



HARVARD UNIVERSITY SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE 2016 STUDENT GRANT REPORTS



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About SAI Grants

The mission of the South Asia Institute is to engage faculty and students through interdisciplinary programs to advance and deepen the teaching and research on global issues relevant to South Asia. Our grants program fulfills our mission statement by annually providing funds for students to travel to South Asia for research, language study, or to pursue a hands-on internship.

This year, we have provided \$96,500 in grants to sponsor 45 projects. In this grant report, students share their experiences such as first impressions, meaningful conversations, and lasting memories.

Furthermore, we would like to thank our generous donors, KP Balraj, Sumir Chadha, Mukesh and Chandni Prasad, and the Aman Foundation who have made these opportunities possible.

Internship Grant Reports

The Harvard South Asia Institute internship program supports hands-on experiences in the region for undergraduate and graduate students. We have established relationships with our in region partners to provide fulfilling opportunities for Harvard students. Wintersession internships are for a duration of at least three weeks while summer internships are at least eight weeks long.

INTERNSHIP SITES

Eval Design	New Delhi, India
IRC	Mumbai, India
Women's Advocacy at Shirkat Gah	Karachi, Pakistan
Jana Care	Bangalore, India
Sangath	Goa, India
Adharshila	New Delhi, India
Daayitwa	Kathmandu, Nepal
UNICEF Nepal Country Office	Nepal
NDTV	New Delhi, India
History Project	Lahore, Pakistan
Jana Care	Bangalore, India
Economic Consulting in Kathmandu	Kathmandu, Nepal

Eval Design

Summer Internship in New Delhi, India
Javier Aranzales, Harvard College 2017

Most of my work throughout college has been dedicated to grassroots international development interventions where the long-term impact of our work is not well defined. This interest for how to measure the impact of interventions led me to Evaldesign, a consulting firm in New Delhi, India that specializes in measuring the impact of education interventions.

Upon arrival, I was given a crash course in the work and approach of Evaldesign, a young, small, and energetic firm of individuals passionate about education. I was joining Evaldesign for 3 weeks and this was broken down into 2 weeks to create my product (more info to follow) and 1 week out in the field (Bihar, India) to test this product.

My project: Evaldesign had been playing with the idea of developing a box whose contents would prompt kids to have fun while asking questions and learning. The visual I was given was: "Imagine we drop this box in a village. A kid picks it up and is curious to open it and once she does, she is immersed in a fun and educational environment." The task was broad; I was told "the world is your oyster" and this began a great two weeks of exploration.

Research: Evaldesign encouraged me to dive into the literature behind my project so I began tackling my project by researching topics such as "what makes a game fun?" "what grabs the attention of kids?" and looking for examples of popular educational games. I also enrolled in an Edx MIT course on game design that I jumped around in looking for the theory behind educational games.

Brainstorming: In the office, I was working closely with 2 employees and 3 interns, by which I mean: we all sat together in a large table throughout the day. This allowed us to take breaks from work and have wide-ranging conversations and it also paved the way for tackling roadblocks. Whenever I was stuck or had questions about next steps or wanted input on my product design, I had 5 individuals who were excited to brainstorm and help me along the way. This made for a great work environment.

Prototypes: The bulk of my work came in designing the prototypes that we would bring to the field. At the end of week 1, I had developed a social entrepreneurship board game, but at the beginning of week 2, my director and I wanted to explore a box that contained materials that kids could use to build something. I, with the constant help of the team, worked on developing this prototype and while we had progressed in a direction that we saw growing into something, we did not feel that we had a product that was

ready to be tested in the field.

Field experience postponed: My director and I faced a tough decision which was that the products I had been working on were not ready to go out into the field. I had been hard at work on the products, but the one week that I dedicated to brainstorming with the team and researching game design meant that I had fallen behind on the product development. This meant that I was not able to travel with the firm to the site of field testing, but this was a great learning experience in making sure that I have a clear timeline in mind and am being realistic about where I am in a project and where I am expected to be.

The internship experience was a huge learning experience and dive into product ideation, which I had not expected when I signed up for the internship and took as a pleasant surprise and experience. However, a great piece of this experience was being in New Delhi, India for three weeks. I had studied Urdu-Hindi for one semester prior to this trip and it was an incredible experience to communicate (in very basic Hindi) with the locals that I encountered on my way to work and back home and the ones I encountered when I tried to buy flip flops (the closest word I knew to sandals was "shoes" but it got me to the shoe and sandals seller).

My first two weeks in New Delhi, were very work heavy and my third week involved more exploring and taking in the culture. I got to visit historic sites around New Delhi, such as the Lotus Temple and the Red Fort, and was able to take a day trip to the yoga town of Rishikesh and dip in the Ganges in Haridwar where the Ganges is close to its source and much less contaminated than in other parts of India.

Indian Research Centre

Summer Internship in Mumbai, India

Divya Arya, Harvard College 2019



At bangana tank in Mumbai

It was an honor to spend this past summer working with Harvard Business School in the India Research Center, Mumbai. Not only did I get the chance to work directly with professors and experienced researchers on HBS case studies, but also grow in an empowering environment, learn from an inspiring mentor, and explore India in its era of fast-paced economic and social growth.

From day one, I was deeply immersed in exciting research projects that were so much more than simple data collection or literature reviews. I worked with Senior Researcher Namrata Arora, who perfectly balanced giving me much needed guidance as well as independence on the projects. My main project consisted of working with Professor John Macomber on writing a primer on Private Financing of Public Infrastructure in the Global South. When Namrata described my role in the project, which truly was to take their outline and write the entire 30 page primer, I was immediately excited by the level of responsibility, which I had experienced nowhere else. Namrata and Professor Macomber were excellent with feedback and in the 10 weeks I spent at the research center, we finished the primer which Professor Macomber will teach this coming fall to HBS students traveling to developing countries around the world.

I also contributed to several case studies in meaningful ways, from writing full sections to creating exhibits to providing critical analysis. All of the case studies were focused on Indian companies, and it was exciting to interview the management teams of Ambuja Cement and Godrej Agrovet, multi-billion dollar conglomerates that dominate the Indian market. Coming out of my freshman year of college, I was

excited and inspired by the level of responsibility, degree of independence, and breadth of experience that the India Research Center gave me.

I cannot speak highly enough of the work environment at the India Research Center. As a woman in a work environment, especially in India where women have historically experienced extreme misogyny in the workplace, I was inspired by the hardworking team members that surrounded me. By chance, the team was majority women, and I was so humbled and proud to see this experienced, intellectual, and determined group continue to make a difference in HBS and in India.

Though my work was intellectually demanding and time consuming, SAI's generous stipend allowed me to travel with other students I met in Mumbai. Mumbai itself is a comparatively modern city, and as a woman with Indian heritage, I felt extremely comfortable exploring the city and all it has to offer. My coworkers provided incredible recommendations for food, theater, and places for exploration beyond the typical tourist attractions. Though I had been to India several times before, it was exciting to experience the country on my own for the first time.

I was also able to travel to Jaipur, a city in Rajasthan famous for its ancient palaces. I had been there as a child and it was intriguing to go there again as a college student and experience the city with new eyes. While in Mumbai, I could get away with speaking English and dressing like an American, in Jaipur my Hindi and Indian looks became my greatest asset. Though Jaipur's palaces and historical attractions are breathtaking, the city has not caught up to Mumbai's more modern understanding of women, independence, and breaking traditional roles.

Overall, I cannot thank the India Research Center and SAI enough for this experience. It was a privilege to work with experienced researchers but also be given real responsibility and stimulating projects, despite my comparative lack of experience. I am excited to continue working with the HBS professors back on campus and that my projects were not limited to the 10 weeks at the research center this summer. To any other students considering an experience in academic research, especially in a fast-changing, exciting country, I cannot recommend this experience enough.

Women's Advocacy at Shirkat Gah

Wintersession Internship in Karachi, Pakistan
Hira Baig, Harvard Divinity School MTS 2016



Camel ride in Pakistan

I hadn't been to Pakistan since 2002 and was, admittedly, very nervous for my trip. I had family in Karachi that I was in touch with over the years, but I couldn't help and be a little concerned about my new immersion to the city. Pakistan was a place I had faint memories of as a child. I lived there for three years in my adolescence and had visited when I was just nine years old for a wedding. Returning to Pakistan at this age for a work opportunity meant I'd be reacquainted with a city that time and distance were making me forget.

I spent my winter break in Karachi, Pakistan doing an internship for women's rights NGO called Shirkat Gah. Shirkat Gah does local, national and international outreach in order to help women in rural Pakistan build better lives for themselves. They have four branches of work that are their main focus: women's bodily rights, women's voices, political environment and natural environment. Their staff works under these branches on various projects for women. These activities include but aren't limited to research, capacity building and training, resource development and legislative advocacy. I was most interested in Shirkat Gah's work on behalf of women that needed assistance in family/personal status law matters. I learned that Shirkat Gah works with community partners in villages around Pakistan to lead training and information sessions for women to gain access to legal aid in times of need. I was able to help the Karachi office by researching and drafting memos for new outreach areas and doing research on the sorts of difficulties women come across and what type of legal assistance is needed. Being at Shirkat Gah allowed me to gain insight into the

issues women face in Pakistan, and the change in face of feminism in the country.

Though the work was meaningful and interesting, my time outside the office was just as, if not more, educational than my time sitting behind a desk at a computer. Karachi is an enormous city. It's busy, fast, loud, intimidating and endearing all at once. Because I hadn't been in many years and was returning as an adult, this time around, I was much more privy to observing facets of the city I had only read about in books and witnessed in the news. The cultural and economic stratification of the city was truly jarring. The gap between the rich and poor seems insurmountable and my heart ached for the many children I saw working during the school day, or worse, begging on the streets. It was also through my experiences exploring the city with my family and friends that I realized the significance of the work Shirkat Gah does. I realized that women are disproportionately at risk of facing extreme poverty because many young girls come from families that require them to become maasis, or cleaning ladies, in order to support their households. The economic and social circumstances facing families in poverty in Pakistan are complex and couldn't have been explained to me in this one trip, but I am eager to return to Pakistan to learn more about these issues and hopefully do some small part in trying to work towards solutions.

Jana Care

Summer Internship in Bangalore, India
Layla Kousari, Harvard College 2017



At Taj Mahal, Agra

This summer I had the pleasure of completing a computer science internship in India. I knew that my project would involve assisting with a mobile phone application that helps with diabetes care and I anticipated gaining many new skills from the rigor of learning and implementing new coding languages. But outside of just the coding aspect, I had many expectations about simply being in India. I had never been to South Asia before, and although I didn't know exactly what I would find, I knew I would be challenged in a new and unfamiliar environment. Going into the program I was ready to break barriers that would inevitably exist, such as language and cultural, and try to truly connect with the people instead of just my laptop. After spending a summer in India I can truly call it a formative experience. Academically, I was able to appreciate the intellectual environment of computer science careers. However, I also recognized the disconnects between computer science and my passions, enabling me to rule it out as a potential concentration or career.

Outside of my internship in Bangalore, I spent my time exploring various temples, ancient palaces, and other cities within India, including Pondicherry, Delhi, Jaipur, Agra, and Mumbai. I found the people in Bangalore to be so incredibly compassionate and easy to befriend. I thoroughly enjoyed every second I was able to spend with them. Although initially I was challenged when trying to connect with local people without being able to speak the language, I realized that enthusiasm when interacting with others and an eagerness and openness to learning can go a long way. I hope to bring this enthusiasm and openness to all of my future academic pursuits.

This summer ended up being one of self-reflection. I found that what I enjoyed most during my time in India were not the experiences I had behind a screen but rather the time I spent interacting with the people and trying to understand the culture. The careers that I thought excited me before did not in practice and other experiences that I never expected to stir such a love in me did. Thus, as I move forward in my college career I will focus on choosing classes and activities that allow me to continue helping others but with more face to face time than computer science allows.

Without the support of the South Asian Institute none of the memorable experiences I had these past few months would have occurred. My summer spent in India was invaluable to my future and would never have been possible without their generosity and compassion.

Sangath

Summer Internship in Goa, India

Angela Leocata, Harvard College 2017



With workers at Sangath

As an SAI grant recipient, I had the opportunity to return to Goa, India to continue research I began the previous summer with Sangath, an NGO and mental health research institution. Awarded the MacArthur Foundation's International Prize in 2008 and a pioneer of task-sharing for mental healthcare to primary care and community workers, Sangath is one of the most influential health non-profit organizations, globally. The organization is co-founded by Vikram Patel, a world-renowned research psychiatrist, Professor of International Mental Health and Trust Senior Research Fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and 2015 recipient of Time Magazine's "The Most Influential 100 People in the World."

As a returning intern, I analyzed the data gathered as a product of the sub-study I helped to develop last summer. The study evaluates the impact and experience of an intervention wherein mothers are trained as peer-counselors to support other mothers with postpartum depression. While programs too frequently view women's health as reproductive health and mental health as a Western experience, mental illness was the leading cause of global years lived with disability in both low- and high-income countries in 2004, and women share a disproportionate burden of suffering. Around the world, women predominate in rates of common mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety. This disproportion can be better understood through the social, economic, and political context in which gender and mental health disparities arise, as well as the forces that prevent access to care. The findings of this study will have powerful implications for increasing availability and access to mental healthcare for women, globally.

Unlike last summer, in which I focused mostly on the impact of the program on the mothers, this summer I began to consider its impact on the peer counselors. By supporting the

counseling team, I was able to reflect on how the intervention may not only have an impact on the mothers with postpartum depression - whom the intervention is delivered to - but the delivery agents themselves. Given that the peer counselors are also mothers, and that the intervention asks them to process and share their own experiences of motherhood, I became interested in whether they, too, are affected by the intervention. This inquiry has accumulated into my thesis question, which will be integrated into the larger study. In considering the community health worker experience, I will consider a group of people central to the dissemination of mental health programs, but rarely considered in mental health literature. I view this inquiry as significant not only for this specific intervention, but for the dissemination of mental health interventions, globally.

Returning to Goa and continuing with my research from last summer shook what I thought I understood of task-sharing and global mental health. The continuation of work with the same community enabled me to consider new inquiries and ask questions previously unimagined. By shifting now to the community health worker experience, I am able to engage with a local issue that has global implications and ask questions applicable to an ongoing practice. I intend to continue with combined coursework in Medical Anthropology, Clinical Psychology, and Global Health and Health Policy to develop my understanding of both maternal mental health and community health worker experience before continuing with fieldwork this January.

Adharshila

Summer Internship in New Delhi, India
Shreya Mathur, Harvard College 2017



At Adharshila Center

I had the opportunity to spend this summer interning and conducting research with the Delhi-based NGO Adharshila. Adharshila runs a variety of educational and medical programs for women and children through centers that are located in the hearts of the slums and communities it works with. I distributed my time between the centers and the head office, where administrative side of work takes place. Some of my most memorable experiences that summer took place at Adharshila's center in Sangam Vihar, Delhi. There I was able to meet and interview students enrolled in Adharshila's garment construction, computer skills and English classes. One garment construction student in particular, Sabhana, truly inspired me with her dedication and strength. A small child in one arm and another constantly tugging on her clothes, Sabhana worked diligently to complete every assignment on time. Since schools were out for summer vacation, she would bring her two children with her each class, juggling her pen and sewing machine with one hand and the needs of her children with the other. Despite the difficulty, she was determined to succeed in the class. "I've made up my mind that I'm going to get a job. I'm going to show them that I can stand on my own feet," she told me in Hindi. The strength in her voice is not something I will forget.

This determination to overcome was a common denominator of the people I worked with this summer. From overcoming language barriers to educational barriers, each and every child and adult enrolled in Adharshila's various programs was using the NGO's services to improve their living conditions. It was especially moving to see the strength with which patients at Adharshila's women's health clinic in particular faced both their social and medical difficulties. I spent my first few days at Adharshila's health clinic in Harkesh Nagar, Delhi shadowing doctors and talking with patients. It was immediately apparent that the patients' health problems were intimately tied to their socioeconomic situations. Many were returning diabetes or high blood pressure patients who simply could not afford to buy their medications and were unable to visit Adharshila, which offers low-cost medications, regularly because of other responsibilities. Others were simply unable to live health lifestyles because of lack of means. Through this unique experience of talking to patients about their troubles and hearing from the doctors about the holistic approach they employed, I learned to see patient care as having not only visceral but also important social consequences.

Near the end of my internship, I also worked on conducting an impact analysis of Adharshila's maternal health program. In doing so, I was able to integrate what I had learned from my previous global health and statistics classes into a real-world setting. While conducting the impact analysis, I was able to get a much deeper insight into the roadblocks gynecologists in India face when working with low-income and less-educated families. For example, despite the heavy emphasis Adharshila's gynecologist placed on having a hospital delivery, women were often pressured by their families to return to their home villages for delivery, resulting in unstable births. In other cases, newlywed women came to the clinic feeling depressed because their families were upset that the women had not yet conceived, despite the gynecologist's reassurance that this was completely normal. Experiencing these tensions first-hand deeply impacted me. It truly sparked my desire to better inform lower-income patients and their families about medical conditions, with the hope of both enacting social change and improving common medical knowledge. I have certainly brought this passion back to Harvard with me.

Outside of my project, I also enjoyed the cultural experience of living in India. I was able to visit local shopping areas and try many new types of foods. Most striking to me was the consolidation of the various distinct regional cultures of India in Delhi through specialty restaurants and clothing stores. I felt as though I was travelling through one state to another state just by moving from store to store. The societal culture was also very welcoming; locals were always willing to stop to give directions and cab drivers readily offered advice on the best places to shop and sightsee. It was also heartwarming to see my entire residential community walking out each evening to buy fresh produce and spend time outside. This

was a way of bonding with the community as a whole that I rarely experienced in the US. In just a few weeks, I felt as though I was a part of the community. During lunch with my co-workers, we would talk about everything from American politics to where the best mangoes grow. Over chai, we would exchange our cultures; I was regarded as the expert on all things American while they educated me about the nuances of India. By the end of my stay, I had developed a profound respect for my co-workers. Despite the difficult conditions of the work, including blisteringly hot temperatures and long hours, and the great progress they were making, everyone I met was incredibly unpretentious and down-to-earth. In comparison, the volunteer work done at Harvard seemed like a walk in the park. It was an enormously humbling and grounding experience that I am so thankful I had the opportunity to have.

Going to India was in many ways a renaissance of my understanding of Indian culture. I am returning to Harvard with a renewed sense of purpose – to improve the way we approach healthcare delivery in impoverished communities and to incorporate social change as a fundamental aspect of improving medical care. I am wholeheartedly thankful to the South Asia Institute for making my summer internship possible and for contributing in such a fundamental way to who I am as a scholar and as a person today.

Daayitwa

Wintersession Internship in Kathmandu, Nepal

Yoko Okura, Harvard Kennedy School MPP 2017



Meeting with community members in Ramechhap

15 hours of electricity cuts a day. Lack of fuel caused by a blockade at the Indian border. When I describe my everyday life in Kathmandu, Nepal, people tend to focus on the lifestyle deprived of the basic necessities we are used to. Looking back, I myself am surprised at how little I remember such shortcomings. The kindness and perseverance of the people are the lasting impressions I have of my three weeks in Nepal.

This winter, I had the privilege of interning with Daayitwa, a local NGO based in Kathmandu, Nepal. The mission of Daayitwa, which means self-responsibility in English, is to build a movement of young leaders through leadership/ entrepreneurship programs to collectively transform societal challenges into innovative opportunities. Daayitwa has three goals: 1. Promote inclusive and enterprise driven economic growth, 2. Strengthen governance of public service delivery, 3. Foster resilience in local communities. Following the earthquake in April 2015, Daayitwa was seeking to formulate a strategy to incorporate rebuilding initiatives into their mission and effectively implement leadership/ entrepreneurship programs in the affected areas.

I conducted site visits to Ramechhaap, one of the severely hit districts classified in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment, to learn about the needs of the communities and opportunities for Daayitwa to take part in the recovery process. With political haggling and an unstable government, the National Reconstruction Authority had only been authorized in December. Communities faced the question of how to rebuild without reliable support. NGOs and various donor agencies were filling this space, but communities had started to cut back on reconstruction expenses by compromising the

safety of buildings. Daayitwa identified two primary schools which had collapsed in the earthquake and decided to fund the reconstruction. However, because Daayitwa did not have a field office in the area, they faced a problem of keeping the local organizations accountable for the reconstruction process.

In my visit, we met with community leaders and formed a team specifically for monitoring the reconstruction. Moreover, we together created a timeline of the process including weekly goals, and a phone follow-up to discuss whether the construction was on time or not. As we were holding a meeting with the ten community leaders, the local people started to come by to listen. Now with a large audience of sixty, Daayitwa emphasized the importance of building back better and to not compromise safety of the children. Although I knew in theory the importance of education, I experienced how strongly the community wanted a safe learning environment. I learned that one of the first actions the community took after the earthquake was to rebuild the road to the school. Following the field visit, I identified how current reconstruction support can translate into the organization's third goal of fostering resilience in local communities, and how Daayitwa could conduct better outreach by empowering people with knowledge of the importance of resilience.

