

# **The Anne Frank Project: Promoting Peace through Education**

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## **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Peace, in any society, is threatened by a lack of understanding and open-mindedness among people of different ideologies, backgrounds, and beliefs. Currently, differing political ideals are endangering the peace and democracy Nepal earned just six years ago. The Anne Frank Project will address this issue by educating the youth of Nepal on the atrocities of the Holocaust and through the construction of a peace library. We will work to instill values of mutual respect and tolerance in young minds and encourage them to “create and tryout their own ideas for building peace.”<sup>1</sup>

## **BACKGROUND**

“I have idolized Hitler ever since I have had a sense of history. I admire his leadership qualities and discipline.” said Prayag Thakkar, a 19-year-old student in India. Sudip Bhandari could not believe what he was reading. The BBC article “Hitler memorabilia attracts young Indians” went on to describe how the youth of India admire Adolf Hitler’s charismatic leadership, celebrating his reign on T-shirts, bags, bandannas, and key rings.<sup>2</sup> His mind immediately turned to his home country of Nepal, a nation still recovering from a devastating civil war (1996-2006) between government forces and Maoist rebels. The conflict left more than 13,000 dead. During the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, the Maoists emerged as the strongest party, occupying 38% of the seats in parliament. However, Nepal is still reeling under political instability, violent riots, and deep poverty. Dissatisfied with the leadership, the increase in political division has only deepened the youth’s frustrations and heightened their agitation, igniting a culture of youth violence.

Like India, the atrocities of the Holocaust and story of Anne Frank are absent from Nepalese curriculum. World War II is reduced to two pages in 10<sup>th</sup> grade social studies textbooks, simply listing the causes and effects of the conflict. The curriculum fails to discuss the harrowing consequences of genocide, oppression and violence. As a result, many idolize Hitler as a great leader who unified Germany, not a totalitarian dictator motivated by prejudice and hatred. We recognize that the youth are the future leaders of Nepal, so we will use the story of the Holocaust to educate them about the consequences of violence, oppression, and hatred, and help them to envision a more peaceful Nepal.

## **FIRST STEP TOWARDS PROMOTING PEACE**

In response to the growing culture of youth violence and limited knowledge of the Holocaust, Sudip Bhandari founded The Anne Frank Project in the summer of 2011. Funded by a St. Olaf College Entrepreneurial Grant, Sudip traveled to Nepal, committed to teaching students about the atrocities of the Holocaust through the inspiring story of Anne Frank. He compiled donated books and reading material from the Anne Frank Center in New York, and designed a traveling educational exhibition. The exhibit featured 15 large banners capturing life in Nazi Germany, an engaging PowerPoint presentation, thoughtful discussion questions, and informational fliers. Supported by six volunteers, Sudip traveled to six different schools over the span of six weeks, educating 2,300 students of all ages on the history of World War II, highlighting the Holocaust, the reign of Hitler and the story of Anne Frank. He received a positive response from students and teachers alike.<sup>3</sup>

Reflecting on The Anne Frank Project 2011, Sudip recognized a need to expand the program, as well as develop a permanent resource where students can continue to study historical figures committed to a more peaceful tomorrow.

## **OUR SOLUTION**

Building upon the framework of the first Anne Frank Project, the Anne Frank Project 2012 will focus on the implementation of two initiatives: expanding the breath and depth of the traveling educational exhibition, and establishing a permanent educational resource committed to honoring peace activists, through the construction of the first peace library in Gorkha region of Western Nepal. Both initiatives will open avenues for students to access historically accurate and comprehensive information, engage in thoughtful discussion and cultivate a commitment to peace. Created in response to a growing culture of violence, the Anne Frank Project 2012 will instill a message of hope, mutual respect, and tolerance among Nepal’s youth.

