DRAFT
Political Economy Analysis of Disaster Risk Management in Nepal

Executive Summary

With significant shifts in the overall governance context in Nepal, and the passage of new legislation to address disaster risk management, USAID/Nepal sought a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) to answer the following questions:

- What are the incentives and constraints surrounding the sustainable and inclusive implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act? How do these factors operate at the national versus the local level?

And operationally:

- Considering the history of donor assistance in Nepal, and its potential impact on incentives for Nepali ownership of disaster risk management efforts, how can USAID programs best support development of sustainable, locally-owned approaches in this area?

Political economy analysis responds to these questions by walking deliberately through factors in the context, ensuring attention to everything from the most enduring to the most recently emerged. In the terminology of this report these are divided between three pillars as follows:

- **Foundational Factors:** Deeply embedded, longer-term national, subnational and international structures that shape the character and legitimacy of the state, the political system and socio-economic structures;
- **Rules of the Game:** The formal and informal institutions (rules and norms) that shape the quality of governance and influence actors' behavior, their incentives, relationships, power dynamics and capacity for collective action; and
- **The Here and Now:** The influence of current events and circumstances on the objectives and behavior of key actors /stakeholders, and their responses to opportunities for or impediments to change.

Finally the PEA then moves through an exploration of how those pillars are interacting:

- **Dynamics:** The interactions between foundational factors, rules of the game and here and now, including how they affect each other, and influence/shape prospects for change?

Several foundational realities underpin the answers to the questions above, as they

shape the situation in which disaster risk management will be addressed in Nepal. Nepal's geography renders it highly prone to a range of disaster events, some of which cover large swathes of the country (like earthquakes) while most are quite localized. Nepal remains an extremely poor country, driving many youth, and young men in particular, to seek work outside of the country. The impacts of disasters are strongest for the poorest Nepalis, constraining their ability to escape poverty, increasing their vulnerability to disaster, and creating a vicious cycle. These realities intersect with the dominant culture, spanning Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, and broadly speaking, yield a cultural conditioning to see negative events as conditions that must be endured as they happen, but not dwelt upon in advance. This condition is reflected to a certain extent not only among individuals and communities, but also within government, which has focused on the response to disaster to a much greater extent than preparation or mitigation.

The country's feudal history and more recent pattern of internal conflict between the Government and the Maoist movement between 1996 and 2006 underpins decision-making at many levels in Nepal. This includes the evolution of what ultimately became the the All Party Mechanisms (APMs) beginning in 2002--an informal process of local governance that was espoused to protect peace and promote reconciliation, yet contributed to collusion and lack of transparency within the bureaucracy.[1] Indeed, despite Nepal's extreme diversity, many describe a broad unity among the ruling class in their shared goal of advancing their own interests ahead of the people. A further reflection of historically hierarchical norms is a culture of systematic risk aversion. Government leaders under the old system, and within the current national bureaucracy were frequently described as more fearful of sanctions (possibly politically motivated) for taking action than they were of simply failing to achieve results. This general understanding made "champions" who spring up particularly notable and valued exceptions.

All of this notwithstanding, the overriding condition of Nepal in the past three years is change--dramatic change with respect to the formal rules, along with some signs of accompanying shifts in informal norms and associated behaviors. The 2015 earthquake is credited with incentivizing passage of the constitution, establishing a federal system which many hope will fundamentally change the trajectory of Nepal's failed governance structures. The constitution has also mandated a greater role in governance for women--including a 40% quota for party nominees, and a requirement that two of four ward members be women, one of whom must be from the most underprivileged Dalit caste. This has the potential to fundamentally shift the incentives for behavior, and initial indications are positive that it may.

The passage of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (DRRMA) establishes a dedicated National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDMA) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) with a mandate to lead on DRM with other line ministries. The placement of the NDMA under MOHA, has inspired certain doubts. One such doubt is whether NDMA can work in an independent,

[1] https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/analysislocalgovernancenepal.pdf

autonomous and efficient manner, particularly given MoHA's mandate and frequent preoccupation with maintaining law-and-order and mobilizing security forces. The Act also indicates that DRM should be integrated into municipal planning, requiring 5% of local spending to be dedicated to DRM. Although still primarily focused on the response aspects of the DRM cycle,the DRRM Act of October 2017 is considered more comprehensive and broad-based than the earlier legislation it replaced. While risk aversion, hierarchy, and elite collusion can still be presumed to be influencing factors, federalism and greater electoral and local accountability have potential to significantly change incentives.

The frequency, location and severity of disasters in the coming months and years, and the response of government at different levels, is likely to have a strong impact on the legitimacy of the municipal governments in particular, and forge a new understanding of their appropriate roles vis a vis both DRM and broader development issues.