As a student studying public policy with the aim of transforming my career into the field of disaster recovery, the internship in Nepal was an exceptional experience where I learned firsthand the difficulties of strengthening resilience in communities without resources. I am very thankful for the South Asia Institute for supporting my internship; the enriching three weeks could not have been possible without the SAI's support.

UNICEF

Summer Internship in Kathmandu Nepal

Yoko Okura, Harvard Kennedy School MPP 2017



UNICEF Nepal Country Office

In April 2015, Nepal made headlines worldwide when a devastating earthquake struck the country, taking 9000 lives and affecting 8 million. Children, especially vulnerable to disasters, accounted for 30% of the deaths. 700,000 houses and 35,000 classrooms were destroyed, and many children continue to learn in temporary shelters over a year after the earthquake.

As an intern for the emergency unit of UNICEF NEPAL, my main responsibilities were to monitor the community-based and school-based disaster reduction programs implemented across the country. In addition to the ongoing earthquake recovery efforts, UNICEF Nepal provides significant work to a country also prone to other natural disasters such as droughts, fires, floods, and landslides; such disasters on average affect 335,000 people and kill 1,000 annually.

During my internship, I travelled to three different districts across Nepal to conduct stakeholder interviews with community leaders, local government officials, members of children clubs and women's clubs, teachers, students, and parents on the impact of these programs since their implementation in 2014. The interviews identified both positive outcomes and challenges to UNICEF's disaster risk reduction programs, which includes community hazard mapping, school evacuation drills, and first aid training. For example, I learned that stakeholders in all districts were unanimous in their support for creating a seasonal hazard calendar to raise community awareness to prepare for a disaster. Moreover, the formation and activation of a local disaster management committee at the ward level was essential to ensure the programs would be implemented in policy, after the program ended. I was surprised to learn that even in flood-prone areas, schools did not have evacuation

plans prior to the implementation of UNICEF's programs, and realized the importance of transferring knowledge on how to prevent, mitigate, and react to natural disasters. As the final deliverable, I compiled all of my learnings and best practices into a report so that these invaluable lessons are ensured as the programs are scaled to other districts. I was very happy to see that the report contributed to further funding from an American foundation, so more districts could benefit from community based and school based DRR programs. I also felt the urgency and necessity of knowledge and awareness towards disasters as monsoon rain caused flooding and landslides across the country, resulting in over 100 deaths in just one week, in July.



Interview gender based watch groups

My internship at UNICEF Nepal has served as an opportunity to put my year of invaluable training at the Harvard Kennedy School in econometrics, leadership, management, negotiations, and statistics to use in a real-life and impactful setting. After working in Nepal for a month, I find that the lessons and skills I have learned from my HKS classes have strengthened both my analytical judgement and interpersonal skills. Working in the UNICEF Nepal office, where my colleagues come from all over the world, you need to present your work persuasively with evidence, but also communicate effectively.

I am thankful to the South Asia Institute for providing me with a wonderful opportunity to apply my learnings and explore my passion and interests. The internship would not have been possible without your support!

New Delhi Television

Wintersession Internship in New Delhi, India
Shaiba Rather, Harvard College 2017



Inside NDTV newsroom

This winter break, I had been as up to date on the news as I ever have been and probably as I ever will be. As a research intern for New Delhi Television (NDTV), I read every Indian national paper, Kashmiri local papers, and even top US headlines. NDTV demanded that I constantly be informed of India's happenings; it was challenging but surely rewarding. NDTV put me in an environment where my team members urged in me a desire to know more.

I spent my month working behind Barkha Dutt, not only one of NDTV's lead anchors but also one of the program's Editors. Ms. Dutt is best known for her coverage of the Kargil War and her frequent shows on Kashmir. Ms. Dutt has not only received numerous accolades as the Best Talk Show host but also earned a civilian honor from the government of India. To even start to work on her show, "The Buck Stops Here," was intimidating to say the least.

To my relief, Ms. Dutt greeted me with a smile and a hug, transforming a TV legend into a friend. We shared our achievements and ambitions and then I was off to work. My primary role was as a research assistant. My job was to always make sure Ms. Dutt could do her job. After reading any and every newspaper I could get my hands on for the day, I would prep Ms. Dutt with the day's happenings. We would quickly

determine what the shows focus for the evening would be, and then everything was a blur from there. People would carry two phones at a time and call whomever they could try to find the perfect panelists. We'd brainstorm clever show titles and impactful sub-titles. It was a crazed last second dash but by 9pm every Tuesday and Thursday, we'd have a show.

During my time at NDTV, Indian geopolitics were as lively as they had been. I covered Arvind Kejriwal's fight against BJP in conversations on corruption. I followed the Pathankot terrorist's attack that compromised the state of Indo-Pak relations. And of course, I lived and breathed Delhi's alarming pollution levels only to witness the city's historic Odd-Even vehicular regulation. The most exciting part of my internship was easily the moments when we were forced to handle breaking news. In an instant, all of our former plans for the evening would be erased to deal with the newest Indian drama. The most salient example of this came when Prime Minister Modi-Ji made a surprise visit to Pakistan on Christmas day. After a few phone calls here and there confirming the news, frustration was clear. Things were not going as planned; suddenly, we were subject to the politics of surprise. Prime Minister Modi-ji had decided on a "whim" to visit Pakistan on his way back from Afghanistan, a trip that would be the first trip by an Indian PM to Pakistani soil since the days of Vajpay-ji. History was being made, and to our bad luck, it was happening on Christmas. We slaved away, jokingly thanked Modi-ji for his Christmas present, and laughed together. It wasn't the most ideal of timings but it felt spontaneous and exhilarating. When the show went live, I had never felt more proud. I thought on my feet and with the mentorship of my team members, I watched Ms. Dutt host a show that I, along with the rest of India, was enthralled by.

I had never felt as close to a city as I had while working with NDTV. I wasn't just reading the headlines; I was experiencing the problems and fortunes of the people of Delhi in real time.

The History Project

Summer Internship in Lahore, Pakistan

Zuneera Shah, Harvard College 2017

Thanks to the South Asia Institute, I, during my first year, was able to intern with the History Project over my winter break. The History Project is an initiative, based in India and Pakistan, which seeks to eliminate bias in the instruction of sub-continental history in schools. Having received my education in Pakistan, I also encountered a very pro-Pakistani version of history, which was only challenged when I came across other impartial literature. Hence, working with the History Project proved to be an indispensable opportunity as it is the first of its kind that deals with the problem of historical bias.

Working with the History Project curriculum helped me understand how important the frameworks of curriculum are. Analyzing responses to their outreach strategies and how their program appeals to students served a great deal in my understanding of constant restructuring of initiatives. The History Project, although young in its years, has been able to spread its influence far and wide. I deem their success as a product of meticulousness in everything that they do. One of the most important traits I embodied at the History Project was entertaining various possibilities for every pitch or idea, and, that too, from a group of individuals. A large chunk of my work also dealt with organizing the launch of their book “Partitioned Histories: Two Nations, One Beginning”. This book presents excerpts of textbooks currently circulating schools in India and Pakistan in relation to historical events. This makes apparent the stark difference that exists in the presentation of history on both sides. From reaching out to renowned South Asian historians, to dealing with the nitty-gritties of event planning, it was surely a great learning experience. Albeit only a three-week experience, I was able to add to my skillset a great deal. Most importantly, my understanding of the education system in Pakistan broadened which I find crucial to my future goals as I wish to impact instrumental change in the education system of Pakistan. Moreover, I was able to see a lot of Lahore that I’d never seen before. This time I went around as an outsider, and was able to discover a city I called my own all over again. It’s rich culture, vibrant streets, and delicious food, that I once took for granted, was finally recognized for its great value in my life and bringing up!

Jana Care

Summer Internship in Bangalore, India

Anonymous student, Harvard College 2017

Overall, I would say that I had a pretty positive experience during my summer internship with Jana Care in Bangalore, India. There were definitely some bumps in the road that I ran into during the summer, but I'll go into more detail about this later and start off with what went really well for me.

As an international abroad experience, this summer was absolutely phenomenal. Before the summer began, I was a bit apprehensive as to what I'd think about living in India for two months—I had talked to some friends who had been abroad in India before, and they told me that I would either love it or hate it, especially since this was my first time in Asia in my entire life. Although it was a bit of a culture shock when I immediately arrived to India, I acclimated to the lifestyle quite quickly and found the whole experience to be both very memorable and educational. Coming into India, I knew very little about the country as a whole, and after spending two months in Bangalore and talking to the residents who lived there, I definitely feel much more informed about the country—from the local politics to the vast diversity of cultures from region to region (e.g. India's 14+ nationally recognized languages) to the local cuisine and desserts to how Indian marriages and weddings differed from Western ones.

One of the big reasons that I was able to immerse myself so much into the culture is because of the friends that I made at the apartment that I stayed at. Not only was the living situation super accommodating (laundry, clean drinking water, very spacious single), but the people who lived with me made the experience particularly memorable and special for me. There were a group of college students who lived in the apartment who immediately befriended me and the other interns, and we ended up spending almost every weekend together, going on excursions throughout the city and even outside of Bangalore. Additionally, the staffs at the apartment were also extremely sweet, really kind, and very enthusiastic to get to know us. By the end of the summer, we were all a tight group of friends, which definitely made leaving India even more bittersweet because of the amazing memories I had with them.

However, as I mentioned before, there were some things that could have definitely been improved about the experience. The first thing is my actual internship experience itself. I was pretty dissatisfied with the projects that I was assigned throughout the summer. There were three projects that I was involved with—the first project, which I spent a month on, involved having to do research on how to create a chatter bot for the startup app. The biggest reason I found this frustrating is because it didn't really require me to do much physical

coding or data science, since doing any work involved in actually creating our own framework was way beyond the scope of what could be accomplished during the time of my internship or my background. Consequently, most of the work I did, involved just doing extensive reading and then conducting naïve, basic implementations of the chatterbox frameworks we researched. Additionally, it didn't feel like there was much that could have been accomplished since we were limited by preexisting frameworks we had to work with. As a result, a lot of the work that I did didn't feel like it was really moving towards anything concrete and left me feeling a lot less intellectually stimulated than I would have liked.

I know I spent a while talking about the problems that I experienced this summer, but overall, I sincerely had a really great time and am 100% glad that I got to spend a summer in Bangalore. I really learned so much about such a wonderful culture and people, and I will always cherish the memories and moments that I spent in India.

Economic Consultancy

Summer Internship in Kathmandu, Nepal
Bharath Venkatesh, Harvard College 2017



Temple in Nepal

Nepal is currently in the midst of a humanitarian crisis that has resulted from what many term an unofficial economic blockade at its border with India—practically the only source of fuel for this tiny, landlocked Himalayan nation. To make matters exponentially worse for the Nepalese people, this blockade came right when the country had only just begun to recover from the effects of the devastating April 2015 earthquake. Although this situation has ensured that official fuel supplies in Nepal continue to remain in great shortage, a thriving local black market for fuel has nevertheless come to exist in the wake of the aforementioned blockade. In this regard, I was fortunate to receive a grant from the South Asia Institute this past winter to travel to Kathmandu, where I analyzed the fuel landscape and contributed to a report that will be of use to aid agencies working in the region—if not to Nepal's government as well.

Working in conjunction with a European development consultancy, I spent the majority of my few weeks in Nepal gathering data for a baseline study on local fuel value chains. After doing extensive background research on the history of fuel markets in this part of South Asia, the political and social causes of the recent blockade, and the economic consequences of the ensuing crisis, I set out to gather data on a few key metrics pertaining to both the crisis and the pre-crisis periods: the amount of fuel that Nepal has been using, the breakdown of fuel consumption by type (petrol, diesel, kerosene, LPG, aviation fuel) and sector (domestic, industrial, transport, etc.), and the physical and contractual routes followed by the distribution of fuel throughout Nepal. For this purpose, I interviewed officials at the Ministry of Industry, the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce

& Industry (FNCCI)—an apex business board in the country—and the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC)—a state-owned enterprise that has a monopoly over oil supply within the nation. In addition, I spoke extensively with foreign development workers stationed in the region and other Nepalis (taxi drivers, hotel owners, etc.) that I encountered on a day-to-day basis, since their vocational consumption of various fuels required them to be keenly attuned to the local fuel situation. Through such interactions, I was able to gather a sizable amount of quantitative and qualitative data on the influx, distribution, and sale of fuel throughout Nepal, which allowed me to work on devising geographical representations of the flow (both legal and illegal) of various fuels throughout the country during two time periods: 1) before the crisis, when the NOC was the sole supplier and was selling much more fuel officially at set, state-mandated prices; and 2) in the midst of the crisis, during which official supply has dwindled to a standstill even though many distributors have made huge profits by selling fuel in black—at prices ranging up to even four or five times that of the aforementioned state-mandated level. As a result, I was able to conduct a sort of longitudinal analysis to estimate the size, scope, and importance of the current black market for fuel in Nepal, and I was also able to piece together a macro-level picture of the country's current economic situation as a whole. Consequently, I was able to make significant headway towards a more comprehensive understanding of the way in which fuel markets work—especially within the context of South Asia.

In spite of these successes, my work did not occur without its fair share of stumbling blocks. For one, I learned from firsthand experience that getting good data on shadow economies is often very difficult due to a widespread lack of reliable sources. This was certainly the case during my time in Nepal, given that I was—on average—able to cite only about 1 out of every 5 or so of my sources in my work. Furthermore, the general unwillingness of Nepalese government officials to part with their data—a factor that was altogether more evident in my case, given that I was a foreign student working with a foreign agency and had no personal vested interest in Nepal—meant that I was able to glean only a small fraction of the data that I had intended to gather from such sources. Despite these setbacks, my time in Nepal was nevertheless very productive and enriching on both a professional/academic level and a personal one, given that I was able to explore much of the Kathmandu Valley and even see Mt. Everest during my time there. I am very grateful to SAI for enabling me to have this experience.

Language Study Grant Reports

The Harvard South Asia Institute language study program supports immersive and intensive study of a South Asian language for undergraduate and graduate students. Students can choose to either study the language independently or through an institution. Winter language studies are for a duration of at least three weeks and summer language studies are at least eight weeks long.

LANGUAGE STUDY

Odia Language Study	Bhubaneswar, India
Punjabi Language Study	Chandigarh, India
Sanskrit Language Study	Pune, India
Tamil Language Study	Madurai, India

Odia Language Study

Language Study in Bhubaneshwar, India

Sonali Dhingra, Faculty of Arts and Sciences PhD 2019



Sculptures in Odia Temple

My dissertation on “Buddhist art in Odisha between the seventh and eleventh century” is based on sculptural and architectural remains from the south-eastern Indian coastal state of Odisha. A generous grant from the South Asia Institute at Harvard enabled me to learn Odia, the primary language spoken in region. I spent the summer in the green and beautiful city of Bhubaneshwar, also known as the “city of temples”. Classes were arranged through the American Institute of Indian studies as Odia is not taught at Harvard and is seldom learned by graduate students working on South Asia. In fact, I was the only student in the program which was consequently well-tailored to my needs. The language program segued seamlessly into my field-work year and after a successful completion of the program, I visited several living temples, small villages and archaeological sites in rural Odisha, where knowing Odia is a definite asset. Medieval Odiya literature is indispensable for tracing the lives of the images and architectural spaces that I am studying for my dissertation project.

Through the summer, I learned how to read, write and speak Odiya. Most of all, I enjoyed learning the difficult, but beautifully rounded, “umbrella-topped” unique Odia script. Two days into the program, I realized how much incessant typing on a computer had reduced my ability to write easily, let alone beautifully. Soon enough though, the long dictations that my teacher gave me were one of the most therapeutic times of my day and by the end of the term I was able to impress some of my Odia friends with my handwriting! I found that being an Indian and fluent in Hindi was

both an advantage and disadvantage while learning Odia. I noticed that the Odia script is deceptively similar to Devanagari and took a few days to retrain myself. Once I got a hang of reading, I religiously browsed the local newspapers and looked forward to my daily dose of regional politics, entertainment (such as the culinary wars between Odisha and Bengal over “who invented the Rosogolla (an Indian sweet)?”) and my often dramatic zodiac horoscope. Afternoons and evenings were spent reading and translating a Ramayana in Odia, reading short stories and conversing with my host family in Odia. I also wrote a journal every weekend.

My teacher and his wife ensured that I felt immersed culturally. From them, I learned how to prepare some delicacies from Odisha. After initially shocking my hosts with my uncouth North Indian habits, I understood the nuanced ways of proper dining etiquette in Odia culture: one must not touch their food with the left hand! I was also fortunate to be in Odisha during the annual Jagannatha Ratha Yatra or chariot festival and got a flavor of how anchored people’s lives were around this festival. The Jagannatha trio was everywhere: billboards, newspapers, TV and at entrances to cultural centers. On a weekend, I made a trip to the famous Sun Temple in Konark, and also enjoyed the beautiful natural landscape that surrounded the architectural marvel. My host family took me to a few plays in the evenings that allowed me to feel part of the Bhubaneshwar culture scene.

Hindi Bollywood films and TV soap-operas have made a huge impact on the regional culture in Odisha. Most Bhubaneshwar locals were puzzled and some even laughed uncontrollably when I told them that I was living in their city to learn the language. When I tried to talk to them in Odia, they would instead reply to me in Hindi, but were amused by my insistence on replying to them in Odia. To be honest, it was a bit hard to be the only student in the program but I found a community to interact with on a regular basis. The cab-driver who took me to class everyday was the staunchest proponent of language immersion that I have met in Odisha! At the end of two months, I had already read a newspaper article on the theft of medieval sculptures in a village 150 kms from Bhubaneshwar. This news piece provided me leads for subsequent field-research. Continuing on in Odisha after the summer program for dissertation research, I found that speaking Odia in villages allows me greater access to images in worship. I can also communicate more easily with sculptors and locals alike. I am thankful to the SAI for providing me the opportunity to kick-start field-work with an opportunity to learn the language in a focused manner. Each day that I spend in Odisha allows me newer insights into the visual culture – none of which could have been possible without knowing the language of the people.

Punjabi Language Study

Language Study in Chandigarh, India
Ajay Singh, Harvard College 2018



At Golden Temple, Amritsar

This summer I was able to attend the Punjabi Language Summer Program at the American Institute of Indian Studies in Chandigarh, Punjab. My goal for this summer was to lay the foundation for Punjabi learning. Coming into this summer, I could not read, write, or speak Punjabi. I understood simple commands and basic household talk because my family speaks the language, but beyond that I had no proficiency. My course consisted of eight weeks of intensive language study. Four hours each day, five days a week. In those hours, our curriculum covered from the very beginning level of language study, focusing on learning the Gurmukhi script all the way to advanced language constructions at the end of eight weeks. One of my favorite portions of the curriculum was the personal tutorial session. Each week, I had a chance to explore a topic of interest with one of the three teachers. As a Sikh American, I was very interested in learning about my culture and religion. I chose to read stories about the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Though the book I was reading used fairly poetic language, I was able to get fuller explanations on the stories

because the teachers, having grown up knowing these stories, were able to expand on and explain the content. After eight weeks of studying, I now have the ability to read Gurmukhi, my vocabulary has drastically expanded, and I can hold some basic conversations without too much hesitancy. Ultimately, this study abroad program allowed me to connect more with how I identify myself which is truly an invaluable experience.

Outside of the classroom, I lived with a host family. The host family really provided me with the cultural connection I had been hoping for when I applied to this program. The host family was a very religiously observant Sikh family. As I developed my Punjabi skills, I began to discuss the history of Sikhism, the current state of Punjab, and Punjabi and Sikh politics. We covered poetry from the Guru Granth Sahib, which was the first time that I was able to read from my holy scripture. In addition to Sikh culture, I learned more about Punjabi culture by going to a local village on the outskirts of Chandigarh. I also had the opportunity to travel to Amritsar and visit Harimandir Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, and the Akal Takht. To be able to visit the Sikh religious and political center after having learned some Punjabi was quite an opportunity.

In returning from my time in India, I feel that I truly have transformed (as Dean Khurana wishes for all of us). For the first time, I am aware of the unique and extremely privileged opportunities that I have as a Harvard student. I am blessed with safe housing, seemingly endless food, and a space where I can safely express who I am. I witnessed issues in India that I found appalling and upon further thought, realized that those issues exist in our own community here, such as gender based discrimination and racial/religious oppression. Moving forward, I hope to be a more active activist. I now have a particular interest in human rights issues, focusing on problems that minority communities are affected by. Academically, this trip has emphasized the importance to continue to learn Punjabi in order to stay connected with a culture that I truly cherish and a religion that I strongly identify with. Unfortunately, Harvard has failed to provide me with a Punjabi language tutorial after two semesters of petitioning so my future course choices that I wish to pursue after this experience are limited.

