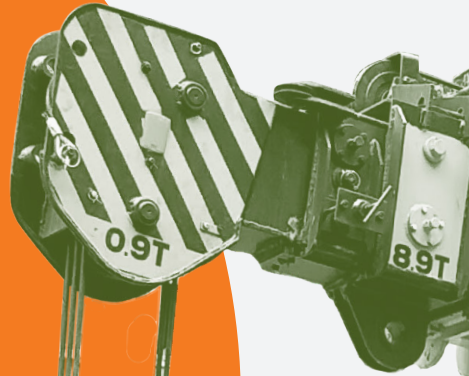


Global Expertise, Local Impact

30 Years of Senior Expert Contact Programme in Nepal

Neeraj Singhal and Shradha Giri

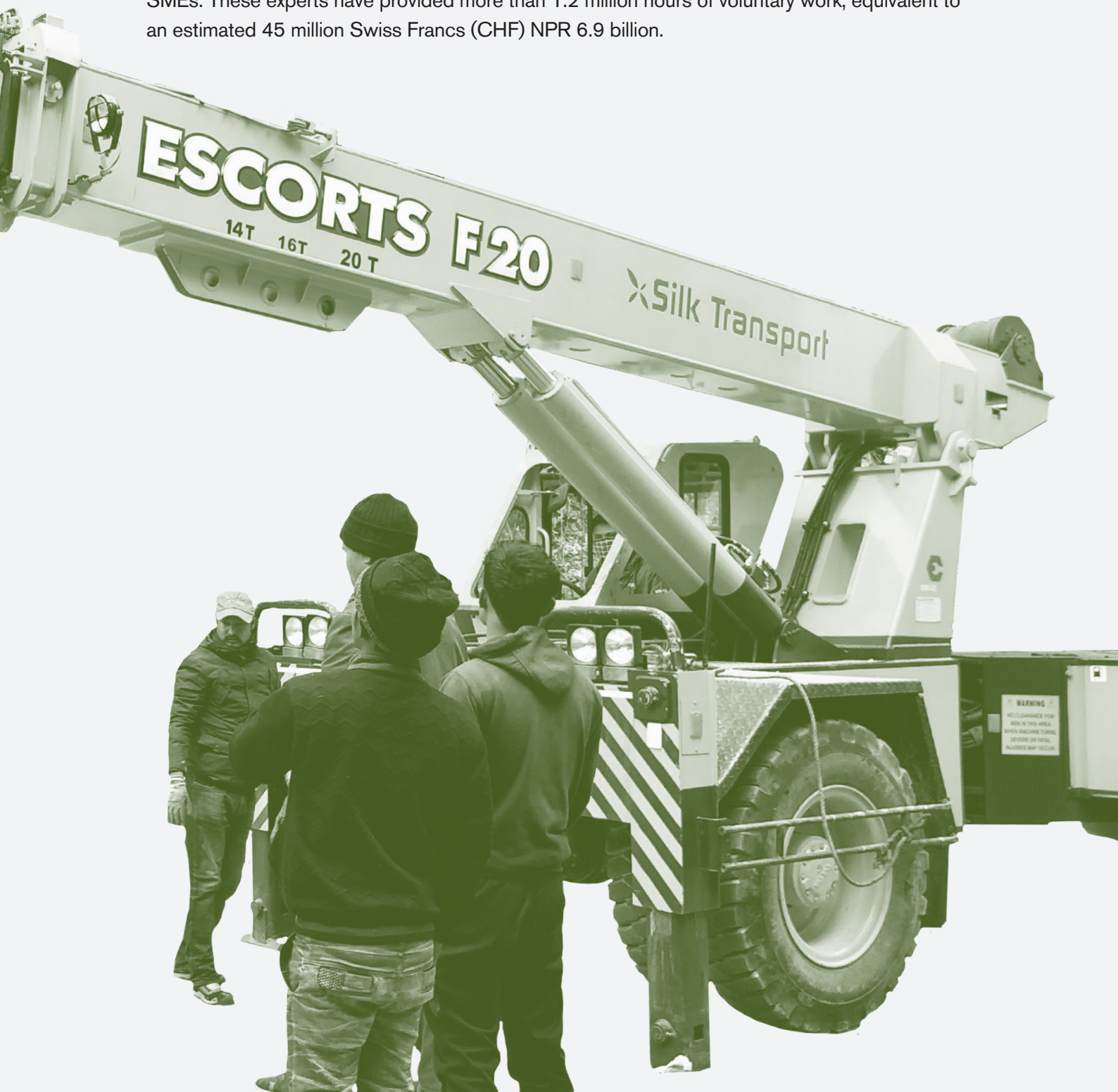




Background

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

The programme has led to tangible improvements in service quality, operational efficiency and workforce development. This has contributed to overall institutional development and enhanced competitiveness of local SMEs, resulting in job creation, increased profitability, and entry into new markets.

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. Around 40% of these businesses rated the contribution and advisory support from an SEC expert as crucial to their growth, while 60% found it useful and helpful. The evaluation concluded that the support was perceived to have had a greater impact on the additional growth of SMEs compared to larger institutions.

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.

93% Growth

Approximately 93% of businesses showed considerable growth since first enlisting with the help of a SEC expert

205 Assignments

Five-year assessment

4,700 Jobs Creation

SEC contributed in various degrees to the creation of 4,700 jobs

24 to 36 Million CHF

Increase in turnover of between 24 to 36 million CHF in 138 institutions



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. In the early 1990s, Nepal faced a stagnating economy due to limited industrialisation and underdeveloped private sector activities. SMEs, which have the potential to drive economic growth, were constrained by a lack of technical expertise, management skills, and access to affordable support services. The SEC programme aimed to bridge these gaps by providing tailored, affordable technical and managerial assistance, enabling SMEs to improve their competitiveness and contribute to economic diversification and sustainable development. To date, the programme has empowered and supported the growth of over 550 SMEs in Nepal. SEC operates in key growth sectors, including tourism, hospitality, agriculture, education, and information technology. These sectors are targeted for their high potential to enhance SME competitiveness and generate additional jobs.

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.