The ongoing transformation of Nepal's system of governance from a unitary to a federal model, and the progress of that effort in light of the history, norms, and understandings that shape Nepali society, will be the critical factor in DRM mainstreaming for the next few years. The new Constitution represents a collective bet by Nepalis that local actors can do better than those operating from the center at confronting the numerous challenges that have beset the country in recent decades. Nepali's see their country's development as hinged on the strength of that local-level commitment (whether supported or inhibited by National, Provincial or residual District Governments), rather than on resource limitations, technical capacity gaps, or lack of comprehensive and rationalized plans.

There are many reasons to be optimistic about the future and sustainability of DRM efforts in Nepal. Legislation taking a broader look at the entire disaster risk management cycle that had languished for a decade has passed. Local elections - the first to take place in most municipalities since the 1990s - were held in May, June and September 2017. While varied in experience, capacities, and interests, most mayors and deputy mayors interviewed[2] demonstrate an understanding of the expectations of their constituencies and are seeking to be responsive to them. A national framework exists that, in theory, provides the space and resources for municipalities to play that role. The Act could also result in a shift of more DRM responsibilities to the local level across the country, which would redefine DRM governance as a bottom-up process.

Given the localized nature of specific DRM challenges, and the range of other economic and social development priorities, it is inevitable that "disaster" as such will not be defined as a priority for all local leaders. Wherever USAID programs work, they need to meet those leaders where they are. In some cases, this may mean building and communicating evidence on the cost-benefit of efforts throughout the DRM cycle, whether response, recovery, mitigation, or preparedness--what those in the busines community would understand as articulating the business case for DRM. It may also be

[2] Note: the focus of this assessment was on urban municipalities, so less is known about the conditions in rural municipalities.

as simple as targeted the language used to address DRM issues, considering terminology, such as “safe development” that is meaningful to the local population.

Supporting Nepal at this juncture will require judicious attention to planning, resources, capacity and donor coordination, but also meaningful support to efforts to leverage political commitment in innovative ways. There is a genuine threat that popular expectations will outstrip the ability of new municipalities to respond, and given the cultural inclination of local authorities to prioritize conflict mitigation over need-based aid distribution, donors must be mindful of burden of our own standards and the potential to do harm in our work with municipalities. Among other things, we must apply flexibility and attention to learning as these nascent institutions develop, and as the incentives for their behavior shift, to ensure our programming remains relevant. The overarching paradigm for DRM seems to be shifting from removing obstacles to DRM-informed planning from national level down, toward one of accelerating and amplifying local-level successes, and donor support must match that shift.

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Structure

This report begins with an overview of the methodology and instruments used to collect data. It then provides a review of the findings according to the PEA framework. moving from the most embedded structural aspects (*Foundational Factors)* through to key norms and institutions (*Rules of the Game*) and then more immediate shifts in the context (*Here and Now*). These are followed by a review of drivers of change or ongoing evolution in the political economy (*Dynamics*). These findings collectively comprise the relevant political economy stage on which changes in disaster risk management in Nepal are playing out. Finally, the Implications section spotlights key opportunities and threats stemming from the findings as well as ways that programming can leverage opportunities and mitigate threats. It also lists some important questions to inform monitoring to observe and keep on top of continued shifts in the context.

Methodology

To answer these questions, the team spoke with a range of stakeholders, etc. [fill in on methodology]. The report also integrates key findings and recommendations from a Private Sector Landscape Analysis conducted following the PEA.

Findings:

Foundational Factors

Hazardous Geography, Localized Disasters

Nepal is geographically highly prone to disasters, due to its terrain and location. It has rivers prone to flooding, steep hillsides where landslides are common, and is in a highly

active tectonic zone, as well as experiencing intense rain during the annual monsoon season. Rapid, unplanned urbanization and population growth combine with periodic droughts, fires and extreme cold weather to contribute to Nepal's exposure and vulnerability to disasters. Many of these hazards exacerbate each other, and broad changes in climate such as extreme rainfall patterns and intensity contribute further. Some disasters affect large swathes of the country, both major earthquakes and floods foremost among them. However, in aggregate, the majority of disaster events in Nepal are quite localized due to the specific geography; a municipality, or even wards within a municipality, affected profoundly by flood or landslide may be next to another which is untouched, resulting in a sense that the real effects of any disaster are felt acutely by small sets of populations, albeit with a large aggregate total.

