

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
Broad theme	Improving water, forest access
Research	Analysing water and forestry access and making policy recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged communities
Impact region	Nepal, India, Bangladesh
Faculty	Arts and Social Sciences
School/Institute	Social Sciences
Academic	Dr Hemant Ojha
Project partners	IDRC (Canada) - \$1 million in funding, ends 2018; in partnership with Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS), and the Centre for Ecology, Development and Research (CEDAR).
	Ecosystem Services and Policy Alleviation (UK) - \$1 million in funding, ends 2018
	Swedish Research Council - \$600,000 in funding, ends 2018; in partnership with University of Agricultural Sciences, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Related SDGs	10: Reduced Inequalities
	7. Climate Action
	11. Sustainable cities and communities

Elevator pitch

Together with a range of partners UNSW research is helping local cities in Nepal and India to provide better water and forestry access for the disadvantaged, improving their health and livelihood, and their capacity to respond to climate change.

The Challenge: The poor cannot easily access water and forests

Water supply is scarce in Nepalese and Indian cities due to rising populations and failing government systems and infrastructure. The poor are the ones who are missing out the most. Water access problems are being confounded by climate change-induced events, such as flooding, droughts and landslides, and a lack of political momentum and support on the issue.

Forest access is limited by national governments. Yet the disadvantaged need to access the forests for timber, charcoal (fuel) and animal grazing.

UNSW's solution: Analyse water and forestry access, provide policy recommendations

Together with other partners, Hemant is researching local water systems in Nepal and India in relation to urbanisation, population increases and climate change. Eight cities (three in Nepal and five in India) are being assessed. Results from the analysis are presented to local planners, researchers, mayors, NGOs and political parties to inform policy. Hemant says with further funding, another further five cities in the Himalayan region could be assessed.

Hemant is researching the creation of communal forest groups in Nepal that provide nearby locals with equal access to resources, increasing their income and livelihood, and sustaining forest levels. He is also researching climate change and political violence in Nepal. Is the new Nepalese constitution resilient and less vulnerable to climate change? How can future conflict in communities be better managed? Hemant is interested in working with farmers in the region to understand the social and economic impacts climate change and farming innovations are having and what a resilient farming framework looks like.

The Impact: Equitable access to water and forests, better livelihoods and resilience

Hemant's work is influencing local community and government on policies related to forest, water and agriculture. The flow-on effect is that the disadvantaged are getting better access to these resources, improving their health and quality of life, and their resilience to extreme weather and conditions brought about by climate change.

Researcher

Dr Hemant Ohja is a Research Fellow cum Lecturer with UNSW and a specialist in collaborative approaches to natural resources. His work has taken him to Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, and the UK. He is the co-founder and former chair of Forest Action Nepal and the current chair of Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies. Born in and raised in the Himalayan region, Hemant is passionate about helping the most disadvantaged communities in the world.

Ben Falkenmire 30.10.17