



FEEL

Fellowship for Emerging
Empathic Leaders

Personal Reflection and Action Project Report

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MY
Emotions
MATTER



Acknowledgment

We would like to sincerely thank My Emotions Matter (MEM) for creating the FEEL Fellowship 2025 and for giving us the opportunity to be part of this year's cohort. This journey has been deeply meaningful for all of us. It gave us the space to learn, reflect, and apply emotional intelligence, empathy, nonviolent communication, and conflict resolution in real-life settings, helping us grow both personally and professionally.

We are deeply grateful to the co-founders of My Emotions Matter, Mr. Sagar Satyal and Dr. Bhawana Shrestha for their vision and commitment to emotional learning. Their work continues to inspire meaningful conversations around emotions, awareness, and peaceful communication. We feel truly thankful for the trust they placed in us and for including us in this important journey.

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Acknowledgment

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Acknowledgment

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With gratitude and appreciation,
Karisma Regmi
Priyanka Neupane
Roshani Karki
Sarita Dangi
Sujata Bastola
Sweekriti Swaroop Rai

FEEL Fellows, 2025

Summary

The FEEL Fellowship, initiated by My Emotions Matter, is a learning journey focused on building emotional intelligence, empathy, and practical conflict-resolution skills. In 2025, the fellowship explored Conflict Resolution, with a strong emphasis on moving emotional intelligence from theory into everyday practice. Throughout the program, fellows reflected on how emotions, judgments, and unmet needs shape the way people communicate and respond in difficult situations, and how conflict often has more to do with what lies beneath the surface than the issue itself.

As part of this journey, fellows designed an Action Project titled “Understanding the Needs Behind Actions.” The project was rooted in a simple but powerful idea: every action is driven by an underlying need. Rather than focusing on fixing behavior, the project encouraged looking deeper at feelings, needs, and assumptions as a way to respond to conflict with more empathy and awareness.

The project engaged students in public schools and officials working in local ward offices, groups that regularly face interpersonal challenges but rarely have access to structured emotional learning. Through reflective and experience-based engagement, participants were introduced to core emotional intelligence concepts in a way that felt relatable and practical.

Overall, the experience showed that even basic awareness of emotions and needs can shift perspectives, soften judgments, and open space for healthier communication. The fellowship reinforced the belief that emotional literacy is not just a personal skill, but an essential leadership practice with real impact in communities.

Keywords: Emotional Literacy; Emotional Intelligence; Empathy; Leadership

List of Abbreviations

FEEL	Fellowship for Emerging Empathic Leaders
EI	Emotional Intelligence
MEM	My Emotions Matter
NVC	Non Violent Communication

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	2
SUMMARY	5
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	6
TABLE OF CONTENTS	7
Chapter- 1 Overview of the FEEL Fellowship	9
1.1. Program Background	9
1.2. Core Objectives	9
1.3. Introduction to the FEEL'25 Fellows	10
Chapter 2: Reflection on Fellowship Journey	16
2.2. Understanding of Empathic Leadership	19
2.3. Understanding the Role of Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Resolution	21
Chapter 3: Action Project	24
3.1 Background and Rationale	24
3.2 Objective of Project	26
3.3. Methodology	25
3.3.1. Learning Objectives	26
3.3.2. Planning and Content Development	27
3.3.3 Designing the Slides and Content	27
3.3.4. Pre- and Post-Survey Feedback	28
3.3.5. Implementation of the Project	28
3.4 Challenges Faced and Solutions Implemented	30
3.5 Results and long term outcomes	33
3.6. Discussion	38
Chapter 4: Recommendations	41
4.1. Recommendations for MEM	41
4.2. Recommendations for the Project Implemented Groups	42
4.3. Recommendation for the Future Fellows	43
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Closure	45
5.1. Conclusion	45
5.2. Closure of the Fellowship	48

Table of Contents

Reference	55
Annex 1: Reflections of project Co-ordinator	57
Annex 2: Reflection on Personal Growth as mentor	57
Annex 3: Reflection on Fellows	58
Annex 4: Reflection on this cycle and Feedback for upcoming cycle of FEEL	59
Annex 5: Survey Form	60
Annex 6: Slides from the Action Project	62
Annex 7: Photo Gallery	66

Chapter I

Overview of FEEL Fellowship

1.1 Background

The Fellowship for Emerging Empathic Leaders (FEEL) is an initiative by My Emotions Matter for young aspiring leaders to cultivate self-awareness and empathy skills through an Emotional Intelligence curriculum that enables reflective learning, an immersive professional engagement, and impactful action projects for hands-on growth and contribution. The program emphasizes learning through action projects, coaching sessions, reflective assignments, and hands-on practice. At its core, FEEL aims to empower individuals with the skills to navigate emotions effectively and foster positive change in the systems they are part of.

The theme for FEEL'25 was "Conflict Resolution." The curriculum aimed to help fellows navigate internal and interpersonal conflicts, promoting deeper self-awareness and empathy. Under this larger mission, FEEL program is a leadership incubator which assists the participants not only in understanding concepts of Emotional Intelligence, but also how to implement them in real world scenarios by reflecting, discussing and through hands-on projects that have community environments. The fellowship focuses on experiential education and social change, which allows fellows to make inner awareness an outer change.

1.2. Core Objectives:

The main purpose of the FEEL fellowship is to cultivate leaders who can:

1. Deepen Emotional Intelligence (EI): Understand the science and practical application of Emotional intelligence to enhance self-awareness, manage reactivity, and build stronger, more meaningful relationships.
2. Cultivate Self-Awareness and Empathy: Navigate personal and social challenges through self-awareness and the application of EI skills, fostering greater understanding of oneself and others.

Chapter I

Overview of FEEL Fellowship

3. Design and Deliver an Action Project: Develop and implement a real-world EI-based intervention that addresses a challenge within their community or workplace, providing hands-on experience in leadership and social impact.

1.3. Introduction to the FEEL'25 Fellows

The 2025 cohort consists of six fellows from diverse academic and professional backgrounds across Nepal. Despite their varied experiences, all fellows share a commitment to personal growth, empathy, and social impact.

Each fellow brought unique perspectives from fields such as law, business, psychology, governance, technology, and community development. Together, they contributed to a learning environment grounded in openness, reflection, and mutual support.

Sarita Dangi

Sarita is a software engineer by profession and a mentor dedicated to empowering the next generation of girls in technology. As a co-founder of STEMInist Nepal, she works to increase the representation of women in STEM fields by leading workshops, leading Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions for educators, and developing localized learning materials to support girls and women in STEM, especially in rural communities. She values emotional intelligence as the heart of compassionate leadership and nurturing learning environments. Through the FEEL Fellowship 2025, she is excited to deepen her skills in conflict resolution and empathetic leadership to make a greater impact professionally and within her community.

Chapter I

Overview of FEEL Fellowship

Karisma Regmi

Karishma is an advocate committed to justice, having previously worked under a judge where she conducted legal research, contributed to public policy advocacy, and assisted in delivering justice at the local level. While immersed in the legal field and its many complexities, She has observed a recurring gap in emotional intelligence between lawyers and clients—an area she is deeply passionate about bridging .Beyond her professional identity, she remains a free-spirited individual with a strong creative streak. She finds joy in pottery, exploring art exhibitions, swimming, crocheting, and watching thought-provoking films. These pursuits not only ground her but also enrich her empathetic approach to the practice of law.

Sujata Bastola

Sujata works at the intersection of governance, human rights and inclusive development. Her work includes researching and advocating for inclusive change in laws, policies and practices. Along with her profession, she is passionate about Yoga, Spirituality, Human Psychology and Arts.

Priyanka Neupane

Priyanka is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) at Ace Institute of Management. She is juggling between multiple interests and working with a startup firm. She is passionate about a range of areas including psychology, event management, and writing. She believes in the power of emotional awareness and creative expression, and she is excited to deepen my understanding and grow through the FEEL Fellowship.

Chapter I

Overview of FEEL Fellowship

Swekriti Swaroop Rai

Swekriti is a psychology student and an aspiring neuro psychologist eager to apply academic knowledge in real-world contexts to support individuals and communities. Experienced in volunteering, facilitation, and educational outreach, with a strong interest in learning new techniques in mental health, education, and conservation.

Roshani Karki

Roshani Karki is currently pursuing her MBA at the School of Management, Tribhuvan University. She finds meaning in deep conversations, creating genuine relationships and a secure space for others to be heard. She thinks that empathy, vulnerability, and emotional intelligence can bring a positive change, as she believes change starts from within. She is excited to apply these principles on projects that are based on knowledge and intention as she proceeds with her entrepreneurial journey. She is eager to start her journey as a FEEL Fellow so that she can develop as an emotionally intelligent leader and to discover how to handle conflict with courage and compassion

1.4 Objective of Joining Fellowship

Roshani Karki

Roshani's main objective to join the fellowship was personal growth. She aimed to become more self-aware and enhance her interpersonal relationships. As she prepared for leadership roles, she recognized the importance of emotional intelligence and hoped to develop these skills through the fellowship.

Chapter I

Overview of FEEL Fellowship

Priyanka Neupane

Priyanka's main motivation to join the fellowship was to strengthen her leadership skills. She aimed to gain the knowledge and emotional intelligence necessary for effective organizational leadership. She also sought to improve her ability to empathize and understand others' perspectives, recognizing this as a crucial skill for business and management. Additionally, she hoped to build a safe and genuine network of peers where she could connect openly and share experiences.

