



Himalayan Climate & Science Institute

Mushroom Poisoning Prevention Program (MP3)

Project Need

Because of the economic turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented number of people across Nepal have been poisoned by toxic mushrooms as they have desperately turned to harvesting wild mushrooms to feed their families. Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population is now viewing this rise in deaths as a severe public health crisis.

In 2021, HCSI led a public health campaign to educate rural communities on how to avoid deadly mushroom poisonings and building the public health capacity needed for long-term mitigation of the problem. , under mycologist Dr. Shiva Devkota, co-chair of the HCSI Science Advisory Board.

Project Objective

HCSI seeks to continue the important and often overlooked work of:

- **Research for National Strategic Planning:** Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the scale of the poisoning crisis in Nepal, and identify the geographic locations/districts, communities, and age groups are most vulnerable to poisoning events in last 15 years (Year 2007 - 2022).
- **Develop Long-term Prevention Through Partnerships:** To develop regional capacity, HCSI will provide trainings to public health officials, Community Forestry Users Groups (CFUGs) and other Community based Organizations (CBOs) with the training needed to support communities indefinitely. HCSI will partner with schools, colleges and local educators to create locally-tailored anti-poisoning materials for local schools and to train teachers to implement it on a wide-scale. *(Combine with prior)*
- **Distribute Outreach Materials to Raise Awareness:** HCSI and trained partners will distribute intuitive, high-resolution posters (A2 Size, 200 GMS, Multicolors) of about 5,000 (Five Thousands) in numbers to educate rural and indigenous communities on which mushrooms must be avoided. HCSI will develop a weekly awareness program for four months (June-Sep 2023) to broadcast from the local FM stations, after identifying most poison prone areas in Nepal.

Project Results (2021-2022)

2021: During the Delta-fueled COVID crisis of the 2021 monsoon season, HCSI hosted community-wide training events on how to avoid poisonous *Amanita* and other species in at-risk, food-stressed Chepang communities in Lothar, Chitwan.

2022: HCSI organized an educational prevention program in multiple Meche communities, to educate residents and school-age children in Southeastern Nepal. The team distributed posters and were featured in televised interviews to raise awareness.

This program was made possible with support from the following:

- Idaho Mycological Society
- Mushroom Club of Georgia
- Gloria Myhre
- Cornelia Cho
- Mickey Myhre, M.D.
- Sam Landes
- Fungi Magazine





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Dr. Shiva Devkota is Nepal's leading mycologist. He serves as co-chair of the HCSI Science Advisory Board and as a research scientist at Global Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (GIIS), Nepal. He recently led the first mycological trek into the Everest region, which was featured by the Washington Post.

He received his M.Sc degree in Botany (Major Mycology) and M.A, in Anthropology from Tribhuvan University, Nepal and Ph.D. degree in Ecology and Evolution in 2017 from Bern University and Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL, Switzerland. Apart from his expertise in projects development and multi-pronged national/international partnership, his main research interest is understanding the ecology, sociology and conservation genetics of wild mushrooms, caterpillar fungus, lichens, and plants in the Himalayas.



Himalayan Climate & Science Institute (HCSI)

HCSI advances environmental science and economic development in the Nepali Himalayas, which are warming at three times the global rate. This warming threatens the livelihoods of Himalayan communities and imperils the primary source of water relied upon by over 20% of the world's population and the region's diverse ecosystems. HCSI seeks to help understand and mitigate this rapid change by advancing practical science that directly benefit of local communities and regional adaptation efforts. In 2021, HCSI provided partial support to execute the mycological digitizations project in Nepal conducted by GIIS, major supports obtained from the GBIF/BIFA. Six datasets are now available on the GBIF platform through HKH-BIF.

HCSI was founded by Sonam Jangbu Sherpa and Richard Silber, and Dr. Shiva Devkota leads the organization's scientific agenda as Co-Chair of the Science Advisory Board. The Himalayan Climate & Science Institute is registered as a nonprofit in the United States (EIN: 85-0899793).