Poverty, Transitional Economy

Nepal is a poor country, with an official GDP per capita of just $883 in 2017. Most of the population still relies on rainfed, low-productivity agriculture. Public and private investment is low and has created limited opportunities for improving the poor state of Nepal's infrastructure. The Nepalese economy is extremely dependent on a high volume of remittance income, which is a mixed blessing. According to the World Bank, remittances comprise more than 30 percent of GDP[3]. Remittances have supported household consumption, lead to dramatic reductions in poverty, and kept the external account stable. But the growing dependence on remittances has eroded competitiveness, resulted in a severe terms of trade deterioration and made the economy fundamentally uncompetitive.

The economy is gradually transitioning to services, but growth prospects are uncertain. The two-thirds of Nepalis that work in Agriculture add just $445 per capita to GDP, well below the regional average of $1,202[4] and the variability of the seasonal monsoons is still the primary driver of GDP. 90% of workers are informal and although poverty has been halved and household hunger levels are low, most Nepalis still have relatively insecure livelihoods, dependent on remitted income. Where disaster has been recent and pervasive within the range of local authorities, disaster management can be seen as an integral part of general development priorities. In other cases, its impact is sufficiently episodic or isolated within vulnerable populations, rendering disaster risk management a more fringe issue.

Ke Garnae - Culture of Enduring

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[3] The World Bank, "Nepal Development Update: Remittances at Risk," Page ii, May 2016, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/564551468198011442/pdf/106393-WP-PUBLIC-ADD-SERIES-Nepal-Development-Update-2016.pdf, ,

[4] The World Bank, Country Economic Memorandum, page 44: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/358501495199225866/pdf/115156-CEM-PUBLIC-SAREC-70p-Country-Economic-

Nepalis are used to living with the effects of different challenges, both in terms of natural disasters and otherwise. The dominant cultures (spanning Hindu and Buddhist belief predominantly) tend to perceive events as happening; where they cause suffering that is to be endured as it happens,not dwelt upon in advance. This can translate into what is described as a fatalistic attitude toward disasters, with an emphasis on coping with them afterwards rather than mitigation or prevention. It also seems to facilitate a strong fellow-feeling among people and willingness to work hard to help those who have suffered some calamity. There are signs of change in this culture (see dynamics below) but it remains foundational to the understanding of disaster risk in Nepal.

Diversity, Exclusion, and Conflict

Nepal is an extremely diverse country. The 2011 census recorded data for 125 caste/ethnic groups, including 52 caste groups, 44 ethnic groups and 4 other social groups. The census also tabulated a total of 123 languages and ten religions.[5] Regional-spatial identities, particularly of up-land/low-land belonging, further intersect this complex socio-cultural formation. The Government of Nepal officially recognizes 59 ethnic groups as indigenous groups. The Government also recognizes 98 caste groups as "minorities" whose population falls below 0.5 percent each of the total population.

The mechanisms through which identity reinforces vulnerability to disasters is complex and multifaceted. Higher castes are often able to control resources through long-existing formal and informal power structures. However, caste is not always a predictor of economic status with rural populations of different castes being equally poor and equally vulnerable to disasters. Vulnerability is often a product of unequal access to the formal systems of governance coupled with poverty. For example, in the case of the *tharu* people of the Terai, much of their land was occupied following the eradication of malaria by migrants from the hills who were able to legally register land that the *tharu* had maintained through customary land ownership arrangements. The overlapping ethnic, gender, and caste identities create a complex web of inclusion or exclusion that at times can lead to conflict between different groups. Furthermore, because diversity is present even in fairly small geographies, multiple questions of exclusion are relevant at almost every level of Nepal. Identity intersects strongly with overall exposure to hazards in terms of shaping disaster vulnerability among Nepalis.

All Eat from the Same Plate

Historically, while the leading actors influencing the direction of Nepal as a state have represented various ideologies and approaches, they have all been understood as belonging to a ruling class. This ruling class, identified with presence in Kathmandu, and

[5] 2011 Census - Major Highlights - http://cbs.gov.np/image/data/Population/Major%20Highlights/Major-Finding.pdf

bearing some relationship to high caste, has been described as “all eating from the same plate” despite strong differences. That is, fundamentally, there is a sense that Nepal’s leaders, whatever else they may disagree about, are unified in advancing their own their own interests first and exploit the broader population - an expectation that has been confirmed by experiences with All-Party Mechanisms and consensus governing (see below).

Hierarchy from Center to Periphery

Nepal has a strongly hierarchical society, traditionally shaped/defined to a great extent by ascriptive parameters like caste/ethnic belonging, size and type of ancestral land, and family/kinship ties. This divided traditional Nepali society broadly into a feudal hierarchy of the landed aristocrats, the self-employed/self-sufficient peasant households, and their poor counterparts (slaves, wage workers, landless laborers). On the surface, while the salience of these conventional parameters has notably diminished over the years, giving more value on education and social preference for having a "job," the feudal hierarchy and the prestige-seeking value system is still at work. Further, the highest layers of society have historically been concentrated in Kathmandu (remaining watchful that access to the corridors of power remains unchallenged). This usually gave a sense that other parts of the country have been either under Kathmandu’s thumb or left to their own devices.