Swekriti Rai

The last few years were my inner healing and self-discovery journey, which has transformed my perception of empathy, leadership and making a difference. I am interested in being a FEEL Fellow as I strongly believe your opinion that empathy and vulnerability-based leadership, as well as direct experience, are essential not only transformative in a broken world today. Having been a young Nepali woman growing up in a Nepali family, I have experienced the relationship of generational silence, so-called thick-skinned nature, and complicated socio-cultural norms as a female in my family set up. This has influenced my intention to lead in a different way. I would not like to lead by hierarchy or distance. I desire to lead with heart-inspired approaches, caring and deep-rootedness.

Participating in FEEL would assist me in how to bear my emotional depth with perception and boldness the way I do not need to carry it like a weakness and conceal it. This is not only a growth opportunity, but also a calling which resonates deep in my soul as to who I am and who I am becoming.

Chapter I

Overview of FEEL Fellowship

Sujata Bastola

I've always been someone who pauses and reflects, sometimes too much. I feel things deeply, but for a long time I saw that depth as confusion rather than strength. I knew my emotions mattered, yet I lacked the language and tools to understand or express them clearly.

My interest in psychology, spirituality, and psychosocial counseling came from this search for clarity, for emotional intelligence, and for ways to support others as well. When I came across the FEEL Fellowship through My Emotions Matter, it instantly resonated. A space for empathetic leadership felt like exactly what I had been looking for.

Joining FEEL gave me what I was seeking: a framework to understand emotions, practical skills like nonviolent communication, and a community where vulnerability and growth felt safe. It helped me turn my heart-centered nature into something grounded and actionable and for that, I'm deeply grateful.

Karisma Regmi

My motivation to join FEEL 2025 was driven by both personal and professional aspirations. I

wanted to deepen my understanding of emotional intelligence and empathetic leadership, not just theoretically but through practical application. The fellowship offered an opportunity to:

- Develop emotional skills for more thoughtful communication, better conflict resolution, and stronger relationships in professional and community settings.
- Learn from peers and mentors, gaining insights, feedback, and new perspectives on leadership and emotional awareness.

Moreover, my objective to join the fellowship was to learn and surround myself with empathetic people learning and sharing my own perspectives.

Ultimately, the fellowship allowed me to grow as reflective, empathetic, and effective leader capable of creating a positive impact in the community.

Chapter I

Overview of FEEL Fellowship

Sarita Dangi

I joined the FEEL Fellowship with a strong intention to develop my emotional intelligence and deepen my understanding of myself and others. Coming from a technical background, I have often observed that while people may be skilled in their work, empathy and emotional awareness are frequently missing in professional spaces. I have personally experienced how a lack of emotional connection and empathetic leadership can create distance, misunderstanding, and unhealthy work environments. I did not want to become someone who leads or works without empathy. I wanted to learn how to stay emotionally connected, especially in challenging situations, and respond with awareness rather than reaction. Another key motivation for joining the fellowship was to better understand my own emotions, patterns, and needs, so that I could build healthier relationships—both in my personal life and in professional settings. At the time of joining FEEL, I was in a phase of consciously focusing on my personal growth. The fellowship felt like the right opportunity to pause, reflect, and invest in developing skills that are often overlooked but deeply necessary. Through FEEL, I hoped to grow into a more grounded, self-aware, and emotionally responsible individual who can contribute positively to the spaces and communities I am part of.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

This chapter presents individual reflections on learning, transformation, and evolving understanding of empathy, leadership, and emotional intelligence throughout the fellowship. While each fellow's journey was unique, common themes of self-awareness, responsibility, and relational growth emerged.

2.1. Application of the FEEL Fellowship

Roshani

Roshani found My Emotions Matter on Instagram, a social network she was accustomed to. This was when she was feeling angry most of the time, but she often blamed others without truly knowing why she was feeling that way. This made her curious about the FEEL Fellowship for reflection and growth.

Through the fellowship, Roshani began to develop awareness and empathetic listening that allowed her to see beyond her impulses to what was essentially causing her emotional response. Learning to discern real feelings from judgments, she is slowly building emotional clarity that eventually has supported her long-term development in developing a more respectful relationship with herself and, over time, more balanced and respectful relationships with others, which is the ground for personal well-being as well as professional leadership.

Priyanka

Priyanka was informed about the FEEL Fellowship through social media platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn. She happened to be on an active lookout for opportunities which align with her aspirations of personal development and future readiness. She had a fundamental belief that understanding emotional intelligence-in addition to emerging concepts such as artificial intelligence-is critical for sustaining oneself in modern organizational and social environments.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

This fellowship has provided Priyanka with insights on needs awareness, emotional intelligence, and a differentiation between judgments and pseudo-feelings. According to her, the learning of the above-mentioned skills or tools is crucial for being in real-life organizational setups and interpersonal relationships with more conscious decisions in personal and professional life. These skills, over a period of time, are helping her get connected with herself and be more engaged thoughtfully and effectively with others.

Swekriti

I found out about it through social media and, consequently, started to learn more about My Emotions Matter and the theme of Emotional Intelligence and conflict management that the fellowship centers on.

My mission in participating in the FEEL Fellowship had a strong foundation on my continued inner healing and self-discovery that I have been undergoing in the past several years. This experience has greatly changed my perception of empathy, leadership and what it takes to change something meaningful. I greatly concur with the notion that empathy, leadership that is weak and based on vulnerability, and lived experience are critical and transformative in the contemporary broken world.

As a Nepali woman in my childhood, living in a Nepali family, I have observed and experienced generational silence, emotional toughness prerequisites, and intricate socio-cultural norms in the family and social framework. Such experiences have made me have a desire to lead differently. I am not eager to rule by hierarchy, power, and emotional buffer. Rather, I desire to serve in the style of heart-led practices based on caring, connecting, and having roots.

I also resonated with the FEEL Fellowship since it provides opportunity to emerging changemakers to be open, introspective, and radically honest in learning to develop systems of care. The concept of a community of learning in which softness and strength are important, and in which personal experiences and the wider social reality need not be separated appealed to me.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

One of my dreams is to be a leader in the area of psychosocial and community wellbeing in the future. I consider myself a person who is a good listener, sympathetic designer, and healing-focused leader. The FEEL Fellowship is very much aligned to such a vision because it does not merely offer practical tools and structures, but also presents a nurturing learning community that bears the personal story, and fosters leadership via relationships and experiences.

The experience of FEEL has contributed to my development as it taught me to be more aware, responsible, and courageous when holding my emotional depth. It is through this experience that I have started to realize that emotional sensitivity is never the weakness or the hidden secret that must be dragged around but can be clearly and purposely expressed. Not only has this fellowship been a learning and development opportunity, but a calling that I can almost personally identify with.

Sujata

I discovered about the FEEL Fellowship through the Instagram post of My Emotions Matter, as I follow MEM, and both Dr. Bhawana Shrestha and Mr. Sagar Satyal since quite a while. As someone deeply interested in understanding emotions, psychology, and emotional intelligence, and as a lawyer, community practitioner engaged at the grassroots level, the fellowship's focus on empathetic leadership and emotional intelligence felt directly aligned with my personal and professional growth.

Sarita and Karisma

We learned about the FEEL Fellowship through a social media platform, where a senior sister had shared information about the program. We believe that this experience will continue to support our future growth by helping us process and adapt effectively to various situations in our professional and personal lives.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

2.2 Understanding of Empathic Leadership:

Roshani

Roshani first comprehended the concept of empathetic leadership by trying to feel and react to the emotions of other people. The idea that Roshni had about empathy was that it involved engaging with people's emotions and modifying one's behavior to fit the other person. Although the idea involved empathy, it was mainly external, focusing on other people.

Roshani's knowledge evolved over time through the FEEL Fellowship. She began to see the reality of empathetic leadership, which is not only about sensing the emotions of others but also about having a strong understanding of one's own emotions. By understanding her own needs, responses, and emotions, Roshani was able to recognize that self-understanding plays a direct role in one's ability to lead an organization as an empathetic leader. This change in mind helped Roshani to see that the work of an empathetic leader is about finding a balance between self-understanding and others. By working well with herself, Roshani is now well-equipped to work well with others.

Priyanka

Priyanka felt that empathy in leadership was an important trait but had a limited notion about it. Her limited notion about empathy as a leadership trait was based on its definition as "putting oneself into another person's shoes." Though it covered aspects of compassion, it could not address more complex scenarios pertaining to leadership.

After attending the fellowship sessions, Priyanka's perspective changed drastically. She was able to understand the concept of empathetic leadership in terms of a balance between the internal states in a manner similar to managing the parent and child characteristics. For Priyanka, the concept of empathetic leadership now encompasses an understanding of acknowledging other people's needs while also being conscious of one's own needs.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

This balance enables one to respond rather than reacting in terms of their own emotional state. For Priyanka, empathetic leadership now incorporates being able to balance one's own needs along with an understanding of other people's needs.

Swekriti

My perception of empathetic leadership has changed through the FEEL Fellowship because of the perception that empathy is an emotion to the practice as a self-awareness, self-responsibility and care of the needs of others.

