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Nepal's Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies

This progress report by the National Planning Commission presents Nepal’s roadmap for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Prepared as a call to action to change, the report shapes Nepal’s conceptualization on SDGs 16 Plus corresponding with the achievements so far on the related goals, targets and indicators.

Among 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 16 deals with the core issues of peace, justice and strong institutions, and thus is treated as the cornerstone for achieving other goals. Looking at the set targets and indicators under Goal 16, both vertical as well as horizontal integrations and relations are inter-connected without which other SDGs are challenging to achieve.

Global studies and interventions suggest that 36 SDG targets directly measure an aspect of peace, inclusion, or access to justice, with only a third of these found in SDG 16 which is thus officially concerned as SDG16 Plus targets.

Read more about the report here.
Status of Informal Workers in Nepal: CSC Study

The Centre for Social Change (CSC) released a research report, 'Amid the Pandemic and Beyond: Status of Informal Workers in Nepal', based on secondary data and policy dialogue discussions. Key findings include:

- An accurate meaning of informal sector and terminologies associated with the concept has no clear definition in Nepal’s context. Policies, regulations, and various studies have exercised the flexibility to choose definitions that fit their purposes.
- Major policies affecting worker rights including social security, work benefits, insurance, work hours and working conditions fundamentally target formal sector workers in general. More than half of the working population that are involved in informal sector are either inadequately or not at all protected under the existing labor laws and benefits.
- Identification of informal workers and vulnerable groups is urgent for COVID-19 relief and future crises interventions to reach them. 6. Policymakers need to assess emerging concepts like ‘platform economy’, ‘work from home’ and increased digitalization of services that has created income generating prospects for many citizens since the pandemic started, but at the same time has increased informality in the work force.
- COVID- 19’s impact on informal workers is multifaceted, affecting individuals in different forms. Formalization of the informal economy and its response measures need to realize this nature of informality and policy interventions must sustain beyond the span of the pandemic.

Read more of the publication here.

Impacts of climate crisis and environmental degradation on children and youth in Nepal

This research by the Child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change (CDCC) Consortium explores how climate crises and environmental degradation affect children and young people’s lives in ways that would prevent them from learning and being protected. The report highlights that climate crisis has affected children and young people’s right to survive and growth. Half of those killed or injured by climate hazards in the last 5 years were children and youths. Among those who receive less food after a climate-induced disaster, nearly two-thirds are children, and a quarter of them are youths. These impediments lead to stunted growth and prevents children from reaching their full potential. Read more of the publication here.
State of Conflict and Violence in Asia: The Asia Foundation Report

The Asia Foundation has released its latest report, which highlights the situation of conflict and violence in Asia. This study explores recent events and patterns of events through regional assessments and country-specific overviews, in particular addressing contemporary concerns over political polarization and identity-based tensions. Following this introductory chapter, three keynote essays, featuring regional experts, offer closer assessments of recent conflict trends. Data is drawn from a range of primary and secondary sources, including country-level and regional datasets on violence and conflict, academic analyses, reporting on contemporary events, and other research conducted by The Asia Foundation.

The report highlights some key issues related to gender, violence and conflict in Nepal:

- The government has legislated against sexual harassment in the workplace and criminalized marital rape. Yet reports of rape doubled from 2016 to 2019, more than half the victims being minors. Women in disadvantaged groups, indigenous groups, or ethnic minorities are more likely to be sexually assaulted.
- Domestic violence rates have risen. Fewer than one in four victims seeks help.
- Despite longstanding bans and recent tightening of the laws, child marriage is still common, with 37 percent of girls married as minors.
- In 2019, 46 women were reported to have been harmed or killed for practicing witchcraft.
- The Nepal Women’s Commission received 885 calls related to domestic violence from April to June 2020, over twice the number of calls received in the three months before lockdown.
- In 2018 and 2019, 176 and 414 deaths, respectively, were attributed to gender-based violence, close to 40 percent of the violent deaths recorded in those years. A significant number of women and girls in Nepal face domestic violence, rape, trafficking, dowry-related violence, child marriage, and violence from being accused of witchcraft. This is driven by social, cultural, and religious norms, compounded by years of conflict and underdevelopment.
- Women workers have been particularly affected by COVID-19 because of their disproportionate representation in the domestic and hospitality sectors and in informal and insecure jobs, and because of the gender pay gap. The economic strain on many families from COVID-19, as well as the fear and anxiety arising from extended lockdowns, have exacerbated unequal power relations between women and men and contributed to a severe increase in gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

Read more about the report here.
What has motivated you to conducting research in the public health sector?
My personal trait of asking questions after every end motivates me to conduct research. The beauty of my profession being a combination of art and science to promote and protect the health of people and the communities is fascinating to investigate and generate evidence that can influence larger communities, programs, and policies. Yet to contribute, I aspire to conduct studies influencing programs and policies. Similarly, research in public health is more about exploring and embracing complexities which helps you to shape your personality and professional career. On a personal note, the intellectual ecstasy of doing some productive work is encouraging. Likewise, another important motivation is that research in our field is also valued high for professional development and progression.

What are the specific areas you are interested in writing/publishing?
My primary research interests are community health, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as chronic respiratory diseases and cardiovascular diseases, and the application of new media and technology in disease prevention and management. I have been leading the research on community-based trials on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) prevention and management in Nepal. To sum up, my broader area of writing/publishing is in exploring, learning, and presenting the things in the area of NCDs prevention and management approaches and risk factor reduction strategies. Beyond this, I believe generating evidence by researchers and academia is insufficient to enhance public health programs unless these are communicated and translated into programs and policies. Therefore, I also try to contribute to research communication and evidence translation by founding and leading initiatives like NCD Watch Nepal. It is an initiative to promote evidence-informed policymaking and promote public awareness of NCDs and related issues in Nepal. It monitors the progress towards national targets and global goals to prevent and control NCDs and their risk factors in Nepal.

You have been conducting and publishing research on public health consistently. What have been your major lessons and achievements?
As a young professional in public health research, persistence, collaboration and mentorships remains as three major pillars for me in publishing research in areas of my interest. Similarly, I learned that the hard work bestowed by researchers in research and publications remains secluded due to a lack of proper research communication to program managers and policymakers. It is more prominent in the context of developing countries. So, evidence-into-policy is a critical area to work in Nepal. Publishing has been a boon for me. I was able to secure the fully-funded PhD scholarship at Aarhus University, Denmark, in the continuum of master’s degree based on my publications and academic work. It is always gratifying to be recognized for your work. In 2020, the official Broadcasting Corporation of Denmark DR Knowledge also featured me and my research on COPD in Nepal.

Any recommendations or tips you would like to share for those interested to contribute on public health research and evidence sector in Nepal.
I believe knowledge generation is like pouring your skills and expertise into a common pool and picking the best by those in need. By this, I want to stress that research and publication is a process, and it requires joint efforts, intersectoral collaborations, and intergenerational support. In our context, with limited resources and expertise in the field of public health research, those interested in contributing to public health evidence in Nepal should not hesitate to collaborate, network, and seek support from each other for better outcomes.

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