The foundation of the SEC's performance lies in its pre-assignment, on-site assignment, and post-assignment engagement strategy between the SEC expert, SEC partner, and the SEC team. Regular interaction builds trust, enables real-time adjustments, and fosters collaboration. On-the-ground presence allows SEC experts to assess local dynamics, provide immediate support, and offer tailored solutions, leading to quality outcomes and effective knowledge transfer.

Furthermore, the success of SEC can be attributed to the extensive global experience, adaptability, and flexibility of its on-the-ground experts. These professionals offer comprehensive support tailored to the unique needs of each business, including areas such as strategic development, human resource management, financial planning, product innovation, and process optimisation, among others. This approach combines a diverse mix of domestic, regional, and international expertise, ensuring a well-rounded and effective solution for every SEC partner.



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.





Examples of success from Nepal

1. Expansion and Investment Connections

SEC has enabled partners to expand by attracting investments and entering new markets. By facilitating connections with international firms, the SEC has driven enterprise growth and fostered access to broader customer bases.



Partner: Silver Mountain School of Hotel Management (SMSHM), Kathmandu**Sector: Hospitality and Tourism**

SEC intervention: The SEC partner played a critical role in guiding the development of specialised courses and programmes in hotel management and hospitality at SMSHM. This involved offering expertise in both curriculum design and hands-on training, particularly in culinary skills for students and local chefs. One of the key challenges was ensuring that the training programmes aligned with industry standards while catering to the diverse needs of the local workforce.

**Partner's testimonial**

For the past 24 years, we have been collaborating with various experts, and the contribution they have made to our growth is beyond words. 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. Chef Rudy advised us on the design of our kitchen to align with our culinary arts programme. He convinced us to build two kitchens 12 years ago. He had already envisioned – how they would be used, and although people laughed at me for spending NPR 40 million (26,000 CHF), today, I have been able to add many bachelor's and master's programmes because of that very kitchen. We named the kitchen 'Chef Rudy's Kitchen' in his honour. This kitchen has also allowed us to establish Nepal's first French fine-dining experience.

