

Md. Saiful Momen, a Master of Urban and Regional Planning student at University of Hawaii, was offered a GRC grant to do a summer internship at the Rural Urban Partnership Program (RUPP) in Nepal. During the six-week internship, he studied the economic and spatial linkages of the RUPP-sponsored small enterprises in and around the municipality of Butwal.

Saiful's interest in rural regional development in less developed countries and regions brought him to study rural urban linkages. The presence of interdependencies among towns and rural areas mean that rural regional development has to address them in some way: Ignore them, guide them, or take advantage of them. Recent thinking and practice does not ignore them any more. Rather the need for understanding them and their role in rural regional development is increasingly being recognized and studied. Such recent studies continue to improve understanding of linkages in different countries and regions in them, and the implication of the linkages for policy.

The increasing pace of globalization has added an important dimension to these linkages. The pattern of local productions has changed. Resources have been reallocated, and new directions and quantity in flow of goods, people and capital have emerged. Development planning in any region in world essentially needs to cater to this new reality.

The considerable number of programs and projects that have been taken around the world on this theme, therefore, deserve interest. RUPP being one such program offered valuable understanding of rural urban linkages and how effective a policy tool they promise to be.

Consequently, Saiful's internship was seen by GRC to be an opportunity for contributing to this promising area in rural regional development.

Saiful joined the Rural Urban Partnership Program headquarters in Kathmandu on May 22. After a week he started his study in Butwal. His study took him to the rural markets and households in and around the municipality. Local interpreters helped with interview of entrepreneurs and their input suppliers and output buyers. Nevertheless, he had an opportunity to hone his Nepalese that he said he crammed before leaving for Nepal.

The study, though constrained by time and resources, was an excellent opportunity to explore the rural urban linkages in a comparatively less globalized economy and the impact of RUPP's contribution on them. "I enjoyed the experience, it did not quash the cynic in me completely, still I liked the Program, and enjoyed what I learnt," said Saiful, "and liked it as much the opportunity to visit the birth place of Lord Buddha, which was in the same district as my workplace."