As I now see it, empathetic leadership starts with the capacity to relate to feelings and needs of one self and not respond with supposition, accusation, silence or imperative. It demands leaders to change their Reactive Mentality to Responsive Mentality where decisions are guided by knowledge other than being guided by emotion. This involves the separation of facts and stories, interpretation of emotions as a feedback and responsibility of needs as well as being open and amenable to the needs of someone else.

The emphasis on intention also helped me enhance my understanding. Empathic leadership is a process of always questioning the motive in words and actions particularly when tension or disagreement strikes. Empathic leadership focuses on connection and dignity, as well as mutual understanding, in place of control or authority.

This fellowship made me view empathic leadership as relational and not positional. Leadership does not concern the distance and hierarchy but the provision of spaces in which people are seen, heard, and valued. It is concerned with working with people as human beings with universal needs, and the creation of a conducive environment in which communication promotes trust, clarity, and cooperation.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

Sujata

My understanding of empathic leadership has deepened through learning the power of empathy, self-accountability and nonviolent communication. I now see it as leading with awareness of both your own and others; emotions and needs, fostering trust, collaboration, and inclusion-oriented environments. It is about respecting and putting an effort to understand other's needs, diverse perspectives and requesting instead of demanding, controlling or using a similar traditional top to bottom leadership approach.

Sarita and Karisma

Our understanding of empathic leadership deepened significantly over the course of the fellowship. Initially, we saw it simply as listening to others. However, we learned that true empathic leadership begins with connecting to ourselves, being aware of our own thoughts, emotions, and needs before engaging with others. Only when we are present and grounded can we listen deeply, with focus and patience, and respond in a way that acknowledges the other person's perspective. We also learned the importance of reflecting back what we heard, not just to confirm understanding, but to validate the experience of the person sharing. This shift from reactive to reflective engagement fundamentally changed how we approach leadership and communication.

2.3 Understanding the Role of Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Resolution

Roshani

Roshani considers emotional intelligence (EI) to be very essential in the process of resolving a conflict because it gives a person the ability to recognize the emotion of the other. According to Roshani, EI entails other attributes like self-awareness, self-management, and the use of emotional intelligence to make a person more conscious when dealing with a conflict. Use of EI may not be entirely successful in the sense that it might not solve the conflict entirely. Instead, it assists in the partial resolution of a conflict by making a person more conscious.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

Priyanka

Priyanka's thought process is much similar to Roshani's, though her viewpoint stresses the importance of the "need" concept even more. According to Priyanka, EI has been that lens through which people should try to comprehend their own emotions and the emotions of others around them. By using EI, Priyanka realized that quite often people get involved in situations where there are unfulfilled needs, not necessarily emotional, though. The moment people become aware that people behave in such a way due to their needs, the efforts will shift from placing the blame to trying to comprehend the situation.

Swekriti

The FEEL Fellowship reinforced my knowledge of Emotional Intelligence as a key instrument to conflict resolution and management. The conflict may be the result not only of what happens but also of the stories we make about what happens as well as of the unmet needs and unspoken feelings.

During the fellowship sessions, I got to know that EI aids in resolving conflicts by enabling the individual involved to take time and respond instead of reacting. Individual skills, including the ability to separate stimulus and stories, enable people to remain in touch with the present rather than get immersed in assumptions and judgments. This minimizes misinterpretations and assists individuals to get involved with situations in a more objective position.

The other important learning was the understanding of feelings as messages of needs that have not been met or are met. Emotional Intelligence can enable the individual to understand that things do not make them feel, rather, it is what they appreciate and must have at a certain point in time. This change adopts self-responsibility and minimizes blame and conflict can be tackled more easily with curiosity and empathy instead of defensiveness.

Moreover, Emotional Intelligence is important in expressing the needs clearly with practical requests. As the needs are stated in specific, positive, and concrete terms, the conflicts will be thus resolved by a collaborative approach, as opposed to growing further.

Chapter II

Reflection on the FEEL Journey

The model suggested in the fellowship helped unite these aspects through offering a viable framework to take pauses, reflect, and communicate when tension was in the air. Emotional Intelligence would help conflict be turned into an opportunity to learn and relate instead of splitting apart by identifying stimulus, noticing stories, understanding feelings and needs, and making actionable requests.

Sujata

EI helps manage conflict by enabling us to identify our true feelings, emotions and underlying needs of ourselves and others. This awareness allows for calmer, clearer communication and transforms potential confrontations into opportunities for mutual understanding.

Sarita and Karisma

Our understanding of the role of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution evolved to viewing it as a fire extinguisher, one that helps de-escalate tension before it intensifies. Emotional intelligence became a foundational tool for first understanding oneself: recognizing personal reactions, identifying the factors influencing feelings and behaviors, and uncovering the underlying needs involved. This self-awareness then made it possible to extend understanding toward others. Additionally, emotional intelligence helped reduce the tendency to become absorbed in stories and judgments. Emotional intelligence can be effectively applied to address and manage conflict. Although we had always felt a desire to understand and resolve conflicts, such as those observed during public travel or everyday discussions, we previously struggled to identify the core needs driving people's behavior. After the fellowship, we are now able to recognize that individuals may be seeking similar needs, but through different strategies.

Chapter III

Action Project

3.1 Background and Rationale

Roshani and Priyanka

Ninth grade is a critical turning point for students, as it represents the transition from early adolescence to mid adolescence and increased academic and social responsibilities (Eccles et al., 1993; Benner, 2011). During this period, students face new academic expectations, peer dynamics, and identity related challenges as they enter high school (Benner & Graham, 2009). We focused on ninth grade students in public schools in Nepal because public school students generally have more limited exposure to life-skills education, psychosocial support, and enrichment opportunities beyond the standard curriculum compared to private schools (MOEST, 2016; Save the Children, 2019). Our goal was to offer these students guidance and awareness that they might not typically receive. This support helps them develop essential life skills and emotional understanding during an important age.

The idea behind this project is based on the belief that understanding the underlying needs behind behavior is essential for personal growth and healthy relationships (Rosenberg, 2003). Teaching students to recognize their own needs, as well as the needs of others, equips them with skills to manage conflict, make empathetic decisions, and build positive relationships in various life contexts, including family, school, and future workplaces (Goleman, 1995; CASEL, 2020). By sharing this knowledge at a crucial stage in their development, we hope to enhance their emotional intelligence and overall growth.

Swekriti and Sujata

This action project emerged from collective reflection and brainstorming conducted by our group during the FEEL'25 Fellowship. As the fellowship sessions deepened our understanding of emotions, needs, judgment, and self-awareness, we were prompted to reflect on our own experiences of early adolescence. We recognized ages 12–14 as a particularly vulnerable developmental stage, marked by rapid hormonal, physical, and emotional changes (Kuhn, 2006).

Chapter III

Action Project

During this period, feelings such as frustration, irritation, confusion, and heightened sensitivity are common, often resulting in misunderstandings and conflicts with parents, teachers, and peers, frequently described as an “intergenerational gap”. (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Based on this understanding, we chose to work with Grade 7 students, as this age group is often navigating intense internal changes without the language or awareness to make sense of their experiences. We further decided to collaborate with small to medium-sized community schools, Ganga Secondary School and Mandal International School (Kalanki, Kathmandu), where access to structured psychosocial and emotional learning programs is limited.

The project aimed to introduce students to basic emotional concepts and practical tools to better understand their inner experiences, with the intention of making this challenging developmental phase more manageable and less overwhelming.

Sarita and Karisma

Earlier, the understanding of conflict came from Bessel van der Kolk's line that “Trauma is a public health concern indicating deep interpersonal and societal conflicts”. From this, trauma can be inferred as a major public health concern. Later, Civil service courses also have social disputes and conflict as their course content. This also informed us to look at conflict as misunderstanding of interests or concerns and presented its various forms. Conflict is a natural part of human interaction, whether at work or in personal life. In the context of Nepal's ward offices, government officials often face conflicts arising from unmet expectations, differing priorities, and communication gaps with colleagues or citizens. However, it was during the fellowship that we learned conflicts could be between the self and or with someone else, or one could be called to play the role of umpire between others. In the fellowship, we learned that conflict actually arises at the level of strategy.

Chapter III

Action Project

Our action project themed “Conflict Resolution Through Needs Awareness,” aimed to address these issues. The goal was to create a safe space where officials could notice their own feelings, reflect on their judgments, and identify the underlying needs behind conflicts. By becoming aware of these needs and emotions, participants could manage conflicts more calmly, reduce tension, and work together more effectively both at work and in daily life.

3.2 Objective of Action Project

- To help participants recognize emotions and underlying needs in everyday situations
- To introduce needs-based understanding of conflict
- To promote reflective and empathetic communication
- To provide practical tools for conflict resolution
- To assess learning through pre- and post-session reflections

3.3. Methodology

The methodology for this action project had to be tailored in such a way that the students and the government officials would readily understand and put into practice the concepts of needs and judgments on the field. This was done through a five-stepped approach:

3.3.1. Learning Objectives:

The learning objectives were clearly defined for all the groups at the outset:

- Recognize their own emotions and needs in conflict situations.
- Understand the role of judgments in escalating conflicts.
- Apply needs awareness to resolve conflicts effectively in work and personal settings.

