



Australia Awards



# Year in Review 2025

Australia Awards  
– Nepal



# Highlights of 2025

## In 2025, Australia Awards continued to support Nepal's development priorities by equipping emerging leaders with the skills, networks and leadership experience to drive meaningful change.

It was a year of growth for Australia Awards, demonstrating Australia's commitment to building human capability in Nepal, with increases in:

- new Scholarships offered for master's degree-level study (19, compared to 18 in 2024)
- instances of scholars participating in enrichment opportunities (74, compared to 55 in 2024)
- the number of Short Courses completed by Nepali participants (four, compared to two in 2024).

In total, 100 Australia Awards scholars, fellows, and Short Course and Australian Professional Opportunity (APO) participants from Nepal undertook education, training and professional development during 2025.

Twenty-four of these scholars completed their degrees at Australia's world-class universities and returned home as alumni, committed to contributing to Nepal's development.

A comprehensive schedule of enrichment activities, including five flagship Scholars Symposiums, enhanced Nepali scholars' professional capabilities and facilitated networking with senior Australian leaders.

Indigenous engagement was an important theme throughout the year's activities, giving Nepali scholars the chance to learn about the culture, history and achievements of Australia's First Nations people.

As targeted short-term training opportunities to strengthen sector-specific capability and regional collaboration, Australia Awards also supported 17 Nepalis to complete four Short Courses and 18 Nepalis through three APOs.

For alumni, Australia Awards provided professional development and networking opportunities in Nepal and regionally.

A highlight was the 2025 Regional Alumni Workshop, which had the theme 'From inclusion to equity: Development for all'. Seven Nepalis joined other alumni from South Asia and Mongolia at the workshop, which launched the Equity for All alumni network. This fourth regional alumni network (alongside the Regional Women in Leadership Network, Male Allies for Gender Equality alumni network, and Champions for the Environment and Climate Action) enabled participants to continue collaborating on equity-focused initiatives for people with disability and from marginalised communities.

*Cover image:* Australia Awards scholars and alumni from Nepal. From left to right: Nisha Neupane, Shailee Chaudhary, Baburam Acharya and Jyoti Ghimire.

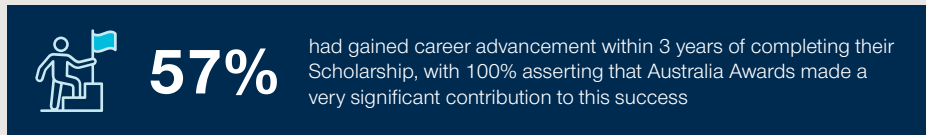
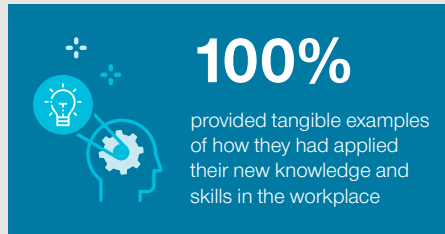
*Image:* Australia Awards recipients from Nepal. From left to right: Lokendra Adhikari, Kamana Adhikari and Rabin Kumar Gyalang.



# Outcomes at a glance

**Outcome:** Alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development

Among 9 Australia Awards Scholarships alumni in Nepal surveyed:



Among 16 Australia Awards Short Course alumni in Nepal surveyed:



**Outcome:** Alumni contribute to cooperation between Australia and Nepal

Among 9 Australia Awards Scholarships alumni in Nepal surveyed:

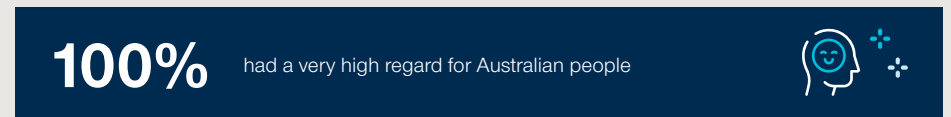


**Outcome:** Australia is viewed as a valued international partner

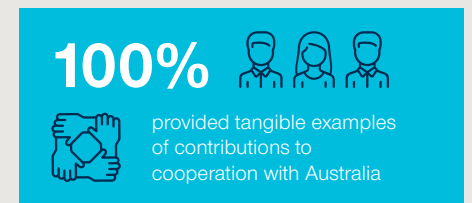
Among 9 Australia Awards Scholarships alumni in Nepal surveyed:



