

# An Open Letter

## To: Everyone It May Concern

Greetings!

I am writing this chronological narrative on the issue of NRN (Non Resident Nepalis) and the Role of the Nepalese Americas Council (NAC) in the formation and development of the NRN organization in the US. It was requested after questions to me from and discussion with a some of the younger Nepali diaspora in the US from which it appears that they may not be properly fully informed on this matter.

The following, which presents the most comprehensive account to date that I know of, relies on my recollections; a document first compiled in 2010 by the NAC Presidents listed below and the records of Dr Prahlad Pant. It is apparent that all of us have firsthand knowledge on different parts of the chronology. Names of many key players have been included for sake of veracity.

I have also been given to understand that this issue impinges in some way with the imminent NRN NCC USA elections and the eligibility of some candidates therein. Although I cannot comprehend how this could be, at best, more than a tangential issue, I offer this for a fuller understanding of this particular matter to clarify any misunderstandings based on this narrative.

1. Historically, owing to the small numbers of Nepalis immigrating to North America in the fifties, sixties and seventies and then being dispersed into a vast continent, organization-building did not really commence until towards the end of this period. By the end of the eighties, however, there already were several organizations. All of them had congruent goals and similar approaches. Local service aside, their efforts in dealing with their external interfaces, particularly Nepal, tended to be needlessly duplicative. The need for all to work together and leverage our efforts was recognized.

Dr Prahlad Pant, then President of ANMA in Cincinnati, mounted some early steps to address this by organizing the first "national" convention of Nepalese-American organizations in College Park, Maryland in 1991. Dr Pant and a number of us had been formulating the structure and form of an organization, to be a confederation like a trade association, and these concepts were discussed at the meeting. NAC was envisioned to coordinate and facilitate activities among the various Nepali organizations to avoid duplication of efforts to mobilize their limited resources and know-how including contributing to the overall development of Nepal. The convention brought together all Nepali organizations and resulted in a joint resolution to work together as an alliance. The NAC concept was realized. NAC was born on May 26, 1991.

In 1996, a second "national" convention was also held in College Park, MD and the NAC concept was more fully realized. NAC went on to be registered in the State of Tennessee in January 2001 and received its 501 (c) 3 status in September 2001. This exemption continues to used to this day by the NRN NCC.

2. A test of the practicability of the NAC concept soon followed.

Dual citizenship, for example, had long been raised as a vital issue by Nepali-American entities - organizations like ANMA - Dr. Dinesh Koirala, Mr. Dibya Hada of the America Nepal Friendship Society (ANFS), Mr. Veda Joshi of California and others.

The Nepalese Association in Southeastern America hosted a conference of US and Canada based Nepali organization in Atlanta in 2000. Many dignitaries from Nepal, including then Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba - the keynote speaker - attended. A well-supported call for dual citizenship was issued during the meeting and a core group of people were identified to follow up and funds were raised to finance the effort in Nepal. ANMA, NASEA and other organizations contributed to this fund along with ANA. Successful lobbying efforts in Nepal followed and in resulted a cabinet decision to provide long term visas, which was ratified by the parliament of Nepal and made into policy, although attempts to implement it floundered - with a visa actually being issued from DC being rejected at TIA. Those who worked in Nepal for this long-term visa were later felicitated at an ANA convention.

