

Global Expertise, Local Impact

30 Years of Senior Expert Contact Programme in Nepal

Background

For 30 years, Swisscontact's Senior Expert Contact (SEC) programme, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, has played a pivotal role in supporting the development of Nepal's small and medium enterprises (SMEs). It has offered expert knowledge, technical advice, and management support to empower local entrepreneurs and promote sustainable practices.

SEC has helped over 550 SMEs improve their operations, enhance service quality, and expand their business. A pool of 700 SEC experts, through short-term consultancy assignments, have offered hands-on and cost-effective support for business growth. Since 1979, the SEC programme has carried out over 3,000 assignments globally, supporting the growth of 2,500 SMEs. These experts have provided more than 1.2 million hours of voluntary work, equivalent to an estimated 45 million Swiss francs (CHF) NPR 6.9 billion.

Results and Impact

An impact evaluation of SEC in Nepal, interviewing 138 partners, revealed that approximately 93% of these businesses showed considerable growth since they first enlisted the help of an SEC expert. Increases in turnover and the number of employees were key indicators considered to measure the growth of these enterprises.

The SEC programme has supported and built a network of **550 SMEs** and institutions in Nepal. A five-year assessment covering **205 assignments** indicated that senior experts contributed in various degrees to the creation of approximately **4,700 jobs** and an increase in turnover of between **24 to 36 million CHF** in **138 institutions** in Nepal.

How does the SEC programme operate in Nepal?

The SEC programme was introduced in Nepal in 1994 to support SME growth in a transitioning economy. SEC supports SMEs and institutions in urban and semi-urban regions across Nepal in selected sectors. SEC is a demand-based programme, and the process reflects this. SMEs submit requests to Swisscontact for specific business support. Swisscontact reviews these requests by conducting a thorough assessment of the gaps identified by the partners, identifies suitable experts, and matches them with the SMEs according to their needs. SEC facilitates communication between the SME and the assigned expert to kick off the assignment, often through remote sessions.

Once the plan is finalised, the expert travels on-site to provide the necessary support. The expert continues to provide remote support until the assignment's goals are achieved.

How do development projects benefit from the SEC programme?

Swisscontact Nepal's projects, such as the Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness Programme (CASA), Nepal Agricultural Market Development Programme (NAMDP/Sahaj), and Skills for Safe Reconstruction Programme (SSRP), have greatly benefited from the specialised expertise provided by SEC. In CASA, SEC's expert support enabled them to achieve a greater impact through targeted interventions in the agricultural sector. For NAMDP, SEC experts worked closely with agribusinesses to streamline operations and introduce product diversification strategies. The SSRP project aimed to promote earthquake resilience and safe reconstruction practices, crucial for rebuilding Nepal following the 2015 earthquake.

How do businesses in Nepal benefit from the SEC?

A series of interviews with our SEC partners provides deeper insights into SEC's approach, benefits for partners, and lessons learned from over 30 years of operation in Nepal. SEC partners identify four main types of benefits associated with SEC: **expansion and investment connections**, which foster opportunities for growth; **enhancement of product range and quality**, contributing to more diverse and superior offerings; **adoption of new technology**, advancing operational capabilities; and **human resource development**, which strengthens skills and knowledge within teams.



Testimonials from the SEC partners

Expansion and Investment Connections

The SEC partners played a critical role in guiding the development of specialised courses and programmes in hotel management and hospitality at SMSHM.

“For the past 24 years, we have been collaborating with various experts. Each expert who has helped us has left a significant mark on our success. However, if I may compare, Chef Rudy Bider has had the biggest impact. We named the kitchen ‘Chef Rudy’s Kitchen’ in his honour. Today, we have opened 46 hotel management colleges in Nepal, including 11 founded by our staff and 8 founded by our graduates. This success is also due to the SEC experts and the SOP.” **Samir Thapa**, *Executive Chairman, Silver Mountain School and Hotel Management (SMSHM), Kathmandu*

Enhanced Product Range and Quality

The SEC assignment involved addressing key challenges related to skill development and quality assurance within the culinary sector.

“Our SEC expert, Alfred Gafner, has supported us three times over the years. One key mantra he taught Moondance restaurant was the pricing strategy. He taught us to round out the entire cost and limit our pricing to a maximum of 2.5 or 3.5 times the base cost. This international pricing strategy applies to all services we offer, from food items to resort amenities.”

Dorje Lama, *Proprietor, Moondance Restaurant and Dorje’s Resort & Spa*

Introduction of New Technology

The assignment involved delivering expert technical advice on the design and implementation of ropeway and cable car projects.

SEC experts Martin Liesch and Fritz Infanger provided critical support for our material ropeway project — helping us with design, engineering, and installation. Liesch’s mentorship helped us overcome a huge technical challenge during cable car installation in Kalinchowk. His presence on the project site was important to us as he guided us with practical, hands-on coaching during the installation. Without Liesch’s

support, we would not have the exposure, skills, or market reach we enjoy today.”

Guna Raj Dhakal, *Chairperson & Kiran Rauniyar*, *Technical Director, Ropeway Nepal*

Human Resource Development

The assignment involved delivering management training on the new corporate structure, business strategy, financial planning, and human resource development at various organisational levels.

“In its initial days of operation, Subisu Cablenet Pvt. Ltd. was expanding rapidly, but our organisation lacked the organogram structure to sustain and manage growth effectively. Our SEC expert, Volker Klein, suggested we change the structure of our executive board since we had too many people in the board of directors. He helped us create an organogram that established clearer reporting lines and management roles. This structure remains foundational to our organisation even today.” **Binaya Mohan Saud**, *Founder and CEO, Subisu Cablenet Pvt. Ltd, Kathmandu Nepal*

Key learnings from 30 years of the SEC programme

Feedback from partners suggests that, for most partners, the ‘**how**’ SEC provided support was considered as important as the ‘**what**’ support it provided. Below are a few examples of how the SEC programme’s effectiveness is measured.

Sustainable growth through human resource development

Catalyst for job creation and income generation

Access to international expertise

Effective post-assignment engagement

Enhanced competitiveness in key sectors

In conclusion, the SEC programme, through its rich history of supporting SMEs in Nepal, has proven to be a crucial contributor of economic growth, enhancing the competitiveness of local businesses and fostering job creation. By providing tailored expertise across key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, IT, and education, SEC has not only contributed to individual business success but also to the broader socio-economic development of Nepal. As we look to the future, the lessons learned from these initiatives will serve as a valuable guide for further investments and support towards Nepal’s continued growth and resilience in the global market.