Independence is Strength is Remaining Unentangled - Regional Geopolitics and History

With the world’s two most populous countries, China and India, as its neighbors, and a proud history of never being colonized, despite British attempts, Nepal is very concerned to maintain its independence. This translates as well into a strong desire not to incur obligations or debt that could be exploited by more powerful neighbors. Even at local level, it was common to hear officials indicate a desire to be able to improve the situation of their populace without depending on assistance, or at times expertise, from others.

Prachanda Path and Royal Dictatorship - History of a Generation

Between 1996 and 2006, Nepal went through a difficult time of an internal conflict between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN Maoist). The conflict, precipitated by a range of social, economic, and political demands made by the Maoists, left over 13,000 people dead and 1,300 missing, with numerous cases of unlawful killings, torture, arbitrary arrest, sexual violence, and damage to public infrastructure. Inspired by initial successes, Maoist Chairman Prachanda proclaimed a Nepali version of Maoist principles to guide a 'People's War', known as the the Prachanda Path.

Civil unrest led King Gyanendra first to assume absolute power in 2005, vowing to crush the Maoists, and then, amidst widespread protests, to surrender it in 2006 – paving the way for political parties in the power. The then-Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) brought all major pro-democracy parties together to sign Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) with the CPN Maoist in November 2006, bringing the latter into peaceful and competitive multiparty democracy.

The All Party Mechanisms (APMs) and the Politics of Consensus--or Collusion
When the tenure of the locally elected representatives expired in 2002, the government authorized civil servants to assume all functions of the local bodies, who, for lack of capacity and ability to command local legitimacy, had to rely almost entirely on relationships rather than procedures to perform their duties. By 2009, this coping strategy was adopted as the preferred political framework and acquired formal legitimacy with the formation of All Party Mechanisms (APMs). This directive officially endorsed and promoted the informal deliberative space as part of the process of local governance.

The agenda of APMs and the politics of consensus, was espoused to protect peace and promote reconciliation, and was adopted as a template for transitional political representation and decision-making at all levels of government. It was perhaps assumed that, because the APM members represented different parties on a one-party, one-representative basis, they would articulate competing needs and priorities, resulting in more open and equitable resource allocation decisions. However, the APMS also provided legal cover for the gradual unfolding of collusive tendencies in local politics. The lack of opposition politics, increase in size of grant monies to local bodies, and the lack of direct accountability serving as primary drivers of collusion.[6]

Better Lives Elsewhere - Migration and Brain Drain
A large number of Nepalis have moved abroad in search of economic opportunity, mostly within South Asia or the Middle East, sending home remittances to help support family. Over the past decade, Nepal has seen a ten-fold increase in the number of migrant laborers, predominantly youth, leaving the country to work abroad resulting in substantial reductions of the country's working-age population, who remit back home the equivalent of 30% of official GDP.[7] Men represent the majority of migrants, leaving a large number of female-headed households. While many move to take laborer jobs, professionals also are often moving for work, resulting in a "brain drain" phenomenon. Many of those with valuable skills, including around planning or engineering relevant to disaster risk management - see greater opportunity to practice their work outside of their

[6] https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/analysislocalgovernancenepal.pdf
[7] Nepal Rastra Bank, "Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation" https://www.nrb.org.np/

country. A recent study has also cast doubt on the broader benefits of migration, correlating higher migration rates with an increased risk of impoverishment, especially when learned skills are not applied upon return to Nepal.[8] Of particular relevance to DRM, a 2014 study by Practical Action established a link between remittances and earthquake risk, given the lack of awareness of building codes and proper construction techniques by remitees. This study recommended engagement of migrant workers and households receiving remittances, as key stakeholders and potential advocates, to promote building code implementation.[9]

Vicious Cycle - Poverty ⟳ Vulnerability

In addition to being generally disaster-prone and relatively poor, it is a common pattern in Nepal that the effects of disasters are strongest on those who are poorest and most marginalized - who have the least household resilience and ability to recover or rebuild - which in turn acts as a major constraint to their ability to earn income and pursue opportunities to escape poverty, increasing their vulnerability to disaster and serving as a vicious cycle. For example, most of the households affected by 2017 flooding belonged to poor families without formal land tenure, a large proportion of which had migrated internally in prior years in search of economic opportunities. Further, those still living in camps more than 4 years after the 2014 floods were described by numerous informants as those who didn't have family support or kin networks to start rebuilding elsewhere, and couldn't afford new land. As disaster-affected people over years have been entrenched in poverty, this has become foundational, though it is not always explicitly acknowledged or addressed in the face of more immediate disasters.