3. While US lobbying efforts for dual citizenship were continuing, a group of global Nepalīs were laying the foundation in 2002 for a worldwide platform of Non Resident Nepali (NRN) to give voice to diaspora aspirations in a systematic and organized way. Many of the early principal players decided to move ahead with the concept when they were brought together in Kathmandu at a royal wedding in February 2003. Dr. Gaury Adhikary, then President of NAC, was informed about it and committed the NAC to carry the NRN mandate in America. In that context, there was a nationwide conference call from his residence in April 2003 at which it was affirmed that NAC would be the repository of NRN affairs and for the first NRNA global conference in Kathmandu in 2003, the Nepalese Americas Council representative would be Dr. Shyam Karki, the ANMA delegate would be Mr. Sharda J. Thapa and Mr. Naresh Koirala from Canada would be the ANA delegate. They agreed to attend the conference in October.
4. In preparation for the Conference, all organizations devoted portions of their upcoming annual meetings to discussing NRN affairs, soliciting attendees and promoting the NRN concept. ANMA, ANA and NASEA all created their own resolutions and declarations reaffirming support for NRN causes and the need for all US organizations to work together to advance the cause of NRN.
5. A historic first NRN planning meeting was held in London in August 2003 at the initiative of NRN in Russia and other European countries. Dr. Kunjar Sharma and Mr. Raja Upadhaya were the members present from Canada and the USA. At a NAC meeting on NRN conference preparations at Cincinnati, at Dr. Prahlad Pant's house, with ANMA and NASEA members present, Dr. Kunjar Sharma joined by telephone gave a synopsis of the London meeting.
6. At the NRN Conference in October, Dr. Shyam Karki was elected one of two Vice-Presidents, Mr. Sharda J. Thapa the country representative for USA and Mr. Naresh Koirala the representative of Canada. There were some 26 US attendees. Detailed reports were filed by the three representatives on their return and they were posted on the NAC web page at that time. Even at that time the issues being discussed today were surfaced in and the ensuing discussions helped further define the role and the functions of NAC. Sadly, the documents posted on the website <http://www.nepalcouncil.org> are now lost.

7. There may not always have been agreement on all issues but NAC always made concerted efforts to communicate with each and every diaspora organization through the years. For example in 2004, ANA was not a NAC member but it should be noted that ANA was always a part of the NRN discussion within NAC.
8. During 2004 Dr. Shyam Karki, Mr. Naresh Koirala and Mr. Sharda Thapa attended every major organizational conference, jointly or separately, to publicize the newly created NRNA-ICC and how we needed to become united and enthusiastic participants in the vision and promise of the movement. Many ICC members were guests at many of these events. The coordination of these “NRN Sessions” and the guests was done under the auspices of the NAC without challenge. Under the nomenclature of the time, work commenced on defining an NRN Cell within NAC to conduct NRN affairs and liaison with NRNA-ICC. This proposed charter of the NRN Cell was first presented at a NAC meeting convened in Washington, DC in January 29, 2005. The NRN Cell was declared to be in effect prior to the ANA Conference in Dallas later that year. Dr. Jeet Joshee, the then NAC President, traveled to Dallas and conducted a general session on NRN cell at the ANA convention. A NAC meeting was also conducted at the ANA convention in Dallas and the NRN Cell was further explained and agreed upon by all attendees.
9. In 2005 the practice of NRN Sessions was continued as was the visits by global ICC members to the US to promote the NRN message. In October the 2<sup>nd</sup> global Conference of NRNA was held in Kathmandu. Mr. Sharda J. Thapa was elected Vice President, Americas and Mr. Mukesh Singh was elected the country representative of USA.
10. The NRN Cell was officially renamed NRN North American Coordinating Council (NACC) in 2006 (when Dr. Jeet Joshee was the President of NAC) and endorsed by all member organizations including ANA. A ratification vote was taken in Nashville NAC meeting in early 2006 hosted by Mr. Girija Gautam. Dr Gaury Adhikari was appointed the first Chair of NACC.
11. The first official meeting of the NACC was held in San Bernardino, California in January 2007, hosted by Dr. Jeet Joshee where NRNA President Upendra Mahato and General Secretary Bhim Udas attended. A clear endorsement of NAC NRN NACC role in North America was affirmed by NRNA-ICC at that time.
12. NRN sessions to inform the wider diaspora within the USA and Canada continued to be regular features in the annual convention of ANMA, NAsEa and ANA and other organizations. NAC started publishing NRN news items on its webpage and called annual conferences devoted mainly to NRN issues. Vice-President Mr. Dev M. Hirachan (the current president) attended the Nashville NAC meeting in 2008.
13. A US delegation of 36 attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Conference of NRNA in Kathmandu in 2007. Dr. Ambika Adhikari, then president of NAC, led the US delegation, which was the largest from any country. This was the first meeting at which country NCCs started endorsing the attendees from their countries and NACC fulfilled the then limited role for the US. Mr. Naresh Koirala was elected the Regional Coordinator, Dr. Gaury Adhikary was elected the country representative and Mr. Sagar Onta the Youth Representative. Ms.

Amrit Tuladhar and Mr. Mohan Thapa became inducted ICC members, later confirmed at the ICC executive meeting. Mr. Sharda Thapa was appointed Advisor to the NRNA-ICC.

