Environmental Disaster Risk, Political Conflict and Governance: A Case study from Nepal

Presentation for Fifth IIASA-DPRI Forum Integrated Disaster Management Risk Management

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Outline

- Overview of Nepal
- Environmental Problems
- Environmental Disaster Risk and political conflict in Nepal
- Political conflict and its impact in development
- Factor running economy
- Conclusion
Environmental Problem in Nepal

- Deforestation
- Landslide
- Earthquake
- Flood
- Glacial lake outburst
- Epidemics
- Migration (Internal and external)
Spatial difference of vulnerability

- Hilly areas are vulnerable to:
  - Land slide
  - Shifting river/streams
  - Erosion
  - deforestation

- Flat area are vulnerable to:
  - Siltation,
  - Illegal harvesting
  - Land forest encroachment

- However, common problem of both areas as resource degradation, fair distribution of land
Of Nepal’s total population, 52 percent now reside in the lowlands (inner tarai and tarai) districts. People of lowlands origin constitute less than one-third of the total population. This discrepancy between majority population in the lowlands despite smaller size of its native population can be explained by large-scale' influx of highlanders. Thus, of the 12.6 million people of highland origin, 3.9 million or 30.8 percent are residing in the lowlands. People of hill origin now constitute 83.1 percent of the inner tarai and 30.9 percent of the tarai population. In contrast, among the 5.8 million people of lowland origin, only 182,284 or 3.1 percent are reported in the highlands. They constitute a mere 2.2 percent of the hill and 0.9 percent of the mountain population.

Push and pull factor for migration

**Push factor**
- Deteriorating productivity
- Unfair land distribution
- Conflicts

**Pull Factor**
- Better facilities
- Centralized system
- Better facilities
The main occupation

- Government data puts more than 80% of population depend on agriculture, however
  - 70% of farmer own less then 1 hectar of land
  - 40% of agricultural house owns 9% of land where as, top 6% occupies 35% of land
  - Owner-tenant is dominant type of land entitlement in Nepal ....more then 15% of land is rented

  Source: NPC 1998

- Tenant have no motivation to improve land
  - 3% of household income is invested in land improvement

(NRB survey 1994)
Consequence of Internal migration

- Pressure in urban areas and in fertile lands
  - 90% of urban centers are located in fertile lands
  - Deteriorating land in both urban and rural areas
  - Regional imbalances
Environmental Disaster Risk and Political Conflict in Nepal

- 73 out of 75 districts are prone to environmental and political disaster risk.
- A disproportionate increase in population density in hazard-prone areas results in increasing numbers of Nepalese living and working - without local knowledge - in harm's way.
- Domestic Conflict
- Disaster management agendas focused on modern high tech intervention.
  - Purely technological intervention have been acting as catalyst to increase the vulnerability to local hazard in developing counties (Blaikie, Cameron, and Seddon, 1977, 1980; Wisner, 1997).
Environmental Disaster Risk and Political Conflict in Nepal

- Disaster risk and vulnerability in Nepal is too complicated to be captured by simple models, frameworks and maps. There are numerous and diverse dimensions to it, including economic, social demographic, political and psychological .... (Twigg, 1998).

- Dynamic in a state of constant change, they are complex and diverse. All elements within societies are evolving so that changes occur in different parts of society in different ways at different times (Hewitt, 1997; Twigg & Bhatt, 1998; Mitchell (ed.), 1998; Cannon, 2000; Hilhorst, 2004; Stephen, 2004; Frerks et.al 2004).
Political Conflict and its impact on development

- Peoples war 1996 Feb 13
- Ten of thousand on either side are killed
- People feeling Insecure in their own land
- Most of the people
  - Moved to district head quarter
  - Moved to India and abroad
- This fact accounts only for the loss of human capital, which can never be recovered as the state loses its active and fundamental resources for creating a good development environment
People expectation after 1990

- Great excitement and expectation after restoration of democracy
- Promise to improve daily life remain unrealized
  - Weak democratic institutions
  - high levels of public sector corruption, combined with the breakdown of electoral and political processes have created a crisis for good governance
- Natural resources has always suffered during political turmoil in the country
Diverting the development fund

- The public expenditure during the period of conflict (1995/96-2002/03) has grown at an average annual rate of 8.8 percent under which the development expenditure has grown at an annual rate of 2.2 percent as against the annual growth rate of 14.3 and 18.9 percent in the regular and defence expenditures respectively.

- The defence and security expenditure as percentage of GDP has been increasing over time. The ratio was 1.7 percent in the fiscal year 1995/96 and gradually reached 3.1 percent in the fiscal year 2002/03.
Environmental Disaster Risk and Political Conflict in Nepal

[Graph showing GDP and defense expenditure as a percentage of GDP over years 1995/96 to 2002/03]
Heading towards catastrophe

- The future trend in the development activities would be a devastating if we allow the civil war to continue and the loss of human lives will be unpredictable.