Similarly, Giuseppe Bazzani assisted us in developing our Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Before this, no educational institution in Nepal had an SOP in place. The SOP we created is still in use today, with amendments as needed. This SOP has become a foundational document, and we can honestly attribute much of our success to it.

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, Kathmandu**

Partner: Namuna College of Fashion Technology (NCFT), Kathmandu**Sector: Textiles and Fashion**

SEC intervention: The assignment included delivering hands-on practical training in innovative designs in fashion and textiles to enhance overall quality at NCFT. Additionally, the role involved providing guidance and practical training in sewing techniques to improve product quality. Offering insights into new market trends, colour combinations, and international design styles was also essential.

**Partner's testimonial**

“Since our establishment in 2000, NCFT has positioned itself as a leader in Nepal's fashion education sector. SEC expert Anna Gerle taught us the use of certain chemicals in screen printing and roller printing. Before her guidance, we had no idea that chemical usage could not only increase production but also improve the quality of fabrics. We have embedded these learnings into our curriculum, directly benefiting our students.

SEC expert Christine Peter helped us with advanced draping techniques to create high-quality garments suited to different materials and fittings, such as coats and waistcoats, which was highly beneficial.

One valuable lesson I recall is how Christine guided us in identifying and adapting to international colour trends, which helped us understand the contrast between the sober tones favoured in the

US and Europe versus the vibrant colours popular in Asia. The experts brought many fashion catalogues unavailable in Nepal, orienting our students to global fashion trends and colour usage.

Additionally, Gunda Bornkessel provided us with expert training to enhance our ability to train others effectively. Our company has grown tenfold since our inception.

So far, NCFT has produced some phenomenal fashion designers, such as Manish Rai, Arzoo Shrestha, and Samrat Rana. We frequently discuss our challenges as a team to understand our needs and request SEC expert support. We are grateful that SEC experts are available to meet any needs we have. Their combined expertise is crucial for our company's sustainable growth.”

Jeebeshwor Shrestha,
Vice-Principal, NCFT

2. Enhanced Product Range and Quality

Through hands-on training on world-class products and services, product formulation, recipes, and standard operating procedures, partners have diversified the range and quality of their offerings in hospitality, tourism, agriculture and IT sectors.

Sector: Hospitality and Tourism

SEC intervention: The SEC assignment involved addressing key challenges related to skill development and quality assurance within the culinary sector. This included advising on and creating specialised courses and curricula, while also offering hands-on, practical cooking training to local chefs and students. A major challenge was delivering practical bakery training to local bakers and students, ensuring that they met industry standards. The role also focused on establishing and maintaining rigorous quality standards and implementing standard operating procedures to ensure consistency and excellence.



Partner: Moondance Restaurant and Dorje's Resort & Spa, Pokhara

"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. Drawing on his experience from around the world, Gafner helped us design our menu, introducing 15 new items that have attracted customers globally. Some of our top-selling items include the pulled pork sandwich, mixed grill, and wild boar skewers.

He taught us techniques for cooling and heating food safely. For example, he showed us how to bring the sauce from 80 degrees to zero degrees in seconds. This technique has helped us keep our pizza sauce fresh and free from bacteria. Gafner is like a godfather to us. For our resort, he helped us transform our menu into a fine dining style. We are now selling a room for \$600, thanks to the support we received.

He would visit the market, survey, and observe, bringing his insights back to help me understand the dynamics of our business better. This experience gave us

the confidence to operate a resort, which is very different from running a restaurant. When I asked Alfred about SEC's motto, he shared that it is to empower Nepali people so that they don't have to go abroad for employment, and this deeply moved me.

We are now confident, empowered, and fulfilling the SEC's vision, with many of our staff no longer needing to seek work abroad." **Dorje Lama, Proprietor, Moondance Restaurant and Dorje's Resort & Spa**



Partner: Global Academy of Tourism and Hospitality Education (GATE) , Kathmandu**Sector: Hospitality and Tourism**

SEC intervention: The SEC experts played a pivotal role in enhancing product quality, improving services, and refining standard operating procedures within the bakery, culinary, and programme sections. Additionally, they contributed to the creation of training programmes for teachers, which built their capacity and supported the overall growth of the institution. Throughout the assignment, the experts emphasised the importance of quality and the establishment of high standards, fostering development and driving progress across the institution.