## **-Traveling Educational Exhibition- 2012**

**Estimated Timeline: June 20- August 20,**

In order to address the gaps in Nepalese curriculum, the traveling exhibition will educate around 4,000 Nepalese students on the Holocaust, Adolf Hitler, and the story of Anne Frank. We will double our impact by utilizing our existing partnership to travel to 12 schools in the communities of Kathmandu, Chitwan, Birendranagar, Nepalgunj, Pokhara, Gorkha, and Illam. We will spend one to four days in each school, depending on the number of students enrolled. Around four to six volunteers who worked on the project last year, will help us in this endeavor.

We will run a three-part educational program, beginning with a brief introduction to a general assembly of K-12 students, where we will share our mission and purpose. This will be followed by a traveling Anne Frank exhibits, featuring 15 large banners with moving photographs, informative captions, and interesting facts. The final portion of our day will be dedicated to working with students in grades 9-12. Sharing a PowerPoint and short video, we will encourage them to share their experiences with war, discrimination, and hatred. Through thoughtful discussion and engaging activities, we will encourage students to reflect on how the world is, compared to how the world should be. We will also ask students to come up with a personal written reflection to promote tolerance, mutual respect, human rights, and democracy in their own communities. Students with the best peace pledge will receive an award. We will keep track of the number of pledges made, and strive to collect 2,500 by the end of the summer. This will be our metric for success during this part of the project.

We will conclude our visit by donating books and other educational materials related to peace, human rights and tolerance to the respective school libraries. The Anne Frank Center in New York has agreed to donate some of the necessary educational materials. We will also provide each student with a brochure that has a brief description of the major topics we discussed and our contact information.

## **-Peace Library- 2012**

**Estimated Timeline: June 15- August 15,**

Collaborating with Subhash Ghimire, the director of the first peace school in Nepal, Sawswati Peace School, we will open a peace library in Arupokhari, a remote village of Gorkha district in Western Nepal. We will create a space committed to honoring stories about overcoming challenges, standing strong in the face of oppression, and working for change. For example, we will include Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, and Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. This will preserve our message of hope and inspiration even after we leave. The Anne Frank Center in New York has agreed to donate books and other educational materials. Additionally, the Jewish Student Organization at St. Olaf College will help us organize a book drive for the library. We are hoping to open the library with at least 500 books. In addition, we will install two desktop computers and a projector to help students in learning.

Subhash will help us hire the same contractor he used to construct the peace school last year.<sup>4</sup> We will begin construction the second week of June and finish around the second week of August. The administration of the peace school will oversee the construction while we will conduct the traveling educational exhibition. Our last destinations for the exhibition are Durbar High School and Sarswati Peace School, both of which are located in Arupokhari. After we complete our exhibition, we will inaugurate the library. The peace school administration will continue to oversee the operation of the library, as it opens doors for the students and other people from the local community.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOME AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

We believe that the best way to sustain peace is by educating and motivating young minds. We are confident that the Anne Frank Project 2012 will fulfill Kathryn W. Davis' vision for peace by actively educating around 4000 youth, and by supplying permanent educational services for children, teenagers, and adults of varying backgrounds and beliefs through a fully functioning peace library. We hope the project will leave a lasting impression on students to work towards rebuilding and reuniting the broken nation of Nepal. By empowering young students with accurate education, we can take meaningful steps towards fostering mutual respect and tolerance, which will ultimately ensure peace. Our long term goal is to inspire Nepalese Curriculum Development Center, through our successful model of education, to work towards providing accurate and comprehensive information about the World War II and other misrepresented historical events.

<sup>1</sup> Davis Project for Peace homepage, [www.davisprojectsforpeace.org](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org), attained January 23, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Zubair Ahmed, *Hitler memorabilia 'attracts young Indians'*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/860064.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/860064.stm) (June 2010)

<sup>3</sup> Amy Lohmann, *Bringing the lessons of the Holocaust to Nepal*, [www.stolaf.edu/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsDetails&id=5177](http://www.stolaf.edu/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsDetails&id=5177) (September 2011)

<sup>4</sup> Letter of support from the Sarswati Peace Foundation/ Peace School submitted to the St. Olaf selection committee with supplement application