Remembering Purna Bahadur Thapa

NIRC team is shocked to learn about the untimely demise of our dear friend and well-wisher Purna Prabhat Thapa, who suffered from heart attack on the 27th of September, 2020. We remember Purna as a person with a golden heart, always supportive of his friends and colleagues. Purna has made immense contribution in evidence and information management field. He was instrumental in establishing the health insurance system, providing technical assistance in planning and budgeting of health sector programmes and developing long term organizational strategies. Purna worked with several notable organizations such as Good Neighbours Nepal, KOICA, Nepal Health Sector Support Programme and most recently with World Vision International Nepal. Hearfelt condolences to this family.
The Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) has recently published the report of the National Mental Health Survey 2020. Key findings from the study are as follows:

**Among Adolescents**
- The prevalence of mental disorder among adolescents was found to be 5.2%.
- Neurotic and stress related disorders were the most prevalent, with a prevalence of 2.8%.
- The prevalence of mental disorders was highest among adolescents in Province 1 (11.4%) among 16-years-olds (7.7%) and among females (5.3%).
- The prevalence of current suicidal thoughts among adolescents was 3.9% while that of lifetime suicidal attempt was 0.7%.

**Among Adults**
- Among the adult participants, 10% had any mental disorder in their lifetime, and 4.3% currently has any mental disorder.
- Lifetime and current mood disorders among adult participants were found to be 3% and 1.4% respectively.
- Neurotic and Stress related disorders (current) among adult participants was 3%.
- The prevalence of suicidality (including current suicidal thoughts, lifetime suicidal attempt and future likelihood of suicidal thoughts) was found to be 7.2%.
- Majority of the adult participants (6.3%) has low suicidality compared to moderate and high suicidality.
- Current suicidal thoughts and lifetime suicidal attempt were found to be 6.5% and 1.1% respectively.
- The prevalence of lifetime mental disorders was highest among adults in Province 1 (13.9%), among 40-49-years-old (13.3%) and among males (12.4%).
- The prevalence of current mental disorders was highest among adults in Bagmati province (5.9%), among 40-49-years old (6.3%) and among females (5.1%).

Link to the Factsheets are here:
Labour Market Impact in Nepal due to Covid-19: ILO Study

The International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted a rapid assessment to understand the labour market impact. Major highlights from the study include:

- Nearly four in every five workers most vulnerable to disruption are in the construction, manufacturing and trade sectors.
- Between 1.6 and 2 million jobs are likely to be disrupted in Nepal in the current crisis.
- The jobs disrupted includes nearly 780,000 workers in wholesale and retail trade, 446,000 in manufacturing, 404,000 in construction, 211,000 in transport and 62,000 in accommodation and food service activities and 83,000 in other services, real estate and administrative activities.
- The majority of workers in all sectors are in informal employment, including the sectors expected to face the highest degree of disruption: construction (97 per cent), trade (74 per cent) and manufacturing (84 per cent). Informal workers lack the basic benefits usually provided by a formal job, including social protection coverage. If they stop working due to economic downturn, sickness, or quarantine, they have no state-funded safety net.


Launch of Women Entrepreneurship (WE)Data website

Women Entrepreneurship Data (WEData) is a joint initiative from WiSTEM Nepal, Open Knowledge Nepal, and Women Leaders in Technology to make data on women entrepreneurship in Nepal more accessible and support new and existing stakeholders for evidence-based decision making.

The project includes harvesting and presentation of the existing data, development of the new conceptual framework for the research, conduction, and implementation of the research project, partnership with diverse stakeholders, dissemination of the research analysis, and provision of stable support to the stakeholder working on women entrepreneurship of Nepal.

The WEData initiative has launched a very cool website. For more details, please visit https://wedatanepal.com/
What has motivated you to conducting research in the public health sector?
For me, research is about addressing the research gap, and contributing to the existing knowledge in public health. Apart from original research, ideas in the form of commentary or perspectives also help to guide the health system or at least initiate discourse to improve systems or change practice. As public health is about focusing on the health of the population, research contributes to identify determinants of poor health or inequalities. An advanced design such as implementation research or interventional research further helps to evaluate strategies or interventions to solve public health problems. So, the hunger for addressing research gap and the thrust for contributing to health system motivated me to conduct public health research.

What are the specific areas you are interested in writing/publishing?
The specific areas of my interest are health system research focusing on social determinants of health, service delivery, and non-communicable diseases. As a health system researcher, I contribute paper through health system lens focusing on the deficiencies and strategies to solving health system problems. I am focused on both original research and non-empirical research.

You have been writing and publishing journal articles on public health consistently. What have been your major lessons and achievements?
Finding time and fund for research is the most challenging thing for any researcher. I and my team have conducted many research without funding, invested time in developing proposal, collecting data, and manuscript writing. Paper gets rejected too which is the unpleasant part while the most satisfying part is the acceptance by the journal on the first attempt. For low income countries like ours, research is not much prioritized as politicians and bureaucrats do not adequately understand the technicalities involved, time invested, and efforts required for conducting a research. In Nepal, working full time as a health researcher is not easy as position such as researchers merely exist apart from Nepal Health Research Council. For me, as a person working in development sector for full time, doing research is stealing time from the personal life. As a researcher, achievement is getting recognized for your work by academic community, peers and family members.

Any recommendations or tips you would like to provide to anyone who is interested to write and publish journal articles?
Researchers especially young people are more tempted to conduct research and publish papers for fascination or for just adding to numbers or conducting research in anything. Similarly, there is also tendency to conduct research for academic promotion or to attract funders. However, the important thing is to conduct research in your area of expertise, area that has research gap, and has policy implications. Research should benefit society or provide a direction to inform policy and practice. Similarly, many research conducted during undergraduate and postgraduate degree remains unpublished and are stored in the library of the campus. University faculties and journals should encourage young people to conduct and publish research. Most importantly, you do not achieve excellence conducting few research, it takes time and devotion, and is a life-long learning process.

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