

Toward Sustainable Development:

A Community-Level Framework for Evaluating Interrelated Challenges in Bhaktapur, Nepal

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INTRODUCTION

To create a sustainable development intervention, one must comprehensively understand all dynamics of a given community. Such existing frameworks tend to overlook the meso level and interrelatedness of existing problems. We chose to adopt the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a baseline structure for creating our comprehensive framework. This allowed us to shift the unit of analysis to the community and its members. Our research investigates Nepali brick kiln communities with a focus on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) among individuals working in this environment and living within these communities. With this in mind, we chose to address the research question, "How can the SDGs be used as a baseline for creating a framework which can assess multi-faceted social problems in communities such as Bhaktapur, Nepal?"



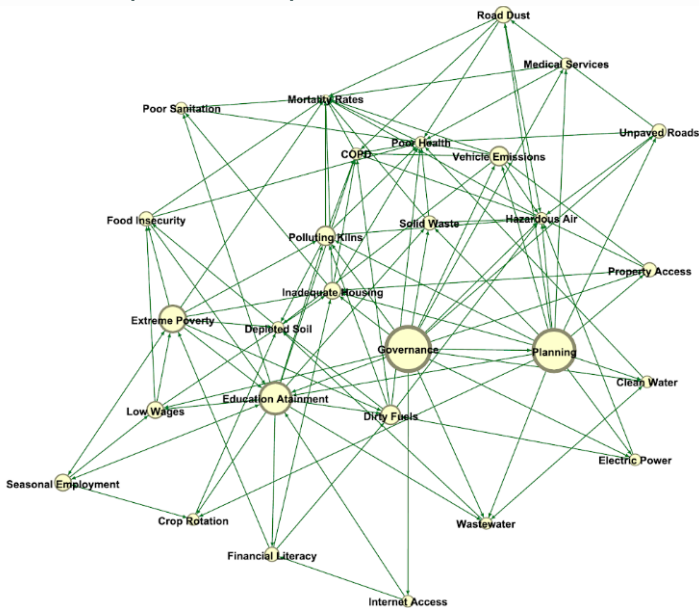
There has to be a way to analyze interrelated social problems while considering personal factors, such as culture, religious systems, family, etc.

METHODS

Primary methodology for data collection was through mixed-methods interview questions asked to civilians in the Kathmandu valley and those surrounding brick kiln areas. Additional research was conducted through library literature search to collect data about what approaches to our issue already exist.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Having assembled a team of researchers to ask hundreds of questions to gather responses related to COPD and the SDGs, we found evidence that further research was to be conducted to better encapsulate the breadth of the problems. Assigning a specific problem to develop an intervention for a foreign area proved to reveal the difficulty of community engagement in one problem alone. Often, we discovered, social problems are far too interrelated within a community to address one problem alone. Below is a graphic which demonstrates an issue map for Bhaktapur’s social problem.



What we found by using our SDG-based questions were that we lack knowledge about Kathmandu’s complex caste systems, cultural norms, and familial ties.



ANALYSIS AND ACTION

From the standpoint of a team geographically detached from the social issues occurring in Kathmandu Valley, we see that much can be done to improve the quality of life for the civilians of this area. In order for a solution to be truly sustainable, we found that it is imperative that we adopt the passions of the key players in the ecosystem. Nothing has been decided in terms of intervention for the area, and we are strategically being patient prior to implementation so that further research can be conducted through a more comprehensive community-level framework. Developing such a framework will empower future researchers of every field to save time gathering relevant information about the physical and emotional desires of a community in order to help solve social issues.

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