

Proposal for the Establishment of Bhutan Research Center in Nepal

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of South Asia, Bhutan and Nepal stand as two nations closely entwined by their shared geographic, demographic, and strategic significance. Despite these inherent similarities, interactions between the two nations, both at the levels of people and governments, have been limited. This disparity in engagement stands as a missed opportunity to harness the collective potential for growth and development.

Bhutan and Nepal have similar demographic compositions, regional challenges, and opportunities. The limited collaboration has hindered the mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences necessary for addressing these common concerns effectively. Recognizing the imperative to forge stronger ties, there arises an undeniable need for both nations to walk together, to learn from one another, and to embrace each other's perspectives.

The historical hosting of Bhutanese refugees by Nepal and the stalled negotiations between the two nations have further compounded the urgency for enhanced cooperation on pertinent issues. The resumption of talks and the cultivation of camaraderie are paramount to fostering sustainable diplomatic relations.

Here we propose the establishment of a Bhutan Research Center in Nepal to carry out research aimed at digging the shared history tradition, potentials and challenges of the two nations, the legacy of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal so as to facilitate deeper understanding and collaboration between Bhutan and Nepal. This center would serve as a nexus for scholarly inquiry, policy analysis, and cultural exchange, providing a platform for researchers and practitioners to delve into the intricacies of bilateral relations and regional dynamics.

We find Tribhuvan University (TU), renowned for its academic excellence and central location within Kathmandu and with existing knowledge center like Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), as the ideal host institution for this initiative. Leveraging existing infrastructure and academic resources, the center can be strategically positioned to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, including academia, government agencies, and civil society organizations.

The genesis of this endeavor is started by the Bhutanese diaspora, drawing upon their ability and networks to lay the groundwork for collaborative research and dialogue. Over time, the center aims to expand its scope to encompass scholars and practitioners from within Bhutan, fostering a truly inclusive and bilateral approach to knowledge production.

In collaboration with esteemed institutions like the CNAS, TU the Bhutan Research Center can capitalize on existing networks and ability to develop robust modalities for its operation. By harnessing the collective wisdom and resources of both nations, the center can serve as a lighthouse of cooperation and understanding, paving the way for a brighter future characterized by mutual respect and shared prosperity.

Concept

The Bhutan Research Center (BRC) embodies a singular hub for scholarly inquiry, fostering collaborative research, cultural exchange, and policy dialogue between Bhutan and Nepal. Structured as a cohesive unit, the BRC operates with a compact team comprising ten to twelve individuals, including a Principal Investigator tasked with spearheading research endeavors. As a research team, the BRC has a Principal Investigator to provide a leadership role, guiding the team in strategic decision-making, research design, and project management. The head of the CNAS, upon agreement through MOU, shall be the reporting authority of the BRC. The BRC has a team of dedicated professionals including researchers, office assistants, and an accountant, the Principal Investigator ensures the seamless execution of research initiatives and administrative functions.

Recognizing the value of experiential learning, the BRC welcomes aspiring scholars by accepting students as interns. Through hands-on engagement in ongoing research projects, interns gain invaluable insights into the complexities of Bhutan-Nepal relations, contributing to their academic and professional development. Central to its mission, the BRC generates a wealth of knowledge resources in the form of books, references, and research articles. By curating and disseminating these materials, the center fosters a culture of intellectual exchange and knowledge sharing, enriching academic discourse and informing policy discussions.

In line with its commitment to knowledge dissemination, the BRC organizes a diverse array of academic events, including conferences, seminars, workshops, and talk programs. These platforms serve as catalysts for interdisciplinary dialogue, bringing together scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to explore pressing issues of mutual interest. The BRC actively promotes scholarly publications, facilitating the dissemination of research findings through national, regional, and international journals. By amplifying the voices of researchers from Bhutan and Nepal, the center contributes to global academic discourse, enriching understanding and perspectives on regional dynamics.

In partnership with esteemed institutions such as the CNAS, TU, the BRC leverages collaborative networks and resources to enhance its operational capacity. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CNAS TU, the BRC seeks access to dedicated rooms and working stations for a conducive environment for research and collaboration. The BRC's management team functions as the backbone of the center, oversees day-to-day operations, ensure efficient allocation of resources, and draft and implement organizational objectives. By synergizing research, education, and outreach efforts, the BRC aims to form a dynamic platform for fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between Bhutan and Nepal, advancing shared goals of peace, prosperity, and sustainable development.

Objective: The objective of the Bhutan Research Center (BRC) is to facilitate collaborative research, knowledge management and exchange, and cultural understanding between Bhutan and Nepal. By fostering interdisciplinary inquiry and dialogue, the BRC seeks to deepen scholarly engagement, inform policymaking, and promote mutual cooperation for the benefit of both nations.