Sanskrit Language Study

Language Study in Pune, India

Lee Ling Tang, Faculty of Arts and Sciences PhD 2021

The generous funding from Harvard University South Asia Institute allowed me to visit India for the first time. In the summer, I was enrolled in an eight-week Sanskrit Program at the American Institute of Indian Studies in Pune.

As a child growing up in Malaysia, my first impression of “India” came from the Tamilian serial dramas with jolly dance scene, and the mouth-watering roti canai, which was easily available in most hawker centers. As I started learning Sanskrit several years ago, I began to be deeply immersed in a whole new “Indian” world ornamented by intricate beauty; I was deeply fascinated by the complex of Sanskrit grammar—with all kinds of conjugation and declension—and the figures of speech employed in Sanskrit poetry. My mind ran wild as I read Sanskrit plays and stories with imaginative plots and scintillating wit. With this Indian images constructed by some childhood memories and reading of Sanskrit texts, I was looking forward to finding out two things in the summer: India as it is today and Sanskrit texts as interpreted and approached in the Indian traditions. I embarked, feeling nervous and excited, on my Sanskrit journey in Pune. The first ten days were rough. Accompanied by the lack of internet and mobile number to get in touch with my family was the pain of a cold that defeated me both physically and mentally.

Worried about missing classes, I was feeble but restless. But I knew I had to help myself out of this undesirable state of being. I made the decision to get to know my host parents and my surroundings well, so that I can feel connected to them and my well-being be sustained by them; I am still thankful to this decision as it later helped to improve the quality of my stay in India significantly. School work at AIIS was heavy, but manageable and enjoyable. Rarely had I any chance in the past to read Sanskrit for so many hours every day, let alone reading Kālidasa’s depiction of the monsoon season while experiencing the monsoon myself. Waking up every morning in the sound of Sanskrit prayers broadcasted on the radio, I immediately felt myself in that very world. On the bumpy rickshaw to school every-day I mumbled my paradigms or read my text, while observing the Devanāgarī script which was everywhere on the street. (Just by the daily exposure to the script, I felt much more comfortable reading it.) More memorization of paradigms, speaking of Sanskrit, and reading of texts were done at AIIS, until I felt myself exhausted at noon and could not wait to devour the whole thali of Indian food carefully prepared by the cook and his wife in the canteen. The direct contact with the weather, the flora and fauna, and the people helped me to make sense of

the world in Sanskrit texts and enriched my understanding of them. While classes at AIIS provided me with formal Sanskrit education, things that took place outside the classroom gave me the nuances required to admire Sanskrit texts and Indian culture in general.

Concerts in Indian classical music taught me how the different rasas are when actualized through sound and how a violin can be played in a radically different way, i.e. held upside down. The wedding rituals I was fortunate enough to witness gave me a taste of Indian society and kinship relation. The chromatic Indian clothing cultivated another kind of aesthetic sense in me. The daily conversation with my host parents made me realize how many similarities we share in our cultures. At the end of the eight weeks, I brought away with me a self, whose horizon was broadened by the place and the people, not to mention the language skills that were acquired through the training. I am grateful for the valuable experience I had in the summer.

Tamil Language Study

Language Study in Madurai, India

Iris Yellum, Faculty of Arts and Sciences PhD 2020



At Madurai Markets

In June, I travelled for the first time to South India. For at least four hours every weekday, I took intermediate classes in Tamil at the American Institute of Indian Studies in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. In contrast to the Tamil instruction I had received at Harvard before, in Madurai I attended specific classes covering a variety of subjects: dictation, conversation, literature, newspaper reading, listening, grammar, film songs, pronunciation, and more. Some of these subjects were part of my previous instruction, but hour-long classes devoted to each subject allowed for a focus I had not had access to before. Apart from regular group classes consisting of just three people, we also had individual tutorials, which gave me a chance to work through particular questions.

Before travelling to the American Institute of Indian Studies, my goals were focused primarily on improving my speaking level. In a non-immersive environment it was difficult to get a sense of my speaking skills in Tamil. I was surprised to find that in class and around Madurai I could communicate more than I expected would be possible, and that my classes had already covered a significant amount of grammar. My goals each week became more specific, especially with two weekly tutorials, sometimes with teachers who excelled at explaining nuances of grammar. By the end of the program, I was more solidly at an intermediate fluency, and my speaking confidence had increased (based on my own assessment and that of the head teacher).

Aside from regular classes, the program took us on a few short day trips. I became acquainted with the city through frequent local buses every week, and everyday interactions around town were great opportunities to learn. My classmates and I enjoyed recognizing new vocabulary words from

the institute being used by native speakers in and around Madurai.

Though there were major cultural differences in Madurai compared to where I have spent time in India in the past, the program made my adjustment relatively easy. My training at Harvard also helped immensely. Everyday interactions were a way to become a part of the community and neighborhood, such as buying flowers and green coconuts from the same vendors.

Being in Tamil Nadu also allowed me to think about future research goals, and learn about Tamil culture in a new way. I have often worked on literature while studying language in India, but my interests are now expanding to the study of agriculture and agricultural history. In one of my tutorials at the institute, my teacher often brought newspaper articles on agriculture for me to read. These allowed me to gain a new and useful vocabulary, and begin to investigate media coverage of important topics such as local drought, crop yields, and alternative agricultural methods.

This program was a helpful introduction for future trips to Tamil Nadu. Before I left, I was uncertain about switching much of my research to the South, considering this program a test of my language abilities. Now, I plan to return and conduct research next summer. This grant enabled me to travel to a new part of India and shift my focus to a different area of research. My training at the American Institute of Indian Studies, Madurai was an invaluable experience that clarified the decision to move my research focus to South India. It also helped me to see that research trips are the best way to proceed, since real world situations are often the most effective way to learn. I am now more prepared for potential fieldwork in the future.

Research Grant Reports

Harvard South Asia Institute research grants are awarded to students pursuing field research on specific topics that could contribute to a thesis or dissertation and to students who have done preliminary work on the topic.

RESEARCH

Adaptive State Capitalism: The Indian Coal Industry	Dhanbad, India
Vipasana Research	Myanmar
Fourth Braj Bhasha and Early Hindi Workshop	Trest, Czech Republic
The Brahman Ascetic in the Visual Lexicon of Early Buddhism	Delhi, Bihar, Maharashtra, India
Harvard Development Initiative	Delhi, Ranchi, Mumbai, India
The Journeys of South Asians to the Americas	Manila, Phillipines
The East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge, 1772-1835	Glasgow, UK
Understanding Special Education System in Pakistan	Pakistan
Arabic Medical Manuscripts	Delhi, Patna, India
Resilient Design to Resilient Buildings	Dang District, Nepal
The Politics of Contemporary Women's Rights in Myanmar	Yangon, Myanmar
Shipbreaking Lives and Labor	Chittagong, Bangladesh
Identities Narrated in Multi-Ethnic States	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Language Ideology and Education	Lahore, Pakistan
The Politics of Power in 18th century Punjab: Space, Culture, and Identity	London, United Kingdom
Analyzing National Agriculture Market	Delhi, Punjab, Bihar, Odisha, India
The History Project	Lahore, Pakistan
Resolving Refusals: Polio Vaccinations	Lahore, Pakistan
Harvard Development Initiative	Delhi, Ranchi, Mumbai, India
Tamil War Widows' Access to Transitional Justice	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Forest Practice in India	Dehradun, India
Vocabulary Development for Cultural and Linguistic Minority Students	Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Dissecting and Dismantling India's Gender Gap in Political Participation	Rajasthan, India
Traditional Nepalese Architecture and Post-Earthquake Reconstruction	Kathmandu, Nepal
Understanding Inefficiencies in India's Agricultural Markets	Karnataka, India
Jousting Over Jurisdiction: Sovereignty and International Law in Colonial South Asia, c. 1858-1947	New Delhi, India
Electricity Crisis in Nepal	Nepal
Business Process Outsourcing and Urban Transformation in India and the Philippines	Bangalore, Ahmedabad
Harvard Development Initiative	Delhi, Ranchi, Mumbai, India
Nepal Earthquake Relief Effort Data Usage Narrative	Kathmandu, Nepal
Analysis of Indian Mothers' Protective Factors on Child's Oral and Nutritional Health	Mumbai, India
Hidden Landscapes: Visualizing the Functional Presence of India's Stepwell	Gujarat, India

Adaptive State Capitalism: The Indian Coal Industry

Summer Research in Dhanbad, India

Rohit Chandra, Harvard Kennedy School PhD 2017



Coal mines of Jharkhand

This summer, I continued my dissertation work on the Indian coal industry, this time focusing more on the labor relations and the local politics surrounding coal in different states. Part of what I was hoping to do is compare how mobilized unions are in different Coal India subsidiaries and see how locally important these unions are as political actors and brokers of public services. To put together this information, I used a few different sources. The first was a continuing set of interviews with Coal India senior management on their experiences with labor over time. The second was a set of interviews with senior labor leaders and activists who have been engaging with Coal India for an extended period. Thirdly, I was able to access a fantastic in-depth study commissioned by the V V Giri Labor Institute in Noida which had commissioned a study on “outsourcing” labor and its impacts on the mining labor class. And finally, I supplemented these sources with high level interviews with MPs and MLAs from coal-bearing areas who could tell me about the state and national level impacts (if any) of coal politics.

The majority of my time was spent in Jharkhand and West Bengal, with short stints in Chhattisgarh and Orissa as well. Historically, unions have been most active and relevant in Jharkhand and West Bengal, where coal mining has existed for the longest time. Particularly prior to liberalization in the early 1990s, these unions not only lobbied for workers’ rights, but were also strong local political forces that were able to influence the redistributive expenditures of the fiscally powerful public sector coal companies. Particularly in areas like Dhanbad, coal union leaders rose to be strong political

forces both at the state and at the national level.

In interviewing MLAs and MPs familiar with the coal industry, it became clear that in the last 20-25 years, the strength of these unions has declined considerably. While they may still be somewhat influential locally, the widespread rise of subcontracting has diminished their political clout considerably. Prior to liberalization, union leaders could extract rents from the public sector coal companies in the form of local jobs, electricity connections, water connections and more. After liberalization, the public sector coal companies became much more conservative in their hiring and social expenditures. This meant that political leaders had to look elsewhere for their rents. This reduced the social influence of the union leaders considerably. To supplement these interviews, I spent some time in the Indian School of Mines in Dhanbad digitizing some weekly coal journals which covered labor unrest in collieries in some detail.

What my interviews and primary sources make clear is that much like the rest of India, there has been a major change in the role of public sector. As private companies have increasingly taken over the operational aspects of the industry, the redistributive role once inhabited by public sector companies has slowly been vacated.

Vipassana Research

Summer Research in Myanmar

Jasmine Chia, Harvard College 2017

This summer, I travelled to Myanmar and was able to do three things: learn Burmese reading and writing, change my thesis topic to a more suitable and interesting topic, and finally to make Burmese friends and connections. My initial objective in going to Myanmar was to research the Vipassana movement, with the intention of going to various temples that practiced this meditative form of Buddhism and interviewing participants to understand how the movement towards Vipassana Buddhism may be linked to political engagement. This was to be a piece comparing Vipassana Buddhism in Myanmar to the Buddhism of the Thammakaya sect in Thailand, which also preached a form of Buddhism modernism that emphasized an individualist experience of enlightenment over a communal form of religious engagement. However, through a series of serendipitous events, I stumbled on a much more interesting phenomenon in Myanmar in explaining the links between capitalist religion and political engagement.

When I initially got to Myanmar, I was lucky enough that my timing coincided with the beginning of one of the most well reputed Burmese courses taught in Yangon, Bama Zaga by John OKell and Yu Yu Khin. For the first two weeks of the summer I immersed myself intensely in these language classes, spending every day at the French Institute studying Burmese and making sure that I did the homework so I would consolidate my knowledge. At the end of two weeks I was able to read comfortably and pronounce difficult Burmese words, as well as write my name and converse in very basic Burmese. This was immensely helpful, not in conducting my research but in making connections with Burmese people. At the institute, I was also surrounded by many researchers and NGO workers working in interesting fields, and in speaking with them I was able to increase my understanding of Myanmar's political issues and how best to conduct research in the country. Whilst the Rohingya issue was not the paramount political issue in Myanmar that international media makes it out to be, it was certainly sensitive to talk to people about religion, especially with regards to politics.

As I finished the language class and began meeting up with contacts in Myanmar to begin my research, by chance I was connected with someone working at Myanmar's biggest bank, KBZ Bank. I went to speak with him about Myanmar's banking sector in general, and as we discussed the challenges of creating the trust required for people to transition from a cash economy to a credit economy, he told me about a fascinating phenomenon that was a big challenge for modernizing the country: the Hundi system. The Hundi system is an informal, underground system of

monetary transfer that allows for the many international Burmese migrants to send their money home. Developed under the socialist military regime when economic activity was discouraged and people had to risk their lives to cross the border, the system allows payments to be made by an agent in a distant location and the difference to be settled between the agents later on. Even as bank remittance options – such as those offered by KBZ or AYA – became available and legal, the simplicity and flexibility of the Hundi system means that it remains a key challenge for banks to overcome.

To me, this was reminiscent of James Scott's thesis on how Myanmar's harsh geography – the aggressively hilly regions to the north contrasting starkly with the floodplains to the center/South – has shaped the politics of the region, creating different state identities and also allowing a space for rebels to shape a stronghold in opposition to the center. To some extent, this geography has facilitated the civil war that remains ongoing amidst Myanmar's peace talks, and it is this geography – and this lack of trust in the state – that determines the success of the Hundi system. The idea of geography as a determinant for Myanmar's political and economic future, mitigated and understood through the Hundi system, seemed to me a perfect pivot for my thesis topic.

As this was already halfway through my summer, I had to seek out secondary sources to understand the context of the Hundi system. I was able to access libraries at the Yangon University as well as resources from researchers in the area, and especially crucial was meeting Dr Toe Hla and interviewing him on money lending practices in Myanmar. He gave me insight into the origins of the money lending system and was able to speak generally to the relationship between money lending and political cronyism, as well as access to capital and growth of political power. Moreover, I was able to interview John Buchanan, who writes about the economy of Myanmar in the 21st century, and he recommended Sean Turnell's *Fiery Dragons*, which seems to be the only piece of literature I've found in English with a section devoted to the Hundi system.

Whilst the lack of secondary literature has made studying Hundi more difficult, it also means that this is an area where primary research is crucial, and the SAI grant allowed me to directly interview people and understand firsthand how the Hundi system works. I spent the rest of the summer shadowing the man at KBZ bank and doing research for him on marketing techniques to overcome the Hundi system (or to act as a complement to it) and was given access to a lot of resources through this connection as well.

Fourth Braj Bhasha and Early Hindi Workshop

Summer Research in Trest, Czech Republic

Gregory Clines, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2017



Members of the camp in Czech Republic

From August 1st until the 11th, scholars from across the United States, Europe, and India met in Trest, Czech Republic for the fourth Braj Bhāṣā and Early Hindi Workshop.

Thanks to the generous funding from the Harvard South Asia Institute, I was able to participate in the workshop, which served as an opportunity not only to improve my understanding of early Hindi language, which is integral to my research, but also to meet and foster relationships with some of the most prominent scholars in the field of medieval and early-modern India. As I mentioned in my application for South Asia Institute funding, the community of scholars who work on early Hindi literature is a small one, and these workshops serve as opportunities not only to come together to read and discuss some of those scholars' current projects and interests, but, more broadly, to evaluate the state of the field and the current trends in scholarship. This is especially helpful for me, as my dissertation attempts to place more concretely early-modern Jain literary material into larger discussions of vernacular in South Asia.

This year, nine presenters led focused reading sessions on texts from various time periods and covering myriad topics. In the category of bhakti (or devotional) texts, Arvind Tejawat led sessions on the poetry of Mirabai, and Imre Bangha led sessions on Tulsidāsa's Kavitāvali, which tells the story of the Rāmāyana. Ken Bryant led sessions on the poetry of Sūrdās that focused on metrical analysis. Thomas de Bruijn led sessions on the Cāndāyan, an Indo-Sufi masnavi usually credited as being one of the first examples of Hindi literature.

For me, the most exciting and fruitful aspect of the workshop was getting the chance to meet and read with Eva de Clercq, a professor at Ghent University in Belgium. Professor de Clercq is one of the leading scholars of Jain purāṇic literature, which is also the focus of my dissertation. De Clercq led reading sessions on the Apabhramśa Paumacariu of Svayambhū, which tells a Jain version of the Rāmāyana narrative. My work focuses not on the Paumacariu, but rather on three other Jain Rāmāyanas: Ravisena's Sanskrit Padmapurāṇa, Brahma Jinadāsa's later Padmapurāṇa, also in Sanskrit, and his Middle Gujarati Rām Rās. Jinadāsa's Middle Gujarati, though, retains many Apabhramśa verbal and lexical forms, so the opportunity to read with Professor de Clercq proved especially helpful in this regard and has led to an ongoing email correspondence and de Clercq expressing her willingness to read and comment on my work. There is also talk of de Clercq organizing a separate Apabhramśa workshop in the future. More broadly, though, one of the most exciting aspects of the workshop was witnessing the growing presence of scholars focused on and interested in Jain authors and texts. Besides Horstmann and de Clercq, who led sessions on Jain material, there were three participants including myself whose work focuses on Jain material in early modernity. I was also able to meet privately with Imre Bangha to read selections of the Rām Rās. Bhamga's expertise in the development of north Indian bhāṣā helped me to identify characteristics of the Rām Rās that mark it as Middle Gujarati.

The final session of each year is dedicated to planning out the next workshop. The group decided that workshop will be next year in Bansko, Bulgaria, where the workshop was held in 2014. There was also discussion as to how to deal with the growing number of people interested in participating in the workshop. Participants were simultaneously excited that there was a growing interest in Braj Bhāṣā and early Hindi and concerned that growing numbers would be counterproductive to the intimate nature of the workshop format. This year's workshop had thirty-seven participants, which everyone agreed was the absolute maximum number feasible under the current format of the workshop. As I will probably be finishing my dissertation next summer, it is unlikely that I will be able to attend the next workshop. But I am confident that my participation in this year's workshop helped not only to improve my early Hindi language mastery, but also to foster professional relationships with the best scholars of early-modern India currently working. This would not have been possible without the funding of Harvard's South Asia Institute.

The Brahman Ascetic in the Visual Lexicon of Early Buddhism

Summer Research in India

Fletcher Coleman, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2019



Chaitya worship cave, Ajanta

With the joint support of the Harvard Asia Center and South Asia Institute, the summer of 2016 offered a fruitful addition to my ongoing dissertation research on the visual language of early Buddhist asceticism. From the end of July until the first week of September, my fieldwork took me for the first time to important Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain religious sites across India—as well as the major museum collections in each region. Because these locations developed first as precursors and then, alongside the Buddhist sites of Western China, that are the focus of my doctoral research, it was extremely instructive to conduct comparative fieldwork. Observations made at these primary sites in India have already begun informing and reshaping my dissertation research.

My journey began in the northwest of India as I flew into Delhi and first visited the National Museum. Beyond a comprehensive collection of indigenous Hindu and Buddhist

sculpture, the National Museum also houses an impressive array of Central Asian artifacts collected by Aurel Stein in the early 20th century. My attention was directed at the large collection of painted Buddhist banners unearthed as part of a manuscript hoard from the caves of Mogao, Dunhuang, in Western China. After making several surprising discoveries amongst the painted donor figures of these banners, I turned my attention to the collection of Gandharan Buddhist sculpture. A synthesis of Indo-European and Central Asian styles, the works of the Gandharan region are an extremely valuable set of materials that were in constant visual dialogue with Western China.

Following my time at the National Museum, which was also punctuated with trips to the famous Mughal monuments of the area, I traveled to Bodh Gaya, Bihar Province, to the site of the Buddha's meditative realization under the Bodhi tree. There, I first traveled to the Mahabodhi Temple. This temple complex allegedly dates to the 3rd century BCE and was reclaimed from river-silt in the 19th century. It is one of the four primary sites related to the life of the historical Buddha. The architecture and surrounding grounds are studded with sculptures unearthed during its reclamation. In addition to this fascinating structure, I had the opportunity to visit other sacred sites associated with the Buddha's life—Vulture Peak, Sarnath, Lumbini—during my time in the area. The trip also featured a harrowing visit to Nalanda, a famous Buddhist temple and university complex. The day of my visit, the main road was washed out due to monsoon flooding, and I had to trek with my guide along muddy paths through country rice paddies in order to reach a parallel minor road that took us the remainder of the way to the site!

