Welcome Messages

Welcome from the MICD Team

Dear friends,

Seasonal Greetings !!

We are glad to bring you the first issue of MICD Newsletter that includes updates, information and activities about the MICD Master’s Program in particular, as well as glimpses of the CDN Network, of which we are proud to be a constituent member.

We would like to begin by thanking all the faculty members, lecturers and experts, who over the period have shared their precious insights, extensive experience and impressive expertise with our students, lacking relevant topics about development discourses and practice going on in our country.

Our appreciation goes also to the students who are currently attending the First Edition of MICD Master’s Program, whose feedback and engagement has brought us not only a unique learning and rewarding experience, but also it represents a building block for further enhancement and excellence in teaching and learning at MICD.

In this moment, many activities are under way to prepare for the Second Edition of the Program, and thus the arrival of the second batch of students in a few weeks.

In 2013, we have celebrated many successes and achieved important objectives; now we look forward to a great 2014 for getting back to the fundamentals that will encourage MICD to drive future innovation.

We wish you to enjoy reading the MICD Newsletter that our students have prepared. We would like to extend our greetings and sincere thanks to Midwestern University, the University of Pavia, the Cooperation and Development Network (CDN) of Pavia and all the colleagues in Palestine, Colombia and Kenya for their precious support and insights.

Thanking the students of the First Edition of MICD Program for making our journey successful and achievable, we look forward to a fabulous New Year 2014!

Best wishes,

The MICD Team

Welcome from Mid-western University (MU)

Welcome to Mid-western University of Nepal!

Mid-western University’s teaching and research are innovative, collaborative, enterprising and characterized by flexible endeavors; we are dedicated to developing innovative programs to address emerging professions and needs of our country.

Why to focus on development and international cooperation?

Nepal is in the midst of experiencing lengthy transition and greater innovation. To cope with the ongoing challenges that Nepal is faced with at all levels, there is a need of skilled and well-trained human resources who can think about development challenges and trends from a global perspective but act locally, that is in our country.

MICD – Master in International Cooperation and Development - is a unique program, as much as are its faculty members, students and administration. MICD attracts scholars, practitioners and researchers through its emphasis on close working links with universities, development agencies, government bodies, civil organizations and other institutions. At the same time, MICD emphasizes the importance of a solid base of general skills and knowledge through a carefully designed Core Curriculum, which was conceived with an eye to needs and requirements of our Nepali society and its labor market.

A special thank goes to the MICD Students and Team, who wisely have prepared this Newsletter.

We are proud to invite you to further explore our University and become better acquainted with our ambitions and bright future. We welcome you to learn more about what MICD Program can offer you!
In conclusion, for achieving accelerated economic growth and ensuring sustainable development, it is important that Nepal embrace the expansion of its potential sectors, strengthen its institutional capacity and pursue socio-economic transformation as its national policy.

By MICD Student
Ms. Upasna Acharya, research intern at Women in Environment, Kathmandu.

Role of consulting engineers in infrastructure development

Nepal faces a challenge to bring economic transformation to help fulfill aspirations of the people. Building a robust infrastructure is the backbone of a country’s sustainable economic transformation. But even in the ongoing political transition period, both public and private sector investment in infrastructures are unable to gain momentum. Infrastructure development, both economic and social, is one of the major determinants of development.

There are clear linkages between infrastructure investment and key indicators of social wellbeing, such as health care, water and sanitation, housing, human capital accumulation and electrification, all of which are essential in addressing poverty challenges. The consulting services related to engineering, architecture, construction and physical planning play a vital role in the development activities and, therefore, cannot be overlooked.

Nepal lacks in major infrastructure services even when we have potential of competent engineers and architects. Meeting the international criteria, Nepalese engineers and architects are hired and employed by the expatriate consulting firms and other multilateral organizations to work in the different parts of the world. Therefore, the country can highly benefit from the potential resources if the government focuses and develops policies to invest in the construction of essential infrastructures. Despite the focus in the construction of mega projects, consulting engineers also need to be aware about the other areas like agriculture, low-cost housing with consideration for disaster resistance, employment generation schemes, plans and projects. The consulting engineers need to be innovative and come up with ideas and solutions which will meet clients’ requirements for faster, cost effective and modern solutions, which are appropriate to the local context.

