

## Project Significance

Pakistan is home to the world's largest irrigation network, an agriculture-dependent economy, and the world's second most "overstressed aquifer," the Indus Basin. Land ownership in Pakistan is among the most unequal in the world, and time-shares of irrigation water are allocated according to the size of land holdings. Exacerbating this fraught waterscape, in 2018, Pakistan declared a national water scarcity crisis.

Located in this fraught waterscape, my research encompasses the Punjab Irrigation bureaucracy; agriculturalists; and development practitioners. It directs attention to urgent questions of environmental justice and climate change. Pakistan is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change—thus, understanding the state infrastructures already in place and those that will be needed in a climate changing world is crucial and has immense contemporary urgency. Pakistan is one of the top water borrowers at the World Bank. This particular AIPS grant was used to understand why a specific World Bank project failed and how Irrigation officials make sense of that failure. The project set up farmer organizations in the Punjab and was rolled out as a decentralization measure with a total cost of \$ 785 million. Not only does my project contribute to anthropological literature, it also has profound public policy implications. Studies of failure, whether in policy or academic writing, are rare. My research makes the profound intervention of showing that the World Bank is implicated in the corruption it seeks to root out via the political economic regime of foreign aid.

Examining anti-corruption measures and a long history of World Bank intervention in the Irrigation Department, I conceptualized a "structure of feeling of devaluation" among lower-tier Irrigation officials. The research enabled by the AIPS grant led to multiple presentations and collaborations. For instance, I co-organized a Special Issue in the *Anthropology of Work Review* titled, "Between Work and Labor: Valuing Action in South Asia."