

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES
Broad theme	Disaster resilience and justice
Research	Enhancing disaster justice in the Himalayas
Impact region	Nepal, Himalayas
Faculty	Arts and Social Sciences
School/Institute	Social Sciences
Academic	Dr Krishna K. Shrestha
Project partners	CARE Nepal - \$210,000 in seed funding for two years until end of 2019
Related SDGs	1: No Poverty
	13. Climate Action

Elevator pitch

UNSW research is helping Nepal and other communities in the Himalayas to better understand and respond to the increasing occurrence of disasters, ensuring the immense number of marginalised groups in the region receive fair and equitable treatment when responses are made.

The Challenge: Disaster responses in the Himalayas are not treating the marginalised fairly

The Himalayas is home to around 50% of people living in poverty in the Southeast Asian region. It is also the source of ten major systems that provide food and water to more than 2 billion people. Disasters in Nepal and the Himalayan region are incurring with increasingly regularity. Climate change and the unseasonal melting of ice and snow is exacerbating catastrophic events like flooding, earthquakes and heatwaves.

Currently disaster responses tend to treat a population in the same manner. Yet disasters impact members of the community differently and members have varied capacities to respond. Those with money and power often receive favourable treatment, leaving the poor and marginalised to miss out on vital resources.

UNSW's solution: Reframing disaster response policy and practice

Krishna is undertaking research and analysing policy and literature on disaster responses in Nepal, India and the Himalayas with a view to providing local communities and governments with better disaster plans that treat the most vulnerable fairly and equitably. This 'disaster justice' research is unique to the academic world.

He is primarily concerned with finding out the capacity of local communities and governments to respond and who are the winners and losers when the response is made. His research includes surveying households, holding focus groups and interviews, conducting case study analysis and dialogue with relevant stakeholders. A report is provided to governments and communities, influencing policy at local and national levels. With further funding Krishna can expand the number of communities does this assessment and report for.

Krishna is also co-leader on a project with ACIAR (\$2.5 million) to help Nepalese communities and governments to better use uncultivated land and secure the country's food supplies. In other research projects, Krishna is researching water management practices in South Asian cities, and Indigenous Nepalese's changing relationship with river systems in the face of urbanisation and political change.

The Impact: Improve disaster relief for the poor

Krishna's work is influencing government and community responses to disasters, making sure the poor and marginalised receive fair and equitable treatment. This enables disadvantaged groups to better recover from disasters and it makes them more resilient for when other climate change-induced events occur.

Researcher

Dr Kirshna Shrestha is an environment and development geographer. He is Senior Lecturer in Development Studies at UNSW, he previously worked at the University of Sydney, and he was a visiting scholar at the Department of Geography, Cambridge University (UK). The son of a Nepalese farmer, Krishna is passionate about helping those experiencing extreme poverty and injustice. He has two decades of experience researching environmental, social and political issues in the Himalayan region.

Ben Falkenmire 26.10.17