PROPOSAL NARRATIVE
The objective of the project is to restore peace and harmony in Panchthar by tackling the issue of rapid outmigration among the youths. We plan to achieve this goal by setting up a fully operational community center that provides opportunities for middle to high school students to engage in various activities and workshops, thus retaining these youths by equipping them with skills to contribute to the local workforce and empowering them to be leaders in their community.

Panchthar is a rural village in eastern Nepal with a population of approximately 200,000. Like many rural settlements in Nepal, Panchthar suffers from rapid outmigration of the youth and hence, its most able workforce. Most of the emigrants are high-school graduates and dropouts. Unfortunately, due to their poor education background, many are unable to compete in the domestic labor market. Nepal’s tight labor market for unskilled workers pushes these low-education youths to consider working abroad. An estimated 6 million Nepalese work abroad, primarily in Gulf countries, Malaysia and India, but a whopping 75% are unskilled. In addition to the perceived idea of lucrative livelihood which does not always materialize as expected, the endeavor of finding employment abroad is riddled with corruption in a complex labor brokerage system. A large portion of Nepalese migrant workers is exploited, which is an extreme violation of human rights. Nepalese migrants are dying at a rate of one in two days while doing construction work in the Gulf.¹ A loss of family members in addition to a hefty debt incurred due to a corrupt system is significantly affecting the peace and harmony of the rural Nepali community. A village without youth is also susceptible to social unrest, for example, petty crimes, looting and abuse of children and senior citizens. Youth force changes political, economic, and social aspects of the society and through this project we hope to retain youth in Panchthar, equip them with skills needed for sustainable development and peace.

A community center is one of the missing community fulfillment aspects in Panchthar. Our partner Nepal Tea Foundation (NTF), a 501(c)(3) registered nonprofit, realized this in 2018. They worked diligently to build a four-room Panchthar Youth Community Center (PYCC). However, the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected their funding effort and the community goal of bringing the center into operation had been stagnant for the last two years. Davis Peace Project provides us with the financial resources to jumpstart the project and partnership with NTF, who brings expertise from their volunteers in various skills such as financial education and rural development, will assure sustainability of the project. As part of our collaboration with NTF, we aim to create an engaging and interactive space for students in middle and high school and organize workshops and training on community building, problem solving and creating economic opportunities. More specifically, with the funds we plan to upgrade the four rooms in the following manner:

a) **E-learning Room**: Station 4 laptops in the room for the children to have access to e-learning to supplement the traditional school curriculum. Conduct a workshop on internet literacy and train the teachers and students who will train others.

b) **Recreational Room**: Station musical instruments (guitar, madal, flute), board games (chess, scrabble) and sport equipment (badminton, table tennis, volleyball) for the children to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing. Form a youth club to oversee future recreational activities and events.

c) **Counseling Room**: Setup counseling room to facilitate both professional advising and social/emotional support from trained professionals at NTF.

¹ Hajariya, Ambar. "NEPALESE MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR HARDSHIP IN THE DESERT." (2016).
d) **Conference Room:** Station projector and lounge area to host conferences, vocational training and educational events geared towards high school students.

**Timeline, Sustainability and Teamwork**

Our project duration is expected to be 4 weeks in the summer, but the preparation begins in late spring. We will remotely recruit teachers from 3 local schools to collaborate with us in the project. They will solicit feedback from the high school students and local community members on how to best use the community center. We will review their feedback before traveling to Nepal with a team of experts from NTF and design a sustainable operation model that consists of weekly programs to be conducted at the center. Upon arrival in Kathmandu, we will purchase all the equipment for the project and travel to the project site. We will spend 3 weeks in the community center working directly with the high-school students, teachers and locals. In the first week, we will co-lead a workshop on internet literacy where we train teachers and selected students on accessing, understanding, and communicating content online. The workshop will include inspirational stories of youth who returned to their village to be successful entrepreneurs after going through stressful time working abroad. We will hold Q&A session with some of them remotely. We hope this workshop will play an integral role in reducing outmigration and hopefully encourage them to be creative about finding economic opportunities locally. After the workshop, we will assign the teachers and NTF volunteers as mentors to oversee future training for other students, thus contributing to the sustainability aspect of the project. In the second week, we will establish a youth club consisting of students. An expert from NTF will hold a leadership workshop for the members of the youth club and provide them guidance to oversee the recreational programs at the center. We will work with the club to organize an inaugural sporting event - a friendly volleyball tournament between the students and the teachers, and a chess competition between the elderly locals and the students. We will host several other sporting events that week. We hope this engagement will strengthen the bonding in the community and lead to reduction in out-migration. For the final week of the project, we will give a glimpse of future services and activities to be held at the center and officially hand over day-to-day operational duties to NTF. We will continue to hold regular meetings with NTF to seek updates and provide feedback on the PYCC’s progress.

Teamwork between Sujan and Ram is crucial for the successful completion and sustainability of this project. Sujan, cofounder of NTF, who led the team that built the four-room building is dedicated to bringing this community center to life. Likewise, his connection with NTF makes it a long-term partnership, thus making the project sustainable. Ram brings a wealth of knowledge and experience both from being raised in rural area and having opened a community resource center in rural Nepal as a part of Davis Project for Peace in 2015. His perspective on rural life will be influential in persuading youth during the workshops.

**Indicators of Success**

There are a couple of metrics of success for our project:

1) Institutional upgrade of the PYCC - successful completion of the 4-room revamp and passing over the facility to NTF

2) Davis-NTF Partnership
   a) Increase in high-school retention and graduation rates
   b) Annual survey in partnership with NTF to examine out migration trend in post high-school demographics and community satisfaction with the PYCC