Rules of the Game

Rules of the Game: Politics and Governing

Systemic Risk Aversion

Given Nepal's history of conflict, party dominance, and attention to social hierarchy, it is perhaps unsurprising that many characterized the general climate for governance as "systematically risk averse." There remains an entrenched view of government bureaucrats, at all levels, as primarily concerned about their exposure to sanctions--often politically motivated--should they take actions that exceed their clear authority under law and policy. Inaction was described by many as the anticipated state, justified through explanations of why something went beyond the authority of a given unit/level--with rare exceptions where particularly enlightened champions took an interest in an

[8] ODI, "Resilience and Sustainable Poverty Escapes in Nepal"

[9] Practical Action: "Understanding the Role of Remittances in Reducing Earthquake Risk", pp28-29, Oct 2014. https://infohub.practicalaction.org/oknowledge/bitstream/11283/582504/1/understand-role-remittances.pdf

issue or action. Accountability of bureaucratic officials, as a general rule, was described as focused upon formal compliance against their official mandates, as opposed to outcomes in their area of concern. While risk aversion is still a driving factor, federalism and greater electoral accountability have the potential to change these incentives and have shown signs of doing so (see Here and Now and Dynamics below).

Political Parties and Decision-Making
Until the new Constitution took force, the de facto space where competition for local resources took place was the APM. The APMs contributed to a strong culture of patronage at the local level, manifest in a variety of forms. The term “culture” is used here to refer to an enduring practice, rather than opportunistic corruption that is sometimes also observed in different sectors of government. Local-level corruption in Nepal is generally not a discrete event, but rather an ongoing practice involving a multitude of stakeholders each playing their part. Collusive schemes employed at the local level included a tactical mixing of private and public interests in resource allocation decisions, practice of nepotism, lack of transparency, and informal decision-making, among others.[10]

Decentralisation of power and responsibilities

The Nepal 2015 Constitution established a federal parliamentary republic with a focus on inclusivity, social justice, and a socialist-oriented economy. It confirms a transition from a constitutional monarchy and a unitary state to a federal system, with provisions for proportional representation and democratic participation.

The drafting of a new constitution through a Constituent Assembly was key element of the of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The constitutional process was intended to end centuries’ long exclusion of the marginalized groups and create the basis for socio-economic transformation of a country which, in spite of enormous potential, is still among the least developed in the world. It was also to institutionalize Nepal as a secular, federal republi.

Promise of the Constitution - New Norms, New Expectations
The demand for a new constitution was raised by Maoists rebels, who waged a 10-year civil war which ended with a 2006 peace deal. The Maoists won elections to a constituent assembly two years later, leading to the abolition of the 240-year-old monarchy. But because of squabbles, the assembly failed to draw up a new constitution.

[10] Adapted from https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/analysislocalgovernancenepal.pdf

A new assembly elected in 2013 was once more dominated by the traditional parties. They and the Maoists, jointly pushed through the new draft charter in 2015, crediting the disastrous earthquakes in April and May with concentrated their will to get it done. The constitution is not without controversy - more than 40 people were killed during protests surrounding its passage. Some ethnic groups were concerned over the hill group-lowland control issues within provinces and the boundaries and capitals of provinces served as flashpoints. The Madhesi community in the Terai also feel discriminated against by provisions in the Constitution.

Nevertheless, overall, it is hard to overstate the widespread sense of popular excitement and expectation around the new Constitution. It is seen as a seminal moment and critical disruption to a failed pattern of governance, with a new opportunity for people to inform decisions close to them. There is tremendous excitement that the locally-elected officials, with authority over bureaucrats in their realm and a set of resources to promote development in their locality, will be effective and accountable in a way that hadn't happened for years. All field teams in all localities routinely heard that the new Constitution was a tremendous opportunity, even from officials facing disruption (or in the case of CDOs, loss of authority) because of it. Observers who expect confusion and tumult in the first few years also invariably felt it a good thing, and the sense of opportunity and renewal is palpable. Citizens and experts alike seem to expect a 2-5 year period of time for local officials to figure out their functions and get up to speed, but there was also a common perception that the public would be patient with the new mayors and deputy mayors as they learned the ropes. Even when probed on resource limitations or other potential constraints, local officials and observers tended to assert that the new local governments would have a freedom of action and likely achieve considerable gains because of their mandate. Interestingly, in several cases where mayors were elected on published platforms, these platforms included DRM-related actions such as embankments or river training.

