

Aalto student team studied flood preparedness through the eyes of vulnerable populations in Nepal

Aalto's League for Flood Assessment and Solutions is a multidisciplinary group part of the Aalto Sustainable Global Technologies Studio course. They led project over Spring 2022 and travelled to Nepal in April to meet flood experts and conduct interviews with the population living in flood prone areas. The team worked in close collaboration with local specialists to understand the problems regarding flood mitigation and to collect primary information on the field.

For two weeks, the six representatives of Problem Based Learning South Asia have been guided by teachers of Sagarmatha Engineering College and Nepal Engineering College to deepen their understanding of **the reality of flooding facing the field** in order to create an information package regarding flooding solutions.

"Everyone is at risk" shared Etisha. In her village located thirty meters from the River Seti, many women have difficulties sleeping during the monsoon season due to stress over the security of their children. Because **a flood can happen at any moment**, a villager must guard the river every night during this period. However, this endangered village found a solidary way to fight against flooding. Each household monthly contributes to a community fund to build spurs and other infrastructures to protect the village. "I have never seen this strategy implemented somewhere else" confided in us Mr. Binay Shakya, a flood expert from Nepal Engineering College.

This example underlines the key findings of the team, based on 11 interviews in four different flood prone locations. The insecure situation of people living in flood prone areas is not provoked by a lack of means to implement solutions. It is due to a personal trade off, which comes from the economic situation of the country. River mining and fishing are **lucrative activities that push professionals to move in flood prone areas**. Furthermore, these lands have a lower value, which attracts disadvantaged people. To propose an output helpful to the local population, the Aalto team decided to **create a poster listing flood mitigation solutions** implemented in South Asia with a focus on the Himalayan region. This poster will be published online in June 2022 as well as printed and hanged in different villages in Nepal. Its purpose is to present to the population living in flood prone area different way to prevent and mitigate floods.

Additionally to learning about flooding and realities of the local populations, this student project has offered the Aalto team numerous highlights. Interviews of the local population living in flood prone areas showed how informal settlements can be organized as well as the perception of locals about this disasters type. Many experts interview have been conducted, which **showed the students a meaningful professional path**. Finally, team members greatly improved their communication and work efficiency. The project management strategies they have experienced have developed their **abilities to lead further engagements**.

This project has been organised as part of the PBL South Asia initiative. Within it, the main collaborators have been Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Sagarmatha Engineering College, and Nepal Engineering College.

"This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."