As the focus of my research is early Buddhist cave decoration, the Buddhist caves of India were my primary target. The remainder of my time took me to the world-renown sites of Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad, and Elephanta in Maharashtra Province. These painted and carved caves are majestic testaments to the activities of Buddhist and other religious communities as early as the 3rd century BCE. Once again, comparing these sites to similarly patterned locations in Western China was invaluable to my dissertation research. My summer fieldwork concluded with a visit to Mumbai, the city of my departure. There, amongst the British architecture of colonial India, I visited to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya Museum—formerly known as the Prince of Wales Museum. With my eye on their collection of Buddhist stone and ivory carvings, I had the opportunity to conduct a close viewing of several poorly published pieces related to my research.

Harvard Development Initiative

Wintersession Research in Delhi, Ranchi, Mumbai, India
Neil Davey, Harvard College 2018



With field workers in New Delhi

From January 5 to 20, 2016 during Winter Session, I had the privilege of conducting a research visit to India for the Harvard Development Initiative (HDI), an undergraduate organization that I had started with two of my friends Raj Vatsa and Pranay Nadella during Fall 2015. The purpose of our visit was to better understand the context of development in India by specifically speaking with students and faculty at research universities as well as visiting slum communities with NGOs and meeting with a variety of government ministers. Our hope was to establish transnational connections with interested students and NGOs such that over the Spring term, we would be able to co-create student-driven development solutions and then eventually return to India to actually implement them during Summer break. Though we initially only planned to stay in New Delhi, after finding opportunities with IIT Mumbai and the education NGO Ekal Vidyalaya, we also spent some time in the cities of Bombay and Ranchi.

Our journey began at IIT Mumbai, and our time there revealed to us that students at top universities in India are already extremely engaged with community development. We met with TREE labs - a small company dedicated to creating low-cost technological solutions for economic empowerment, - interacted with professors involved in public health and education technology projects, and spoke with students in the entrepreneurship club and on-campus start-up incubator. The drive for innovation was astonishing, as students had created their own space called the Tinkerer's Lab with the goal of spurring inventive thought, and faculty had recently started an Innovation Studio focused on design thinking. We

learned that MIT and IIT Mumbai had already established a connection through the TATA Center, which generates technological solutions to development problems pertinent to South Asia. However, this collaboration pursues development in a top-down manner, with faculty leading projects and then recruiting students, which differs from HDI's bottom-up approach. Regardless, the three of us decided that a backup strategy could be to send students from Harvard to IIT Mumbai to complement their expertise in engineering with skills in policy and technology implementation in the community. In addition to our experiences on the university campus, we were able to visit Dharavi - India's largest slum - with the maternal health & nutrition NGO SNEHA to encounter first-hand some of the greatest concerns in urban development. It was incredibly inspiring to see how optimistic the community members were despite the appalling lack of basic sanitation and hygiene measures in place. Our final meeting in Bombay was with the Center for Technological Alternatives for Rural Areas (CTARA), where we learned about the importance of system dynamics and documentation issues in community development.

After our four days in Bombay, we visited Ranchi, a city in the northern state of Jharkhand. Our time in Ranchi exposed us to some of the most glaring issues in developing rural India - problems in retrieving and recycling water, affordable energy, and access to technology in education. An amazing initiative that we witnessed by Ekal Vidyalaya, involved bringing computers to even the most remote villages in the state. After learning about a software entitled Spoken Tutorial - a platform developed by an IIT Mumbai professor which offers basic, open-source IT training modules translated in every Indian language - Raj, Pranay, and I were interested in the idea of pursuing at least one project in the space of education technology.

Following rewarding trips to Bombay and Ranchi, we finally arrived in our originally planned destination of Delhi. In the nation's capital, we continued interacting with a variety of students from universities including IIT Delhi, Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC), Ashoka University, and the Delhi School of Social Work (DSSW). We were also able to conduct further community visits with numerous NGOs. Some notable visits were with Save the Children, Vidya, the Heal Foundation, Pratham, and the Delhi Brotherhood Society. In each informal settlement that we visited, we saw recurring issues, and recognized that dirty and stagnant water causes many of the health problems in the communities. Not only does dirty water act as the breeding ground for vectors like mosquitos that carry infectious disease, lack of clean drinking water has serious implications in malnutrition. Thus, we ideated a project to develop community-managed toilets and a system of simplified sewage to ensure clean water and effective recycling. Downstream of the toilets, a biogas device can even be installed so as to provide combustible energy to the community members.

The Journeys of South Asians to the Americas

Summer Research in Manila, Philippines

Hardeep Dhillon, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD



My research seeks to untangle the history of political anti-colonialism and citizenship from the confines of the Indian nation-state. By focusing on the anticolonial claims of Indian migrants who were traveling in and through Southeast Asia and North America at the turn of the twentieth century, I explore how migration enables scholars to redefine the contours of Indian anti-colonialism, citizenship, and rights on an imperial scale.

This summer I conducted preliminary archival research related to my doctoral project at the National Archives in Washington D.C., the British Library, National Archives at Kew Gardens, and various archival collections in public and private collections in Manila with the support of the History Project. Beginning in the National Archives in Washington D.C., I explored documents related to the surveillance and immigration patterns of Indian migrants affiliated with the Ghadar movement. While the United States government was invested in monitoring immigrants entering the country in the early 1900s, it – like the British government -- became invested in the anticolonial and radical politics of Indian migrants by the mid-1910s.

By exploring archival materials in Washington D.C., I also learned that American and British surveillance networks worked closely with one another to monitor the movement of Indian men. These research findings were further verified and bolstered by research at the National Archives (Kew) where I discovered a significant array of archival materials related to the surveillance of migrants. I hope to further investigate the development of these surveillance networks and their connection to Indian migration in my future research. During my stay in Manila, I explored archives at the National Library, University of the Philippines Diliman, Ateneo University (American Archival Collection), National

Archives of the Philippines, National Historical Commission, the Khalsa Diwan located on United Nations Avenue, and the private collections of Mario Feir. My stay in the city also allowed me to explore the landscape of the region and note the importance of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia. Importantly, the resources available at Bahay Tsinoy (House of Chinese) provided critical insights into how public history is utilized to build particular narratives on ethnicity and migration.

In all, I benefited widely from the archival materials I worked through and the breadth of ideas that have risen organically from the materials I explored. I am grateful to the South Asia Institute for its support in this endeavor.

The East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge, 1772-1835

Summer Research in Glasgow, United Kingdom

Joshua Ehrlich, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2017



Botanical garden in Glasgow

A summer research grant from the South Asia Institute took me recently to a handful of archives across the UK: three in Scotland and one in London. The research was primarily in English and Indo-Persian source materials connected with my dissertation, “The East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge.” These materials ranged from the mundane to the mystical; from the collections and correspondence of administrators to the poems and petitions of scholars. My project aims to give a new account of the political and ideological uses of knowledge in South Asia, in the eventful decades around 1800. Such materials are its evidentiary bread and butter.

At the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, I consulted the papers of George Bogle, who was commissioned in 1774 to establish a trade route between Bengal, Bhutan, and Tibet. The mission was not only commercial, but diplomatic and scholarly in character: Bogle was tasked with assessing the “government, revenue, and manners” of the places he visited. At Mount Stuart, on the Isle of Bute, meanwhile, I looked at several collections connected with the Company’s administration and education policy in the early 1800s, including correspondence between past and contemporary governors-general. The University of Glasgow and Royal Asiatic Society in London held other papers of interest in understanding the complex interactions of ideology, patronage, and scholarship.

One of the intellectual challenges of a transmarine project like mine is to trace the often forgotten connections between distant peoples, languages, and political idioms. But the

archival work required to do so also entail physical and logistical challenges. Splitting the past year between India and the UK, travelling around most of the time in each, I was rarely able to adjust to a given place—or even fully move out of a suitcase. The British summer this year was sunnier than normal, but still made for an incongruous backdrop to some of my researches. It takes a greater-than-normal effort of the imagination to travel from a manor house library on a Scottish island to a desert outpost in the Deccan. Of course, London, and to a lesser extent Glasgow, have sizeable populations of South Asian ancestry, with attendant cultural and culinary benefits. Spend enough time in Delhi, however, and you become something of a snob about chole batura or Mughal miniatures. (The same goes for Kolkata and mishti doi etc.).

One of the best cures I found for my “culture shock”—or, as I’ve started calling it, “latitude sickness”—was a visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew. Linked from the time of my research to gardens at Calcutta, Saharanpur, and elsewhere across the British Empire, Kew feels somehow more tangibly global than the nearby City of London, a cultural void whose myriad overseas financial connections are obscured by their complexity and ethereality. In the humid enclosure of an antique greenhouse, as the sweat came to my skin, an unlikely argument came to my mind around the disparate sources I had spent the summer consulting. I rushed “home” to write it down.

Understanding Special Education System in Pakistan

Wintersession Research in Pakistan

Syeda Farwa Fatima, Harvard Graduate School of Education EdM 2016



A Government Center for Special Education in Model Town, Lahore

While debates over the past decade have focused on increasing rights for people with disabilities, the recently adopted Education 2030 agenda with the landmark Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015, has secured a safe place for comprehensive actions for inclusive education. SDG 4 aptly calls to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, specifically for 'persons with disabilities' (1). A recent report traces out how one in three of the 72 million out of school children in 2007 had a disability - a statistic that is yet to be updated for the current figure of 56 million out of school children (2).

In the context of Pakistan - which already has the second highest population of out of school children, a JICA report quotes how 'persons with disabilities are mostly unseen, unheard and uncounted', thereby constituting to the most marginalized group of the country (3). The regular government school system functions independently of the special education system, except for a few private schools that have started to acknowledge inclusive practices. However, such schools are mostly located in bigger cities and target a niche population that can afford the services. Despite numerous policy agendas, including the National Policy for Persons with Disability (4) that specifically advocated for a shift from exclusion to inclusion, followed by The National Plan of Action (5) to execute this policy (which never took off), Pakistan failed miserably to achieve the targets set. The National Education Policy (6) vouches 'to equalize access

to education through provision of special facilities to boys and girls alike, underprivileged/marginalized groups and handicapped children and adults'; unfortunately, little has been done to translate the policy into action.

With the courtesy of South Asia Institute at Harvard University, I decided to conduct a small pilot study to understand how social perspectives of different stakeholders frame the special education system in Pakistan. I designed a very simple survey form, no more than thirteen questions, comprising mostly of close-ended responses with an exception of three. I approached government officials in education and special education ministries, school leaders and teachers in special and general education schools, parents of special and non-special needs children and general community members associated with special and non-special needs children. However, as per the scope of the study, I drew my sample from the eclectic city of Lahore. Along with two helpful colleagues and a driver, I personally visited each of my respondents. This took me around the city from grounds of government-run special education schools including Government Centers for Special Education at different ends of the city, privately-run special education schools that included the likes of Amin Maktab Center of Special Education and Training and Rising Sun School along with the Education Ministry at large.

During my field experiences, I interacted with a combination of different personalities that exposed me to a range of emotions- ranging from ardent passion, zealous fervor, committed beliefs to hopeless skepticism, opinionated dogma and uncanny struggle for power. So my days had their own highs and lows, reflecting my interactions with varied individuals in easy and difficult settings - crossing across economic, social and cultural capital of the contexts. However, a few of my interactions stuck with me; one such particular person was a school leader at the Lahore Speech and Language School- partially deaf but doctorate in Special Education from Teachers College at Columbia University. She spoke at length about how her own struggle to acquire education drives her passion to provide equitable access to education, especially to deaf children.

Surprisingly, contrary to my expected beliefs, results revealed an almost equal percentage of respondents who believe that there should be a separate special education system (58%) compared to those who believe that there should be an inclusive special education system (60%); many believed in both. Regardless, when asked what role needs to be strengthened the most to ensure an inclusive education system in Pakistan, 48% reported the role of the government to provide inclusive infrastructure and facilities in schools, 26% reported the role of teachers to adopt inclusive pedagogies in classrooms, 13% reported the role of community members must be strengthened to integrate the society while 8% reported the role of school leaders to ensure an inclusive school environment and 7% reported the role of

parents as support systems for their children.

These results were rather shocking to me. Knowing that a fairly large majority of the population believes in an inclusive system, why is there still no such system? That's where I dwelled into the open-ended responses to understand the perspectives better. Most respondents desired a separated education system due to the attitudes of the general education school leaders, teachers and students towards students with special needs. Many reported instances of rejection and mockery towards students with special needs that automatically eliminated them from the general education system. Therefore, they believed that to ensure that students with special needs can do well, they have to be put in a separate system. On the other hand, many respondents that desired an inclusive education system did so, to ensure students can be treated equitably in a socially integrated system.

Both responses directed attention to an underlying data that is often ignored and not countered – a data of stigmatization within the society, which propels reactions of either believing in a separate system or an inclusive system- both habitus stemming off from the same data. Where does this data come from or where will it lead us? Which habitus is stronger and how can we make a certain kind of habitus stronger for the benefit of the community? No doubt, as many respondents also suggested, media can play an instrumental role in shifting the habitus by building the 'right' capital for change. This is where sociology interacts with economics to create interventions that target the change in community attitudes rather a change in the system- for a change in attitudes will lead to a change in the system- an idea we internalize, fulfilling the promise of diversity, as we learn to change the world!

Arabic Medical Manuscripts

Summer Research in North India

Shireen Hamza, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2021



Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library

I applied for the SAI Summer Research Grant in hopes of researching Arabic and Persian medical manuscripts for a week at each of two North Indian libraries: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library at Patna and Raza Library at Rampur. This was an exploratory trip, in which my goal was to determine the feasibility of a dissertation project on the exchange of medical knowledge between the Middle East and South Asia in the twelfth-fifteenth centuries. This time period corresponds to the Ayyubid and Mamluk Empires in most of the Middle East as well as the Delhi Sultanate in North India. In addition to taking note of the few manuscripts surviving from that period, as well as later copies of texts composed by physicians living in that period, I ended up finding many twentieth and twenty-first century Urdu books on the topic of the history of medicine as well.

This unforeseen and useful finding of Urdu books which are largely not available at Harvard arose out of the circumstances particular to Khuda Bakhsh Library. Because information regarding the library's photography policy is not available online, both Deborah and I were surprised to learn that the cost of a photograph of one page of a manuscript is \$5 for foreign researchers! As the cost of even a single full text would have exceeded my budget, I refrained from ordering photographs, and took notes about the few manuscripts that I examined. I spent most of my time that week looking through printed Urdu books, of which Khuda Bakhsh has an impressive collection, and ordering photocopies of certain chapters at the modest cost of two rupees per page.

The librarians were surprised that we were interested in both Arabic and Persian materials, perhaps because most researchers use either one or the other language. We had generally pleasant experiences, and were struck by the importance of being familiar with the Urdu language as well as the etiquette of Urdu-speakers. The most interesting materials that I found in Patna were conference proceedings from the early twentieth century of the "All India Vedic and Yunani Tibbi Conference," in Urdu, as well as a manuscript of a fifteenth-century commentary on a popular didactic poem by Ibn Sina, which has never been edited and published. I took frantic notes on this latter text, copying down as much as I could of the section on "the origin of medical knowledge."

Luckily for me, although I did not finish, Raza Library has a manuscript copy of this same text, and the cost of photographic manuscripts there was significantly lower. Our trip to Raza Library had a happy ending, but a rough start: we had not called ahead of time, and our emails to the director and the head of manuscripts, Islahi Saheb, had gone unanswered. When we reached there, we found that Islahi Saheb was away on a personal emergency and further, that the library would be closed on two of the four working days that we were there - on Thursday for Janmashtami and on Friday for Jumma. We were lucky that Isbah Saheb and the rest of the manuscript division facilitated our research. Further, Deborah's laptop, on which she had the notes of which manuscripts she wanted to view, inexplicably stopped working. This underscored a further lesson: to always have a printed copy of all necessary materials on hand, rather than relying on digital materials. Luckily, the library had hard copies of both Arabic and Persian manuscript catalogues available. Deborah and I were both able to look at a great deal of manuscripts, by powering through the lunch hour on the two days we had. I am most excited about the eighteenth-century Persian treatises on the China Root (*chub chini*), which may form a secondary project. Because this is a substance that does not exist in prior Graeco-Arabic/Unani medical literature, many new treatises were written on it in this period, often discussing it as a treatment for syphilis.

While Deborah got her laptop fixed later in New Delhi, there was definitely no one around to repair Apple products in Rampur. It was a small town, with a very different feel than both Patna and Lucknow. Since my prior travels in India had been limited to metropolitan areas, it was a new experience. If we had not reached out to a number of scholars beforehand, with queries about the research process, we would not have known where to stay and which librarians to contact. The advice of Katherine Butler Schofield and Razzaq Khan, both established researchers who generously took the time to give us detailed information on visiting these libraries, was much appreciated.

Resilient Design to Resilient Buildings

Summer Research in Nepal

Justin Henceroth, Graduate School of Design MDes 2017



Workers in Nepal

The SUV slowed to a crawl as we prepared to cross the last of four causeways before we reached our destination—a construction site for a new police station in Dang District, Nepal. This site is not in the most remote part of Nepal, but in many ways this construction site embodies the challenges of building anything in this mountainous country. Despite being on the national East-West Highway, it took us nearly six hours to drive the 120 miles from the nearest city and the regional headquarters for UNOPS, the organization managing this project. It had not rained in over a week, so the road was clear, but the evidence of landslides lined the road for miles, and each causeway we crossed was still under a few inches of water. It was easy to understand how even a day of rain could quickly block some key section of this road—cutting off access between communities and the flows of people and materials.

As the reconstruction following last year's earthquakes gets underway throughout Nepal, the limited access will prove a significant challenge for the communities, government agencies, humanitarian organizations, and donors that are all working to rebuild Nepal. Throughout the country, more than half a million homes need to be rebuilt, more than 30,000 classrooms have collapsed, and more than 400 health centers were completely destroyed. Many of the most damaged communities are in the remote hills that flank the Himalayas, with some villages accessible only by a multi-day walk.

The scale and remoteness of the reconstruction has implications beyond the logistics challenges of moving people and materials. To facilitate the reconstruction, many

new organizations are getting involved in building projects, bringing in key additional resources, but often lacking the technical expertise and experience to ensure quality construction projects. On top of that, resources devoted to quality assurance across all types of projects are far less than what is needed to ensure regular and timely oversight. As a result, it is likely that many projects will be built without adequate oversight or review to assess quality.

This is a particular challenge for a reconstruction that is being undertaken through a “Build Back Better” methodology. Across all sectors, organizations are committing to not only rebuilding, but to rebuilding new structures that possess key design and structural elements that will make them more resilient in the case of future earthquakes—a possibility many seismologists warn may occur soon. However, even if organizations are designing projects that contain key earthquake resilience measures, if these elements are not included in the building during construction, the building will be just as vulnerable as the ones that collapsed before it. With a tendency for local contractors to revert to known construction techniques, there is a real concern that without adequate quality assurance, all design for “building back better” may never be realized in the field.

In Nepal, these concerns are not only arising from the reconstruction, but are substantiated by past experience. One major international donor has been working on school construction in Nepal since 1994 and has built over 9,500 classrooms. Design drawings for schools built through these projects show key earthquake resilience measures; however, after more than 2,000 classrooms collapsed during the earthquakes, reviews of those sites revealed that many of the key design elements were not included during the construction process. During construction of those schools, contractors had omitted elements to save money, engineers had signed off on approvals without proper review, and communities were not empowered to review or report on potentially faulty construction.

While arising now in Nepal, these challenges have long plagued development and humanitarian efforts; however, recent developments have opened up new opportunities. In the past few years, mobile networks have expanded across the globe, with even remote mountainous countries like Nepal and Afghanistan boasting 90% mobile penetration. At the same time, new and more powerful mobile phones and tablets are able to carry out more advanced and complex tasks.

Taking advantage of these developments, I am working with UNOPS and the Nepal Innovation Lab to develop a new platform that will allow organizations engaged in humanitarian and development projects to use mobile technologies to conduct quality assurance projects on remote sites. This platform will include a mobile application that will prompt field users—including supervisors, contractors, and

communities—to collect and provide data about progress on construction sites, while also providing them with key education materials about resilient design techniques. Data collected in the field will be submitted to a central location, where project engineers and project managers using a web application can review, provide feedback back to sites, and, if significant issues arise, communicate with or visit problem areas. This will not only provide more information to organizations implementing projects so they can ensure quality throughout the process, but will also enable them to better target limited resources to working with field sites to ensure that they are using the best available construction methods.

We are currently in the process of developing the software, standards, and educational materials to create this platform. Over the course of the coming months, we will release prototypes for field-testing, focusing first on school construction projects in earthquake affected districts in Nepal and expanding outward to other projects as we are able. By the beginning of 2017, a full version of the platform will be complete, and we will focus on expanding its use across the reconstruction process in Nepal. The expanded use of this platform has the potential to improve construction processes, increase accountability, and promote transparency in reconstruction, development, and humanitarian aid.