Quotas and Representation

Nepal's 2015 constitution mandates that 40.4 percent of all nominee seats be reserved for women. At least 14,000 women were elected from the three phases of local elections—the highest number ever elected to public office. Women now occupy posts as ward members, ward chairs, chairs and deputy chairs of rural municipalities (gaunpalikas), and mayors and deputy mayors of municipalities.For both urban and rural municipalities, membership for the ward committee requires that at least two of the four ward members are women, one of whom must be from the Dalit caste (socio-economically the lowest and most underprivileged under the hindu caste system). The election law also mandates that political parties must field at least one woman candidate between mayor and deputy mayor, and between chair and deputy chair of rural

municipalities. The constitution also mandates that the nine-member District Coordination Committees include a minimum of three women. It is also important to note that deputy chair/mayors have also been designated to lead the Judicial Committee which is to be created at the local level.

Certainly, these are significant developments toward building inclusive participatory spaces for women, and will continue to unfold within a complex political and socio-cultural context in the country. But initial observations and voices from the field are concerning, and reflect that women elected leaders are still confronted by deep-seated gender expectations, questions on capacities, and often divisive political ideologies, caste, ethnicity, religion, and class.

Unlike their male counterparts, women elected leaders are confronted with making choices between what is perceived as their primary identity as a home maker/caregiver vs. a political leader. The deeply entrenched patriarchal social norms that define gendered expectations and roles where women are historically confined to performing their domestic roles seems to be undermining their newfound political identity. Many women elected representatives confided during interactions that they are being derided by their own communities at being elected as local leaders. The communities' trepidation in accepting women as leaders is pervasive, and is a far greater drawback for the effective participation of women in politics, than any other capacity limitations the elected women leaders may have.[11]

Emphasis on Planning Procedures

The emphasis on policy and procedure outlined above translated, to some informants, as an opportunity realized to incorporate some capacity for DRM into local planning. The National Planning Commission (NPC) cited disaster risk as both a section of local budget and planning, and one of a handful of cross-cutting issues required to be addressed in every category of budget and planning. Field teams heard from CDOs and ward officials that organized efforts around preparedness and response, were standardized in the old system. Districts were able to stand up required task teams for disaster response and coordination between the GON, INGOs and the Nepal Red Cross Society led to effective responses, particularly to the 2017 floods. Certain line ministries had also inserted disaster risk into planning procedures for their staff on relevant decisions, such as the role of certain hospitals in planning to function through an emergency, though findings were somewhat more uneven in practice. The most consistent areas of follow-through tended to be readiness and planning efforts. Further, the 5% set-aside for DRM required under the new Act was referenced and applied in municipalities visited, with investment in preparedness and collaboration with the local

[11] https://asiafoundation.org/2017/12/13/nepal-elections-women-seat-table-will-voice/

Red Cross common examples of spending this section of funding in the first year of the municipalities.

Rules of the Game: Disasters

Little Before, Leap Into Action After

Most informants reported that the general understanding in society was that the government's role was primarily one of reacting quickly to disasters to rescue people and afterwards to offer relief. One informant drew an explicit distinction between the government's sense of responsibility to private individuals, which was about relief in the face of their loss of life or property, versus the responsibility felt by certain segments (particularly the MOE and MOH) to fully rebuild schools or health outposts that were destroyed, and build back better. DRR has been a separate chapter in the past National Planning Commission set of 3-5 year plans and mainstreaming DRR into development is already mentioned in planning procedures of certain line ministries, but is limited in acceptance and focus compared with response. Politically disaster response also provides mileage to the party in power and is a sensitive issue, which further tilts toward an emphasis on government responding and privileging response within the DRM cycle. Recovery and reconstruction, on the other hand, provides little political capital - further eroding the authority of the National Reconstruction Authority to act effectively.

Preparedness for relatively regularly recurring disasters was also described as becoming more expected, but much less than coordination of response efforts. The investment in earthquake recovery may also be shifting expectations around recovery - for example, in Surkhet, one team met with a CSO representing those displaced by 2014 floods, who had launched a campaign for the government to follow through more robustly on promised relief - but only after they had seen the government's response to the 2015 earthquake. Even in these communities, the description tended to be of hope that government could help but not that government should fully rebuild. Informants were more likely to point to examples of self-insurance (through women's savings circles) than government taking responsibility to plan for full recovery. Overall, the orientation toward authorities tended to be that they did well where they organized response and offered some relief or fought for more, rather than real pressure to expand their role around the DRM cycle.

