

Preface

This Ph.D. thesis has not come together through the more traditional route; a predefined Ph.D. research project which emerged in the quest to find answers and solutions to problems/issues that have not been previously addressed and thus pose new challenges to be tackled. Rather, the present Ph.D. thesis is an amalgamation of a work in progress, initially started in 1996/1997 through realizing the urgent need for changes in the field of utilized and applied renewable energy resources and technologies, respectively, and community development, but without defined, satisfactory, or available solutions and tools to put into practice.

The author recognized this need by observing that the impoverished alpine communities of Nepal need solutions that are more holistic, applicable within their defined context, and with a much more practical angle compared to the current “standard” approach to community development projects.

Thus, from 1997 onwards, the author started to develop and apply new ideas and concepts of holistic community development. The concepts gradually included more and more projects that meet identified basic energy service demands through converting the locally available renewable energy resources.

The author was initially inexperienced in this field, and often had to make ad hoc decisions to do justice to the local circumstances and needs. The first few years were very much a phase of learning-by-doing. Many mistakes were made due to the limited understanding and knowledge at the time of how inclusive and holistic solutions need to be in order to bring forth long-term changes that are suitable for varying contexts and communities.

In particular, the decade from 2001 onwards was devoted to developing and implementing holistic community development projects in close partnership with the local communities through the NGO, RIDS-Nepal. The experience of working at a grass-roots level, and the initial results that the concept of applied renewable energy technologies, paired with long-term holistic community development brought forth, were most encouraging. Gradually, these projects brought substantial life improving changes to the small communities that RIDS-Nepal works with in the high-altitude Himalayan mountain valleys in Nepal.

Recognizing that there are many other impoverished communities in similar circumstances, in other areas in Nepal and indeed in other, similar needy countries, encouraged the author first to start writing papers and publications about the individual project parameters of the new holistic community development

concepts of the “[Family of 4](#)” and the “[Family of 4 PLUS](#)”, and the reasons why the author has developed these new concepts, their outworking, and their impact among those with whom they have been applied.

Work experience, results, and impacts seen and experienced on the ground through the last 16 years of practical community development encouraged the author to put together all the papers and publications written since 2005, and to synthesize the results in the form of a Ph.D. thesis. It is his hope that other agencies, communities, and scholars may benefit from these experiences and apply them in contextualized ways within their own defined surroundings and communities.

<http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-03988-6>

The Role of Renewable Energy Technology in Holistic
Community Development

Zahnd, A.

2013, XXX, 611 p. 396 illus., 75 illus. in color.,

Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-03988-6