The Politics of Contemporary Women's Rights in Myanmar

Summer Research in Myanmar

Katherine Hoffman, Harvard College 2017



Government officials in Myanmar

With the SAI Summer Research Grant, I was able to spend the past few months in Myanmar conducting research for my senior thesis. I would like to thank SAI for allowing me to pursue this research project as the experience of living and researching abroad was extremely meaningful. Not only am I now much more knowledgeable on a subject I am passionate about, but it provided me with further insight into my post-graduation aspirations and ambitions. Overall, the summer was enriching, engaging, challenging, and rewarding and after completing it, I would recommend the experience to any young scholar.

In total, I spent ten weeks in Myanmar (as outlined in my project proposal). I arrived on May 29, 2016 and returned

to the U.S. on August 4, 2016. I lived and spent the majority of my time in Yangon, with weekend side trips to Hmawbi, Bagan, and Nay Pyi Taw. After arriving in Myanmar, it took me a few weeks to get settled in. I moved in with my host family and I spent the first few days getting re-acquainted with the city, attending an intensive Burmese language course, and taking fabric to the tailors so I could get some traditional Burmese outfits to later wear to my interviews. I unfortunately faced some difficulties during the settling in process as I got sick and there were some unavoidable delays in my IRB approval. However, despite this three-week delay in starting substantive parts of my research, I was able to complete the necessary steps and actions over the course of my entire stay.

My research on Women in National Level Politics in Current Myanmar took me to multiple political party offices, the country's capital, and to bustling tea shops which lined the streets. To answer the question of how and to what extent women have been able to participate openly and meaningfully in national politics post the November 2015 election, I interviewed three distinct categories of subjects: Members of Parliament (both male and female), Campaign Managers for the last election in 2015, and average citizens. The combination of the three groups of interviewees provides multiple different perspectives and will hopefully provide strong causal inference for my research conclusions. In all, I formally interviewed 26 people and had informal conversations with many others. Each interview was different; some were in Burmese (with a translator) and some in English, others in offices or on park benches. For each, I tried to make my interviewees feel most comfortable to speak with me about their experiences and perceptions of female political participation.

I faced multiple challenges throughout my research including unresponsive potential interviewees, some language barriers, and difficulty in scheduling interview times. By the end, although I was not able to conduct as many interviews as I had anticipated, I was proud of the quality of the primary data I was able to collect. The lack of infrastructure and the obstacles in my way only made me more determined to conduct my research and provided me with a stronger motivation to do so. With so few scholars having gone down the path of conducting research in Myanmar before me, I had to pave some of my own way, but I am extremely satisfied with the work I did and the experiences I had and I am excited to continue the thesis writing process.

Shipbreaking Lives and Labor

Summer Research in Chittagong, Bangladesh
Marissa Houlahan, Harvard College 2017



Ship breakers in Bangladesh

With the support of the South Asia Institute, I spent the summer in Chittagong, Bangladesh, conducting ethnographic research for a senior thesis on the shipbreaking industry. Over the past decade, a confluence of geographic, historical, economic, geologic, and political factors has shaped South Asia, and Chittagong in particular, as the shipbreaking capital of the world. More than 70% of the world's defunct merchant and passenger vessels are now dismantled in South Asia, where labor and environmental regulations are largely unenforced and shipbreaking yards do without the expensive infrastructure required to break ships in places like Japan, Korea, Europe, and the United States. The shipbreaking industry in Chittagong fills nearly half of the country's growing demand for steel and provides thousands of jobs, however unstable. The industry is also responsible for the deaths of dozens of workers each year, who are victims of gas explosions, falling steel plates, and other accidents, and for leaching lead, asbestos, oil sludge, and other hazardous materials into the water, soil, and bodies of ship-breakers.

Since around 2005, the Chittagong shipbreaking industry has been a subject of intense fascination for foreign journalists, documentarians, artists, and reporters. Throughout the course of interviews, actors in the shipbreaking industry pointed to a myriad of potential causes for this foreign curiosity: the visual spectacle of massive ships run aground on the beach, exhortation of poverty and manual labor, generosity and a desire to alleviate suffering, implicit racism, and the attractively but deceptively simple narrative of the externalities of the developed world internalized

in the developing world, a unidirectional movement which provokes pity, sympathy, distance, and moral indignation among the developed. Media attention and NGO involvement, both foreign and Bangladeshi, have gone hand in hand, and in the process have produced a set of frameworks through which the industry is frequently discussed. Newspaper articles might cast shipbreaking as a calculus between economic benefit and environmental degradation, or, most popularly, as a site of overwhelming death. Shipyards are described as "graveyards" or "hellish," ships as "skeletal" or "end of life," and even workers as perpetually near death.

It was in the tangle of these intertwining narratives that I began my research in Bangladesh. I attempted to listen to the stories of people embedded in the industry, and from those stories begin to unearth the details that NGO reports, news articles, and adventure journalism tend to elide. Beyond that, I look to make claims about the situated-ness of the Chittagong shipbreaking industry within a multinational system of legal regulations, the production of categories like "global" and "local," and the inequities of transnational capitalism. I asked what forces create Chittagong, and the bodies of local and migrant workers, as sites for shipbreaking and shipbreaking labor? How do legal regulations, aesthetic sensibilities, material demands, and the political economy of the shipbreaking industry create ships as ruins, waste, or commodities at the intersections between regimes of value? How might ships, largely conceived as wasted or ruinous, instead be both implicated in vibrant human and nonhuman networks and productive of new social and material worlds?

My fieldwork began by connecting with Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), a Chittagonian social development organization that has been fighting for the past decade to make the shipbreaking industry safer, to enforce the many regulations in place, and to hold ship owners and shipping companies accountable for the fate of their vessels. Through YPSA I researched the history of institutional and legal involvement in shipbreaking and studied the processes and assumptions that ground foreign media attention by shadowing the work of foreign photojournalists and news writers. Along the highway running parallel to the shipbreaking yards, I observed and interviewed at the scrap shops selling items from ships – everything from spoons and life jackets to compressors and generators – to families, distributors in Dhaka, and industrial clients. I also visited the steel mills tied to the industry, and conducted interviews with the vast global network of industry actors, including lawyers in London, shipbrokers in Singapore, antiques dealers in Boston and North Carolina, filmmakers in Dhaka, Germany, and Korea, and shipyard owners, activists, government officials, ship captains, bankers, buyers of ship products, middlemen, academics, and laborers in Chittagong.

My methodological framework during my research was guided by anthropologist Anna Tsing's ethnography of

global connection developed in her book *Friction*, which pays close attention to the awkward encounters where aspiring universals like capitalism or commodity fetishism emerge in the particular and take on different meanings for different people, creating the productive friction of misunderstandings, partnerships, and unlikely connections. I come away from my fieldwork intrigued by an unexpected aspiring universal, which appeared over and over in interviews with everyone from international lawmakers to steel mill employees – waste. In Chittagong, I found that the easiest way to get laughed at was to ask a Bangladeshi, “So, what gets thrown away?” After chuckling indulgently at my naiveté, people usually told me that nothing gets wasted in Bangladesh; there is a use and a market for everything. This stands starkly at odds with shipbreaking legislation produced by the United Nations, which treats ships as floating pieces of waste, as well as with the practices of shipyards that claim, for the benefit of foreign visitors, to build hazardous waste storage facilities that are in fact empty rooms. Foreign and Bangladeshi NGOs rally around the damage done to the human and nonhuman environment by the waste products of broken ships, while scrap market owners and steel mills scoff at the idea of ships as waste in the first place when they are confronted every day with the task of turning ship into cash. Nor does the assertion that nothing gets wasted in Bangladesh always square with the things I saw – cracked porcelain sinks originally from ships and now strewn haphazardly on a highway median, food and household scraps encroaching on city streets, and what Zygmunt Bauman would controversially call the “wasted lives” of people excluded from the possibility of capitalist production.

These ethnographic encounters lead me to wonder, what is waste? When is waste? How is waste managed, commoditized, and contested? What assumptions and responsibilities, legal and moral, are variously seen to be attached to the narrative designation of waste? What regimes of value does waste connect or challenge? How is waste attached to or a conduit for power? I hope to address these questions, at least partially, as I continue down the rabbit hole of the Bangladeshi shipbreaking industry.

Identities Narrated in Multi-Ethnic States

Summer Research in Colombo, Sri Lanka
Sarani Jayawardane, Harvard College 2017



Jaffna Fort

A history textbook is complex item lying at the intersection between ethnic politics and education policy. I did not think about that as a student in school – then, the history textbook was something to read, memorize, and cough back up at end-of-year examinations. But when governments write curricula or textbooks, the history textbook begins to mean much more. It becomes a tool by which the state can transmit its historical narrative, its version of the official past of a country. It becomes a direct articulation of what the state considers an accurate narrative and a desirable national identity for its citizens. Yet “national history” is subjective: differences in identity – whether by race, religion, language, social status, class, or gender– can drastically alter personal conceptions of history. Thus multi-ethnic countries face a multiplicity of versions of past and conceptions of identity. Many South Asian nations have witnessed ‘textbook controversies’ or ‘textbook wars’ because of this complexity.

I spent the summer of 2016 examining these charged politics in Sri Lanka. I conducted research for my senior thesis, which will seek to understand how and why government-issued history textbooks have changed in how they depict ethnic minorities during the course of the civil war and afterward. My research consisted two parts. One element was to analyze the current and past textbooks to understand how depictions of minorities have changed. The second was to interview those involved in the production of textbooks, to assess the influences on the process. Thanks to the generous funding received from the South Asia Institute, I was able to achieve both of those goals. I am now back on campus and getting into the process of writing my thesis and I am so thankful for

having been able to do my research over the summer.

I am from Sri Lanka and lived there prior to coming to Harvard, so whenever my research kept me in Colombo I would stay at my family’s home. I was worried that my summer would feel like just going back home, instead of being a ‘research experience’. Yet doing a solo research project in Sri Lanka was actually an incredibly new experience, during which I learned much more about my own country. I interviewed 27 people connected to the production of textbooks, ranging from an ex-Secretary to the Ministry of Education, to present administrators at the National Institute of Education and Educational Publications Department, to leaders of civil society who have campaigned for and against textbook reform, to academics studying history across the country. From these conversations, I learnt about the politics and pressures at play in the production of a history textbook. I also gained some great insight about the complexities of education policy and reform in general, which I truly valued since I plan to work in education in Sri Lanka in the future. For this same reason, I appreciated all the time I spent in the different government agencies and ministries, as I could perceive how different branches of the government worked.

Some of my favorite experiences this summer included several trips to Jaffna in the North, and Kandy in the center, to speak to academics based at the Universities of Jaffna and Peradeniya respectively, as well as different civil society organizations such as the Ceylon Tamil Teachers’ Union. I had not visited either city for many years, and traveling there alone as a researcher was a completely new experience. Memories I will particularly cherish from the summer were my train rides between Colombo, Peradeniya and Jaffna: racing the sunset as the Udarata Menike barreled down the central hills at dusk, or watching the changing landscapes of Sri Lanka as the Yal Devi rushed north through wet zone, dry zone, town, field, village, and jungle. Once, as I was going up to Peradeniya for an interview, the train engine broke down. We were stuck for an hour in the middle of nowhere waiting for a replacement engine, as I slowly realized that I was going to miss my interviewee – whom I had been trying to interview for weeks. As the conductor walked through the compartments I explained my predicament to him, and he suggested that I hop off the train and wait for another one that would pass by soon. As I stood on the edge of the other track with ten other passengers preparing to unceremoniously switch trains, surrounded by paddy fields, I felt very far from Cambridge MA.

Language Ideology and Education in Pakistan

Summer Research in Lahore, Pakistan
Shahrukh Khan, Harvard College 2017

All in all, I am incredibly grateful to the South Asia Institute for its financial and institutional support. I am aware of the gravity of such an opportunity, something that is a kind of luxury, especially considering what I had seen in Pakistan just a few weeks ago. I hope that students in the future are able to have as much of a meaningful experience as I did.

My experience in Pakistan was a mix of cultural and intellectual enrichment and engagement. One of the most memorable experiences was when I attended a Sangat (in Sanskrit it means “companionship”) in Lahore – which is a gathering of a group of individuals who read, perform, and engage with classical texts in various South Asian traditions. I attended the Sangat of the famed Punjabi culture revivalist Najm Hosein Syed – who has been hosting it in his home for the past 40 or so years. In the Sangat I attended, we read and analyzed an opening passage of the Guru Granth Sahib (the religious scripture of the Sikhs). However what was more intriguing than the piece itself were the people reading it: here, you had mostly middle-class Pakistanis engaging with an incredibly difficult and dense text at the level that PhDs in the US do, and all of it in English and Punjabi. Their level of comprehension and usage of Punjabi was phenomenal. I hadn’t heard or seen anything like it. Plus, in Lahore you would expect a disregard of texts like the Guru Granth Sahib given the relative religious intolerance in a place like Pakistan. Lastly, the performance aspect was also something worth watching: you had singing, with live tabla and harmonium playing, just as if it were in a Gurdhwara (or on other days, a Sufi Dargah).

Moreover, I had the opportunity to meet and interview a wide array of people whose experiences inform my thesis and my topic in quite unorthodox and unanticipated ways. Retrospectively, I think taking an anthropological approach to my research was arguably the best way to gain that insight. Incorporating culture and individual stories (all of which certainly connected categorically) into an analytic thesis will give, an argument much more grounded in the nature and status of Punjabi. It was also interesting conducting mini language “experiments,” in which I would order food in Punjabi at a restaurant or ask for directions in Punjabi when going from place to place. More often than not, it was the case that people would respond to me in these cases in Urdu. There was confusion in their conduct, a kind of shock in some cases. There was also a kind of hesitation, and I think it was my initiative to speak in Punjabi or say something in Punjabi that allowed me to see that. There was so much irony in the conduct of Punjabis – Lahore, the most populous Punjabi city in the world, with the greatest number of ethnic Punjabis of any city, was facing, in many ways, an identity crises of sorts. People were afraid, confused, and deceptive. I do not mean intentional deception exclusively, but inert deception. At the meta-level, it was as if they were collectively moving towards an entirely new linguistic reality which is still in the process of becoming.

The Politics of Power in 18th century Punjab: Space, Culture, and Identity

Summer Research in London, United Kingdom

Neelam Khoja, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2018



Tarikh-i-Nadiri Manuscript

For almost two months, I went to the British Library six days a week and poured over Persian histories, genealogies, stories, poetry, and even miniature paintings, panoramas, and maps. There was one specific moment during the course of the two months that continues to haunt and excite me at the same time: the moment when I was reading Bayan-i Waqi, an account of the times by a companion and historian of Nadir Shah, and I happened to stretch my arms and neck when I noticed a painting of a man whose eyes gazed directly on me. The man in the painting was no one other than Nadir Shah himself! That portrait was not the last of Nadir Shah I encountered during my short stay at the British Library. I also

managed to scan European style sketches of Nadir Shah in a 19th century copy of the Tarikh-i Nadiri (see below). This specific text has numerous copies, but only this particular copy contains sketches of the man and two other historical events.

As a recipient of the South Asia Institute summer research grant, I conducted research at the British Library in London. I consulted over fifty manuscripts, twelve maps, numerous documents, and twenty published materials. I scanned twenty-six complete or partial manuscripts. These manuscripts are critical for my dissertation research on 18th century Punjab. The question that drives my dissertation is: how do Iranian (specifically Nadir Shah) and Afghan (Ahmad Shah Abdali/Durrani) attempts to gain and legitimate political power in eighteenth century Punjab implicate changes in imagining, articulating, and representing land and space, language and culture, self and community. The sources I examined and copied from these libraries will provide me the data I need to answer the question outlined above.

In addition to conducting research, I met with and consulted important scholars in my field. In London, I met with Professors Christopher Shackle, Francesca Orsini, Roy Fischel, Shabnum Tejani, Thibaut d'Hubert, James Caron, Swati Chattopadhyay, and Derek Mancini-Lander. Conversations with these scholars forced me to rethink some of my assumptions, and more importantly, helped me think through some of my frameworks and arguments.

One direct result of this research trip is a paper I will present at the upcoming Annual Conference on South Asia at Madison in October. The paper is on an eighteenth-century ex-slave whose memoir in manuscript form is at the British Library. Although this text has been critically edited and published, examining and consulting the manuscript had been quite helpful. There are conventions within manuscript writing that are lost when the text is typed. For example, red ink indicates a change in subject, and lines appear over important names. I also noticed that the editor of the printed text at times wrongly noted discrepancies between the two extant manuscripts, one at the British Library and the other at Aligarh Muslim University. As the manuscript is in very good condition still, I was able to scan the entire memoir and can read it alongside the published text.

I sincerely thank SAI for supplementing my research costs that allowed me to conduct research in the United Kingdom.

Analyzing National Agriculture Market

Wintersession Research in Delhi, Punjab, Bihar, Odisha, India
Rohit Kumar, Harvard Kennedy School MPA/ID 2016

As part of my master's research project at the Kennedy School, I am analyzing the National Agriculture Market (NAM) scheme that was announced by the Government of India (GOI) in its 2015 budget. To understand the implementation issues around NAM, I interviewed government officials in Delhi, Punjab, Bihar and Odisha. Most of these conversations were off the record as officials gave insights into the political and administrative issues surrounding the NAM policy.

I initiated my research by reaching out to different government departments. It took several requests and follow-ups to get meetings, but the officials I finally met were extremely helpful. Candid conversations with them proved to be extremely insightful. While most officials recognized the merits of the NAM proposal, they were cautious about the nature of gains that could be achieved by its implementation. A senior official in GOI highlighted that reforms in agricultural marketing have been a tricky problem for the central government because of the distribution of powers under the Indian constitution. The center has been trying to get states to modify their laws for many years now, but with limited success. Through NAM, the government sees an opportunity to incentivize reform by giving additional funds to states that show willingness to reform their marketing processes. However, the government recognizes that in the absence of a supportive ecosystem (of credit availability, warehousing etc.), NAM may not be very effective. But, the objectives of the scheme have been intentionally kept modest so as to reduce internal opposition and enable adoption. It is believed that a less ambitious reform is politically more palatable, and will not ruffle too many feathers. This will allow the government to get a foot in the door in some of the less enthusiastic states. Even limited success might give an impetus to further reforms.

In Odisha, where the trader lobby is weak, I learned that the government has already extended its support to NAM and requested funds from GOI to implement it in 10 markets. In Bihar, the government is now in the process of setting up private markets and making provisions for e-auctions (the Bihar government had dismantled the entire state marketing system during a crackdown on its market officials in 2006 for their monopolistic and extractive practices). Since the design of NAM was broadly in sync with the Bihar government's policy, it was willing to extend its support to GOI as well. In Punjab, however, the scenario was different. While the marketing board had already sent its approval to the state government, not much headway had been made at the

Ministry. Officials anticipated resistance to NAM because moneylenders, traders and landlords are a very well knit and politically connected network in Punjab.

Overall, my research showed that NAM is a good political sell. Strategically, its design minimizes resistance. Where local political circumstances permit, states have spoken out in support of NAM. However, most officials agreed that the government has been a little short-sighted in not focusing on the complementary reforms of grading, warehousing and credit availability that are likely to prove crucial to the effective functioning of NAM. Absent these reforms, the actualization of a unified national agricultural market may not become a reality.

I am glad I went to India to speak to these officials in person. It has been a great learning experience. A big shout-out to SAI for supporting my research!

The History Project

Summer Research in Lahore, Pakistan

Muhammad Liaqat, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2020

This summer I worked with “The History Project” (THP) in Lahore, Pakistan to develop an evaluation strategy for an exciting set of workshops they are doing with school children. These workshops are aimed at improving critical thinking and increasing empathy in schoolchildren in Pakistan and India. As a researcher, my role in these workshops is to design an evaluation strategy to ascertain the impact of these workshops on critical thinking and empathy in children.

The workshops in themselves are borne out of THP’s previous work in schools in India and Pakistan, introducing children to the idea that there is multiplicity in historical narratives. They decided to place versions of the same incidents from Indian and Pakistani textbooks right next to each other and simply show that to students, taking in their reactions and learning how the rigid notions of right and wrong formed due to particular forms of socialization in formative years could be broken. Having gone through that development phase, THP was ready to start piloting its workshops this summer, and I formed a partnership with them to evaluate the impact of their interventions.

In designing such an evaluation, there are a host of theoretical and practical issues that differ from a standard evaluation of a development program – a setting I am more used to. Firstly, the outcomes that we are trying to impact are by definition vaguely defined and hard to grasp even conceptually. I spent a lot of time grappling with the concept of critical thinking and empathy, as understood by psychologists, educationalists and behavioral economists – and trying to square these theoretical constructs with how these ideas were being applied by THP in their pilot workshops.