Districts Anchored Effective Response

Fittingly given the emphasis on response, the structures that have existed for the last few years (leadership by District Disaster Relief Committees under the command of the CDOs, bringing together diverse humanitarian actors usually including district line agencies of the government, UN agencies, Nepal Red Cross Society, and NGOs/ INGOs to be coordinated through a District Lead Support Agency - an NGO or INGO

assigned with specific role of facilitating coordination among NGO actors in support of the district plans) were generally cited as active and engaged in disaster preparedness and response. In particular, the coordination through the CDO of key resources such as the national police or army were valued by stakeholders as important aspects of DRM in Nepal, if insufficiently oriented to the risks facing people, and many of those involved in the coordinated response clearly took pride in their effectiveness. Several actors involved in the district structures, as well as at the Ministry of Home Affairs, cited approvingly that they would continue as coordination bodies even under the new Constitution's federal arrangements, though this was not totally uniform.

First Call is to a Uniform or an NGO

When a disaster strikes an area, the district-level coordination would quickly engage security forces in any rescue operations, and use their logistics and manpower to help access difficult areas. Immediately afterwards - or in immediate anticipation of a challenge, such as when weather patterns (cold or rainfall) presaged potential disasters - local officials reached out to the Red Cross and available NGO/INGOs. For many smaller disasters, the NGOs might be expected to provide the bulk of the response effort. This was becoming a sticking point with the NGOs, who felt that they were often expected to provide resources so that the government could save up its own for other purposes, and to leverage freedom of action not afforded officials. Some commented that "lack of capacity" had become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as districts left procurement or distribution of blankets, food, and the like to NGOs, and then cited their lack of preparation or resources as driving the need for an NGO-led response. One local branch of an INGO had instituted rules not to offer assistance if a localized disaster didn't affect at least 40 households in order to try to shift responsibility for smaller issues, and routine planning or anticipation of these, to government officials.

DRRM Act

The Act which passed in October 2017, after existing as a tabled Bill (in various slightly different forms) for several years, replaced legislation dating back to 1982. The Act establishes a dedicated NDMA - the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDMA) - with a mandate to lead on DRM together with other line ministries and departments, although the NDMA is situated under MoHA. The Act also allocates much of the responsibility for DRM activities to the municipal level, and indicates that it should be integrated into municipal planning procedures. It also includes a requirement that 5% of spending at local level should be for dedicated DRM activities. It introduces an expectation that there will be a Disaster Preparedness and Response plan at Municipal level, hazard mapping, and establishment of a local emergency operations center. It also defines roles for continued coordination around disasters at District level,

and concurrent responsibilities at Municipal, Provincial and Federal levels for data gathering, stockpiling supplies, coordination, mitigation, recovery and reconstruction.

Rules of the Game: Managing Disasters

We Can't Let Our Gains Be Wiped Away

A strong sense exists that DRM entered the scene as a priority of international donors, more than a felt need of the Government of Nepal, though this was fundamentally changed by the earthquake of 2015. Writing before the earthquake, Jones et al wrote:

> A high level of 'political will' for earthquake risk reduction certainly exists amongst the donors. The necessity for urgently implementing earthquake risk reduction measures is frequently framed by donors in terms of 'protecting development gains'. One representative from a bilateral donor suggested that **"***we had to work this through….the fact that landslides and floods kill more people – why should we focus on earthquakes?…. an earthquake could unpick all the development gains* [achieved] *in the last thirty years in forty seconds*". The measures for earthquake risk reduction that donors have favoured have included more visible actions such as retrofitting hospitals and schools, as well as less visible initiatives such as strengthening building code implementation and awareness-raising. Donors' perceived need to justify the use of taxpayers' money may be a key reason for these choices and the balance between the visible and invisible. This level of political will among donors is not matched in government, and it could be argued that it is only present in government at all due to the 'incentive' provided by the availability of donor money.[12]

The high-profile disasters of recent years have shifted the level of commitment generally obtaining across the GoN, and have both validated and confirmed the focus of the international community on the importance of effective disaster risk management. The donors also continue to show an interest in both visible and invisible aspects and attention to reduction and mitigation, as evidenced by the intention of the World Bank to finance DRM activities at local level. The long-term orientation of donors was also evident in a comment from one donor representative that "quick results are like premature babies - they come sooner but need tremendous support to maintain. Better to get results that are slower but stronger."

First Among Equals

With its responsibility for security forces throughout the country, MoHA was seen as a strong ministry in general, and an effective and appropriate home for disaster response and (limited) recovery. Other GON actors routinely deferred to MoHA on "disasters" writ large, though usually understanding those as response, and it was expected to

[12] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212420915301278

coordinate and drive action toward preparation and coping with disasters. MoHA was seen as being set up well to take responsibility for disaster response, and this was seen as both its priority within the DRM cycle and its natural strength. Conversely, informants (including other GON) tended to assert that aspects of DRM outside of response, particularly mitigation and risk reduction efforts, did not appropriately belong to MoHA or that it would not focus on or emphasize them, leaving those for other stakeholders to address. Multiple informants described MoHA's function, and that of the future NDMA under it, by saying "MoHA does response."