Mission: The mission of the Bhutan Research Center is to serve as a premier platform for academic inquiry, policy analysis, and cultural exchange, advancing understanding and cooperation between Bhutan and Nepal. Through rigorous research, educational initiatives, and outreach programs, the BRC aims to cultivate a vibrant intellectual community committed to addressing shared challenges and opportunities in the region.

Vision: The vision of the Bhutan Research Center is to be a leading catalyst for fostering sustainable partnerships and promoting cross-cultural understanding between Bhutan and Nepal. By nurturing a collaborative ecosystem of scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, the BRC envisions a future characterized by mutual respect, dialogue, and inclusive development across borders.

Goal: The goal of the Bhutan Research Center is to establish itself as a premier institution for research excellence, knowledge dissemination, and capacity building in the field of Bhutan-Nepal relations. By conducting high-impact research, training the next generation of scholars, and engaging with diverse stakeholders, the BRC aims to contribute to informed decision-making, regional cooperation, and positive social change.

Disclaimer: The BRC upholds principles of neutrality, non-partisanship, and non-alignment, steadfastly refraining from taking sides in political debates or conflicts in Nepal, Bhutan, or beyond. However, it remains committed to the pursuit of knowledge through rigorous research, uncovering truths, fostering dialogue, and promoting understanding.

Budget

To meet its budgetary needs, the Bhutan Research Center (BRC) will employ a multifaceted approach, leveraging various strategies to ensure financial sustainability:

Donor Engagement: Actively seek financial support from individual donors who are passionate about promoting research and cross-cultural understanding.

Corporate Sponsorships: Collaborate with businesses and corporations in Nepal, the region, and abroad to secure sponsorships and funding for specific research projects or events.

Grant Funding: Pursue grants from national, regional, and international organizations that support academic research, cultural exchange, and bilateral cooperation.

Endowment Funds: Establish endowment funds to secure long-term financial stability, with returns from investments contributing to the operational expenses of the center.

Membership Programs: Offer membership programs for individuals and organizations interested in supporting the BRC financially, providing exclusive benefits and access to research resources.

Fundraising Events: Organize fundraising events such as galas, auctions, or charity concerts to generate revenue and raise awareness about the BRC's mission.

Crowdfunding Campaigns: Launch online crowdfunding campaigns to engage a broader audience and solicit small donations from supporters worldwide.

Strategic Partnerships: Forge strategic partnerships with academic institutions, think tanks, and research centers to collaborate on joint projects and secure funding opportunities.

Government Grants: Explore opportunities for government grants at the national and international levels, especially those focused on promoting education, research, and cultural exchange.

Research Collaborations: Collaborate with other research institutions on joint research projects, leveraging shared resources and funding opportunities.

Consulting Services: Offer consulting services to government agencies, NGOs, and businesses based on the expertise of the BRC team, generating additional revenue streams.

Publication Sales: Generate revenue through the sale of publications, research reports, and scholarly journals produced by the BRC.

Conference Sponsorships: Secure sponsorships from organizations and businesses interested in supporting academic conferences, seminars, and workshops organized by the BRC.

Corporate Partnerships: Establish partnerships with corporate entities for sponsored research initiatives or specialized training programs, generating revenue while fulfilling corporate social responsibility objectives.

Alumni Contributions: Engage alumni networks of universities and academic institutions to solicit donations and support from individuals who have benefited from the BRC's programs.

Online Merchandise: Create and sell branded merchandise such as apparel, stationery, or accessories online to generate supplemental income for the center.

Grassroots Fundraising: Organize grassroots fundraising campaigns within local communities to garner support and contributions from individuals passionate about the BRC's mission.

Government Contracts: Bid for government contracts related to research, consultancy, or training services, providing a steady source of income for the center.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives: Partner with corporations engaged in CSR activities to secure funding for specific research projects aligned with their social impact goals.

Special Events Sponsorships: Seek sponsorships from businesses and organizations for special events hosted by the BRC, such as symposiums, film screenings, or cultural exhibitions.

Subscription Services: Offer subscription-based access to premium research content, databases, or online courses, providing a recurring revenue stream for the center.

Collaborative Fundraising Campaigns: Collaborate with other nonprofit organizations or initiatives on joint fundraising campaigns to expand outreach and pool resources effectively.

Grassroots Donor Recognition: Acknowledge and publicly recognize grassroots donors through social media, newsletters, or dedicated events to cultivate a culture of giving within the community.

Patronage Programs: Establish patronage programs where individuals or organizations can provide ongoing support through regular contributions or pledges, ensuring consistent funding for the BRC's activities.

Legacy Giving: Encourage supporters to include the BRC in their estate planning and wills, allowing them to leave a lasting legacy and support the center's mission for generations to come.