Among 16 Australia Awards Short Course alumni in Nepal surveyed:



Among 16 Australia Awards Short Course alumni in Nepal surveyed:



“As an Australia Awards scholar, I found this opportunity to be far more than just an academic journey. Building lifelong connections with people from diverse countries and allowing me to gain valuable insights into Australia’s culture, society and policy landscape, it has enriched both my personal and professional growth in deeply meaningful ways.”

**Manoj Raut**  
Master of Public Policy  
The Australian National University  
commenced 2025



# Australia Awards Scholarships

**In 2025, Australia Awards Scholarship recipients from Nepal achieved strong academic and professional outcomes. During the year, 24 scholars (15 women, 9 men) completed their master’s degrees; all have returned home as alumni and are applying their learning in support of Nepal’s development priorities.**

At the other end of their Scholarship journey, 18 scholars (8 women, 1 non-binary person, 9 men) from Nepal commenced master’s-level study at Australian universities in 2025. This brought the total number of Nepali scholars studying in Australia in 2025 to 42.

To complement scholars’ studies and strengthen their leadership capability, Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia offered 23 scholar enrichment opportunities throughout the year, including the flagship Scholars Symposiums (see page 08). Scholars from Nepal participated in these opportunities 74 times, engaging in professional development activities such as grants, internships and online communication training.

Consistent with Australia’s policy priorities, enrichment activities strongly emphasised gender equality, Indigenous engagement and equity for people with disability. Key activities included:

- an International Women’s Day online seminar with Indigenous women’s advocate Vicky Welgraven AM
- a World Environment Day seminar with Professor Anne Poelina, highlighting the connection between Indigenous knowledge and environmental management

- *Disability Sector Connect*, a study tour in Adelaide focused on innovation and best practice in disability advocacy and inclusion.

Manil Raj Maharjan, a Nepali scholar with disability who took part in *Disability Sector Connect*, said, “This was one of the most fruitful initiatives I have participated in.”

As part of a new initiative, Nepali scholars Rita Baramu and Shristi Oliya were appointed Scholar Ambassadors for the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales, respectively. In this role, Rita and Shristi promote scholar enrichment activities, and act as a voice for scholars from South Asia and Mongolia. Reflecting on her role, Rita said, “I am passionate about helping others feel seen, heard and connected.”

Representing Australia’s continued investment in long-term development outcomes, 19 emerging leaders from Nepal received Scholarships to commence study in Australia in 2026, a 6% increase on the previous year. This cohort included 11 women, two people with disability and 10 people from ethnic minority groups, reflecting Australia’s commitment to equal opportunity for all people, regardless of gender, disability status or background.

# Scholars engage with Indigenous Australians

**Scholars from Nepal participated in Indigenous engagement activities across Australia and online in 2025, alongside other scholars from South Asia and Mongolia.**

The flagship activity was a four-day First Nations study tour in Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, South Australia. Through various sessions, scholars learnt about the relationship that the Adnyamathanha people, the Traditional Owners of the area, have with the environment.

Nepali scholar Ranjana Bishwakarma said, “The study tour was truly unforgettable. I gained valuable insights into Indigenous culture, explored breathtaking landscapes and learnt about the region’s rich history.”

In Melbourne, local guides led scholars along the Aboriginal Heritage Walk at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. The guides shared stories of the land and its people, and pointed out native plants used for food, medicine and tools.

Reflecting on the event, Nepali scholar Unique Lohani said, “It was a wonderful experience to learn about Indigenous heritage and their deep, enduring connection with nature—an integral part of their way of life. Discovering how traditions from the Dreamtime have persisted through generations, and seeing them reflected in various cultural artefacts, was truly intimate and moving.”