14. From 2003 until 2008 NAC functioned as the effective North American Coordination Council (NAAC), representing both US and Canada in the NRNA. After the Canadian diaspora formed their NCC in 2008, NAC amended its by-laws to become the NCC for just the USA as well as to eliminate the duality of the NAC and the NACC with separate, almost co-equal, Chairs. From this point on, NAC President also assumed the ex-officio Chair of NACC.
15. Prior to 4<sup>th</sup> NRNA Global Conference in Kathmandu in October 2009 there were intense activities to inform the public in the US about NRN issues. Mr. Suman Timsina, President of NAC, held town hall meeting across the country. With the help of other community leaders, he was able to register over 800 NRN members in US. NAC officers, including Sr. VP Mr. Mukesh Singh and General Secretary Ms. Bishnu Thapa worked tirelessly to reach out to large number of NRN in the USA. Ultimately a delegation of 48 certified members attended the NRNA Conference in 2009.

Subsequent to the Conference the US had Mr. Sharda Thapa as an advisor to NRNA, Mr. Ratan Jha as a General Secretary, Dr. Ambika Adhikari as a Regional coordinator and Mr. Rajendra Shrestha as a Country Representative. Mr. Sonam Lama is was the co-opted ICC member, and Dr. Pukar Malla of Boston was elected as the Deputy Youth Coordinator of the Global Youth Forum within NRNA ICC. Several other prominent individuals were inducted into the 12 global task forces that ICC constituted.

16. Community outreach and membership drives continued after the Conference. During these meetings many questions about the NRN cell within NAC were encountered. Many members preferred to see the brand-name “NRN organization” to bring members together, and to make the NCC name consistent with the names of other 54 NCCs worldwide.
17. In response to those requests, in the light of the new Nepali law, giving NRNA a legal status and to facilitate relations with NRNA as well as diaspora related work within the US, a decision was taken by the house of delegates of NAC to change the name to NRN NCC (National Coordination Council) of USA as of March 25, 2010. This council started on the process of rewriting the bylaws to make it effective to serve the NRN NCC appropriately. The receipt of a “Certificate of Affiliation” from the NRNA-ICC closed the loop and reaffirmed the validity.
18. **Nothing changed otherwise in the charter or function of the organization as it had been since 2003. This was just a name change and NRN NCC USA was clearly the successor organization to NAC.**

### **Conclusion:**

Given these verifiable facts about the development of the NRN movement within the USA the undeniable conclusion is that NAC was at the forefront of our efforts to nurture and promote NRN affairs here and globally since 2003.

There can be little dispute that the NRNA accepted fully from the beginning the role and the evolution of the NAC into the NRN NCC and always honored the NAC on a par with NRN NCCs in other parts of the world.

It is thus incumbent that the NRN NCC USA fully recognize NAC as its predecessor organization, based on the extensive history, and honor all NAC executives and officeholders commencing from Dr Gaury Adhikary's tenancy, as if they were, in fact, full-fledged NRN NCC executives and members. Items 3 and 10 above support this assertion.

It is hoped that an understanding of these facts will lead to the wholehearted acceptance of this recommendation and the resolve not to bring it up again and again for renewed debate.

Finally, it is critical that the diaspora remain united and move together in fulfilling the objectives of Non Resident Nepalis in North America and all concerned should look for the greater good of the community and avoid fractions and divisions.

Sharda J Thapa  
August 2017

Notes:

*I would like to acknowledge the help of Dr Prahlad Pant and Dr Gaury Adhikary for their help in preparing this. As mentioned, parts of this chronology, on which I had helped out, had been previously issued as a joint letter from the following:*

Gaury S Adhikary, MD

*NAC President 2003-2004*

Dr. Jeet Joshee,

*NAC President 2005-2006*

Dr. Ambika P Adhikari,

*NAC: NRN National Coordination Council President 2007-2008*

Dr. Tara Niraula

*NAC: NRN National Coordination Council President 2009*

Mr. Suman R. Timsina,

*NAC: NRN National Coordination Council President 2009-2010*

*Prior to 2003 there were three NAC Presidents of record:*

Dr. Tulsi Maharjan, 1996-1997

Dr. Rohini Sharma, 1998-1999

Ramesh Amatya, 2000-2002

*In the process of writing this I have been fortunate to obtain many documents that support the actions and events detailed. Available on request.*