**Partner's testimonial**

“Over three decades in the field, including four formative years in Switzerland, I have developed a deep appreciation for what Swiss expertise can offer. When I founded GATE College in 2007, I collaborated with the Swiss school where I had studied, driven by a vision to provide Nepali youth access to world-class culinary arts education.

Our expert Baker, Willi Graf not only taught job skills but also instilled values like work ethics—respecting time, cleanliness, hygiene, and dedication to tasks. Since then, we have worked with

four more SEC experts. Through their guidance, we have embraced principles like design thinking, prioritising outcomes, empathy, and discipline. Our students experience a level of culinary excellence akin to Switzerland itself, whether it's in baking, hospitality, or culinary arts. Johannes Herzog introduced tools like recipe cards and recipe books, blending global expertise with local innovation. Thanks to them, we have diversified our products, experimenting offerings suited to our local context. Alfred Gafner made a lasting impact by implementing a cleanliness standard through a “moral

contract,” ensuring our kitchen remains spotless—a practice that is now ingrained in our culture.

I have always had a clear vision of the human capital I aim to develop. Today, our graduates are making an impact worldwide. We have signed over 9,000 certificates, and we are immensely proud to be a part of their growth. I encourage Swisscontact to continue this valuable support, as it is a truly sustainable way for businesses like ours to grow and thrive.”

Khem Lakai, Founder and CEO, GATE



3. Introduction to New Technology

SEC support has played a pivotal role in enabling its partners to adopt new technologies through training, expert guidance, and access to international networks across sectors such as health, tourism, and construction. A major achievement has been the successful transfer of ropeway technology, both for material and passenger ropeway, to a team of Nepali engineers, ensuring long-term sustainability at an affordable cost.

Sector: Tourism

SEC intervention: The assignment involved delivering expert technical advice on the design and implementation of ropeway and cable car projects. This included offering strategic support in marketing and facilitating connections for the procurement and commissioning of these systems from Europe. In addition, technical guidance was provided throughout the installation process and for the ongoing operation of these systems. Furthermore, the role entailed offering continuous mentorship and support post-commissioning to ensure smooth operational performance and address any emerging challenges during the operation of the projects.



Partner: Ropeway Nepal, Kathmandu**Partner's testimonial**

"When we started Ropeway Nepal in 2015, we were struggling to meet the safety standards. For instance, in one of our early passenger ropeway projects in Tanahun, we lacked the knowledge to meet the specific safety norms and guidelines essential for international compliance. SEC experts Martin Liesch and Fritz Infanger provided critical support for our material ropeway project — helping us with design, engineering, and installation.

With their guidance, we were able to ensure safety, optimise design, and adapt to Nepal's challenging geography. He explained to us the complexity of calculating ropeway line profiles, tensioning, and fitting new safety devices. He guided us to source South Asia's first cable crane technology from a Swiss company named Zingrich Cabletrans AG strengthening our confidence in meeting global standards.

Liesch provided invaluable support by sharing designs and technical details that improved the safety and efficiency of our ropeway and cable car projects. They connected us with suppliers in Europe and assisted with logistics, making the procurement and commissioning process smooth and reliable. 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. Thanks to the support of SEC experts, one of our engineers has started his own consulting firm. It is inspiring to see the ripple effect the SEC programme has created." **Guna Raj Dhakal, Chairperson & Kiran Rauniyar, Technical Director, Ropeway Nepal**



Partner: Pataleban Vineyard Winery/Resort, Chandragiri, Nepal**Sector: Agriculture / Tourism**

SEC intervention: The assignment involved providing technical advice aimed at enhancing the quality of existing grape wines, as well as offering expertise on expanding the range of wine varieties. Key interventions included recommending best practices for vineyard management, introducing advanced fermentation techniques, and advising on optimal grape cultivation methods to improve yield and flavour profiles.

