs:	\$1,500
Total:	\$18,000

All labor required to design and install the solar system will be donated.



Project Team

Tilak Pun has committed \$2000 of his own money to the project and is taking unpaid leave from his job at Knowledge Mosaic to return to Nepal to help install the system.

Bagbir Pajja, Director of the Shikha Secondary School, and his staff and students have pledged financial support and will help install and maintain the system.

Namaste Children's Fund has taken the Shikha School project under their wing and is providing guidance and support. This non-profit, founded by Seattleites Phil Crean and Cora Edmunds, is working to support community-based education for women and children in under served regions of Nepal. For more information, visit <http://www.namastechildrensfund.org>.

Knowledge Mosaic Inc. pledges that the company will match Knowledge Mosaic employee contributions up to \$2,500, for a potential total contribution of \$5000.

Clif Swiggett, his wife Nelda, and their sons Dylan (16) and Jack (14) are helping to coordinate the project and will travel to Nepal with Tilak to help install the system and train the school staff.

A Growing Community of Supporters has been lending additional assistance to make this project possible. This is where you can help. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Solar for Shikha Secondary School project and become a part of this community.

How to Contribute

You can contribute to the project by sending a check to:

Namaste Children's Fund
c/o ArtXchange Gallery
512 First Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98104

Be sure to write "Solar For Shikha Secondary School" in the memo section of your check.

Your entire contribution will go towards the purchase and shipping of the system. Namaste Children's Fund is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

For more information, please contact tilakpun@gmail.com.

Thank you for your support!