



IMPACT

Waste Management in Kathmandu Valley

The Supreme Court ordered local government officials to stop dumping Kathmandu's waste along the Bagmati River.



Mountains of waste, haphazardly dumped, threaten natural resources and the quality of life for millions of people around the globe. E-LAW congratulates its partners in Nepal for achieving a Supreme Court victory that will help end poor waste disposal practices in the Kathmandu Valley.

Cities around the world struggle to manage waste generated by growing populations that consume, and discard, more each year. India and the Philippines are beginning to tackle the problem through enacting comprehensive solid waste management legislation that emphasizes community participation, waste reduction and recycling.

In Nepal, public interest environmental advocates are turning to the courts for local solutions to the global garbage crisis.

In 2000, E-LAW advocates at the Forum for Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public) filed a lawsuit against government agencies in the Kathmandu Valley for dumping garbage along the banks of the Bagmati River, a waterway central to Hindu life. The Bagmati winds through Kathmandu, a city of more than one million. With local landfills at capacity, the government allowed dumping along the river's banks. The waste piles were in groundwater recharge areas and threatened to contaminate Kathmandu's water supply.

Pro Public's lawsuit alleged that the dumping violated citizens' constitutional rights to a healthy environment as well as environmental laws which require government agencies to assess the environmental impacts of proposed waste disposal projects.



Students from a nearby school visit a dump site along the Bagmati River.

E-LAW U.S. provided Pro Public with comprehensive legal and scientific support, including case precedents from around the world in which courts intervened to stop poor waste disposal practices, and documentation of the toxic effects of heavy metals that leach from waste into groundwater.

On December 17, 2001, the Supreme Court of Nepal upheld citizens' rights to a healthy environment and ordered local government officials to stop dumping Kathmandu's waste along the Bagmati River. The court also ordered local government officials to study the environmental impacts of using a site for waste disposal — before dumping.

This victory protects the river and helps Pro Public achieve its goal of finding a comprehensive solution to solid waste management in the Kathmandu Valley.

For more information about this E-LAW Impact or Pro Public, contact the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide at elawus@elaw.org.