**Partner's testimonial**

"I lived in Japan for six years, and my stay there inspired me to introduce agrotourism in Nepal. I brought some grapevines from Japan and started planting them around the resort I was developing without any wine-making knowledge. We faced numerous challenges, which were expected as we grappled with the quality of our wine. SEC expert Joseph Chanton had brought brewing enzymes from Switzerland along as he knew our wine was cloudy and oxidized from our initial conversation. The enzymes dramatically improved our wine quality. It was an eye-opening moment for us. Chanton helped us bring crushing and bottling machines, and fermentation tanks from Germany which was financially viable for us. He went above and beyond his scope of work to help us improve both our production quantity and quality.

One critical improvement was in vineyard management. He helped us understand the climate conditions of Nepal and introduced us to various nurseries in Europe to help us choose the right grape varieties suited to the Nepali climate. Compared to the saplings from Japan,

the disease-resistant varieties like Solaris, Regent, Orion, and Phoenix from Europe were six times cheaper. He also advised us to choose grapes with high sugar content as it yields better quality and flavourful wine. We also learned to plant saplings with precise spacing, following specific technical requirements.

Chanton's support was invaluable—it saved us substantial technical costs. He invited us to visit his vineyard in Switzerland and other vineyards in Italy, where I gained invaluable insights into vineyard design and winery operations. This experience profoundly shaped our business model, and today, we meet European standards with minimal pesticide use and maintain a loyal client base among local restaurants and hotels.

Their continued support enabled us to expand from just 7 employees to nearly creating 100 jobs, growing from 3 acres to over 62 acres of cultivated vineyard. No organisation provides this kind of support. This is the sustainable support businesses need, not aid." **Kumar karki**, *Proprietor, Pataleban Resort*





4. Human Resource Development

SEC partners have successfully strengthened their human resources, leading to significant improvements in skills along with behavioural changes. Additionally, SEC experts have instilled core Swiss values and work ethics, including respect for time, collaboration with colleagues, and a customer-centric approach focused on satisfaction, which are key drivers of business success.

Partner: Subisu Cablenet Pvt. Ltd, Kathmandu, Nepal

Sector: Information Technology

SEC intervention: The assignment involved delivering management training on the new corporate structure, business strategy, financial planning, and human resource development at various organisational levels. Technical assignments focused on providing training and guidance for enhancing internet quality, networks, and connectivity across Nepal. These interventions were designed to strengthen the overall infrastructure and ensure long-term success.