Our current working definition of critical thinking is very close to what Robert Ennis describes as “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do.” The three core features of this definition we hope to teach students in our intervention are (1) identifying conclusions, reasons and assumptions; (2) judging the quality of an argument, including the acceptability of its reasons, assumptions and evidence; (3) defining terms in a way appropriate for the context. The predominant examination system in Pakistan is based on rote learning, where passing the exam is more considered more important than learning the content. Moreover, students are discouraged to question their curriculum. This produces intolerant adults later on who were never brought up in an education system that fosters a multiple perceptive approach of forming beliefs. Our intervention does not push any particular interpretation of historical and societal narratives onto the children. Instead,

it gives students the methodologies to question and approach them in a more critical manner without calling either side wrong. It also takes students on a journey to showcase their own histories and social identities that are made up of various narratives without asking them to believe in a certain side of the story. This approach, which does not take ownership of the truth or tries to push any particular ideology onto the children, has been welcomed by schools.

In conceptualizing empathy, we consider two levels at which empathy operates: cognitive empathy and affective empathy. Cognitive empathy is the ability to understand what the other feels; to see a situation from another’s perspective. Cognitive empathy, however, does not imply any degree of concern about the other. The notion of affective empathy involves actually caring about the other side; the person who has affective empathy for another is moved to help the other. In the language of economics, cognitive empathy enters into a theoretical model in the form of an individual’s beliefs about the other’s beliefs whereas affective empathy directly enters the individual’s utility function.

These abstract concepts translate into THP’s workshop through a series of interactive activities that are very different from the usual lecture-based classroom setting the children are used to. One activity I particularly like is an ‘attribute linking’ activity. Each student is given a pencil and post-it notes. They are asked a series of questions of the form “Who in this classroom comes to school in the same kind of vehicle as you?” or “Who in this classroom is the smartest?” After each question is asked, they are asked to identify someone who matches the description given in the question, write the adjective i.e. the subject of the question on a post-it and stick it to the back of the student that they thought fit the criteria. For instance, if the class is looking for the shortest student in the room, each student posts a note saying ‘shortest’ on the back of the student that they think is the shortest. This activity helps student focus on the subconscious choices about familiarity and ‘other’ that they make on a daily basis. The activity begins with helping them focus on similarities and differences and then thinking through their process of making friends or ‘othering’ their peers. In our experience, it gets students to think about the meaning of discrimination and how it is at play even when we think that it is not.

Another activity that gets at the inconsistencies in which majorities and minorities are treated in both Pakistan and India is a short cricket game that is held as part of the workshop. If a session has twenty students, two teams are made, one of which consists of only 4 players and the other of 16 students. They are asked to play the game with normal rules, and the trainer does commentary. When, as would be expected, the team with 4 players start performing badly, the trainer ignores the numbers in their commentary and instead speaks about how wonderfully the winning team is playing and vice-versa. At the end of this game, students are asked to talk about how they felt during the game. Inevitably, the unfairness of the setup comes up in discussion and the

trainer then links that to real world situations in which either minority status or other social barriers prevent certain groups from performing at par with those with advantages, but there is no acknowledgement of these disadvantages. The hope is that this activity translates into cognitive empathy towards minorities and those from a lower socioeconomic background.

The task of measuring changes in empathy and cognitive thinking remains challenging. I have developed an evaluation strategy using a mix of stated measures from established reliable psychology scales, some established behavioral measures used previously such as the dictator and some original behavioral measures that have not been tried before and are designed by me particularly for this context. The process of piloting these behavioral measures remains challenging, and the hope is to fine tune both these measures and the intervention itself with time. We are currently in the process of obtaining funding for pilots and a scale-up, and another practical difficulty we face in this process is the escalating tension between India and Pakistan. Donors seem reluctant to fund activities explicitly talking about relations between India and Pakistan. Unfortunate as that is, we believe our framing goes beyond the particularities of the history of India and Pakistan, and so we are currently in the process of developing case studies from the history of apartheid in South Africa to illustrate many of the same points.

Resolving Refusals: Polio Vaccinations

Wintersession Research in Lahore, Pakistan

Muhammad Zia Mehmood, Harvard Kennedy School MPP 2016



Since Nigeria was announced as completely free of polio by WHO on September, 25th 2015, Pakistan and Afghanistan now are the only two remaining countries in the world where polio is still endemic. Adapted from End Polio Pakistan Hitting a 14-year high of 306, Pakistan accounted for 86% of all reported cases of Wild Polio Virus globally in 2014. In June 2014, WHO recommended that all international travelers from Pakistan should be administered polio drops at airports to prevent its spread. Amidst increasing pressure from international as well as domestic groups, the government ramped up its efforts to eradicate polio from the country recently. The Prime Minister approved \$326 million under the 2014 National Emergency Action Plan, and established the National Emergency Operations Centre with the aim of better coordinating immunization efforts in the country. 38 cases have been reported so far this year. In September 2015, environmental samples from five new districts tested positive for WPV- Multan, Peshawar, Karachi, Sukkur and Quetta. Polio vaccination drives normally take place over three days with a two-day catch-up period where households missed in the primary drive are followed up on. Vaccination teams are instructed to record the address and phone number of all households which refuse vaccination and the area in-charge is supposed to visit the households along with some supporting staff where available, to try to convert refusals the same day. If they are unsuccessful, the district administration is instructed to pursue these cases in the next campaign.

Apart from improving access to vaccinations by further expanding door-to-door campaigns and providing increased security to polio workers amidst growing threats by

extremists (as of April 2015, 76 polio workers have been killed by militants since 2012, the biggest threat to polio eradication that the government will have to address is refusal rates. Every year, a significant minority of parents actively refuse to get their children vaccinated. There were 54,061 refusals of polio vaccination reported in January 2015. The government has responded to high refusal rates by making polio vaccination mandatory- authorities in Peshawar alone issued over 10009 warrants and arrested 471 parents for refusing to get their children vaccinated (The arrested are released after they sign an affidavit confirming that they will get their children vaccinated). This resulted in reported refusals falling to 36,510 in February. However, reported refusals grossly underestimate the actual number of children who are chronically left out during polio eradication campaigns as unwilling parents can easily make up excuses to avoid confrontation with the polio team that shows up at their doorstep (the child is sick/asleep/at school/already vaccinated/what child? etc.).

In order to explore the core reservations that parents have related to polio vaccinations in Pakistan, I conducted an exploratory pilot in the district of Lahore, Pakistan. This involved surveys of polio workers who participate in door-to-door immunization drives and are hence at the frontline of polio eradication efforts in the field, and parents who actively refuse to get their children vaccinated during immunization drives. For the former task, I hired student volunteers from local universities and we surveyed polio workers all across the district. As the latest immunization drive was just starting when we began field work, we managed to survey polio workers in batches of 15-30 all across the district when they gathered in the afternoon to report their progress after field work during the day. For the latter task, the team went door-to-door to every single refusal or resistance case reported by polio workers in the district of Lahore during the December 2015 polio drive, to conduct one-on-one interviews of parents. This phase of data collection is still underway and is expected to be complete by 10/01/2016.

As refusals are relatively less common in Lahore, the project is meant to be an exploratory pilot for a larger initiative to study the reasons behind polio vaccine refusals in parts of Pakistan where this is a significant issue and testing the effectiveness of different interventions in converting them. In addition to that, based on the data collected in the field, the project will seek to advise the District Management of Lahore about perceptions of polio vaccinations amongst refusing households in district of Lahore and offer recommendations on how to address them.

Harvard Development Initiative

Wintersession Research in Delhi, Ranchi, Mumbai, India
Pranay Nadella, Harvard College 2018

Inspired by our summer visit to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where we observed the projects of the Cambridge Development Initiative, Neil Davey, Raj Vatsa and I set out for India with the plan to launch a similar development initiative from Harvard. We sought to connect Harvard students with university students in Delhi, India to co-create community development solutions and empower local changemakers. We had discussed our model with many professors, students and organizations. I felt confident that by providing a network for students at Harvard and in Delhi to ideate together, we would be able to avoid the traditional and generally ineffective mode of development, in which Western powers spearhead development efforts in locations where they altogether lack cultural competency. I thought our model would eschew this colonial tinge to development, but of course until our India trip this past winter, it was only a model and had not been tested by reality.

My trip to India was simultaneously humbling as well as heartening and through its countless learning lessons, it pushed my understanding of development and the plans for our initiative to places I had not expected. As we left the U.S. for India, we knew that our conceptions of development were anything but firm and that spontaneity would be our best friend during the trip. While we initially planned to stay in Delhi, from one spontaneous decision to the next, we ended up spending several days in Delhi, Mumbai and Ranchi, nearby which we observed rural development projects in a village called Karanjo. Having visited both slum communities in Dharavi and Delhi as well as the village Karanjo, we realized that thematically, the development issues faced by villages and cities are very similar.

Our first destination was Mumbai and there, I was in for my first big surprise. Our initial model emphasized “empowering local change-makers,” as we aimed to engage students, who we thought may not already be so engaged, in development work. However, at IIT Bombay, I was the one left feeling empowered, as I was blown away by the innovative development projects and service-oriented spirit among both professors and students. For students, the Tinkerer’s Lab at IIT Bombay, is based on the belief that communities in need should be given the tools to empower themselves and as a result, have created many low-cost, innovative technologies for such communities, such as an icemaker and a low-energy welding machine. I saw a similarly high level of open 24/7 where students can come in and work on any sort of engineering project. Also, TreeLabs, development emphasis at IIT Delhi as well, where there is a course for

undergraduates called Inclusive Innovation, in which students dream up an innovation for a population in need and create a viable business plan for their innovation. Our interactions with universities in Mumbai and Delhi were very motivating because of the great passion for development that already exists at those universities

Ultimately, our field visits to government schools, slums and rural communities were the most impactful for me. By speaking with students at schools and community members, I was able to gain a very human perspective into many of the issues that I had read about through a literature review. I was able to ask people in slum communities if the boom in mobile phone applications for health, education, etc. would actually be effective. Through these on the ground conversations, we were able to hone in on three critical areas for future project work for our development initiative: leveraging technology to improve education access, water sanitation and better NGO, rural as well as urban documentation.

I’m so grateful to SAI for funding my trip to India and the tremendous network of contacts SAI provided for us in India and I am extremely excited about the upcoming steps our development initiative will take.

Tamil War Widows' Access to Transitional Justice

Summer Research in Colombo, Sri Lanka
Mandhavi Narayanan, Harvard College 2017



I have travelled a lot both around the world and in South Asia before, my experience in Sri Lanka was remarkably different than anything I have experienced before. I spent 9 weeks as an intern for the Center for Policy Alternatives, a well-known nonprofit think tank in Colombo. During my time there, I helped with a project on assessing the current state of statelessness in Sri Lanka, where hundreds of Tamils of recent Indian origin were not granted citizenship upon the country's independence in 1948. This project tied directly with a lot of the background to the ethnic conflict that I had spent my last spring semester studying, so I felt fortunate to be able to compile and contribute a literature review for them. I also took trips to the field with the researchers in charge of the project, and I was able to offer translation skills due to my knowledge of Tamil, because most of the Colombo based civil society is Sinhalese. Working on this project and in a research environment helped me gain exposure to what it's like to work at a think tank, something I was considering pursuing after I graduate.

Although being an intern at CPA was quite an informative experience itself, the main purpose of my trip to Sri Lanka was to conduct qualitative interviews and gather data for my senior thesis, looking at 21st century international involvement in conflict and post-conflict Sri Lanka. I spoke with a variety of different actors, from large INGO international staff to former government ministry heads, military commanders and small rural NGO directors. War is never an easy topic, and especially not in a country where

the absence of violence is still so fragile. I felt I was being pulled back and forth in each of my interviews, from hearing of the plight of Tamil citizens that led to the rise of the LTTE to their own civilians' slaughter by these same "freedom fighters," whom the government, label "terrorists."

I learned to be careful with the language that I use and the way I present myself. My experience was extremely complicated by the fact that I am a South Indian Tamil woman, and my name gives that fact away. Most of the people I emailed assumed that, due to my name and foreign accent, I was a member of the Sri Lankan diaspora, whom many on the island blame for their long-held support and funding of violent tactics such as suicide bombings and child recruitment by the LTTE. Never have I been so aware of my own positionality in issues that I know so little about, and the baggage that we all carry just by the way we look and speak. These experiences helped me to realize that although in the US I feel so distant from the Sri Lankan conflict or really any conflict in general, it affects each of personally, from one human being to another.

My experience with my senior thesis research has also made me very interested in global humanitarian and human rights-related response to disasters and crises. There is so much good that the Global North can do, but also so much harm. There is a lot of frustration that is felt when people are dying on the ground because "protocols" are still being discussed all the way in Geneva. In many ways, those most in harm's way are those who we have a hardest time reaching, listening to, and aiding. I am now considering entering this field as an entry-level professional for a few years post-graduation in South Asia before pursuing a law degree focused on human rights. I hope to apply some of the lessons I learned in Sri Lanka about my own positionality as well as agency to both keep reminding myself that I have more to learn while also advocating for those whom I learn from.

Forest Practice

Summer Research in Dehradun, India

Aaron Mendonca, Graduate School of Design MA 2017

Meetings and engagements were held with various entities ranging from Forest Communities, Village Economic Development Committees, Producer Companies, Cooperatives, Self-help Groups, Chief Conservative Officers, Divisional Forest Officers, the Forest Research Institute Dheradun, Tourism Bodies, Research Organizations, Forest Product Enterprises, Investors and Support Institutions.

Communication is underway with following three organizations for the formation of Project Proposals: Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) is a research institution in the areas of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Their focus is on applied science through research, education and action that influence policy and practice on conservation of nature, management of natural resources, and sustainable development. Khetify is a young startup working on urban farming and wholesome produce. Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR) is a Government owned establishment that operates 16 resorts in Karnataka. Their operations are nestled in enviable wilderness properties and offers prerogatives such as jungle access for safaris, water access, treks, bird-watching and elephant camps.

The three activities delineated below are far from independent; they spur and incentivize one another while creating a fabric of open and naturally evolving interventions. Planning is underway to complement ATREE's value addition initiatives at the Eastern Himalayas and Western Ghat sites through design input and market facilitation. The NTFPs include - Honey, Tea, Ghee, Mushrooms, Medicinal Plants, Fresh Poly-house Produce, Gooseberry, Soapnut, Coffee, Spices. Communities face certain difficulties in the superficial design and business end in competition with industrious organizations. The aim is to relieve communities of some of the observed pressures through partnership with Khetify, who will distribute these goods to urban markets. The branding would tell the story of the local producers (the producer company in the event of them being incorporated as producers or the village in the event of a non-entity) and the quality of the goods. This activity would work to not take away from the community sense of ownership, but to give them a large stock guaranteed buyer while they attempt to establish their own local market presence. A percentage of the profits of this marked up extended distribution would go back to the community in the form of an insurance or development fund.

Visits and studies of JLR properties were conducted to suggest a more authentic experience through improvements in the aesthetic, energy and environmental aspects of their

sites as well as the incorporation of community livelihoods into their operations. We are in the process of facilitating a demand and supply match between the value addition communities and JLR resorts in the form of restaurant/kitchen supplies as well as retail stalls to bring the products in contact with NRI and foreign tourists.

There are several avenues through which a design approach would complement research initiatives to help inform the nature of transformation in rural regions that lack a strong design voice. Examples: Design & Planning, MNREGA Projects, Community Infrastructure Projects, Architectural Innovations, Energy Strategies, Policy Formulation, Technology Transfer. These various aspects of Forest Practice would benefit from a collaborative, immersive environment of researchers, students and practitioners. We are conceiving of Tourism cum Residential Research Centers as a means to offer a greater presence of Universities and Sustainable Industries at forest sites. The first site under consideration is Sepi Village, Singalila; preliminary promising meetings were held with the DFOs office, the village economic development committee and ATREE regarding the same.

Over the last 50 years, the hunt for first principles in the field of ecology has established strong linkages between biology and physics. The second law of thermodynamics describes constraints that are necessary for but not sufficient cause for the emergence and existence of structures. Yet, a thermodynamic basis for complex systems attributes direction to processes and renders patterns visible in many living and life-like systems. An expanded thermodynamic view of life considers emergence to occur through feedback originating in dissipating gradients. Self-organization, as a response to externally applied gradients, behaves to dissipate that which moves a system away from equilibrium. Far-from-equilibrium systems degrade energy to maintain organizations, increasing in complexity through positive feedback. Thus, local entropy reduction is bounded and fueled by global entropy production. Inextricably connected by the limits of physical existence, particular structures constantly disturb and design other structures through energy transformations required for their own existence.

This summer research project has acted as an entry point into the field study of emergent systems. The project now continues into fall 2016 and spring 2017 via the Masters in Design Studies Open Projects Format. The approach this semester will be to hone a philosophy towards designing with, while dwelling within, a fundamentally interconnected ocean of things and, to study the energy hierarchies, feedback mechanisms and nature of transformation across the material boundaries of complex emergent systems.

Vocabulary Development for Cultural and Linguistic Minority Students

Summer Research in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh
Maung Nyeu, Graduate School of Education EdD 2017



Fishbowl in grade 5

During the summer of 2016 with the help of Harvard South Asia Institute's (SAI) generous summer fellowship enabled me to conduct my research, a literacy intervention project among the linguistic and cultural minority students from Indigenous communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh. In the following section, I describe the context of education in marginalized Indigenous communities of CHT and share how SAI grant benefited in my two research studies, a) Literacy Intervention Project and b) Teacher Professional Development Project and 3) Children storytelling and story book distribution during the summer 2016.

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) (Appendix A), a remote region in the south-eastern corner of Bangladesh, children from indigenous mountain tribes are among the country's most illiterate and at the highest risk of dropping out of school (UNDP, 2009). More than half of all households lack formal schooling, and of those who start school, fewer than eight percent complete elementary education and fewer than three percent complete secondary education (Integrated Regional Information Networks [IRIN], 2011).

Teacher Professional Development

The teachers in the CHT are not familiar with discussion based pedagogy. For this reason, I decided to provide professional development for teachers. Teachers expressed that these discussion and facilitations methods are highly effective in their classrooms. They also used these teaching strategies in other classes they teach.

Storytelling in Classroom and Children's Book Distribution

In addition to literacy intervention and teacher professional development, I also took time to visit as many classroom as possible. In these visits, I interviewed teachers and students and distributed children's book. I also had storytelling session for students in elementary grades.

During my visit, I observed that girl's sport are encouraged. I was Happy to see Indigenous school girls (Marma, Mro, Chakma, Tripura, etc.) in the Hill Tracts study as well as play. These school girls are participating in a soccer match between grades and they are highly competitive. They do not have soccer boots, soccer jerseys, and other soccer equipment. Armed with school uniform and bare feet, nothing can deter these girls from playing with passion, enthusiasm, excitement and joy. More power to them.

I also received a good news that my research finding as been accepted for presentation at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference 2017. This is the largest educational conference in the United States and the finding from my visits to CHT will be presented in AERA conference. This will bring more awareness to the needs of the students in the region.

Conclusion:

There is no magic formula that can cure educational inequities in Indigenous and marginalized communities. There is a dearth of research and publications on the deplorable dropout rates in the schools among the indigenous communities of the CHT. I believe that rigorous and scholarly research has the potential to shed light in the huge dropout rates and adverse impact plaguing CHT children. I hope that this research will contribute to better understanding of the issues impacting education of children in the Hill Tracts. I'm looking forward to exploring my research interests and learning more about qualitative research and applying them in my doctoral research. I am grateful to Harvard South Asia Initiative for their generosity.

Dissecting and Dismantling India's Gender Gap in Political Participation

Wiinter Research in Rajasthan, India

Soledad Prillaman, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2018



Self help group members

The objective of this fieldwork and my project more broadly was to better understand why women in India, and developing countries more broadly, are particularly disengaged from politics and to identify the mechanisms through which the prevailing political gender gap is reduced. Despite growing focus on female empowerment in the developing world, many women remain largely excluded from the political process and a substantial gender gap in political participation persists today. Across the globe, women accounted for only 17% of members of parliament in 2009, up from 10% in 1995. In India, rural women are 34% less likely to make claims on local governments than men and in 2014 only 11% of members of parliament were women. In January of 2016, I conducted qualitative scoping of the political behaviors and social environments of women in rural India. This qualitative study was implemented in coordination with the NGO PRADAN - an NGO that mobilizes women in rural India into Self-Help Groups (SHGs), collectives of women that act as informal savings and credit institutions, and provides them with livelihoods training to improve their incomes through increased agricultural productivity. The scoping included interviews and meetings with PRADAN program officials and field staff at the grass roots as well as participant women.