Rapidly changing trends in technical and economic fields require drastic changes in the traditional sphere of activities of the consulting engineers. Arranging finance, contracting and project management practices open new possibilities in the field for consulting engineers, who may have to widen the scope of their services. Again, uncontrolled movements of people as an impact of globalization have been affecting the infrastructure development of the country. Opportunities and facilities being provided by other countries have attracted a lot of middle level technical human resources of the country to go abroad for work. Such a flow has consequently created a vacuum in the availability of the middle level technical human resource at home.

Nepal receives a large amount of foreign aids. It is often seen that the foreign aids are misspent by the officials. Corruption has become one of the severe problems hindering the economic development of Nepal. Recently, formalization and institutionalization of technical audit system became possible which is the preventive measures evaluating the deficiencies or pointing out the areas of improvement of any project works. As per the National Vigilance Center (NVC), till the date around 342 projects were monitored through the technical audit system in Nepal. Such kind of corruption controlling and preventing mechanisms are essential for effective implementation of development works and make each and every person involved in project works to be accountable towards the economic development of the country.

By MICD Student
Er. Pravakar Thapa, Executive Officer at Society of Consulting Architectural and Engineering Firms (SCAEF), Nepal.
MICD Students go for exposure visit to Markhu

In addition to classroom learning at MICD, it is very much crucial for the students to be exposed to practical activities and experiences, always linked to course modules. In this regard, on the 31st August 2013, the MICD students went for an field visit to understand rural integrated livelihood patterns. The exposure enabled us to put in practice what we had learned in the course modules, such as Local Economic Development, Climate Change or others. During the exposure visit we were accompanied by the MICD Team members, including Dr. Dineshraj Bhuju, Mr. Prakash Sharma, Dr. Lucia Russo, Ms. Susmita Hamal and Ms. Richa Rana. Gathered early in the morning at MICD Office, we set off for Markhu as per the program schedule.

After one hour of travel, the bus stopped at Naubise bazaar where we had rest for a while and moved again. We stopped at Mulchola, Dhading to observe rainbow trout farming at ‘Agro Top Industries Company Nepal Limited’. We all asked questions to the people working there, who in return cooperated very well. We came to know that trout has a higher demand in better price, about Nrs 1500/kg in the nearby Kathmandu market, especially in Five Stars Hotels. Rather it has potentialities in terms of marketing and profitability creating many job opportunities for the local people. After gathering information, our journey continued again towards Markhu.

After some hours, we stopped in our next destination, Bajrabarahi, one of the famous temples of the Makawanpur district. We spent there some time on taking photos and observing local life. Then our journey continued again towards Markhu.

After half an hour discussion and interaction, we set off to reach Markhu. While some of us continued the journey from there on foot, others went by bus. It was very memorable experience to have trekking ups and downs through the jungle for nearly 2 hours. Bringing to an end our journey of that day, we arrived at Markhu, a small but beautiful place, famous for boating and where one can view the beautiful dam clearly. After dinner, we gathered for review and reporting of our day visits. Everyone shared experiences about the places visited and things noticed.

Next morning, we experienced close-up view from the dam side of Kulekhani, which was so silent and the dam water reservoir adding beauty to the area. We got back to the hotel, had breakfast and continued our journey as we had to return to Kathmandu that afternoon. We had lunch in Sinseri, took rest for some time and moved from there. We also visited Dakshinkali Temple on the way. Our journey was about to finish. Prakash Sir thanked the management team and requested others to share their experiences about the trip. Everyone thanked the management team stating that they really had a good time visiting and learning about places, as it was the first time that we were in any field trip of the college. Finally, we reached MICD office in Sanepa, where we had started our journey from. We all departed from there promising to meet in the class next day.

To conclude, it was one of the greatest opportunities that the students have ever had in terms of learning about various socio-economic, cultural, religious, geographic and environmental aspects of rural places, as well as discovering various potentialities and challenges for local economic development. We are really thankful to the MICD Team for this initiative and all participants for their contributions to make it fruitful, historic, and memorable.

By MICD Student
Ms. Kabita Devkota, English teacher, Kathmandu.