Chapter III

Action Project

3.3.2. Planning and Content Development

The session was planned and considered valuable in every aspect by its contributors, who comprised all the cohort members. Since the sessions were to be held at a government office and school, the two key concepts of understanding the need behind the Feeling and Judgement were selected as the hub and the activities designed to be interesting and relevant, and suitable for relevant target groups.

- Introduction to MEM and the FEEL Fellowship, including pre-session survey.
- Icebreaker activities to encourage participation and engagement.
- Raising-hand activity to explore real-life scenarios and feelings.
- Introduction to the concepts of needs, feelings, and judgments through slides and discussion.
- Roleplay demonstrations showing typical conflict scenarios.
- Pair and group activities for participants to practice identifying feelings, judgments, and needs in their own conflict experiences.
- Summarizing key learnings and post-session survey.

3.3.3 Designing the Slides and Content

Slides were designed to be minimal, visual, and impactful. Key principles included:

- Including culturally relevant examples in daily life of the target audience from government officials to School students. Such as homework pressure, peer conflicts, sibling rivalry, and parental expectations.
- Short text and engaging visuals to ensure clarity and focus.
- Role play scripts and guiding questions to encourage practical application.

Chapter III

Action Project

3.3.4. Pre- and Post-Survey

The assessment of the sessions was supported by the questionnaire-based surveys both at the beginning and end of the session

Pre-session survey questions included: "What causes conflict?" "How do you resolve conflicts?"

Following the session, the post-session survey encouraged the participants to reflect on their learning related to conflict, underlying needs, and personal judgments

These questionnaires helped in assessing participants' understanding and the effect of the project.

3.3.5. Implementation of the Project

Roshani and Priyanka

The session was implemented in two of the government schools Shree Bhimsengola Secondary School and Jana Prabhat Secondary School, Kathmandu.

The sessions were divided into two main parts:

First 45 minutes: Priyanka introduced the concept of needs using the Iceberg Activity and then introduced My Emotions Matter.

Second 45 minutes: Judgements were explained by Roshani, followed by role-playing to show the application in real life.

Both pre- and post-surveys were conducted at the beginning of the session and at the end, respectively. The sessions were completed in an interactive manner, rather than using the traditional lecture format, which helped keep the interest and attention of the students.

Swekriti and Sujata

The session was implemented in two of the government schools: Ganga Secondary School and Mandal International School (Kalanki, Kathmandu), The session was conducted as an interactive workshop and followed this structure:

Chapter III

Action Project

1. Icebreaker Activity: The session began with a light, engaging “Chicken Dance” activity using a short YouTube video to create a relaxed and participatory atmosphere.
2. Pre-Survey and Concept Introduction: Students completed a brief pre-survey, followed by an introduction to basic concepts of emotions, needs, and judgments using familiar home and school-based examples.
3. Interactive Group Game (Kasko Kura): Students were divided into three groups. For each statement presented, one group identified the judgment, another the emotion, and the third the possible underlying need.
4. Video-Based Learning: An age-appropriate video depicting a common adolescent conflict and its resolution was shown to support visual learning and relatability.
5. Guided Discussion and Reflection: Students analyzed the video through guided questions, identifying emotions, unmet needs, and alternative constructive responses.
6. Summary and Closing: Key learnings were summarized, followed by an open forum for questions. Students shared one word reflecting their takeaway from the session. Feedback was collected from both students and the teacher present, along with a post-survey to assess understanding of the core concepts

Sarita and Karisma

The project was conducted in two sessions with ward officials of Nepal. The sessions were divided into two main parts:

1st part: Karisma introduced the session and gave the session till the end of role play.

2nd part: Sarita then took over after the end of role play and concluded the session summarizing the concept and her experience. Each session involved:

- Interactive discussion to build a safe space for sharing experiences.
- Icebreaker and raising-hand activities to reflect on common conflict situations.

Chapter III

Action Project

- Demonstrations through role-play, showing conflicts between citizens and officials, and illustrating feelings, needs, and judgments.
- Pair activities where participants discussed conflicts from their work or personal life and identified the underlying needs and emotions.
- Summarizing learnings, reinforcing the key message that awareness of needs reduces conflict.
- Conducting post-session survey and reflection to measure immediate outcomes.

3.4 Challenges Faced and Solutions Implemented

Roshani and Priyanka

During the action project, some issues came up; finding solutions to them seemed to be difficult.

Content Design and Delivery Challenges:

The ideas of needs and judgments sometimes sounded too complex for the ninth graders to comprehend. Very often, students would raise questions about how these concepts might be put into life, which meant that the stuff was targeted for an older audience.

Solutions:

The content should be more accessible if we use:

- Animated videos or cartoons to explain the situations graphically.
- Role-playing activities with characters in order to teach about real-life applications.
- Mini-books or illustrative handouts to aid learning.

Target Group Selection Challenges:

It was hard to manage the students' attention levels as some of them were either noisy or not focused during the sessions. Therefore, it could not be ensured that the work was being viewed by everyone.

Chapter III

Action Project

Solutions

- Target students who appear to be actively paying attention as not every student will fully engage.
- Reward small things, like chocolates or prizes for each, to encourage participation in one manner or another.
- Engage the teacher or supervisor to help control the class.

Session-Specific Challenges:

The session was a bit dense within the given time-frame, and this made it difficult for the students to get an in-depth understanding of what was being discussed. Also, without repetition, students might have chances of forgetting important things shortly after the session.

Solutions

- Long or multi-session formats may help to allow more time for comprehension and deliberation.
- Provide routine follow-up and revisions to help reinforce learning.
- Break complex concepts into smaller, simpler parts to improve comprehension and retention.

Swekriti and Sujata

Challenge: Limited familiarity with emotional needs

Some students initially associated “needs” only with physical survival.

Solution: Abstract terms were explained using simple, everyday examples relevant to students’ lives.

Challenge: Uneven participation

While some students were vocal, others were hesitant to speak.

Solution: Facilitators engaged quieter students individually and encouraged participation in smaller group settings.

Challenge: Time constraints

The 90-minute session felt insufficient to fully explore all concepts.

Solution: The session focused on depth rather than breadth, prioritizing the emotion-need connection. A one-page visual handout summarizing key ideas was provided for continued reflection.

Chapter III

Action Project

Sarita and Karisma

Content Design and Delivery Challenges and applied solutions:

One key challenge was the use of the Nepali word “धारणा” as a translation for “judgments.” While this was done to make the concept easier, many participants understood “धारणा” in a different way, which led to confusion. To solve this, we continued using the English word “judgments” and explained it through simple, real-life examples from their daily work. This helped participants better understand the concept.

Another challenge we faced in the session was that the ward officials already had their own method of learning and way of looking at conflict, while we were presenting using the slides. Some of the participants had taken our official-citizen role play too literally and used that as a role model example, despite the disclaimer that the role play was fictional and was designed to make them understand the needs underlying.

Target Group Selection Challenges and applied solutions

Coordinating with government officials to finalize session dates and times was difficult. Some officials responded late or requested schedule changes, which delayed planning. To overcome this, we maintained regular follow-ups through phone calls and emails, and prepared flexible session plans to adjust based on participants' availability.

Further, we faced some of the wards leaving us hung, while agreeing for the session but not fixing for the date, day and time.

Session-Specific Challenges and applied solutions

During the sessions, some participants initially approached the content with their pre-existing mindsets, making it harder to engage with new perspectives on needs, feelings, and judgments. To overcome this, we created a safe, non-judgmental space, encouraged sharing through small group activities, and used relatable examples and role-plays from ward office scenarios. This helped participants connect the concepts with their own experiences.

Chapter III

Action Project

The participants had their own method of viewing conflict and in this way, our session was new in concept for them. We had to give time to listen to their way of viewing and working with conflict, making them feel heard and take their time to relearn a new way of looking at the needs underlying the conflict.

3.5 Results and long term outcomes

Roshani and Priyanka

The action project revealed a number of important insights:

- Expanded Understanding of Conflict: Most students had initially viewed conflict as disagreements or fights between two people. For example, several students wrote, “Conflict is when two people fight” or “A conflict is an argument between friends or classmates.” Through the sessions, they learned that conflicts are also possible within oneself through misunderstandings of one's feelings and needs.
- Awareness of Needs and Emotions: Students in the ninth grade, especially those in public schools, had minimum knowledge about need identification, emotions, and how to handle them. They asked very practical questions regarding how they could apply these concepts in real life such as; “What can I do when I get angry at my friend but don't want to fight?” This reflects their genuine curiosity about applying the concepts in everyday interactions with parents, teachers, and peers.
- High Interest in Untouched Topics: Despite little exposure to such topics previously, students were very curious to know more about emotions and needs, thus showing interest in the areas which have not been touched much in government schooling. In the post-survey, after participating in the sessions, students' understanding had broadened. One student wrote, “Conflict can happen when I don't understand my own needs”. It shows that students' curiosity transformed into a deeper understanding of emotions, needs, and conflict, reflecting the impact of the sessions.

Chapter III

Action Project

Response of Participants:

The level of the students' engagement differed within the group.