These meetings generated some preliminary findings. First,

while the income generation achieved through participation in PRADAN's programs does bear deeply important consequences for women and household consumption, it is not clear that there it empowers women socially and in the community. Instead, SHGs act as drivers of change by providing women with a space to develop confidence and social ties with other women in their village and discuss common issues creating a strong network that can be leveraged for collective action. In addition to this qualitative fieldwork, I piloted a small survey of women, collecting information on their labor market activities, their economic security and independence, their use of existing government and non-government welfare schemes and development assistance, and their political behaviors and attitudes. Preliminary results from this pilot data highlight the persistent gender gap in political activity: 53% of men and only 15% of women report having attended a Gram Sabha (local council) meeting in the last year and over 60% of men report having contacted the Sarpanch (mayor) as compared to only 25% of women. For women, however, the percentage reporting having attended a Gram Sabha meeting rises to 31% for women who are members of SHG as compared to 11% for non-members and 50% of SHG members report having spoken to the Sarpanch as compared to only 20% of non-members. Additionally, respondents who received development assistance report greater political participation: 22% of respondents who had received government support to build their houses report having attended the Gram Sabha meeting as compared to only 13% of people who received no housing support.

This pilot data along with the quantitative fieldwork will be used to inform a larger scale survey project and ultimately a randomized control trial (RCT) seeking to better understand the binding constraints to women's political and economic participation.

Traditional Nepalese Architecture and Post-Earthquake Reconstruction

Summer Research in Kathmandu, Nepal

Haibei Peng, Graduate School of Design MA 2017



Structures to support old buildings

With the generous support from SAI Research Grant, I traveled through Nepal in May, 2016 for two weeks to conduct my thesis research on traditional Nepalese architecture and post- earthquake reconstruction in Kathmandu. During the two weeks I spent in Nepal, I traveled through Kathmandu, Pokhara and Chitwan national forest while talking to local residents, friends, foreign workers, volunteers and international organizations. Even though Nepal remains a poor country with bad infrastructure and is still recovering from the earthquake disaster, people here are all very friendly, welcoming and seem to share a happy attitude towards life and their country. Below are some of the most stimulating findings from my research. What I found the most interesting during my time in Nepal

is the housing typology of the traditional neighborhood in Kathmandu and particularly around Durbar Square. Walking down the narrow streets in the afternoon, food market and street vendors take over the already crowded streets. Pedestrians, bikes, cars and rickshaw all cramped close to each other. On two sides of the streets, there are many narrow and short doors leading into a dark hall way.

At first, I thought they are the entrances to private homes, then when I walked down one, I realized that after walking across the dark hallway while bending my back to avoid hitting my head, a big courtyard appears. Usually at the center of the courtyard is a small temple or statue, while surrounding it are many individual houses. I was told it used to be that one courtyard belonged to one big family, but with the development of the city during the past years, now the courtyards are usually divided up with different owners. Each building has a very small footprint because of the high land price. The buildings usually go up three to four stories, sometimes higher if the family needs more space. In many cases you can see clearly that the top floor was a recent addition. The narrow, short and dark tunnel leading from the busy street to the quiet courtyard is almost like a portal transforming your experience entirely. Within a courtyard, you can see kids playing and grandma walking around the Hindu statue to pray. It is the true local life.

Post-Earthquake From Durbar Square to residential homes, there are long wooden poles painted in yellow everywhere supporting the structures in danger. Piles of fallen structures and bricks still scatter everywhere. When asked about when/how the post-earthquake reconstruction is going to take place, no one I had talked to in Nepal seemed to be able to give an answer at all. At the Dunbar Square in Kathmandu next to the ruins, I found the conservation program office where I spoke to architect Amit Bajracharya and Gaurav Shrestha. Both of them have worked here since the earthquake trying to help with the rebuilt program by collaborating with the Office of Archeology and other international organizations. Gaurav told me that the process has been slow because of the lack of resources and because the government officials keep changing. They seem hopeful that the reconstruction will eventually take place. I met Toya Nath Subedi, a tour guide, at the Durbar Square, who knows some Chinese and was trying to talk to me and show me around to earn some money. When asked about the post-earthquake reconstruction, he shook his hand. He told me that the government initially told the people they will get some money to help rebuild their homes but it has not happened and probably will never happen. In terms of the historical sites, he felt heartbroken when they were destroyed because he has spent so much time around them growing up in the city. He said the government should have tried to re-stabilize the ancient structures with the help of technology a long time ago and there were international organizations who offered to help. However, because the government did not want their history to be “touched” by “foreigners”, it never

happened and as a result the earthquake easily destroyed majority of the historical sites. I also visited the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu and spoke to consultant Thomas Schrom there. He has lived and worked in Kathmandu for the past couple of decades. He spoke about some of the difficulties working on conservation projects in Nepal. He said that even though they get donations from the world, they have to get approval from the Nepalese government before they can work on the historical sites here. However, the local government still does not want to disclose many of the information and drawings because of their nationalism ideas and lack of trust.

Agriculture

Agriculture is an important part of Nepal's economy. Before I traveled to Nepal, I read about how it counted for on average about 60 percent of the GDP but farmers have limited access to improved seeds, new technologies and market opportunities. It wasn't until I was in Nepal traveling into the smaller villages when I understood why-- the infrastructure here is underdeveloped. The mountain roads connecting major cities are narrow and congested. For example, traveling between the two major cities Kathmandu and Pokhara takes at least 6-7 hours even though the distance in between is only 124 miles. Because of these reasons, seed-bank becomes particularly important for agriculture communities in Nepal so the local community can collect and store their seed resources. Currently, the ASIA Regional Agricultural Innovation Summit 2016 "Feed the Future" is having a session in Nepal to try to introduce new technology in Nepalese Agriculture.

International Responsibility

Nepal is known as the heaven for hikers. Many people may not know much about the country, but they certainly know about the peak, the tallest in the world, called Mount Everest. I visited the international mountain museum in Pokhara and was moved by people's effort to preserve the history and culture of mountains and mountaineering here. At the front of the main museum stands a statue to remember all the climbers who lost their lives here. I also met international Engineers who are also hikers working here in Nepal. One group I met has been trying to produce bio energy with the trash international hikers left behind at the last small village on the route for the Everest Mountain hike. When I spoke to them, they were very passionate about the project and the positive impact of it. They told me that they work for a big engineering company in the US and this has been their pro bono project for the past few years. They have gotten the local government's approval and are trying to train a few local people to be able to operate the bio energy facility they are setting up. This will allow the local to turn waste hikers left behind into power they can use to make their life better and more convenient. The hospitality of people in Nepal is respected and appreciated by all the international visitors.

Understanding Inefficiencies in India's Agricultural Markets

Wintersession Research in Karnataka, India

Vyasan Radhakrishnan, Harvard Kennedy School MPA/ID 2016



Agricultural market in Karnataka

“India has not one, not 29 but thousands of agricultural markets,” declares India’s Economic Survey 2015-16. Purchase and sale of agricultural commodities are regulated by Agricultural Product Committee Acts enacted by the 29 different State Governments in the country. In a bid to unify the more than 2400 principal regulated markets and 4800 sub-market yards the Government of India launched the National Agricultural Market Scheme as a pilot in 585 different agricultural markets over a 3-year period. The policy of unification of agricultural market has however been carried out by the Karnataka Government by forming the Rashtriya electronic Market Scheme since Feb 2014. This is also a work in progress. By December 2015, 100 of the 157 primary agricultural markets in the state have been unified using an electronic platform.

One of the main reforms brought in was to allow for a single traders’ license that traders can use to buy agricultural commodities across the markets in the state. In the current system only local traders can buy from the markets. By allowing non-local traders to buy from markets and providing information about prices to farmers there are positive efficiency gains due to both information and increased competition among buyers. To look into the sequencing of these reforms in a bid towards understanding the manner in which the national initiative should be paced, I visited four agricultural markets in Karnataka in Dec 2015 and January 2016. These were Chitradurga, Shimoga, Tumkur and Chamaraj Nagar markets.

In our visit to the Chamarajanagar APMC- a district in

South-western Karnataka, we realised how crucial the issue of quality was. Chamarajanagar APMC was one of the first 3 markets that were brought under the rubric of the ReMS. The need for having a quality assessing mechanism is as important as the issue of a unified license. It is in this context that the government introduced assaying and quality measurement alongside the proposal of a single license system. At the CRNagar APMC the equipment for assaying and checking quality were in place. However, it seemed to be in disuse. On inquiring, we realized that there was resistance from the farmers. The farmers perceived that analyzing the cur cumin content (which is the main ingredient in turmeric) and making them available as public information resulted in a reduction in realized prices for them. This therefore led to the abandonment of the assaying facility and scheme that was started and had taken off with gusto. The resistance from farmers led to the disuse of the assaying facilities that were installed in the C.R. Nagar APMC. The official however cautioned that these perceptions of the farmers may not have been spontaneous or based on the ground reality. He mentioned the possibility of an orchestrated resistance to the scheme partly from other market participants like the traders or the commission agents. Considering all these aspects the awareness program planned by the government is expected to bring in reduce the resistance to the quality measurement and assaying components of the assaying scheme.

In the other markets that we visited namely Chitradurga, Shimoga and Tumkur APMCs, the status of the assaying system was at varying levels of implementation. In Shimoga, where the primary commodity that was being traded was arecanut, the equipment for assaying had just been received. The equipment was shown to us and they assured us that the assaying facility would be used once the tendering formalities are over. In Chitradurga APMC, where the main traded commodities were groundnut, maize, sunflower and cotton we were told that the assaying facilities were yet to be received. In Tumkur market which dealt mostly in tamarind and soap nut the assaying facilities were not available and the facilities were therefore not in use.

The ReMS software that is used has a column for indicating the quality of the crops in question. This facility is crucial as the traders who are not locally available can use the objective measures of quality like moisture content, the composition of the main chemicals etc. to provide baseline criteria for ensuring that the bids are placed with an eye on quality of the produce. However, in all the markets that we visited the implementation of the said reform was non-existent or in their early stages of implementation.

Lessons for NAMS

- Start the process of unification by small baby steps. Introducing an electronic platform for tendering within the local jurisdiction should be initiated so that all market participants get comfortable handling the new technology

- To ensure that all the stake holders in the marketing system are on board an antagonistic attitude to any one group should not be take. Depending on the context and the state, the APMCs, the commission agents are vilified. In the initial stages it is important to get as wide an acceptance as is possible.

- Reforms in the warehousing and storage facilities should be complementary to the efforts at unification of markets. Absent reforms in this area the actualization of a unified national agricultural market may not become a reality

- Since agriculture is a state subject a lot of groundwork needs to be done by individual state governments. As a related issue, the reforms will have a greater probability of success if the government of India pilots the project in states that are willing to go the extra mile in the unification process. States like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh etc. have already shown willingness to unify markets. A state-wide unification of markets should precede a pan-India outlook.

- Farmers have to buy in to the reforms. As agricultural as a sector is riddled with disincentives the government will have to convince the farmers of the intention of the reforms. For example the practice of loan waiver, creates negative incentives that extend to reluctance on the part of the farmer to opt-in for a bank account credit system. These contradictions will have to be addressed before there is an active take up of the reform initiatives.

Jousting Over Jurisdiction: Sovereignty and International Law in Colonial South Asia, c. 1858-1947

Summer Research in New Delhi, India
Priyasha Saksena, Harvard Law School SJD



India National Archives

I am interested in unpacking the relationship between international law and empire. The existence of empires in a world of international law has always been a bit of a puzzle, since international law is supposed to be based on ideas of equality, sovereignty and justice. In my dissertation, I examine debates around the legal status of the princely states of colonial South Asia (entities that were not under British rule, but not wholly independent either) to suggest that the idea of sovereignty was a site of social and political struggle between the British and the South Asians.

Thanks to the generous support of the South Asia Institute, I spent the summer archive hopping in India, gathering a range of material on a variety of issues. In 2015-16, I had spent some time conducting archival research in the Asian and African Studies collections at the British Library in London (which house the India Office Records), and had found material on British official arguments and responses in the sovereignty debates. This summer, I planned to back up my prior research with material from Indian archives to supplement my analysis on the arguments made by South Asians, by looking at petitions and letters sent by

Indian princes and their officials, internal documents of the Chamber of Princes, and private papers of a number of influential civil servants who served in the princely states. In New Delhi, I spent time both at the National Archives of India and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. At the National Archives, I focused on material relating to three main issues – jurisdiction over European British subjects in the princely states, submissions and opinions on the Butler Committee (that had been set up to opine on the legal status of the princely states), and submissions and opinions on the proposed federation between British India and the princely states (a venture that ultimately failed to come to fruition). I found extensive notes prepared and submitted by various princely states (including Patiala, Bhopal, Mysore, Travancore and Baroda) on all three issues. At Nehru Memorial, I focused on the private papers of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru (a British Indian lawyer who frequently advised a number of the princely states) and Sir Mirza Ismail (the diwan of Mysore and Hyderabad). However, my most interesting find was a collection titled “Federal Papers,” a set of two volumes that contained documents intended for private circulation among the members of the Chamber of Princes. They included a number of legal opinions and reports of various sub-committees set up by the Chamber of Princes on the proposed federation, and provide a valuable insight into the manner in which the princes and their advisers conceptualized sovereignty and their arguments on the legal status of the princely states.

I also spent time at the regional office of the National Archives of India in Bhopal. Although much of their material relates to the erstwhile Bhopal State, they also have a section on the Chamber of Princes on account of the chancellorship of the erstwhile Nawab of Bhopal. The Bhopal office is not a heavily visited one; as the Assistant Director of the Archives told me, they have a significant amount of untapped information in their records. Their holdings did not disappoint; I found them to be a rich source of memos and opinions (mainly for private and internal circulation) by advisers to the princely states on their legal and constitutional status, particularly with reference to the position of the princely states in relation to federation.

Archival work can sometimes be dispiriting since it involves a lot of time spent digging around, often with little to show for results. But, as I saw time and again this summer, nothing can quite match the thrill of stumbling across a century-old document filled with often-juicy details of a disputed claim of a princely state, and the numerous legal arguments deployed by princely state advisers in support of their clients. Much of the material in my dissertation is based on such findings, and I am grateful to the South Asia Institute for supporting my work.

Electricity Crisis in Nepal

Wintersession Research in Nepal

Anne Shrestha, Harvard Kennedy School MPA/ID 2016



Going home this time was difficult but important. Difficult because the state of Nepal –post-earthquake, amidst a worsening trade blockade that has already lasted four months –was palpably crippled and painful to acknowledge, especially considering the government’s woeful response to both the disasters- the natural one and the one of its own long time making. Important because it made for a good time to search for answers and speak with experts regarding my paper on failures in hydropower development and the electricity crisis in Nepal. But more importantly experiencing this allowed me to be on the inside of the crisis; it added weight to my understanding in ways that no amount of news could.

The severity of the electricity crisis is currently amplified by the fuel shortage. With LPG cooking gas only available to the politically connected, people have restored to electric cookers. But with over 15 hours of power cuts every day, it’s hard to bypass the problem. So, even urban households have restored to cooking with firewood. Mine is no exception. I had been told about this before I arrived but it only hit me when I realized that our brick and mortar house had acquired the smell of a logwood cabin. Having worked in the U.S. electricity sector, I know firsthand that many of the thousands of American power plants each have generation capacity greater than the total estimated demand of Nepal! It is regrettable to think that the magnitude of this crisis could have been avoided with only one large hydropower plant. So

this winter, I shook off some frustration and set out to hear from experts in hydropower about why we have reached this point as a nation.

My goal was to learn why so many projects had been stalled in the pipeline and what contractual weaknesses could enable deals to be honored and plans executed. I was able to learn about these from several government officials at the Investment Board, the National Planning Commission, a lawyer who helped draft hydropower policies, activists and environmental scientists from environmental NGOs and the Nepal Electricity Authority as well as from one of the lead private developers (IPPAN, Chilime) in the industry. I was able to string pieces of stories and perspectives together and understand the different binding constraints. In summary, I found that highly underestimated demand is at the top of the several layers of constraints. The next is transmission, the financial health of the only utility in the country and then time-inconsistency problems in PPP contracts. Underlying all this, the political volatility has been posing significant hurdles to the development of the sector.

But more importantly, I was able to get a deeper understanding of the political divide and regional geopolitics. I learned that there is a fundamental disagreement about the feasibility of a hydro-led development although the discourse that has dominated popular perceptions and the media is the one that paints a far too easy and optimistic picture of the possibilities of a fast-track hydro-led development. However, the complications inherent in the dominant discourse are evident in the two decades of failed attempts. They highlight the importance of i) rethinking why, how, when and for whom hydro resources should be developed as a country and as a region, ii) to understand issues of ownership versus rights of a river basin that flows through three countries, and ii) integrated development using collective expertise and thoughtful attention of economists, engineers, environment and climate scientists, agriculture and power experts, hydro-diplomats as well as policy makers.

I might have come back with more questions than answers but this trip has added a crucial contextual dimension that will be central to my analysis and I thank SAI for helping me.

Business Process Outsourcing and Urban Transformation in India and the Philippines

Summer Research in Bangalore, Ahmedabad, India
Justin Stern, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences PhD 2018



Fieldwork during summer term 2016 supported by the South Asia Institute has played an important role in the development of my academic study. In addition to making key connections with business leaders and other professionals in my field, my time in India helped me develop the India component or “case” of my dissertation project. Although I initially expected to add Delhi and/or Hyderabad as a case study in my dissertation prospectus, I developed a particular interest in Bangalore over the summer. This brief account of my time abroad considers some of the different points of focus during my time in the field and how my dissertation proposal has evolved since my visit. My dissertation project is focused on how the rapid growth of the so-called business process outsourcing (BPO) industry is driving a new paradigm in urban development in major cities in South and Southeast Asia. Having conducted preliminary fieldwork in Manila, Philippines, over winter term 2015-2016, I devoted summer 2016 to developing the India component of my dissertation prospectus. Originally, I planned to spend my summer in Delhi and Hyderabad, and I expected I would select one of those two cities as a comparative case for my dissertation project. However, during my time in India I grew especially curious about a specific project in Ahmedabad and urban development in Bangalore more generally, which encouraged me to visit each city during my time in the region. Ultimately, I found Bangalore to be the most compelling Indian city I visited to add as a case in my dissertation project.

In Ahmedabad, I focused my site visits and interviews on Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT), in addition to visiting a handful of smaller technology parks across Gujarat. Additionally, I took an architectural tour of the Louis Kahn-designed Indian Institute of Technology, and collected material there that I hope will be useful for a future side-project that looks at architectural modernism in South Asia. My decision to visit GIFT stems from the Modi government’s decision to fast track the project, as well as the unique designation of GIFT as India’s only government-sanctioned International Financial Services Center (IFSC). This is particularly interesting considering that the Special Economic Zone is no longer all that special or unique in the Indian landscape, now that there are 186 operational SEZs in India with dozens more in the development pipeline. The most productive segment of my time in Gujarat was a site visit to GIFT City, including a tour of the project’s physical plant including an automated waste collection facility, cooling plant, “66 Kv” Control Room, and the Gift Power Company. The sheer ambition and scale of the project was very impressive and will factor in to my dissertation project and potential future research.

In Bangalore, I divided my time between Outer Ring Road and Whitefield. The sheer number of gated, privately owned and operated office parks spread across the city was overwhelming, and I spent my first week in Bangalore simply getting a sense of the geography of corporate office parks in the metro area. Although virtually all of these projects shared common characteristics, I was particularly interested in how some of the more recent office parks have a more “mixed-use” character and have integrated upscale and middle-tier housing, hotels, parks, meeting centers, and publically accessible shopping malls, into what are otherwise gated office parks. One of my more interesting site visits was at Ascendas International Tech Park in Whitefield, which is the oldest technology park in Bangalore. When one looks beyond the tacky building names (“Discoverer”, “Voyager”, “Creator”, “Explorer”, etc.), there are a number of innovative planning features to the site that respond to questions such as adequate parking, after-hours transportation, and security.

Ultimately, I found my trip to be successful and I am confident that Bangalore will provide a rich case for me to compare with Manila in my dissertation. I hope to visit Bangalore for a more extended visit next academic year.

Harvard Development Initiative

Wintersession Research in Delhi, Ranchi, Mumbai India
Raj Vatsa, Harvard College 2018

It is the year 2016, and we live in the midst of a plethora of disruptive forces that hinder our collective pursuit of a future of peace, security, and wellness. Despite immense strides and efforts at trans-national collaborations being made to tackle them, a global reality of unsettling injustices and inequities persists. It is the year 2016, and staring out at the slums of Dharavi in Mumbai, India, I pondered these very thoughts. For many years, the fields of international development and global health have captivated me. Having been raised in a family that upholds service as a central tenet, I have often felt an intense calling to engage in activities and pursuits that strive to care for and enhance the well-being of the most marginalized and neglected populations in our world. At the same time, I have developed a budding passion for the spheres of social entrepreneurship and frugal innovation, fields that are slowly making their way into developing communities.

In August 2015, I had the unique opportunity to travel to Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania to observe sustainable projects being implemented by the Cambridge Development Initiative, a student-driven initiative focused on empowering local change-makers and tackling some of the most pressing development challenges in the areas of health, education, engineering, and entrepreneurship. Inspired by the progress the students from Cambridge were able to make in just two years, two of my peers – Neil Davey '18 and Pranay Nadella '18 – and I were motivated to launch a sister initiative at Harvard University.

