For my Fulbright U.S. Student grant, I travelled to an area of Nepal that many locals and scholars alike call “the most remote district of Nepal.” Nestled high in the Himalayas, the villages in Humla District lie between 9,000 - 12,500 feet, and are not connected to the rest of the country by roads. Humla is both ethnically and linguistically split as Nepali-speaking Hindus live in the south, while Tibetan-speaking Buddhists live in the north. The traditional diet of the ethnic Tibetans in Humla consists of local grains such as barley and buckwheat, a few roots and tubers such as the potato and daikon radish, and a few high volume of yak butter tea. Given their nutrient-dense diet, Humlis have never suffered from diet-related disease such as diabetes and hypertension.

All of this is changing. The first "dirt" road in Humla is currently under construction, and is providing easy access to a market in China (formerly Tibet) where Humlis are now purchasing enriched, processed foods such as ramen noodles, white flour and soda. The goal of my research was to assess how this new market access is impacting villagers’ health, specifically in terms of their food security, diet and nutrition, and subjective well-being.


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