In Sydney, scholars travelled to Bundeena Royal National Park, on the traditional lands of

the Dharawal people, where they heard cultural stories from Richard Campbell, an Elder of the Yuin Nation. Attendees also had hands-on opportunities to learn boomerang throwing and traditional fire-making techniques.

Scholars also joined Ronnie Jordan, a Pitta Pitta Wangkamahdla woman, and Coen, a Pitta Pitta Wangkamahdla Muruwari Ngemba man, for an online Aboriginal weaving workshop. Using materials received in advance, scholars followed step-by-step instructions to learn coil weaving and rope making, while Ronnie explained how weaving connects the weaver, their ancestors and the land.

Prakriti Budha Magar, a scholar from one of Nepal’s indigenous communities, said, “I was fascinated to learn that Aboriginal art and weaving are both powerful storytelling forms. The choice of threads varies by Country and is naturally dyed ... in the past, echidna spikes were even used in place of needles.”

Each of these scholar experiences helped participants gain deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous Australians’ culture, history and achievements.

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*Image:* Prakriti Budha Magar from Nepal has her face painted by Richard Campbell, an Elder of the Yuin Nation, during her time as an Australia Awards scholar.



# Short-term training

**In 2025, Australia Awards delivered short-term training opportunities to 58 Nepalis in priority sectors, including climate change, forest fire management and Indigenous knowledge. These Short Courses, Fellowships and Australian Professional Opportunities (APOs) strengthened participants' skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to Nepal's development.**



*Image: Participants in the Australia Awards Fellowship on Strengthening Capacity to Respond to Climate-Induced Forest Fires in Nepal with Australia's Minister for International Development, the Hon Dr Ann Aly MP (centre, in lilac dress), and representatives of the Australian Himalayan Foundation.*

A total of 17 Nepalis completed Short Courses focused on sector-specific capability and collaboration, combining targeted learning, professional networking and site visits in Australia, as follows.

Four senior officials from Nepal completed a multi-country Short Course on *Executive Leadership*, alongside colleagues from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Participants learnt about Australian Public Service values and leadership practices, while expanding their professional networks within Australia and across the region.

Seven participants completed a Regional Short Course on *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge*, together with participants from Mongolia and Bangladesh. Through engagement with Australian First Nations peoples and a series of field visits, the course strengthened understanding of Indigenous perspectives on environmental management and equipped participants to support environmental outcomes.

Reflecting on her experience, participant Lasata Joshi said, "Participating in the Short Course was an enriching experience that broadened my understanding of Indigenous perspectives across different lands and cultures—not only through the facilitators but also from my fellow cohort members. We were separated by borders yet connected by culture in various ways."

Finally, six participants in total completed two climate-focused Regional Short Courses, supporting increased capability in responding to climate-related challenges (see page 07).

Australia Awards also supported a total of 18 participants from Nepal to build their knowledge through three APOs. One APO supported 15 participants to undertake a Fire Management Study Tour in Australia, receiving hands-on training in wildfire preparedness and response systems at national and local levels.

Complementing this APO and underlining Australia's partnership with Nepal in enhancing forest fire management capacity, a further 15 professionals completed an Australia Awards Fellowship on *Strengthening Capacity to Respond to Climate-Induced Forest Fires in Nepal*. Participants spent one month in Australia, building technical expertise and strengthening institutional relationships with Australian counterparts.

# Alumni engagement

## Australia Awards alumni engagement activities in 2025 focused on supporting professional development, building linkages and increasing knowledge of priority development topics, including gender equality, disability equity and environmental sustainability.

More than 230 participants collectively benefited from alumni engagement activities in Nepal. These activities included:

- an online Welcome Home Event for recently returned Scholarship alumni
- a workshop on emotional intelligence as part of the Alumni Learn and Network Series
- a lecture on solutions to pollution in Nepal's major cities, marking World Environment Day
- a session on ensuring women's rights in the workplace, marking International Women's Day.