- "This session actually made me really interested in emotional learning. I would love to be part of an organization like My Emotions Matter and learn more," shared one student. This conveyed the great enthusiasm demonstrated by a number of the participants, who expressed interest in joining organizations like My Emotions Matter, while others wanted the sessions repeated.
- Other people were not as attentive; they were having side conversations, but even within those, some of them grasped the main ideas and could summarize the lessons effectively.

Immediate Outcomes:

Pre- and post-surveys underlined the effects of the sessions:

- Approximately 15–20 students out of 60 understood the concept of needs. For instance, when asked why conflicts occur, they identified misconceptions regarding needs as a prime cause.
- This suggested that even in the shortness of an intervention, a significant number of student's internalized notions and were able to express them as if they were their own.

Long-Run Effects:

The lessons learned during the project have potential long-term benefits:

- Students who understood the concepts were now at a better position to understand their needs and deal constructively with internal and external conflicts as reflected in one student's response: "Conflict arises when my needs aren't fulfilled."
- Emotionally intelligent and empathetic thinking will help students in interpersonal relationships and make positive contributions to their academic, social, and future professional lives.
- The experience also lays the groundwork for sustained involvement with organizations such as My Emotions Matter, encouraging constant learning and personal development.

Chapter III

Action Project

Swekriti and Sujata

The outcomes of the action project indicated a positive shift in students' understanding of emotions, needs, and conflict. These changes were observed through student responses, survey comparisons, in-session participation, and teacher feedback.

During the first session, when students were asked what they had learned, several responses reflected emerging emotional awareness and empathy. One student shared, "We should understand others' emotions and also our own, and not get into conflicts" highlighting the realization that understanding both others' emotions and one's own can reduce conflict. Another student expressed, "Emotions are with everyone, and we need to understand what our emotions say and communicate it," showing an understanding that emotions are universal and linked to underlying needs that require communication.

In the second session, a student reflected more explicitly on the emotion-need connection, stating, "I learned that we must understand our feelings and emotions and learn to understand our needs." These responses suggest that students were able to internalize the core message of the sessions.

A comparison of pre-survey and post-survey responses from both schools further supported these observations. Students' definitions of conflict, reasons for its occurrence, and possible solutions showed noticeable development after the session. For example, in the pre-survey, one student wrote that conflicts can be solved by "realizing our mistakes and saying sorry." In the post-survey, the same student wrote that conflicts can be solved by "discussing and understanding everyone's thoughts and feelings."

Chapter III

Action Project

Similarly, another student initially wrote in the pre-survey that “conflict can be solved by understanding our mistakes,” while in the post-survey the response evolved into “conflict can be solved by sharing our feelings, understanding other’s feelings and needs and saying sorry.” These changes indicate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of conflict resolution beyond individual fault.

a. Visible Learning and Sharing Moments:

During activities, students were observed pausing, reflecting, and connecting the concepts to their personal experiences. Statements such as, “Oh, so when I’m shouting at my brother, I might actually be feeling sad because I want to play with him?” demonstrated meaningful internalization of the emotion–need framework.

b. Shift in Vocabulary:

In post-session discussions, some students began experimenting with “I feel...” statements rather than immediately blaming others, indicating early adoption of constructive communication patterns.

c. Teacher Feedback:

Teachers shared that the session-initiated conversations that are rarely addressed within the regular academic curriculum and appreciated the emphasis on emotional and interpersonal skills.

d. Our Learning:

As facilitators, we learned the importance of simplifying complex concepts and recognized the strong curiosity adolescents have about their emotions and inner experiences when approached in a safe, engaging, and non-judgmental environment.

Chapter III

Action Project

Sarita and Karisma

The following were the key findings of the action project:

- A general lack of awareness and understanding of emotional intelligence concepts among public officials.
- Officials interpreted and had their own way of explaining the cause of conflict and remedies of conflict.
- After the session, the participants understood that conflict does not just exist between the two people, but also within oneself.

Participant Response

- Though many officials had their own ways to work through conflict, they were appreciative to learn to first understand themselves and also to consider other people's needs behind the action. The chairperson of Syuchatar ward mentioned "This session would be fruitful in also understanding the citizens' needs and choose the most appropriate strategy to solve any conflict" One of the teacher participant in Syuchatar ward shared her understanding by saying "She liked the concept that feelings, judgments and needs could be separated and not summarized as one unit".
- Ward participants demonstrated strong enthusiasm and a willingness to learn emotional intelligence skills. One of the ward officials of Dhapakhel had mentioned "This list of needs and feelings inventory can be useful in sharing one's inner world."

Long-Term Outcomes

The sessions are expected to have a sustained impact beyond the immediate learning. Several participants expressed that the discussion on needs awareness was relevant not only for their individual roles but for the ward offices as a whole, and emphasized that such conversations should reach all ward-level officials. Their interest in conducting similar sessions in the future and their invitation to facilitate additional programs reflects a growing recognition of emotional intelligence as an essential workplace skill rather than a one time activity.

Chapter III

Action Project

At an individual level, the sessions encouraged participants to look inward and reflect on their own reactions, communication patterns, and unmet needs. For many, this was their first exposure to concepts such as needs awareness and emotional literacy. Even for those who were unfamiliar with emotional intelligence, the sessions created awareness that such tools exist and can be explored further independently. Over time, this awareness can support more conscious responses to conflict, both at work and at home.

At a broader level, participating ward offices are likely to benefit from improved communication and reduced interpersonal tension, as officials carry forward an expanded emotional vocabulary and a clearer understanding of feelings, judgments, and needs. The practice of sharing these learnings with family members and colleagues also increases the possibility of wider community impact, contributing gradually to more empathetic and reflective workplace and community environments.

3.6. Discussion

Roshani and Priyanka

What Went Well?

- Students were actively engaged and showed strong interest throughout the sessions.
- Many expressed willingness to join My Emotions Matter in the future, showing the program's positive impact.
- Pre- and post-surveys indicated improved understanding of needs, with some students recognizing that understanding needs can help resolve conflicts.
- Students could clearly summarize key concepts like feelings, needs, and conflict resolution, demonstrating effective learning.

Chapter III

Action Project

What could be better?

- Side talks and occasional inattention disrupted some sessions.
- Not all schools fully supported the initiative, limiting coordination, coverage, and consistency of the program.

Swekriti and Sujata

What Went Well?

- Interactive, activity-based sessions kept students engaged, with team collaboration enriching discussions.
- Focusing on Grade 7 students made the content relevant and relatable.
- Teacher support facilitated smooth session delivery.
- Most participants were attentive and actively participated.
- Feedback showed students understood key concepts and could relate them to their own experiences.

What Could Be Better?

- Single sessions are just a starting point; real impact needs repetition ideally a short module of 3–4 sessions over a term.
- Brief orientations for parents and teachers could help reinforce the concepts at home and school.
- Better time management and technical preparation—like starting on time and testing devices beforehand would make sessions smoother

Chapter III

Action Project

Sarita and Karisma

What Went Well?

- The participants were enthusiastic and receptive to our session, including the late comers, and showed active interest and engagement throughout.
- They appreciated the concept of separating feelings, judgements and necessities.
- They were in fact eager to learn the conflict resolution strategies and asked for a further session.
- Comparing pre- and post-survey responses demonstrated noticeable improvement in ward officials' understanding of needs and the differences in their concept of conflict.
- In one of the sessions, we had a TV set to show our slide.
- They were asking for feedback for themselves, where they could improve in understanding our session.

What Could Be Better?

- Some ward offices, despite initial enthusiasm, did not fully act on the session, making coordination harder.
- Time management was an issue—sessions didn't always start on schedule, and participant punctuality and commitment varied.
- Participants, especially those with 30–40 years of experience, often interpreted content through their own lens, making it challenging to introduce needs-based perspectives.
- There was confusion around pre-survey questions and distinguishing feelings, evaluations, and needs.
- Technical issues, like a projector problem, required adapting the session to a laptop screen.

Chapter IV

Recommendation

4.1. Recommendations for My Emotions Matter

Online Sessions:

- Run online sessions when physical ones aren't possible, like during protests or unrest, so participants stay engaged.

Flexible Timing:

- Offer sessions on weekends or evenings to suit students and working professionals.
- Allow the fellow to work at their own pace and flow and respect their autonomy.

Broader Age Range:

- Include young adults up to 28–29 years old who can benefit from and contribute to the fellowship.

Exposure & Networking:

- Introduce more facilitators from My Emotions Matter, NVC, and CVNC sessions.

Flexible Session Flow:

- To follow the flow of the discussion and not be session oriented all the time and sometimes listen to others stepping outside of the schedule
- Adjust for unplanned events or professional commitments.

4.2. Recommendations for the Project Implemented Groups

Roshani and Priyanka

- Since the project was implemented for Grade 9 students, it is suggested that the main emphasis should be on making students understand that every human action is guided by some need in the background.



Chapter IV

Recommendation

- Student should be guided to understand clearly the interconnection between needs, emotions, Feelings, and actions, as portrayed in the Needs-Feelings-Actions diagram presented in the session.
- Emphasizing that feelings/emotions arise when needs of an individual are either satisfied or else not met will be helpful in bringing into them more self-realization and understanding of emotions.
- Explaining diagrams in simple terms for outstanding change in students' thinking and approach toward one's emotions and conflicts.
- It will be very hard for them to understand concepts at this stage such as judgment even because it is developmentally inappropriate.
- Therefore, the concepts of judgment need to be integrated little by little in a simplified form that is at the students' age and cognitive level.