- The ratio of defence and security expenditure as percentage of GDP would predict to reach 5.7 percent in 2009/10 assuming a constant historical annual average growth rate.

- The defence and security expenditure as percentage of development expenditure is still more shocking.

- If the prevailing historical growth rate continues till 2009/10, it is estimated that it will reach 135.2 percent and will increase by more than two folds (Table on next slide will illustrate more)
## Environmental Disaster Risk and Political Conflict in Nepal

Future Trend of Defence and Security Expenditure as Percentage of GDP, Regular, Development and Total Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Defence and Security expenditure as percentage of GDP</th>
<th>Defence and Security expenditure as percentage of regular expenditure</th>
<th>Defence and Security expenditure as percentage of development expenditure</th>
<th>Defence and Security expenditure as percentage of total expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>17.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>26.7</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>19.3</td>
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<td>2005/06</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>21.1</td>
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<td>2006/07</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
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<td>30.0</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
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<td>2008/09</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>116.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
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<td>2009/10</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>135.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How is economy is rolling then?

- Remittance i.e. various forms like cash, gold, clothes, electrical equipment etc.
- Nepalese central bank data (2001) shows 85% of Nepalese who are outside country work as labour, 13% are in armed force and 2% are involved organized government services in foreign land.
- According to Department of Labor, excluding India, 122,764 workers went abroad in the year 2003/04 alone. Nepalese work in different countries around the world.
- Department of labour and employment promotion show that workers have migrated to 53 different countries between the years 1991/92-03/04. The inward remittance for the year fiscal year 2003-2004 was over Rs. 100 billion which consisted of 20 % of GDP.
A survey conducted by the Department for International Development (DFID) in 1997 states, 3.2 percent of the total population of Nepal worked in various parts of the world.

Nepal received about US$ 506 million (NRs. 35 billion equivalent) through remittances in 1997 and this figure almost doubled in 2002.

Further increase was noted in the year 2003-2004 where inward remittance was over Rs. 100 billion.

The same year trade deficit was registered Rs. 70 billion. Despite huge trade deficit, country did not face any problems.
Bitter facts

- low castes comprise about 60% percent of the population but are the major victims of environmental disaster in Nepal
  - 6.2% of individuals reaching the graduate level of education.
- Women representation is negligible
  - 8% of the seats in the last elected House of Representatives, and less than 7% of Nepal's Civil Service.
- High-caste Brahmin/Chhetris and Newars retain over 80% of civil service and other influential governance-related positions, even though they represent only 38% of the population.
Whom to blame?

- The principal actors necessary for good governance—
  - civil society organizations, political parties, citizens, free press - have failed to assume constructive roles in advocating on behalf of public interests, strengthening mechanisms for accountability, and combating cronyism in Nepal.

- Social and economic exclusion of low castes, underrepresented ethnic groups and women, combined with a lack of basic services provision in education, healthcare, and rural infrastructure, continue to confound democratic governance and development aspirations.

- The future of Nepal now hinges on the ability of its people to strengthen key democratic institutions and implement reforms.
How bad governance hurting the environment?

- Land-granting practice was common during the Rana regime
  - They granted large portion of land to soldiers as *Jagir* to keep them under control
- Distribution of fund “make your own village” to near and dear
  - Haphazard construction
- Top elites i.e. political level, top civil servants, business man, religious leader in center fulfill their interest through power.
- Marginalized and people still practice slash and burn/ shifting farming
  - Aftermath of “free bonded labor”
- Chambers (1988)
  - “the problem of poverty in South Asia at least is not now a problem of production, or of food availability; it is a problem of who produces and of who has power to obtain it”
Our Current Approach towards disaster

Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee

- Relief and Treatment Sub-Committee
- Regional Natural Disaster Relief Committee
- District Natural Disaster Relief Committees
- Supply, Shelter and Rehabilitation Sub-Committee

Local Natural Disaster Relief Committees
So, We don’t have any achievements?

- Since mid 1970s emphasis been given to horticulture in hill region and cereal and cash crop promotion in tarai region.

- Successive five-year plan
  - Community participation in NRM was emphasized in sixth five year planning (1981-85)
  - Seventh (1986-1990) and eight (1991-1995) put more people in the picture as user
    - Community forestry to user hands over government forest to local communities

- Plans made in center by top elites but with weak implementation in rural level
  - Government offices are either moved to headquarter
  - Poorly trained workforce
  - Failure to spend the allotted fund.
Conclusion

- “Implementation is an Art not science”
- If conflict can be resolved it would be wonderful but it is possible to achieve overnight?
- The best alternative would be conflict management rather
  - It is a practice of identifying and heading conflict in a sensible, fair and efficient manner.
    - Managed by developing and using skill i.e. communicating, problem solving.
    - It may not solve the problem instantly, but keep the situation working and minimize tension and antagonism
    - Nourishing these action enhances the favorable situation for a some degree of sustainable outcome.
- In natural resources, resources-use negotiation is a deliberate process of submission and consideration of offers to share resources until parties involved accept and offer.
Thank You