Research and Consultancy Investment in Nepal

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has established different scientific departments, universities, and research institutions, and has tried to emphasize the application of science and research for the development of the nation. These institutions, however, have inadequate resources, exist in a poor academic and research environment and are subject to overt political influence. Despite these various problems, a variety of pioneer research and development activities have been conducted, which show positive rays of hope. Read more in this paper which presents history, current situation, progress and future perspective for research and development in Nepal.
Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities and Needs of Nepali Women including Returnee Migrants

This report was prepared by Scott Wilson Nepal, commissioned by the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. Major recommendations from the study findings include:

- Ensure active participation of rural women and women-led civil society organizations at local and provincial levels to advocate on behalf of groups of vulnerable populations for equitable rights, access to resources and markets and external assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Provide vocational and technical training to rural women across all eight districts of Province 2 to increase their employability and competitiveness.
- The Government of Nepal and respective line ministries have the important responsibility to protect vulnerabilities by providing strong social security schemes and livelihood generating initiatives.
- Develop a robust and actionable plan to reintegrate women returnee migrants into the Nepali economy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Promote the Micro Enterprise Development (MED) model perfected through the MEDPA to create more micro enterprises and effectively train existing entrepreneurs.
- Design and implement socio-economic protection schemes for returnee migrant reintegration.

Read more of the publication here.

Diversification of Export Portfolio to Address Trade Deficit of Nepal

This policy brief by Policy Research Institute highlights following recommendations for the promotion and diversification of Nepalese exports to tame the rising trade deficit.

- Considering the production capacity of Nepal, the export priority products listed in the NTIS 2016 whose performance is not satisfactory (furniture, ginger, Ayurvedic medicines, textile and yarn, leather products etc.) need to be revised.
- Diversification of export portfolio should be done by prioritizing products that Nepal can gain a comparative advantage at the given current productive structure and capabilities.
- Trade Promotion Center (TPC) has so far developed sectoral strategies only for four priority products – tea, coffee, large cardamom and handmade paper.
- The role of Nepal Business Forum needs to be strengthened for trade promotion and diversification.
- Foreign trade must be diversified based on the countries of export and specific commodities by strengthening competitiveness of Nepali producers.

Read more of the publication here.
Social protection has emerged as a major new focus in efforts to reduce poverty and promote human capital accumulation around the world. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to end poverty in all its forms by expanding social protection for all, with SDG Target 1.3 aiming to ‘implement nationally appropriate social protection systems towards that objective. The international conference on ‘Resilient Social Protection for an Inclusive Development’ held in Kathmandu on 18-19 September 2019 aimed to support the Government of Nepal, and its relevant Ministries, to deliver in its vision of a core package of social protection for all and help Nepal become a more prosperous nation, with a focus on the next generation and the most vulnerable.

This volume contains the proceedings of the research papers presented at the conference along with a summary report of the parallel policy dialogues. Read more about the publication here.

**Policy Recommendations on safeguarding rights of informal workers in Nepal**

Strategic Policy Recommendations incorporates the plights and immediate needs of informal workers of Nepal generated by Centre for Social Change (CSC) led research and dialogues on the issue. Major findings include:

- Significant gap in existing labor laws and social protection schemes
- Multiple linkages between formal and informal economies
- Haphazard measures to formalize informal sector
- Informal workers bear disproportionate burden of economic and social shocks
- Lack of representation and participation in policy processes
- Workplace security and wellbeing

Read more about the publication here.
Meet Public Health Evidence Champion: Devendra Raj Singh

Devendra Raj Singh is a PhD student of Public Health at the University of Huddersfield, UK. His research interests include maternal and newborn health, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition and food security, and the health of the aging population. He has published more than 25 research papers in national and international peer-reviewed journals. His publications include ‘Determining factors for the prevalence of depressive symptoms among postpartum mothers in lowland region in southern Nepal’, ‘Food insecurity and dietary diversity among lactating mothers in the urban municipality in the mountains of Nepal’, among others. Devendra is also an Academic Editor at PLOS One journal. NIRC team discussed with him about his research motivations and interests, research achievements, and tips for aspiring research professionals.

What has motivated you to conducting research in the public health sector?
I am encouraged by being convinced that knowledge-driven health solutions are realistic and sustainable. The term “evidence-based public health” was one of the more striking phrases that caught my attention since the start of my early days in my public health career. I was impressed by one of my tutors who used to repeatedly convinced us that public health is an evidence-based practice, and not just a matter of talking in public or just creating awareness about health among the public. Gradually, after gaining the basic knowledge and some experience in my discipline I began to realize that practicing public health without research is just like goofing off or just keeping the public health concerns into a muddle. Resource-poor countries like Nepal, where we are struggling to have equal access to quality health services and standard evidence generation practice. Utilization of quality evidence can play a crucial role in reducing inequalities in health, strengthening the health system, and improving the overall health of the population. Ultimately, I would say societal need, my professional responsibility, and my desire for contribution to the scientific community have always motivated me to actively engage in conducting research and scientific publication.

What are the specific areas you are interested in writing/publishing?
My research interest areas are maternal and newborn health, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition and food security, and the health of the aging population. Most recently, I am looking for potential collaborations between the health system and implementation research.

You have been conducting and publishing research on public health consistently. What have been your major lessons and achievements?
I have been actively engaged in teaching, conducting research, and publishing scientific papers. Based on my experience, I realized that developing research skills need a series of training and continuous involvement in different activities within the research process. Research skills can not be acquired overnight or just by obtaining an academic degree. It requires commitment, continuous engagements, and collaborations with multiple researchers. There is no such research or a perfect researcher. However, research ethics and integrity are always important aspects of any research even if he/she is embarking at an early stage of a research career. I have trained more than a hundred public health graduates in recent years. I have also had the opportunity to collaborate with national and international researchers for different research work. Collaboration and teamwork with different researchers have enhanced my research skills as well as accelerated my research work and publications activities. My scientific papers in respective subject areas have a good number of citations in a short period. Currently, I am doing PhD (Public Health) degree at the University of Huddersfield, UK. In addition, I also realized that we have poor utilization of available evidence in our policy and practice. We need to assess the impact of our local research in terms of evidence utilization and making the differences in the Nepali context. Just generating the evidence does not make much sense unless it is utilized in improving our public health policy and practice. So, let’s appeal Nepali health research community and concerned authorities to advocate for maximum utilization of available evidence otherwise conducting research would just remain as means for gathering the intellectual property of authors.

Any recommendations or tips you would like to share for those interested to contribute on public health research and evidence sector in Nepal.
Novice health researchers all over the world often encounter several difficulties in the early stages of their careers but that does mean they should change their career track. Instead, they should find and attain appropriate research training and develop their skills gradually. Today, we have several ways of gaining research skills in the virtual world. Even there are freely available research training both in-person and virtual. Additionally, the scientific community and concerned authorities must encourage young researchers if we are looking forward to a stronger scientific community and sustainable development in the future. Likewise, researchers should always maintain research ethics and conduct research keeping people’s interests at the center rather than organizational or personal interest. The researchers should also understand that process is always more important in research than the research output. Collaborations and teamwork are crucial to the success of any research work.

Follow Devendra on ResearchGate.