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Combining Western and Eastern Minds to Raise the Awareness about Landslide Risks in Bhutan

During the spring 2021 a student team from Finland's Aalto University has collaborated with students from Bhutan's Jigme Namgyel Engineering College (JNEC) to provide information about landslides in Bhutan for local students and authorities. The collaboration has had some special features, as due to Covid-19 it is executed fully remotely.

The project of the Aalto team, called Project Mapit, aims to create a handbook of landslides for local students in Bhutan, who are the future professionals of the topic and can deliver the message further in their home country. The handbook complements a geographic landslide susceptibility assessment created for the local authorities by the JNEC student team, and the common goal of the two outputs is to raise awareness of landslides among the wider public to protect people from landslides.

The emphasis of Project Mapit is to raise the awareness about landslides, as a crucial part of protecting people from natural hazards is that they are aware of the risks. As once mentioned to the Project Mapit team by Philipp Schmidt-Thomé from the Geological Survey of Finland, *"the first thing is that the local people understand their own vulnerability"*. The risks need to be recognized for any changes to be possible, and this is what Project Mapit is aiming for – raising the awareness.

The collaborative project between the two student teams started in January 2021 with background research, setting the objectives and sharing information and data between the teams in online meetings and via other online tools. At

the beginning of April, the collaboration and cultural exchange culminated in an intensive three-day online workshop where the teams learned from each other about their cultures and what is needed from the project's outputs, especially the handbook. *"It was very rewarding to brainstorm and plan the handbook together with the Bhutanese students. I can really say that I learned a lot from them"*, says Riikka Rossi, a student member from the Aalto team.

After the workshop, what still needs to be done to finalize Project Mapit, is to realise all the ideas gathered in the workshop in the actual handbook.

The collaboration project between the student teams of Aalto and JNEC is a part of a cooperation project called Problem Based Learning (PBL) South Asia, which belongs to Erasmus+ Programme of European Union and is coordinated by Aalto Global Impact. The project is implemented as a part of Aalto University's Sustainable Global Technologies (SGT) Studio course.



More information:

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