Alumni from Nepal built linkages with counterparts from South Asia and Mongolia and heard from Australian leaders through regional engagement opportunities, headlined by the Regional Alumni Workshop (see page 08).

Four regional thematic alumni networks (the Regional Women in Leadership Network, Male Allies for Gender Equality alumni network, Champions for the Environment and Climate Action, and Equity for All alumni network) also provided opportunities for alumni across South Asia and Mongolia to engage on gender equality, disability equity and environmental sustainability.

A total of 22 regional alumni events registered more than 100 participants from Nepal. Activities included:

- training on applying online tools for digital inclusion, organised by the Equity for All alumni network and delivered by Nepali alum Sagar Prasai
- an event for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, facilitated by Nepali alum Rakshya Risal
- an alumni-led event for World Mental Health Day on the subject of 'Mental Health for Sustainable Development', facilitated by Nepali alum Meena Thapa
- a three-part training series on creating safe and inclusive workplaces, organised by the Male Allies for Gender Equality alumni network.

Nepali alum Maheshwar Ghimire, who participated in the Male Allies for Gender Equality training, said, "This is only the beginning. We have the knowledge and tools—now it's time to use them to create safer spaces for all."

"For me, Australia Awards was more than a Scholarship: it was a journey of growth, resilience, building networks, [and] an opportunity to redefine and refine my confidence and leadership potentiality within me. More than that, studying, exploring and working in Australia transformed my perspective on academia, life, people and the world."

**Prativa Khanal**  
Master of Urban Horticulture  
The University of Melbourne, 2025



# Strengthening climate leadership and resilience

**Australia Awards is equipping emerging leaders from Nepal with the skills and networks needed to respond to the challenges of a changing climate. Action on climate change is central to Australia's international development priorities, and Australia is committed to improving the capacity of partner governments to manage the impacts of the climate crisis.**



*Image: Participants in the Regional Short Course on Accessing Climate Finance.*

This commitment to climate action was reflected in the delivery of two climate-focused Regional Short Courses in 2025. Three Nepalis completed a Regional Short Course on *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction*. Participants explored how stronger policy coherence between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation could support sustainable development.

Three Nepalis also undertook a Regional Short Course on *Accessing Climate Finance*, which built participants' capability to navigate the complex landscape of climate-related finance, international agreements, green banking and sustainable investing.

These two Regional Short Courses each included two weeks of learning in Australia, enabling participants to network with Australian experts, including at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Department of the Treasury, Energy Queensland, the National Adaptation Policy Office and the Clean Investor Group. Participants also visited SolarShare, Australia's largest community-owned solar farm.

The focus on climate finance capability extended to the Champions for the Environment and Climate Action alumni network, which convened two online events on the topic attended by Nepali alumni.

In addition, Australia Awards supported Dr Dharam Raj Uprety, Thematic Lead: Climate and Resilience at Practical Action Nepal, to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> international Adaptation Futures Conference through an Australian Professional Opportunity. Adaptation Futures is recognised as the international community's most influential climate adaptation gathering, bringing together more than 1,200 global experts to explore solutions to adapt to a changing climate.

Australia Awards also sought to strengthen scholars' ability to respond to climate change more broadly. A highlight was Climate Literacy training facilitated by Edith Cowan University over three sessions. Nepali scholars were among a group of 30 from South Asia and Mongolia who explored practical strategies for reducing emissions, influencing policy, and driving positive change within organisations and the wider community.

Reflecting on the training, Nepali participant Kabin Maharjan said, "This training enhanced my expertise in carbon footprint analysis and decarbonisation strategies, further empowering me to influence policy, educate communities, and advocate for sustainable practices on a local and global scale with determination."