After an extensive series of meetings with faculty and administrators at Harvard to refine our model of student-to-student collaboration and project co-creation, Neil, Pranay, and I identified India as the location of our endeavors. Thus, in January 2016, we traveled to cities across India for three weeks to conduct preliminary field research on the context of frugal innovation and development challenges in urban and rural communities while fostering connections with local university students, government ministries, and potential partner NGOs.

Despite visiting South Asia regularly as a child, so many of the preconceived notions and beliefs I held about development in India were challenged on the trip. For the first time, I consciously strove to make sense of the context of development from the perspective of the marginalized and underserved. No textbook research or development index could do justice to the experience of engaging directly with community members and observing challenges on the

ground. In many ways, my research trip this past January was one of the most enlightening experiences of my life. It pointed to key BOP challenges in the areas of health and education, which Neil, Pranay, and I ultimately identified as the focus areas of our future endeavors.

Our journey started in Mumbai, where we were hosted by IIT Bombay for four days. After meeting with several professors and social impact student groups on campus, we also had an opportunity to visit slum communities in Dharavi with the NGO Sneha, which specializes in maternal and child health. In Delhi and Bangalore, we then engaged in field visits with health and education NGOs across the city, including Save the Children, Vidya, the HEAL Foundation, Pratham, the Delhi Brotherhood Society, and Kailash Satyarthi's Bachpan Bachao Andolan. We even had an opportunity to visit rural communities in Ranchi alongside the NGO Ekal Vidyalaya. After synthesizing the findings from our field visits, we then met with various university students across the country to discuss potential collaborations for summer projects. Inspired by the positive response we received from our peers at Ashoka University, the Delhi School of Social Work, and Maulana Azad Medical College, we are hopeful that with a successful Spring 2016 recruitment process at Harvard, our initiative will be up and running in Summer 2016.

Going forward, we will be finalizing collaborations with our peer institutions and partner NGOs. Based on our model to co-create development solutions with local students, we are formalizing a system to stay in touch with and work alongside our Indian peers over the coming months. Neil, Pranay, and I are so inspired by our winter session trip this past January and cannot wait to see how our research project develops in the coming years.

Nepal Earthquake Relief Effort Data Usage Narrative

Wintersession Research in Kathmandu, Nepal
Austin Wu and Patrick Xu, Harvard College 2016



Temple in Bhaktapur, Darbar Square, Kathmandu

As statistics students, we are naturally drawn to data, numbers, and analysis. Following a devastating earthquake in Nepal in the spring of 2015, we came across an article which revealed the massive inefficiency of the Red Cross in Haiti and warned of similar wastefulness in Nepal. This led us to begin thinking about how data can potentially be used to optimize the delivery of relief aid. However, once we traveled to Nepal, we learned an important lesson in data analysis: the contexts behind the data, including the events which generate it, are just as important, if not more important, than the data itself. The following presents some of the insights gained from our trip in South Asia in January, 2016.

At 11:56 AM, on April 25, 2015, Nepal was struck by an earthquake of magnitude 7.8, followed by a magnitude 7.3 aftershock just three weeks later. The death count from these two earthquakes and the number of secondary hazards that followed, primarily landslides, has been estimated by the government to be around 10,000, although data from Nepal's more rural regions is widely considered inaccurate. Many thousands more were physically injured or struggled with mental health issues after this deeply traumatic experience.

We arrived in South Asia hoping to talk to locals about their experiences surrounding all three stages of disaster: preparation, destruction, and recovery. We hoped to understand the perspective of the everyday citizens, relief organizations including international NGOs, and government agencies charged with providing support in disaster

situations.

After spending a few days in New Delhi, we moved to Kathmandu, Nepal's earthquake ravaged capital. According to many people we met, Nepal is currently in one of the most tumultuous times in its young history. While the earthquake had struck 8 months previously, the roads were still littered with rubble and many people still inhabited crack-riddled brick structures. Winter was settling in, and it was heartbreaking to see that thousands of Kathmandu's citizens still lived in makeshift corrugated tin roof shelters or even worse, plastic tarp tents, heating themselves with firewood on the streets. It certainly did not help that Nepal as a whole was experiencing a severe fuel shortage, the result of blockades in the southern part of the country because of disagreements over Nepal's new constitution. City-wide blackouts were also common and we usually had electricity for less than 8 hours a day.

The sad reality, made worse by winter, is that many Nepalis have realized that they cannot rely on the government or NGOs for relief. Many have simply moved on with their lives, a testament to the resilience of the people. In fact, during our interviews, "resilient" was the most popular adjective most used to describe the people of Nepal. We saw this as a double edged sword: while the Nepalis' resilience is helping them through the hardest of times, it also means that they often readily accept the status quo of inefficient governance without demanding change.

We spent our first week working with Local Interventions Group (LIG) and Accountability Labs (AL), two separate organizations that had partnered together to work on anti-corruption and government accountability tracking. For the last few months, they had been administering a nationwide survey with the support of Ground Truth Solutions, an international accountability group with experience in Sierra Leone and Haiti. We lent our analytical skills to the team, providing statistical summaries of the survey results and producing trend analysis of how the situation has changed over the last few months after relief workers arrived in Nepal. Our final deliverable was a regression model that proposed various factors which are the most highly correlated with overall satisfaction - in other words, we identified which government and NGO interventions were producing real results from the perspective of earthquake victims. Over the next couple weeks, we spoke with numerous locals and interviewed representatives from local and international organizations.

The following sections describe what we have learned from these invaluable conversations with some important stakeholders in disaster response and relief. In each section, we attempt to relay stories that we have heard and insights that we have gleaned, both specific to the Nepal earthquakes and to relief work in general.

During our first week in Kathmandu, we partnered with Local Interventions Group and Accountability Labs, run by Pranav Budhathoki and Narayan Adhikiri respectively, for a data project. The two organizations partner in administering surveys in the 14 most affected districts after the earthquake.

At a high level, it was fascinating to be able to actually gauge citizen sentiment towards disaster relief. From our analysis, we began to understand the potential of data to provide a backbone for future discussions and arguments. Without real numbers and hard data, it is easy for issues to become partisan, especially in a country as deeply politicized as Nepal. Furthermore, data analysis and the presentation of open data are tactics that people can use to enhance transparency and stifle corruption. Because financial reports and spending, as well as results from government programs, can be clearly visualized and understood, it holds government officials and other spenders accountable for their promises.

One obvious objection that is raised about “open data” is the lack of data literacy. Like most outsiders to the region, we had the impression that South Asia, and Nepal in particular, lacked technological competence, let alone an ability to manipulate data and perform data analysis. Speaking with technology-centric NGOs, particularly Kathmandu Living Labs (KLL), has made it clear that this is not necessarily the case. In the last decade, young people have embraced mobile and computer technologies with open arms. Like in more developed western countries, information technology (IT) and computer science (CS) courses are rapidly becoming the most popular subjects in Nepal’s for-profit university system.

As we learned more about the “industry” of disaster relief, we began to visualize disaster response and relief as a supply and demand problem, yet a difficult one to optimize due to lack of information. This is not to trivialize the emotional and humanitarian component of disaster relief, but it is very important to balance the availability and need for financial and material assistance. For example, immediately after the earthquake, billions of dollars in cash and relief items flooded in and were meant to be distributed to earthquake victims scattered throughout the country. With proper data about victims, including their location and primary needs, the demand for assistance can be properly matched by the supply of relief aid. Unfortunately, in Nepal, these data were late to arrive or simply don’t exist, and attempts to deliver supplies were complicated by treacherous terrain. A significant portion of Nepal’s rural population lives in areas inaccessible by cars, so it is important to be prepared if relief organizations must commit resources to days long hikes, or even helicopter flights in extreme cases, to reach these places.

The aforementioned model is vastly simplified however, and there are many caveats. First, the simple tracking of both demand and supply side of data is extremely difficult. From the supply side standpoint, it is very hard for a

governing body to track all the aid that comes into the country, especially if small organizations or individual actors are acting independently from larger organizations and government institutions. We’ve heard this story many times, where good-hearted people and organizations who want to help, purchased relief items and flew to Nepal with no real plan, heading only to areas easily accessible from Kathmandu before quickly returning home. Some made the relevant authorities known of their plans, but many did not, making it very difficult to track all the aid that was flowing into the country.

Lack of internet penetration is the primary obstacle for capturing information from the demand side. KLL was able to crowd source responses from people needing help, and created QuakeMap, a web platform that geo-tagged and visualized where and what people needed. Since most affected people lacked Internet access, many reported their needs through SMS text messages or called into a hotline managed by volunteers, who entered victims’ needs on their behalf. But QuakeMap was built in reaction to the earthquake, and it took over a week to start collecting data, spreading only by word of mouth. But time is precious in these catastrophes. A scaled-up system pre-deployed and taught to local administrators for widespread use, might be able to collect demand side data more quickly.

NGOs, International Donors & Volunteers, and their Stories
Even before the earthquake struck Nepal, there were innumerable NGOs operating in Nepal, addressing the full range of human development and environmental issues; but immediately after the earthquake, most NGOs transitioned into a relief supply delivery and emergency aid role.

While we like to think that NGOs operate completely altruistically, we have already mentioned that not all NGOs do good. Many are vehicles for money laundering and embezzling, organizations that exist to grow personal wealth, rather than to help others. Thus, accountability and transparency with NGOs is incredibly important. Many of the organizations that we’ve worked with emphasize complete financial transparency, as they meticulously track their financials and will reveal it to anyone who asks.

An issue that comes to light from the lack of accountability of NGOs is that international donors who have little knowledge of the legitimacy of organizations may donate to organizations that may not be using their money in a proper way. Sadly, of the \$4+ billion that flowed in Nepal, countless funds were undoubtedly lost to corrupt NGOs capitalizing on a horrific situation to grow personal wealth. In addition to corruption, human resources is complex issue faced by and perpetrated by many NGOs. From what we have gathered from our interviews, these issues are universal in NGO culture, but particularly rampant throughout Nepal.

We found that NGOs could be readily distinguished as local

organizations or international NGOs (INGOs). Originally we did not anticipate the importance of local organizations in disaster relief, but our conversations revealed their integral and diverse roles. One heartwarming story we heard is that of Nepal's National Cycling Team, which was biking on the day of the earthquake and quickly rushed to assist affected people in a nearby area. They realized they could reach a location other organizations could not, because they travelled off-road on their bicycles. It was later reported that they generated tens of thousands of dollars of funding and continued to use their special talents to reach disaster stricken areas.

Another extremely important issue, which is frequently ignored, while delivering aid is, understanding of local culture. This is mostly problematic when INGOs come into a country to help without the proper context and background. Two relevant stories exemplify this disconnect. For example, In Nepal, there is a large difference between households and families, as multiple families live in a given household. This is a result of a particular tradition in Nepal, where a son will live with his parents until they pass away. Yet, when attempting to deliver corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) sheets for building homes, organizations made the mistake of equating families and households. Because the average family size in Nepal is much smaller than the average household size, the organizations delivered far fewer sheets to each household than are required. In addition to the lack of sufficient materials, this has also created the unintended consequence of the explosion of households in some districts. Citizens are learning that aid is distributed by households rather than families, so if they split families up, they can collectively receive more aid; thus many families have separated.

One of the saddest stories we came across is that organizations, in an attempt to craft disaster preparedness protocols, educated citizens to hide under tables to seek protection during earthquakes. These drills were adapted from Western countries, where this technique works well. But in Nepal, many houses are built so that ceilings and walls will fall inwards during earthquakes. Because many of the ceilings and walls are cement, people were crushed to death when the tables that people hid under collapsed under the weight of the debris. Many disaster preparedness techniques and procedures in Nepal have been taken from India and Western agencies, but it is clear that they need to be adapted to unique Nepali conditions.

NGOs and INGOs undoubtedly have a crucial role to play in disaster relief, as they are incredible at generating funding from donors, both at an individual and institutional scale, and transporting volunteers to countries to disseminate aid. They are far from perfect, however, and from the aforementioned examples, it is apparent that there is still much room for improvement.

Before we arrived in Nepal, we only had a vague idea of

the media's role in the disaster response situation, but after our interviews, its role has become much more evident. Directly after the earthquake, rumors spread quickly, ranging from reasonable to farfetched. In hectic, post-disaster situations, the media can be a source of truth to help calm the citizenship. This is helpful not only in dispelling rumors that have little veracity, but also in providing information to citizens about potential secondary hazards, entitlements that citizens deserve, and developments in the news.

The media can also serve as a check for both the government and NGOs, which is incredibly important in a country where both are largely seen as corrupt. It is no surprise that social media also has played a role in connecting communities and helping to disseminate information rapidly. Facebook is incredibly popular for citizens with internet access, and following the earthquake, many people used Facebook to communicate with family and friends across the country and around the world.

The consensus among everyone we've talked to is that the government should be the primary coordinator of relief. The United Nations has established what is called the cluster system, where organizations working on like-minded missions, such as hygiene, education, and child protection, meet on some periodic basis to discuss their projects and trade best practices. The cluster heads are government officials, while the humanitarian cluster coordinators come from the United Nations. Thus, ideally the government can direct aid. But in such a hectic situation as with Nepal, and with the limited bandwidth of the government, it seems that the government was not as strong as it should have been.

If the government is able to control all relevant parties, and this seems nearly impossible, then it can properly direct organizations to reduce duplication and increase the number of people helped. Although there is undoubtedly a bottleneck in needing to run everything by the government, the trade-off seems worth it. The government can also push international organizations to understand the culture of the people that they may be unfamiliar with. As mentioned earlier, it's crucial to understand, from a cultural standpoint, the people that you're helping.

In almost all aspects, Nepal was not prepared for the 2015 earthquake; according to the people we talked to, while almost everyone was aware of the historic 1934 Nepal-Bihar earthquake, nearly no one actually had a personal earthquake contingency plan and was subsequently caught off guard. And although there have historically been disaster management policies, no centralized government agency took control to provide a unified response. As NGOs poured in, the largely autonomous and publicly respected Nepalese Armed Forces played a crucial role in providing emergency services.

To learn how other South Asian governments deal with

disaster preparedness, we met with the National Disaster Management Authority in New Delhi, India, which specializes in disaster preparedness. During our meeting, Mr. Nawal Prakash relayed to us one particular success story: in 2007, a typhoon swept through India and killed over ten thousand people; recently, a typhoon of similar severity and location of landfall struck, but killed fewer than one hundred people because of proper monitoring and enhanced warning and evacuation techniques.

While it is nearly impossible to monitor impending earthquakes like one watches an incoming weather system, there are certain mechanisms that can give advance warnings - for example in Japan, earthquake sirens can alert the entire country in seconds after detecting seismic activity hundreds of kilometers away, giving citizens a crucial few seconds to run outside. It is important for all stakeholders, not just the government, to prepare for disaster.

We came to India and Nepal with a relatively vague research question and little understanding of what to expect from our time here, but we have left with a much better understanding of the unique role played by citizens, NGOs, the media, and the government in Nepal, following their catastrophic earthquake. While Nepal is a unique situation in several ways, particularly its difficult topography and very low human development index, we believe that lessons learned from Nepal are universal. When other disasters inevitably occur, we will monitor closely to see how our learning fit into this new narrative. To truly optimize disaster relief, more research will need to be conducted to simply provide a foundation on which this conversation of optimization can be had. We hope that the narratives we have depicted and the lessons we have learned will be a small part of this foundation.

The weeks have been emotional, moving, and trying, but we are both incredibly appreciative to have been able to have this experience. We are incredibly grateful to all those that participated in our interviews and helped us with our research. We are also incredibly grateful to both the South Asia Institute and the Asia Center for funding this trip -- without all of the generosity of these aforementioned groups, none of this would have been possible.

Analysis of Indian Mothers' Protective Factors on Child's Oral and Nutritional Health

Winter Research in Mumbai, India

Hannah Yoo, Harvard School of Dental Medicine DDM

This winter, I had the opportunity to travel to India to conduct research on the oral and nutritional health of women and children in the slums of Mumbai. I worked with an organization based at UC Berkeley called India Smiles, an innovative and low-cost community-based intervention that utilizes education and prevention methods to improve the oral health and nutrition of children age 0-6 in the greater Mumbai and Tamil Nadu, areas of India. We partnered with two NGOs: Foundation for Mother and Child Health in Daboli Ghat and Powai and Reality Gives in Dharavi. At each NGO, we trained community health workers on the importance of oral health education and practical preventative measures that Indian mothers could use to improve the health of both themselves and their children. The following day we held all-day oral health camps that consisted of interviewing the mothers on their knowledge of oral and nutritional health, socioeconomic status, and other protective factors. In addition, we conducted oral health exams on children, applied fluoride varnish to children, and provided free toothbrushes and toothpaste. Through this experience, I learned to practice cross-cultural compassionate care, learn about a broken health-care system, and gain an understanding of a complex yet beautiful country.

Prior to this trip, I had never visited a third world country and didn't know what to expect. What I found most shocking was the huge disparity between rich and poor. It was hard to believe that huge slums and shanty towns could exist next to luxury apartment complexes and extravagant shopping malls. One of the slums we worked in was in Dharavi which is considered to be one of the largest slums in the world. Most of the homes in the slum did not have running water or toilets. Things that I took for granted in America were luxuries here.

Another shocking surprise was the ease of access to unhealthy foods in India. Within slums, it's hard to find a school or doctor's office but small snack stands with cheap, unhealthy snacks were everywhere. Healthy food options like fresh fruits and vegetables are nowhere to be seen in slums; outside of the slums, fruits and vegetables cost significantly more. In addition, because of the poor water quality, it is considered safer to purchase pre-packaged snacks. Moreover, betel nut -a carcinogen that causes oral cancer- are commonly sold on the side of streets. Thus, it is apparent how dietary

choices like this have led to a global epidemic of tooth decay, or "caries", and resultant mouth pain and malnutrition. At the oral health camps, we observed a high incidence of caries in children. It was very common to see children at the age of 5 to have over 10 caries who were significantly underweight.

Overall, this experience dramatically changed the way I think about global health. I used to believe global health consisted of a methodological approach to providing health services and education to underserved people. But this project showed me that "global health" is much more complex and requires the commitment and involvement of the people who understand the barriers to healthcare best, the local community. I am immensely grateful for the support of the Harvard South Asia Institute and the winter session research grant for this eye-opening experience.

Hidden Landscapes: Visualizing the Functional Presence of India's Stepwell

Summer Research in Gujarat, India

Sophie Maguire Graduate School of Design MLA 2017

David Zeilnicki, Graduate School of Design MLA 2017



Step-well temple

The 'step-wells' of India, known in Gujarati and Hindi as vavs and baolis, respectively, lie scattered throughout the landscape as monuments to the nation's age old battle with water management. With the simple notion of using India's regularly occurring monsoon season to collect excess fresh water for the drier months of the year coupled with the physical digging of earth to access groundwater, these structures were engineered, built, and decorated, taking on an appearance of anything but simple.

This body of fieldwork examines seven step-wells within the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan in both highly accessible urban locations and more difficult to reach rural areas. Each step-well that was visited is uniquely articulated in its physical manifestation; however, commonalities in their ritual spatiality, programmatic use, and infrastructural significance, establish them as an appropriate sampling of a larger collection of the typology.

At the time of construction, the step-wells operated beyond their sheer performativity aspect of water collection; the wells served as functional spaces of community (a site with relatively low discrimination), public space (monuments of civic life), health (offering a space to escape high temperatures), and trade (pit stops along major trade routes).

Step-wells have typically been studied for their architectural

significance, objectifying the well as a singular work of man power. This fieldwork, instead, focused on the immediate and larger contexts of the step-wells. The photographic, video, audio, and written documentation from the seven step-wells are recorded from a landscape architectural perspective.

This landscape-based approach to documenting the step-wells helped us understand the conditions within which the step-wells exist today; not just as relics of the past, but as sometimes vibrant spaces of community, other times reflections of broken social and political systems, or other times just simply forgotten. Once lying outside of the city's proper boundaries, many of the now 'urban' step-wells have been engulfed by nearby city centers, completely changing the context from which they were originally built in.

It is hard to know what the original contexts of these great structures were. However, it is perhaps of greater importance to acknowledge how they are or are not being used today. The step-wells that were documented and observed include a cross-section of sizes, locations, and current contexts in order to begin a catalogue for future study. Upon initial conversations with academics, practitioners, and journalists who have been doing research on step-wells, it became clear that there was a necessity for us to see, document, and study step-wells that had already been mapped. The complete lack of research done on step-wells from a landscape architecture perspective has left entire analyses out of the current conversation; questions of context became of primary importance. By adding to the already existing scholarship on known step-wells, we were able to juxtapose our landscape and contextual approach to the more object oriented architectural and archeological approach.



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