MICD Students tell about their visit to SATHI

Field trip is a crucial part of development studies, since it provides an opportunity to broaden the knowledge base and gain first-hand information. As a part of our course module on Gender Studies, we the students of MICD had organized one day visit to the Nepalese NGO SATHI. The visit took place on 24th September 2013.

During our visit to this organization we were guided by Mrs. Suveckyha Rana, who not only briefed us about the work and contribution of SATHI for gender empowerment, but also shared experiences via short presentations on the programs and projects implemented so far. SATHI is a leading NGO working actively in the sector of Gender Based Violence since 1995. It is a pioneer organization to address sexual gender based violence and run shelter homes. Presently, the NGO is carrying out awareness campaigns, conducting studies on domestic violence, organizing skill enhancement trainings and working with Government bodies and strategic partners for mainstreaming gender equality. Some of its major achievements include mobilizing women participation in the peace process, lobbying for women rights, raising awareness to end chhuapadi system among others.

Our visit to SATHI was both fruitful and interactive. The leaflets and brochures provided also helped us gain further information. This kind of field visit must be organized in future for enhancing our practical knowledge and understanding.

By MICD Student
Ms. Upasna Acharya, research intern at Women in Environment, Kathmandu.
Microfinance: a missile for women’s empowerment

Microfinance, pioneered by Muhammad Yunus (Nobel Laureate in 2006), is relatively an innovation in the age-old banking industry. Microfinance has been serving as one of the greatest financial instruments providing various credit and non-credit financial services such as loans, savings, pensions, insurance, remittances and so on, for approximately 33 years in developing countries. This instrument has gained global recognition today not only as a powerful tool for reducing poverty and empowering women, but also as a promising sector of financing banks, financial organizations and several NGOs. It has succeeded in reducing poverty and improving the socio-economic condition of women worldwide. Nowadays, financial services enable the poor to increase and diversify their incomes and build assets, which in turn allow them to reduce and mitigate risks, make choices, and plan for the future. Providing sound financial services for the poor is, in fact, a specialized activity which requires expertise and a long-term commitment. In the present article, I will try to demonstrate how Microfinance can be a missile for women’s empowerment.

Microfinance consists of a circle of borrowing, saving and investing in order to help climb out of poverty; it represents a key missile to reduce poverty through the concept of ‘banking the unbankable’ mostly in developing countries. Furthermore, it is designed to meet the needs of the poor as it has a very low interest rate and no collateral requirements.

Microfinance has been contributing not only in curbing poverty and building financial sustainability, but also in creating a series of ‘virtuous spirals’ for economic empowerment, increased well-being and social political empowerment of many women, thereby addressing gender equality and empowerment (Mayoux and Hartl, 2006). Empowerment through Microfinance can be identified and measured with respect to various dimensions: impact on decision making, on self-confidence of women, on their status at home, on family relationship and incidence of domestic violence, on their involvement in the community, on their political empowerment and rights.

Among others, Nirdhan Utthan Bank in Nepal found women clients making decisions about business investments with their husbands, rather than husbands making such decisions (Chadra and Singh, 2001). In addition to impact on decision-making power and agency, Microfinance access is reported to have positively affected women’s relationship within household, particular to domestic violence. Targeting women as clients of Microfinance Institutions is very much judicious, as women are economically well-disciplined, their repayment rate is higher than those of men, they are more cooperative and aware. Thus, empowering women can actually increase their sustainability.

Yes, Microfinance has brought a revolution in terms of women’s empowerment, raising their economic capability. This, in turn, has undoubtedly strengthened the independence, self-esteem, prestige, self-confidence and bargaining power of the women, so that they could assert themselves in the decision making process both at household level, as well as at community level. Microfinance has also indirectly contributed to reduce abuse, sexual and domestic violence, making women economically empowered so that they could be respected within the household and at community level. Furthermore, it has increased their ability to make decisions, increased their self-esteem and enabled them to make important decisions on how to spend their own income (although men are often consulted), articulate their views, draw attention to their needs and gain respect within the household as well as in the community.

By MICD Student

Basanta K. B.C., English teacher at Siddheshwory Lower Secondary School, Surkhet.

References