



Elevate Nepal Earns Local Trust, Establishes Donor Base to Rebuild Nepalese Primary School

Nonprofit Builds Earthquake-Proof Space for 700 Students to Continue Their Educations

When the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake hit Nepal, it brought centuries-old landmarks tumbling down and reduced entire towns to piles of rubble. With thousands killed and hundreds of thousands more injured or displaced, the earthquake was a devastating blow to the small nation. Just the economic impact – around \$10 billion – was half the country's GDP.



Mancini and Maurer (right and left) work closely with Resham Bal (middle), their In-Country Coordinator, to identify and complete Elevate Nepal projects.

Anthony Mancini and Dan Maurer, two world travelers who had spent months over the past several years trekking, exploring and volunteering in Nepal, immediately knew they wanted to offer their support, resources and expertise to the country's post-earthquake recovery efforts. During the summer of 2015, Mancini and Maurer started a crowdfunding campaign to raise immediate funds for earthquake relief. Then they traveled to Nepal to distribute funds, build temporary shelters and toilets for a school. To continue their efforts, Mancini and Maurer founded Elevate Nepal, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, to help rebuild earthquake-damaged infrastructure in Nepal, including homes, sanitation systems and schools.

Elevate Nepal's First Major Project: Rebuilding the Sarsyu Primary School

With the help of their Nepalese In-Country Coordinator Resham Bal, Mancini and Maurer spent months talking to locals about what projects were most desperately wanted and needed. Listening to the Nepalese people brought them to Sarsyu, a remote village around five hours north of Kathmandu.

Nearly every building in Sarsyu was at least damaged during the Gorkha Earthquake, including the local primary school – and what remained was dangerously unusable. Its destruction was nothing short of tragic for the entire region: The Sarsyu Primary School served more than 700 students, from toddlers to grade 10. Without this resource, these students were forced to travel hours to another school or postpone their educations altogether.

Facts About the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake

- Epicenter was in the Gorkha District of Nepal
- Magnitude 7.8
- Killed 9,000
- Injured 22,000
- \$10 billion in damage

Students in Nepal already faced serious barriers to getting an education. According to UNICEF:

- 770,000 children aged 5-12 are not in school
- Very few schools meet child-friendly school standards
- Only 11% of school buildings are earthquake resistant
- Economically challenged students lag behind wealthier students in literacy and numeracy

The last thing the community in Sarsyu needed was the loss of their primary school – it was vital to the area's families and younger generations. Elevate Nepal committed to the school's rebuilding.

Breaking Ground

With Bal's assistance, Elevate Nepal hired a local builder to help them assess the project. Considering costs, including labor, materials and estimated time to complete the project, they identified a \$85,000 budget. Next steps included:

- Finding a reliable local workforce and earning the community's trust
- Ensuring funds/materials are used appropriately and according to plan
- Completing construction before monsoon season, which could derail progress

Mancini and Maurer frequently traveled to Sarsyu to build relationships and discuss the project with local community members. Eventually, they hired 16 full-time Nepalese workers, in addition to on-the-ground project advisors and accountants.



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The Sarsyu Primary School was reconstructed to meet earthquake standards according to the National Reconstruction Authority, which the Nepalese government oversaw.

As the whole community eagerly awaited their new school, the construction crew chose to work seven days per week to complete the project. Volunteers enthusiastically offered support too. For instance, on the day they poured the concrete roof (all done by hand and without machinery), 150 people from the surrounding area came to help.

Through this close collaboration, they were able to successfully construct a 12-classroom, 9,000-square-foot school. After re-opening its doors in July 2019 ahead of schedule and within budget, Sarsyu Primary School now serves 700 students, providing a safe, dry and earthquake-proof place to learn.

The new and improved school uncovers vast opportunities for Sarsyu's students. The former school was only able to accommodate students up to grade 10 – now, there is room for students through grade 12. With more room and resources, the school expanded its curriculum to include programs such as agriculture, biology, computer science and chemistry. Additionally, the local government donated 40 computers to fill the newly constructed computer lab.

School Highlights



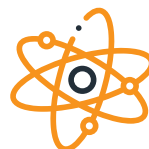
Computer lab with 40 computers



New toilet with clean water and wash basins



Space to accommodate more students



Fully equipped science lab



Kitchen to feed staff and provide snacks



The Sarsyu School during construction and after completion.