# Major events

## Scholars strengthen leadership skills at Scholar Symposiums

**From October to December, 22 Nepali Australia Awards scholars participated in five Scholar Symposiums across Australia. These events were designed to help scholars develop the skills to be changemakers after completing their Scholarships.**

Delivering opening remarks in Sydney on behalf of the scholars, Shristi Oliya said, “An Australia Awards Scholarship provides a window to see the larger world and to reflect on ourselves.”

Each symposium saw a panel of experts speaking about various leadership topics, including the importance of values for leaders, tips for networking and advice on advocating for change. Panellists included:

- Katie Smith, the Director of DFAT’s South Asia and Mongolia Section, in Canberra
- Crispin Conroy, former Australian Ambassador to Nepal, in Sydney
- Harine Somasundaram, a New Colombo Plan Alumni Representative who undertook a New Colombo Plan internship in Nepal, in Sydney.

Scholar Manoj Raut said that the Canberra panel highlighted “different aspects of leadership and strategies to become an effective leader”.

The first afternoon of each symposium was dedicated to training to help scholars apply what they had heard across the morning. Melbourne-based scholar Sapana BK said that the training “helped me improve my professional communication skills and build confidence in connecting with others”.

On the second day of the symposiums, scholars examined their Development Impact and Linkages Plans (DILPs) and whether they needed updating. “This encouraged me to review my DILP progress so far, identify areas where I haven’t paid due attention, and plan future actions to stay on track and achieve my goals effectively,” said scholar Jayandra Bishwakarma.

Each symposium concluded with scholars engaging with First Nations Australians. These activities included art lessons from Indigenous teachers, viewing Indigenous art in galleries and learning to throw a boomerang. For many attendees, the most valuable aspect of the events was the opportunity to network with other scholars from across the region.

Summing up the views of many, Melbourne-based attendee Prativa Khanal said, “This Symposium was really engaging and significant in changing my perspective of leadership and networking. It motivated me to forget my past and work for my future.”

## Alumni unite for equity and development

**Seven Nepalis were among the 51 Australia Awards alumni from South Asia and Mongolia who attended the 2025 Regional Alumni Workshop in Sri Lanka on 7–9 April.**

The workshop’s theme was ‘From inclusion to equity: Development for all’. Through alumni presentations, panel discussions and group exercises, attendees discussed advocacy for the rights of people with disability and people from traditionally marginalised communities. Thirteen participants were people with disability.

Nepali alumni played a central role in delivering the workshop: Nisha Singh delivered one of three keynote presentations, while Yajaswi Rai and Srijana Karki each delivered a presentation showcasing their development work and Sagar Prasain was a panellist.

Opening the event, HE Mr Paul Stephens, Australia’s then High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, said, “The workshop theme recognises that it is not enough to seek inclusion for people from marginalised communities and people with disability ... rather, we must tackle the unequal power systems and structures that hinder economic growth and human development.”

During her keynote presentation, Nisha Singh, a member of Nepal’s minority Madhesi community, spoke about the transformative power of education. “You don’t have to be

perfect to make a difference,” she said. “You just have to be present, persistent and passionate.” Each keynote presentation was followed by a discussion panel featuring alumni. Other topics covered were advocacy by and for people with disability, and why development practitioners working with people with disability and from minority communities should consider intersectionality.

Participants also examined common challenges—dividing into groups to brainstorm approaches to each challenge, then presenting their ideas.

The workshop marked ten years since the inaugural Regional Alumni Workshop, at which the Women in Leadership Network was launched. The 2025 workshop saw the launch of the Equity for All alumni network, enabling participants to collaborate beyond the event.



*Image:* Australia Awards alumni from Nepal at the Regional Alumni Workshop. From left to right: Melsan Shrestha, Yajaswi Rai, Nisha Singh, Sagar Prasain, Srijana Karki, Reejuta Sharma and Ganesh Bahadur Khatri.

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Australia Awards – Nepal forms part of the Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia Program and is managed by Palladium on behalf of the Australian Government.

Images in this publication are of Australia Awards recipients, scholars and alumni participating in Program activities.

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