Summary from Opening Session

November 18, 2019

Adriana Hayes

* In Nepal, communities may not always experience large-scale shocks, but marginalized and vulnerable communities do experience smaller, idiosyncratic shocks that cause them to slide back into poverty.  A recent case study on poverty by the Overseas Development Institute concluded that, between 2003 and 2013, 25-30 percent of Nepali households fell into poverty for the first time or escaped but fell back into poverty as a result of a shock.
* Your contribution to the global resilience dialogue brings a perspective that is new and nuanced for our work in this region.  Greg Collins, Deputy Assistant Administrator for USAID’s Bureau for Food Security and USAID’s Resilience Coordinator, has emphasized that: “Nepal is leading the way for USAID on resilience work outside the Horn and Sahel and demonstrating the broad relevance of the concept.”
* Building resilience contributes to the Journey to Self-Reliance--a core philosophy of USAID.  If governments build the resilience of the marginalized and vulnerable and prevent poverty backsliding, then finite government resources can be put to more sustainable development purposes.
* USAID is bringing its food and non-food humanitarian assistance together under a new Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.  I believe that resilience and the work you are discussing over the next three days will make a great contribution to USAID as we stand-up this new bureau.

Tim Frankenburger

* In Nepal, assets and access to markets were found to have the strongest impact on recovery. However, household resilience capacity found to differ by caste, with higher castes possessing more assets and savings, and registering greater absorptive and adaptive capacity than lower castes. In Nepal, access to savings and increases in assets have consistent and direct association with improved well-being.
* Indicators for women’s empowerment (decision-making power, freedom of movement, income) showed significant gains, and likely helped mitigate impact of floods.
* Future resilience measurement efforts need to focus on gender dynamics, household decision-making, and gender-specific resilience capacities at multiple levels.
* In Asia as elsewhere, social capital is a key resilience capacity that helps households recover from idiosyncratic shocks and aids community recovery from covariate shocks.
* Migration to cities adds to growth of informal settlements. As a result, cities will become vulnerable to humanitarian disasters in future.

Asha Basnyat

* Nepal is a Hindu society historically but now it’s a secular country with freedom of religion. But the caste system, untouchability, and the exclusion of marginalized groups (Dalits), ethnic minorities and women comes from this religious history. Marginalization is a way of life and in “our culture,” rituals, social values, traditions and even the community constructs revolve around those norms and values of caste-based hierarchy
* In the present day, the urban -rural divide within each region is getting larger. People are moving to urban areas which were traditionally dominated by the wealthy and upper castes. This migration helps blur the boundaries of exclusion and untouchability though the poorer are finding it harder to survive in the urban areas and this has contributed to widen the gap between the rich and poor
* Food security is an indicator of social acceptance and status - if you have enough food year-round that means you have land and that gives you status and decision-making power in the community - especially if you are of a higher caste.
* As a rule of thumb, the lower castes/ the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, the Dalit/untouchable groups are not considered a part of the social capital