Swekriti and Sujata

- Use Everyday Examples: Pick situations kids know from school or home. Always show the simple cycle: Need → Feeling → Action. Example: "You studied hard but got a low mark → feel sad → want to practice more."
- Ask as You Go: Don't just explain, pause and get them involved. Example: "What's one thing you need to feel happy in class?" or "Show me with an emoji how you feel when your need to play is met."
- Show, Don't Just Tell: Use pictures or symbols instead of too many words. ❤ for love, ★ for achievement, 🤝 for friendship.
- Keep Words Simple: Avoid tricky terms like "Judgment." Use easy alternatives like "Next thought," "Opinion," or "What you tell yourself."
- Practice Explaining Simply: Be able to explain ideas clearly to a class 7 student. Example line: "Our feelings are like clues. They tell us if something we need like care, love, or friendship is met, and help us decide what to do next."



Chapter IV

Recommendation

Sarita and Karisma

- To be open and willing to listen and understand different ideas, even if that may be hard.
- To try to understand different point of view.
- To be open and to listen attentively to the session presenters and fellow participants in the session.
- To follow the schedule time as absence of this would disrupt the flow and affect the quality of the session.
- To stay committed for the session and not let outer disturbances such as phone calls disrupt the session decorum.

4.3 Recommendations for the Future Fellows

Stay Open and Connected

- Don't close yourself off, this fellowship is all about growth, both for you and your action project.
- Lean on your cohort for ideas, dry-runs, and feedback. Fellowships are stronger when you support each other.
- Build bonds with your peers; they can be your empathy buddies when you need one.

Design Your Project Around What Matters to You

- Pick a topic you genuinely care about. You'll enjoy the process more and stay motivated.
- Start small and keep it manageable. A simple, well-run session is better than a complicated one you can't finish.
- Stay flexible and lighthearted. Don't let group dynamics overwhelm you.



Chapter IV

Recommendation

Run Your Sessions Thoughtfully

- Be ready for changes in schedules, especially in government offices so have a plan B and some buffer time.
- Make emotional safety a priority. People learn best when they feel heard, not pressured.
- Enjoy the session! Even small moments like a smile from a participant make it all worthwhile.
- Ask questions and encourage interaction; it may take extra time but is worth the clarity it brings

Trust Yourself and the Process

- Your experiences and intuition are great guides and trust them when choosing your target group.
- Be patient, consistent, and persevere. Stepping out of comfort zones often means negotiating and communicating a lot.
- Reflect regularly on how you're facilitating and what you're learning.
- Remember, impact takes time. Even small conversations can create meaningful change.

Keep Learning and Practicing

- Stick with fellowship exercises and practices even after it ends.
- Use tools like the Rose-Bud-Thorn journal or feelings and needs cards to stay in touch with your emotions.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

5.1 Conclusion

Roshani and Priyanka

We expected mental problems or mental illness to be the sole focus of the program. As the fellowship progressed, however, we found that the approach was grossly different from what was anticipated and, in most ways, more powerful. Instead of being disease-oriented in terms of the mind, the fellowship focuses on an understanding of emotions, needs, and human behavior at a much deeper and practical level.

The fellowship introduced us to several concepts that rarely or never form part of our daily lives, like the SFNR model, understanding one's status regarding emotional maturity, and differentiating between needs and strategies—one of the toughest yet most enlightening learning. We also looked at the difference between stimulus and story, feelings and false feelings, request and demand, and the practice of empathetic listening.

What really made the learning worthwhile was that the ideas were not confined to mere classroom discussions. The action project gave an actual opportunity to put theoretical input into practice in real-life situations. Such implementation in practical areas consolidated the learnings and emphasized how relevant the items of learning were.

The action project provided a very important opportunity to translate theory into practice. Among the more salient learnings applied in this project was empathetic listening. While facing direct rejections and no initial support, we were able to listen without judgment and respond to what was said. Similarly, the idea of making requests, to be able to handle a "no" in the answer—and to listen carefully and respond rather than react was applied during the interactions with the stakeholders of the school, as emphasized by the facilitator.

Finally, the fellowship exposed us to concepts not always taught in school yet crucial for personal development and interaction. Generally, the journey was enriching, transformative, and quite different from our expectations; it was quite a value.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

Swekriti and Sujata

Before joining the FEEL fellowship, our understanding of programs focused on "emotional well-being" was quite narrow. We expected it to be primarily about diagnosing mental health problems or discussing clinical issues, or simply talking about how we're feeling without going into depth. What we discovered was profoundly different and far more impactful. The fellowship was about building foundational life skills and awareness about emotions in depth and emotional intelligence and non-violent communication strategies. It shifted the focus from what's wrong to how we can work, address conflicts through need awareness, empathy and non-violent communication strategies. We learned to understand about our emotions, the universal human needs, and the patterns of our words and judgement in a practical, daily-life context. The fellowship was a safe space for sharing our emotions, stories and judgement, unlearning the stereotypes, myths and strengthening our skills on non-violent communication.

The fellowship introduced frameworks and concepts quite new to our daily vocabulary. Learning to distinguish between a need and a strategy was a revelation, it changed how we view my own goals and conflicts. Understanding the difference between an external stimulus and the internal feelings we create about it gave me a pause button before reacting. Concepts like empathetic listening, making clear requests versus demands, and recognizing "false feelings" provided tangible tools for navigating relationships. This wasn't abstract theory; it was a user manual for healthier interactions.

The true test and value of this learning came through the Action Project. Translating these concepts into a session for Class 7 students led us to simplify, clarify, and embody the principles. We couldn't just talk about "needs"; we had to find a way to make a 12-13-years-old see the need behind their frustration with a sibling or a friend. The practice of empathetic listening was crucial when coordinating with school teachers, requiring me to understand their constraints without judgment.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

In essence, the fellowship filled a critical gap. It taught the "soft skills" that are often assumed but rarely explained, skills essential for personal peace, healthy relationships, and effective communication. The journey was unexpectedly enriching, moving beyond my initial assumptions to offer truly transformative tools for navigating life.

Sarita

The FEEL Fellowship helped me develop a deeper awareness of my inner world: my feelings, thoughts, and needs and how they influence the way I respond to situations and people. One of the most important lessons for me was understanding the difference between feelings and judgments, and realizing how often I was suppressing my real emotions by distracting myself instead of listening to them. Through the fellowship, I learned to pause, acknowledge what I was truly feeling, and connect those feelings to underlying needs. This practice helped reduce my overthinking, gave me greater emotional control, and allowed me to stay more grounded during stressful situations. FEEL also strengthened my ability to listen with presence and empathy, starting with myself. This self-connection became the foundation for understanding others more clearly and responding with intention rather than reaction.

Karisma

The FEEL fellowship was an eye opening for me. Initially, I'd roughly go through the MEM's blog. But the fellowship gave me the full immersive experience. I had expected for a more self-connected relationship, but not in this deep manner. I'm glad to be close and attuned to my needs and body sensations now. I'm grateful to learn about the inner world in a needs aware way, than other trauma informed way. I liked to be needs oriented and look at things in fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of needs. I learnt about the differentiation between story and stimulus, observation and evaluation, and that presence and focus is needed to listen emphatically



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

Most importantly, I learnt that I can't give empathy if I myself don't have it. Earlier, empathy was absorbing others' troubles and concerns, while sidelining my inner world and its boundaries and requirements. After the fellowship, my perspective on empathy completely changed. Empathy now means being connected to myself, separating my inner world and outer world, asking myself if I'd like to engage in listening if I have the energy and presence. Similarly, emotional intelligence earlier meant cracking someone else's inner thoughts just by looking at them or assuming I can do it. Later, my understanding shifted to emotional intelligence. And to really empathetically guess others' needs, I need to first stay attuned to myself. That calmness in my mind will help me to guess, and not predict the needs behind. Above all, in the fellowship, I learn it's safe to feel safe in a well-grounded and needs aware group. That before sharing any personal reflections in the session or any context, it's of utmost important for the person to feel emotionally safe. For that, such a safe space need to be urged to be established.

5.2. Closure of the Fellowship

Roshni

Before Joining the Fellowship

- Prior to joining the fellowship, Roshni had anger problems; she can barely seem to try and understand other people's points of view.
- Instead, she would often blame others and not herself, while also raising her voice in defense or showing violent reactions.
- Roshni would often find herself angry and discovering the reasons afterward.
- It was hard for her to listen to others' needs; in conversations, she would become overly defensive.

After Entering the Fellowship

- Having gone through this fellowship, Roshni felt slow yet significant changes within herself.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

- She didn't exhibit radical changes, but from the very start of the sessions, she began actively working at keeping her anger in check.
- She became more open to listening to other people and reduced the tendency to become defensive.
- Her improved emotional handling was clearly reflected in the project on action, whereby she handled disturbing situations more calmly and elegantly.
- Roshni also realized the importance of being able to identify her needs prior to emotional reactions such as anger or sadness.

Skills Learned post Fellowship by Roshni

- Enhanced capability of dealing with anger problems.
- Empathy for others.
- She has the ability to identify her own needs before responding emotionally.