Elevate Nepal's Recipe for Success

Partnering with Locals

Elevate Nepal takes on culturally relevant projects that residents want and need, in contrast to many other nonprofits, which come into a country from abroad and begin work without consulting the local community. Elevate Nepal recognizes the importance of listening to locals about what their priorities are in terms of infrastructure. This thoughtful approach helped them discover the Sarsyu Primary School and earned the organization a respected reputation among the Nepalese.

Employing Nepalese Workers

The organization hires the local workforce, giving the community a sense of empowerment, ownership over the projects and transferable skills.

Attracting Strong Donor Base

Mancini and Maurer embarked on an aggressive awareness campaign to attract hundreds of individual donations to fund the school's construction. This included hosting booths at events across the Southwest and organizing an annual *Big Lebowski*-themed fundraiser in Flagstaff, Arizona. The 2018 and 2019 fundraisers were an enormous success, raising nearly \$30,000 to support the project. Several businesses, including Kahtoola, Wild Tonic, Findlay Toyota, West USA and Lyft also sponsored the event.

Selling Nepalese Handicrafts and Coffee

In addition to collecting donations, Mancini and Maurer sold Nepalese handicrafts at the festivals and events they attended. Moreover, they established their own Nepalese coffee brand, Sapana Coffee, in 2018. All proceeds from coffee sales go directly to the organization's humanitarian efforts.



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The biggest reward from Elevate Nepal's months of work and fundraising? Giving the kids in Sarsyu and the surrounding area a comfortable, kid-friendly and earthquake-proof place to learn, study and play. The new Sarsyu Primary School will have an impact that lasts generations.

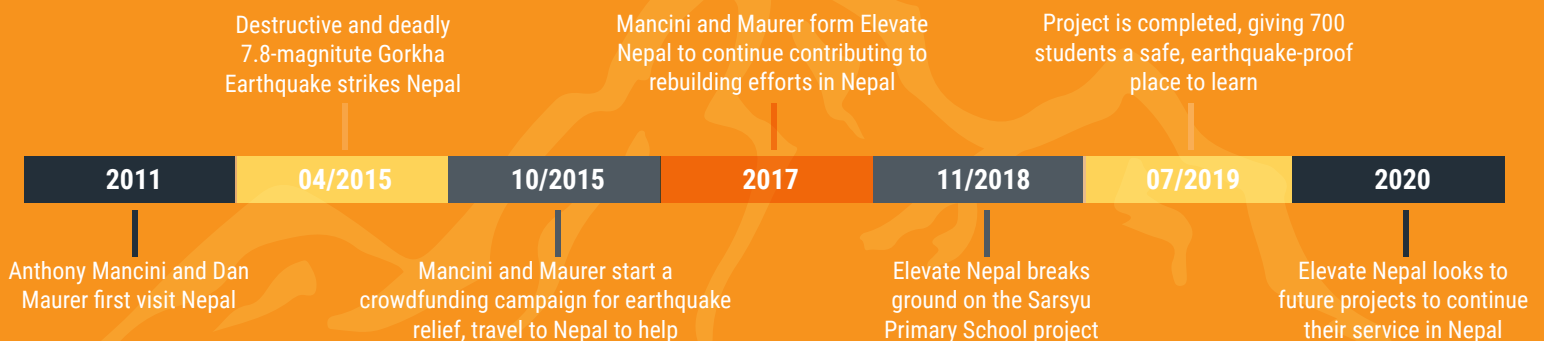
What's Next?

Rebuilding the Sarsyu Primary School was a major accomplishment, and it motivated Elevate Nepal to set other ambitious goals. Upcoming projects include:

- **Establishing Clean Water Infrastructure** – Water pollution and water scarcity are two major issues facing Nepal. Elevate Nepal will focus on rural schools and the immediate surrounding communities to provide clean drinking water and functional toilet systems.
- **Partnering with International Medical Groups to Expand Healthcare** – Elevate Nepal will work with Nepalese medical professionals to implement hygiene education programs at schools near project zones.

Get in touch with Elevate Nepal Director and Co-Founder Anthony Mancini at anthony@elevatenepal.org or 928-699-4988.

Elevate Nepal Over the Years



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