Expected Outputs

Academic Publications: Publish scholarly articles, papers, and books based on the research conducted by BRC scholars and researchers.

Annual Reports: Publish annual reports summarizing the activities, achievements, and impact of the BRC over the course of each year.

Collaborative Projects: Initiate collaborative research projects with other institutions, universities, and research centers to address pressing issues of mutual interest.

Collaborative Publications: Collaborate with partner organizations and academic institutions to co-publish research outputs and joint publications.

Conference Participation: Participate in national, regional, and international conferences to present research findings and engage with the global academic community.

Continuous Evaluation: Continuously evaluate and assess the quality, relevance, and impact of BRC's outputs and activities to ensure ongoing improvement and effectiveness.

Cross-Border Dialogues: Facilitate cross-border dialogues and exchanges between scholars, policymakers, and stakeholders from Bhutan and Nepal.

Cultural Events: Organize cultural events, film screenings, art exhibitions, and performances to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

Database Creation: Develop and maintain a comprehensive database of research materials, datasets, and resources related to Bhutan-Nepal studies.

Research Reports: Produce comprehensive research reports on various aspects of Bhutan-Nepal relations, regional dynamics, and cross-cultural issues.

Impact Assessment: Conduct impact assessments to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of BRC's research outputs and activities in advancing its mission and objectives.

Internship Opportunities: Offer internship programs for students and young scholars to gain practical experience in research and academic settings.

Media Outreach: Engage with the media to disseminate research findings, participate in interviews, and contribute to public discourse on regional issues.

Online Resources: Create and maintain an online repository of research publications, articles, and multimedia content accessible to a global audience.

Online Webinars: Host online webinars and virtual events to reach a broader audience and facilitate knowledge exchange and networking opportunities.

Policy Advocacy: Engage in policy advocacy efforts to raise awareness and influence decision-makers on issues relevant to Bhutan-Nepal relations.

Policy Briefs: Develop succinct policy briefs to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers in Bhutan, Nepal, and other relevant stakeholders.

Policy Dialogues: Facilitate policy dialogues and stakeholder consultations to address emerging challenges and opportunities in Bhutan-Nepal relations.

Policy Workshops: Organize policy workshops and roundtable discussions to facilitate evidence-based policymaking and dialogue between researchers and policymakers.

Public Engagement: Engage with local communities through outreach programs, public forums, and community-based initiatives to promote awareness and understanding.

Public Lectures: Deliver public lectures and talks on topics related to Bhutan-Nepal relations, cultural heritage, and regional cooperation.

Publication of Books:

Research Fellowships: Offer research fellowships and grants to support scholars and researchers conducting research on Bhutan-Nepal relations.

Seminar Series: Organize regular seminars, workshops, and panel discussions to facilitate dialogue and knowledge sharing among academics, policymakers, and practitioners.

Stakeholder Engagement: Engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to foster collaboration and partnerships.

Support for publication of books, journal articles:

Training Programs: Conduct training programs and capacity-building workshops for students, researchers, and professionals interested in Bhutan-Nepal studies.

Major Annual Activities

[Expected Outputs]

2024

1. Sign MOU with partnering institution
2. Establish BRC office and infrastructure
3. Hire research staff and administrative personnel
4. Purchase necessary logistics for research
5. Share responsibilities among team members
6. Conduct research on Bhutanese refugee issue
7. Organize seminar on Bhutan-Nepal relations
8. Publish academic articles on cultural heritage
9. Host public lecture on regional cooperation
10. Participate in international conference
11. Hold monthly meetings to coordinate activities
12. Provide periodic updates to stakeholders
13. Publish annual report summarizing activities
14. Prepare budget reports and financial projections
15. Conduct auditing of financial accounts

- [Collaboration Agreement]
- [Office Establishment]
- [Human Resources]
- [Procurement]
- [Delegation of Duties]
- [Research Reports, Policy Briefs]
- [Seminar Series]
- [Academic Publications]
- [Public Lectures]
- [Conference Participation]
- [Monthly Meetings]
- [Stakeholder Communication]
- [Annual Reports]
- [Financial Reporting]
- [Financial Audits]

2025

1. Conduct internship program for students
2. Organize workshop on cross-border dialogue
3. Develop policy brief on environmental sustainability
4. Collaborate with partner institution on joint research Publications]
5. Attend national seminar on migration
6. Hold monthly meetings to review progress
7. Provide updates on ongoing projects to stakeholders
8. Submit budget reports and financial forecasts
9. Prepare for annual audit
10. Conduct research fellowship program
11. Engage in fundraising efforts
12. Collaborate with government agency on policy study