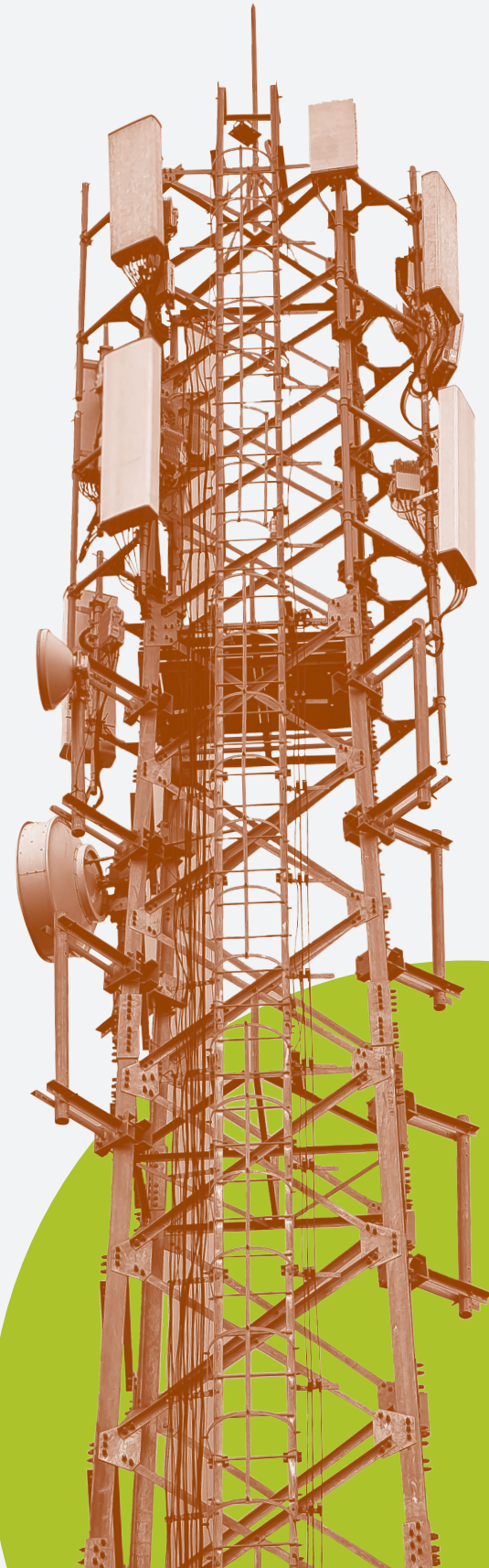
Partner's testimonial

"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. Before his recommendation, we had five people on the board of directors, with one CEO and four board directors. This radically changed our day-to-day operation process. He then helped us create an organogram that established clearer reporting lines and management roles. This structure remains foundational to our organisation even today. This shift in the organisational structure was challenging in the beginning as it required some of the directors to step back from daily operations, but in the longer run, it proved to be effective for the sustainable growth of the organisation.

Another SEC expert, Markus Liniger, provided our team with hands-on training

that drastically improved our human resource management. His support has been invaluable in creating efficient systems that enabled our employees to take on more complex roles. All thanks to their strategic guidance, Subisu's growth has been remarkable. The organogram allowed us to accommodate expansion without adding extra human resources. With the guidance, we are actively working to reduce human resource costs by setting more targeted key performance indicators for the staff while allowing the employees to take on greater responsibilities without the need to hire external consultants.

Swisscontact's SEC programme has been helpful in our evolution from a fast-growing company into a sustainably structured organisation with a focus on efficiency and strategic human resources utilisation." **Binaya Mohan Saud, Founder and CEO, Subisu Cablenet Pvt. Ltd, Kathmandu**



Association of Craft Producers (ACP), Kathmandu

Sector: Handicraft

SEC intervention: The SEC experts' intervention was a pioneer in the felt Industry during 2001. The assignment provided hands-on training on improving the skills of the felt artisans, thereby improving the existing quality and diversification of handicraft products. The felt artisans were further inspired and motivated with hands-on training, thereby learning new techniques supporting them to open their own felt businesses. The post-assignment backhand support led to continuous quality improvement and growth of ACP.



Partner's testimonial

"ACP is Nepal's premier craft organisation, established in 1984. Initially, our focus was only on domestic products like shoes and ornaments. In 2002, SEC experts Maya Ilg and Dora introduced four new categories of felt shoes and other ornamental products. The Cinderella-style shoes are still in style and are in high demand. The hands-on training and introduction of diverse felt products motivated our employees to work efficiently.

Johanna Roesti introduced new techniques for creating high-quality felt using less wool while mixing materials like chiffon to produce unique and lightweight fashion accessories. The machine she recommended for felt sheet production reduced our production time from five to three hours and improved our efficiency. She taught us to reuse the rejected and waste products to develop small ornamental items, helping us manage our waste. Today, ACP is one of the key players in Nepal's felt industry as we work to innovate our line of products and adapt to new and emerging trends. The innovation has helped us reach a large market both nationally and internationally.



Maya Ilg and Johanna Roesti helped us to develop a standard document which we refer to diligently while designing our products – our finished products are consistent and meet superior quality standards. Five of our former employees have started their own businesses, and around 80 artists are now working in their enterprises. Although they began as new businesses, I believe they became independent working under our guidance, and this is a clear demonstration of human resource development. SEC programme and the experts have equal contributions revitalising the felt industry in Nepal." **Revita Shrestha, Executive Director, ACP**



Key learnings from 30 years of the SEC programme

Swisscontact's SEC programme has created a unique offering of senior expert support at an affordable cost, embedding "Swissness" among SMEs and institutions in Nepal over the past 30 years.

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:

1

Sustainable growth through human resource development:

SEC's hands-on support has helped SMEs grow sustainably by enhancing technical and management skills, leading to improved productivity and operational efficiency across various sectors.