Priyanka

Before joining the fellowship, Priyanka often felt sad, but without clarity of what happened. She used to write in a journal, but that did not help; basically, her writing was about feelings with judgments, not clarity. Quite often, she would be caught up in many needs and just did not know how to identify or navigate them clearly.

Like Roshni, Priyanka too had her share of anger and defensive reactions. She could not handle refusal easily, and somewhere, she did not understand the meaning of requesting, she would expect a “yes” when she asked for something and felt disturbed if she heard a “no”. She continued to be perplexed between so-called real feelings and false or pseudo feelings, thereby narrowing the scope of correctly perceiving her emotional self and, hence her needs.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

Since being in fellowship, Priyanka has been going through a gradual yet meaningful change in everyday living. She started consciously to identify and write down what her needs were, more particularly during moments of sadness or anger. Journaling is a more structured reflective practice, focusing on identifying the most important need and actively working toward meeting it.

One of the most empowering learnings for Priyanka was understanding the concept of strategies. Earlier, she used to depend on one source to fulfill a need and perceived that her happiness revolved around it. Through the fellowship, she realized that one need can be satisfied through multiple strategies, which gave her a sense of freedom and clarity.

As time passed, Priyanka began using the SFNR model in everyday life and continues to make conscious attempts to practice the same. Her learnings have helped her deal more mindfully with emotions and approach a situation with better self-awareness, marking a positive shift in her personal growth journey.

Sujata

I entered this experience aware that my own childhood and adolescence had been confusing, but I carried many of those unprocessed patterns into adulthood. My approach to conflict was often complicated. I would quickly feel misunderstood and become frustrated, sometimes withdrawing or becoming sharp in my communication. I struggled to articulate my own needs clearly, often expecting others to simply "know" what was wrong. My focus in disagreements was frequently on proving my point or not being able to navigate a common ground sometimes than understanding the other person's perspective, needs or perspectives.

The fellowship has been a process of gentle but significant rewiring. The most profound change has been the development of a pause, a moment between a triggering event and my reaction.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

Now, when I feel a surge of frustration, I have learned to ask myself: "What is the need beneath this feeling? Is it a need for respect, for clarity, for consideration?" This simple question de-escalates my own emotion and guides me toward a more constructive response.

Working on the Action Project was a direct application of this growth. Facilitating sessions for young teenagers, I had to model the calm and clarity we were teaching. When logistical challenges arose with schools, I practiced making clear requests instead of voicing complaints. When students shared their conflicts, I practiced listening to understand, not to immediately advise. This project held up a mirror, showing me how far I had come in practicing the very skills I was there to introduce.

Swekriti

The FEEL (Fellowship For Emerging Empathic Leaders) experience has been deeply reflective and thought-provoking. Unlike typical learning programs, it encouraged me to slow down, turn inward, and honestly examine how I interact with myself and others, especially in conflict.

I realized I had often been reactive without noticing it. Understanding the difference between a Reactive and Responsive Mindset helped me recognize patterns like assuming intentions, believing stories without evidence, or staying silent when I should have expressed my needs. While confronting these habits was sometimes painful, it was also liberating—they reflected unmet needs rather than personal weaknesses.

One key learning was separating stimulus from the stories I tell myself. Asking, "What actually happened?" instead of "What am I telling myself happened?" helped reduce unnecessary emotional suffering and clarified my responses in conflicts.

I also learned to see emotions as feedback on needs, naming and examining them rather than dismissing them. This practice made me more responsible for my emotional experience and less likely to project it onto others.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

The need-communication sessions taught me to be practical and clear in asking for what I need, viewing communication as an act of care rather than demand. Expressing needs strengthened relationships rather than weakened them.

The fellowship community played a crucial role. The openness, vulnerability, and mutual respect among fellows created a safe space to explore and grow. Facilitators encouraged reflection over performance, and learning over perfection.

My teaching project allowed me to apply these learnings. I realized emotional awareness and conflict resolution are practical skills, and learning is social—sharing knowledge enhances growth.

Overall, FEEL helped me stay conscious of my emotional depth, reinforcing that softness and strength can coexist. It strengthened my belief in leading with empathy, clarity, and connection, both personally and as a leader.

Key Skills and Insights Gained

- Self-Awareness as a Tool: We now view emotions as valuable data rather than disruptions. Identifying core needs has become a first step in problem-solving, not a last resort.
- From Reaction to Response: We have developed the capacity to slow down, distinguish observable facts from personal interpretations, and choose communication strategies that seek connection rather than victory.
- Empathetic Engagement: We approach conversations with genuine curiosity about others' experiences and needs, which has fundamentally changed the tone and outcomes of difficult discussions.
- The Privilege of Sharing: The Action Project highlighted both the responsibility and the reward of passing these tools forward. Witnessing young students experience "lightbulb" moments about their own emotions served as a powerful reminder of the importance of this learning, particularly during formative years.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

- A Shift in Way of Being: This fellowship did not simply add to our knowledge; it transformed our way of being. It provided a shared compass and vocabulary for a more emotionally intelligent, connected, and resilient path forward, for ourselves and, through initiatives like this, for our community.

Sarita

The action project allowed me to translate my learning into real-world practice and experience leadership in action. While working with government officials, I learned the importance of staying calm and flexible in challenging and uncertain situations, especially when plans did not go as expected. The experience taught me to prepare backup plans, manage my own expectations, and remain patient when participants could not immediately grasp new concepts. I also learned that teaching and facilitating do not guarantee instant understanding, what matters is creating a safe space, offering the best we can, and accepting that learning takes time. This fellowship has shaped how I approach conflict, communication, and leadership going forward. I now carry a stronger sense of patience, self-responsibility, and openness, and I intend to apply these learnings in my future professional work and community engagement with greater clarity and empathy.

Karisma

Before Joining

- Struggled to feel psychologically safe in her body and surroundings.
- Knew her guiding values but couldn't connect them to tangible feelings and needs.
- Experienced emotions but couldn't label or separate her own thoughts from societal influence.



Chapter V

Conclusion and Closure

After Completing the Fellowship

- Became more self-aware recognizing thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and facial expressions.
- Learned to distinguish self-judgment from facts and understand the needs behind it.
- Gained skills in listening, self-responsibility for feelings, and empathetic communication.
- I felt safe in the fellowship environment and became more open and connected.
- Learned from peers what strong self-connection looks like.
- Can now identify underlying needs in both self-judgment and judgments of others using emotional intelligence tools.

Skills Acquired

- Self-understanding and self-empathy
- Requesting for own needs
- Listening empathetically
- Feelings and needs vocabulary



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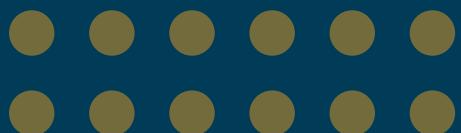
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Annexes

Annex 1: Reflections of the Project Coordinator

The responsibility of leading the fellowship had initially seemed overwhelming. As I was aware of the responsibility that came along with the role. As the journey unfolded, I felt grateful for the support, trust, and openness shown by both the MEM team and the fellows throughout the fellowship.

Another most fulfilling part of the experience was gathering fellows from different academic and professional backgrounds together, such as business, law, management, and psychology. Despite these differences, the fellows shared a strong commitment to learn, unlearn, and relearn. What I found to be a constant was their curiosity, openness, and active participation, which made the whole journey meaningful and rewarding.

This journey reinforced the importance of inclusive and collaborative learning spaces in fostering collective growth and leadership development.

Annex 2: Reflection on Personal Growth as mentor

The fellowship helped me to be more conscious of my presence as a mentor, especially in moments when I was working at a fast pace. With responsibilities, deadlines, and targets in mind, there were times when I was more focused on what needed to be done and unintentionally overlooked the people involved in the process. This realization became a significant self-reflection to me.

As the journey progressed, I could track myself applying the skill of SFNR during interactions and decision-making. This helped me pause, reflect, and respond more thoughtfully rather than reacting purely from urgency or pressure. It supported me in becoming more present, considerate that aligned with the values we were nurturing within the fellowship.

The experience shifted the way I approach communication. Even when I knew what I was doing in terms of strategy and direction, I realized how important it was to share the full context with the team. This transparency improved collaboration and minimized misinterpretations. Being part of a community that was open to both providing and accepting feedback supported my growth, especially in communicating with empathy and clarity.

Annexes

Overall, the fellowship helped me grow as a mentor, emphasizing the value of self-awareness, reflective practice, and proactive communication.

Annex 3: Reflection on Fellows

It was enriching to work with fellows from diverse backgrounds. In the beginning, everyone came with their own understanding of emotional intelligence, empathy, and emotions. What I really appreciated was their willingness to learn not just from the sessions, but from each other. The EI skills shared during the sessions were not only accepted, but their importance was deeply felt. At the same time, the fellows remained realistic and thoughtful, often raising critical questions that helped sharpen and deepen their understanding.

I felt that the space gradually became safe and open, where fellows were comfortable asking counter-questions and receiving feedback. Since emotional intelligence is something that can only be learned through practice, I loved noticing moments when they caught themselves making stories or letting emotions take over. During the action projects working in pairs when they expressed themselves with empathy, it was clear how much they had started to integrate the EI skills into their everyday interactions. Those moments stood out to me because they showed their growing self-awareness, how they were becoming more mindful of their emotions, behaviors, and responses. Seeing this growth over the journey was deeply fulfilling for me.