- [Internship Opportunities]
- [Training Programs, Collaborative Projects]
- [Policy Briefs]
- [Collaborative Projects, Collaborative
- [Seminar Series, Policy Advocacy]
- [Monthly Meetings]
- [Stakeholder Updates]
- [Financial Reporting]
- [Financial Audits]
- [Research Fellowships]
- [Fundraising Campaigns]
- [Policy Advocacy, Collaborative Projects]

2026

1. Host cultural event showcasing Bhutanese traditions
2. Publish annual report summarizing BRC's activities
3. Engage in media outreach to discuss research findings
4. Conduct online webinar on regional cooperation
5. Organize policy workshop on refugee resettlement
6. Hold monthly meetings to evaluate progress
7. Share updates on ongoing research projects
8. Review budget and financial performance
9. Prepare for upcoming audit
10. Expand outreach efforts
11. Collaborate with international partners
12. Plan for upcoming stakeholder engagement events

- [Cultural Events]
- [Annual Reports]
- [Media Outreach]
- [Online Webinars]
- [Policy Workshops]
- [Monthly Evaluations]
- [Research Progress Updates]
- [Financial Review]
- [Audit Preparation]
- [Community Engagement]
- [International Partnerships]
- [Stakeholder Engagement]

2027

1. Evaluate impact of BRC's research and activities	[Impact Assessment]
2. Develop database of research materials	[Database Creation]
3. Offer research fellowship for scholars	[Research Fellowships]
4. Engage in grassroots fundraising campaign	[Grassroots Fundraising]
5. Collaborate with government agency on policy study	[Policy Advocacy, Collaborative Projects]
6. Hold monthly meetings to assess performance	[Performance Evaluation]
7. Share progress updates with stakeholders	[Stakeholder Updates]
8. Review and adjust budget as needed	[Budget Review and Adjustment]
9. Prepare for annual audit	[Audit Preparation]
10. Strengthen partnerships with academic institutions	[Academic Collaborations]
11. Implement strategies for increasing donor engagement	[Donor Engagement Strategies]
12. Explore new avenues for funding	[Funding Diversification]

2028

1. Conduct policy dialogue on bilateral relations	[Policy Dialogues]
2. Host international conference on South Asian studies Publications, Public Lectures]	[Conference Participation, Academic Publications, Public Lectures]
3. Initiate mentorship program for young researchers	[Training Programs]
4. Organize stakeholder consultation on education Workshops]	[Stakeholder Engagement, Policy Workshops]
5. Publish research findings on regional cooperation	[Research Reports, Academic Publications]
6. Hold monthly meetings to review final year activities	[Year-End Review]
7. Prepare and present final annual report	[Annual Report Presentation]
8. Submit final budget and financial statements	[Financial Reporting]
9. Conduct comprehensive year-end audit	[Year-End Audit]
10. Plan for future sustainability and growth	[Strategic Planning]

Funding

Here's a budget estimate for the activities mentioned above in USD:

Year / Activity	Estimated Cost (USD)
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2024

Office Establishment	\$50,000
Human Resources (Salaries and Benefits)	\$200,000
Procurement (Logistics, Equipment)	\$30,000
Research and Publications	\$20,000

Seminar Series	\$10,000
Annual Reports	\$5,000
Monthly Meetings	\$2,000
Financial Reporting and Audits	\$10,000
Miscellaneous	\$32,700
Total	\$359,700

2025

Training Programs	\$15,000
Collaborative Projects	\$25,000
Policy Briefs	\$8,000
Seminar Series	\$10,000
Annual Reports	\$5,000
Monthly Meetings	\$2,000
Financial Reporting and Audits	\$10,000
Miscellaneous	\$20,300
Total	\$95,300

2026

Cultural Events	\$20,000
Media Outreach	\$5,000
Online Webinars	\$8,000
Policy Workshops	\$12,000
Annual Reports	\$5,000
Monthly Meetings	\$2,000
Financial Reporting and Audits	\$10,000
Miscellaneous	\$15,700
Total	\$78,700

2027

Impact Assessment	\$15,000
Database Creation	\$10,000
Research Fellowships	\$20,000
Grassroots Fundraising	\$25,000
Policy Advocacy and Collaborative Projects	\$15,000
Monthly Meetings	\$2,000
Financial Reporting and Audits	\$10,000
Miscellaneous	\$17,500
Total	\$114,500

2028

Policy Dialogues	\$10,000
Conference Participation, Publications, Lectures	\$30,000
Training Programs	\$15,000
Stakeholder Engagement, Policy Workshops	\$15,000
Research Reports, Publications	\$20,000
Year-End Review	\$5,000
Annual Report Presentation	\$5,000
Financial Reporting and Audits	\$10,000
Miscellaneous	\$18,500
Total	\$128,500
Grand Total for 5 Years	\$776,700

Please note that these estimates are approximate and may vary based on specific circumstances and fluctuations in costs.