2

Catalyst for job creation and income generation:

SEC assignments have played a pivotal role in job creation, with tangible outcomes such as a 20-30% increase in turnover for supported businesses, demonstrating SEC's significant economic impact.

3

Access to international expertise:

By connecting Nepali SMEs to international experts and markets, SEC has facilitated the adoption of new technologies and practices, helping local businesses compete more effectively on a global scale.

4

Effective post-assignment engagement:

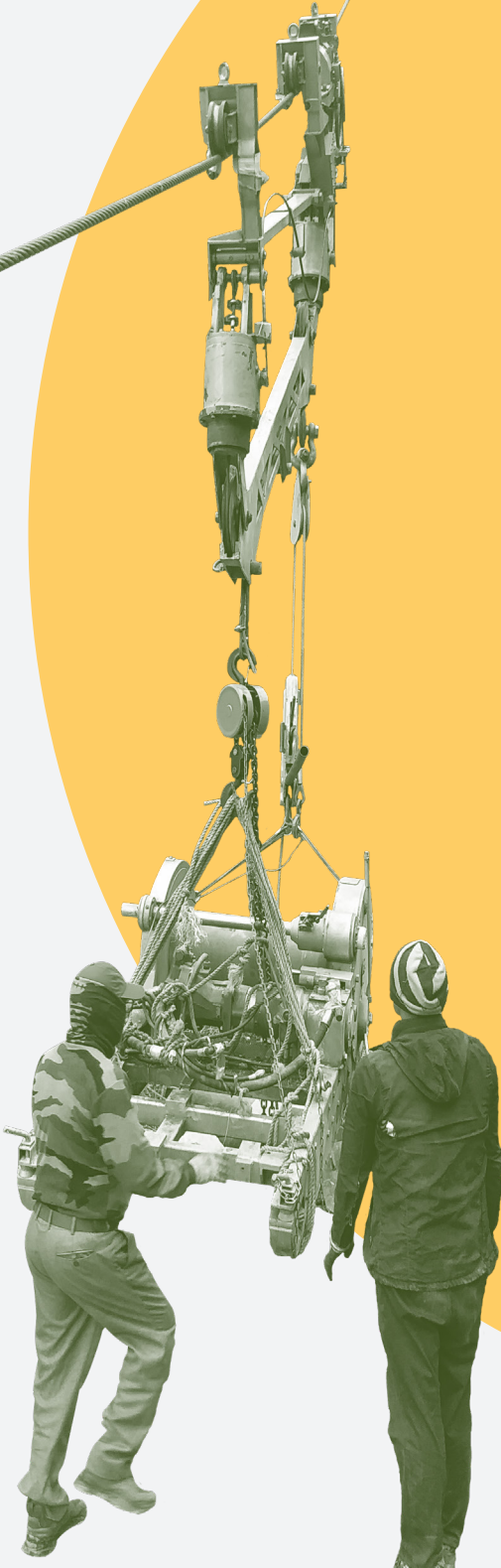
Ongoing support from SEC experts beyond initial assignments has proven essential in reinforcing behavioural changes and securing lasting benefits for SMEs, underscoring the value of relationship-building and continued guidance.

5

Enhanced competitiveness in key sectors:

Through focused interventions in high-potential industries like tourism, agriculture, and information technology, SEC has contributed to sector-wide improvements in quality and innovation, positioning Nepali SMEs as competitive players in regional and international markets.

In conclusion, the SEC programme, through its rich history of supporting SMEs in Nepal, has proven to be a crucial driver 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. The tangible improvements in management, operational efficiency, and product quality, coupled with the positive feedback from over 550 supported enterprises, highlight SEC's lasting impact. 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.



We create opportunities.

Head Office Swisscontact

Hardturmstrasse 134
CH-8005 Zurich

info@swisscontact.org

+41 44 454 17 17

Swisscontact Nepal

Oasis Complex, 4th Floor
211 Madan Marg, Patan Dhoka
Lalitpur, Nepal

+977 1 5428508 | 5448830

www.swisscontact.org