Annex 4: Reflection on this cycle and Feedback for upcoming cycle of FEEEL

This cycle brought together fellows from diverse backgrounds, which added richness to the learning process. However, all six fellows were female. While this created a strong and supportive space, I feel that including participants of other genders in future cycles would further complement the group and bring in more varied perspectives, especially during discussions around emotions, empathy, and leadership.

Annexes

Throughout the fellowship journey, the fellows were introduced to several EI skills and were encouraged to reflect after each session. Building on this, I believe we could make the learning more intentional by designing small, practice-based assignments around each theme. Creating regular spaces where fellows can share their experiences of applying these skills what worked, what felt challenging, and what they noticed about themselves, would deepen learning and help them become more conscious of using EI in real-life.

Since emotional intelligence is rooted in practice, the four-month fellowship period may feel limited, especially when fellows are expected to engage with government officials during the action project.. As the fellows are still in the early stages of learning and applying EI, being more mindful while choosing the target audience for the action project would be helpful. Additionally, to strengthen implementation, outreach planning could be more robust. Considering multiple target audiences in advance would help manage last-minute cancellations and reduce pressure.

Annexes

Annex 5: Survey Form

FEEL Fellowship 2025: Conflict Resolution Pre-Survey

Name:

Gender:

Age:

What does conflict mean to you?

2. Why do you think conflicts happen?

3. What do you think we can do to solve conflicts?

Annexes

FEEL Fellowship 2025: Conflict Resolution Post Survey

Name:

Gender:

Age:

1. What does conflict mean to you now?

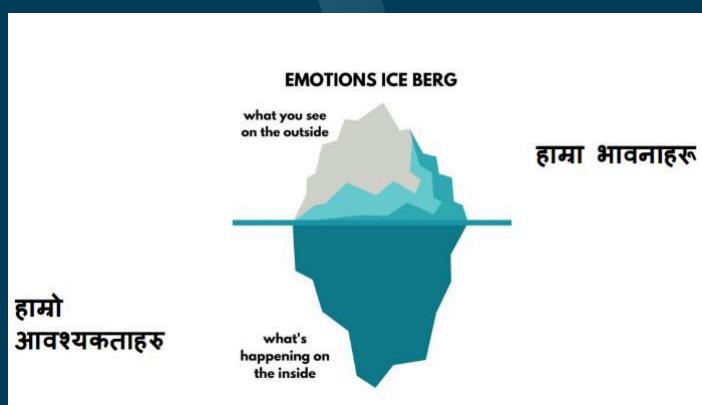
2. Why do you think conflicts happen now? Has your understanding changed?

3. What do you think we can do to solve conflicts now?

Annexes

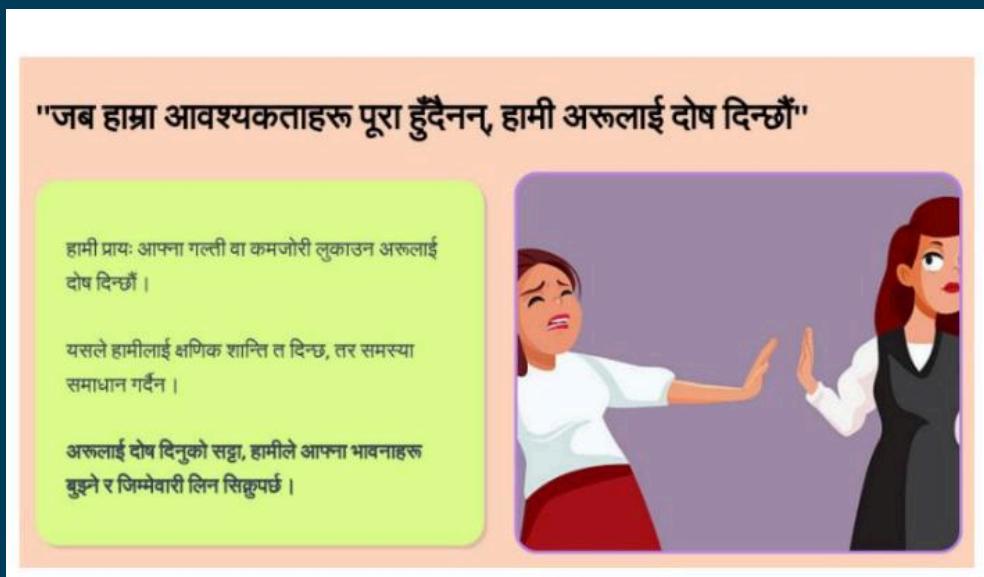
Annex 6: Slides from the Action Project

Priyanka and Roshani



Annexes

Annex 6: Slides from the Action Project



Sarita and Karisma:

Conflict Resolution Through Needs Awareness

भावना • धारणा • आवश्यकता

Sarita Dangi
Karisma Regmi

FEEL
Fellowship for Emerging Empathic Leaders
An initiative of My Emotions Matter

Feelings, Judgements, and Needs



Universal Need Lists

Connection स्वीकृती करुणा निषा सहानुभूति	Physical wellbeing चाल शारीरिक सुरक्षा आराम	Peace सुन्दरता सहज समानता
Meaning स्पष्टता योग्यता योगदान सिकाइ आशा		

Feelings Lists

हाय्यो आवश्यकताहरू पूरा हुँदाको के ही भावनाहरू आदर गर्नु हर्षित	खुशी साहसि
हाय्यो आवश्यकताहरू पूरा नहुँदाको के ही भावनाहरू रीस अधैर्य	बेचैन एकलो पछुतो

Annexes

Annex 6: Slides from the Action Project

Role Play Scenario

यो भूमिका खेल केवल द्वन्द्व बुझनका लागि हो। कृपया वास्तविक व्यक्तिसंग तुलना नगर्नुहोस्।

मैले सिफारिस्तको आवेदन दिएको आज ७ दिन भइसक्यो। आज पनि भएन भने मेरो कामै अडिकिन्छ।

नागरिक

यहाँ हामी मात्रै हैन, अरु धेरैको पनि काम पालोमा हुँच। हामी ढिला गरिरहेका छैनौं।

अधिकारी

माधिवाट स्वीकृति नआएसम्म हामीले बनाइदिन मिल्दैन। प्रक्रिया पूरा गर्न समय लाग्छ।

नागरिक

तपाईंहरू सधैँ यस्तै भव्हुहुन्छ। मेरो कामलाई कसैले गम्भीर लिदैन जस्तो लाग्छ।

नागरिक

Swekriti and Sujata:

आजको सत्रका लागि मुख्य नियमहरू

01 सत्रमा ध्यान दिई रामोसंग सुन्नुहोस्।
 02 कसैले बोल्दै गर्दा बीचमा नटाक्नुहोस्।
 03 जानकारी नदिई कोठा बाहिर ननिस्कनुहोस्।
 04 सबैको विचारको आदर गर्नुहोस्।
 05 आफैमा वा अरुसंग कोठामा गफ गर्ने काम नगर्नुहोस्।
 06 सत्रमा सक्रिय रूपमा सहभागी हुनुहोस्।
 07 सत्रमा सक्रिय रूपमा सहभागी हुनुहोस्।

Game time- "Kasko Kura?"

1. Instructions

What are Emotions?
भावनाहरू

Feeling Happy Feeling Scared Feeling Angry Feeling Sad

Our Emotions
हामो भावनाहरू



Annexes

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Feelings

मलाई/ तपाईंलाई कस्तो महसुस भयो?

feelings are what you feel inside

HAPPY SAD ANGRY EXCITED
खुसी दुखी रिस उठ्नु
उत्साहित

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UNDERSTANDING NEEDS

आवश्यकता

01 WHAT MY HEART WANTS?

02 IT IS A PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL REQUIREMENT EVERYONE NEEDS
Example: सहयोग, स्नेह, दया, सम्मान

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Judgement

धारणा

मैले के थिक ठाने
YO MANCHE KASTO IRRITATING
USLE TA MALAI MANPARAUDAINA
THEY MUST THINK I AM UGLY
YO TEACHER KASTO NARAMRO

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Video Presentation

अब भिडियो हेराउ है त!

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अिडियोमा के भइरहेको थियो?

यदि तपाईं त्यो विद्यार्थी हुनुहन्थ्यो जो विद्यालय चाँडे आउँथ्यो र सीटबाट निकालिन्थ्यो भने तपाईंलाई कस्तो महसुस हुन्थ्यो?

अिडियोमा दुवै समूहका विद्यार्थीहरूको आवश्यकताहरू के के थिए?

अिडियोमा किन विवाद उत्पन्न भएको थियो?

विद्यार्थीहरूसे के गर्नुपर्ने थियो?

तपाईंको विचारमा हामी यो विवाद कसरी समाधान गर्न सक्छौं?

Annexes

Annex 7: Session pictures



Session at Bhimsengola Secondary School



Session at Syuchatar Ward office

Annexes

Annex 7: Session Pictures



Session at Ganga Secondary School



Session at Mandala International School

Annexes

Annex 7: Session Pictures



Session at Jana Prabhat Secondary School



Session at Dhapakhel Ward Office

Annexes

Annex 8: Graduation Pictures