Joint Secretary Won't Report to Joint Secretary - Ministries' Turf Battles
Across a number of issues, cross-ministry coordination at national level is hampered by the perceptions that all discussions over responsibility or accountability are about underlying turf. The normal bureaucratic tendency to seek to control decisions in order that they be made well is compounded by the culture of patronage cited above. As a result, most national ministries and agencies focus on execution of duties through staff and resources under their control, rather than on coordination for shared outcomes that do not neatly fit into bureaucratic lines. The unwillingness to be coordinated by peer bodies was captured by a quote that "joint secretaries won't report to a joint secretary, so coordination functions include lower rank staff from non-lead ministries, who do not have the authority needed to reach agreement or change behaviors of line staff."

Specifically to DRM, each ministry has a Disaster Risk Reduction focal point usually at the Under-Secretary level, who attends the national level meetings when convened, usually by a Joint-Secretary, by MoHA. The Ministry of Finance is often absent from these discussions and the power dynamic between Joint and Under Secretaries means that these meetings act more for information dissemination than for policy formulation. Further coordination has been achieved by the National Planning Commission (NPC), which has mentioned mainstreaming DRR in development and also has a separate DRM chapter in its plans. However, the sense of overall coordination and accountability of each ministry to such mandates was described as limited or problematic by multiple informants.

Collaboration on cross-cutting issues is not impossible - examples cited by WHO included progress on road safety and non-communicable disease, among others, as topics that intersect ministerial responsibilities. However, successful collaboration tends to follow from years of robust engagement by a committed external actor taking a facilitative approach to nurture shared ownership, and are threatened by the frequent shifts in staff assignments. For WHO, a set of MOUs around staff designation and time plus funds commitment was agreed as part of an agreement to build emergency operations centers, and a series of "joint papers" from outside actors plus establishment

of “platforms” at cabinet level for discussion of cross-cutting issues have been part of their long-term approach. The Ministry of Environment successfully brokered interagency coordination on a whole-of-government adaptation plan (not yet completed) by segmenting the work according to narrower themes and working groups under which ministries readily recognized their equities.

Indeed, the difficulties in such collaboration were repeatedly cited by observers as why donors and civil society had sought to elevate the National Disaster Management Authority to sit under the Prime Minister rather than belong to a ministry (the NDMA, per the DRRM act, is situated under MoHA).

Growing Consensus toward Full DRM Cycle

Despite the general sense of disaster as requiring response described above, those informants involved in DRM did tend to show, at least at national level, a fairly broad awareness that DRM represents a need well beyond response, and that by taking appropriate actions at all points in the cycle, Nepal will be better prepared and less vulnerable to future disasters. Several referenced the Sendai commitments as informing aspects of their own work, and many described roles for themselves under the new DRRM act.

A Live Issue

Civil society stakeholders and journalists suggested that there is a high level of public attention to issues of DRM generally. Some suggested that civil society lobbying and media pressure were key elements in the passage of the DRRM act and the last minute incorporation of elements that strengthen the act, and many indicated that a botched government response to disaster or a failure to follow through on commitments for recovery would be a high-profile issue that would invite political pressure. There did seem to be widespread reporting on and interest in the process of earthquake recovery grant-making, for example, though the level of accountability demanded over shortcomings - and of who - was less clear and seemed to be wrapped up with partisan politics. A couple of informants indicated that the civil society sector had itself become fairly politicized with many NGOs associated with particular political parties.

Rules of the Game: Economic Development Yields both Opportunities and Threats to Greater DRM

While improved DRM will clearly reduce Nepal’s economic losses during disaster events, the cost-benefits of taking action, both in the public and private sector are not well known. The linkages of DRM with economic development are undeniable, and can have impacts in multiple directions. One area in which this is seen is in connection with building codes. On one hand, building code adherence can be seen as a luxury good--

demand for safer buildings, even at a relatively moderate cost increase--goes up as a function of consumers' ability to pay. As income of consumers grows, their ability to purchase safer buildings also grows. This is one factor that has been seen at work in Dharan, a relatively affluent community where work on implementing the building code has shown dividends. However, the rapid rate of urbanization that has accompanied economic development in Nepal can complicate the impact of economic development on DRM efforts, in that urbanization is often taking place ad hoc, without institutions to enforce safe planning.[13]

Indeed, Nepal's population growth and rapid urbanisation is one factor influencing its high death toll from disasters through increased exposure. The number of people living in earthquake zones is now greater than ever before. This means earthquakes that would previously have killed hundreds now kill thousands or tens of thousands as a result of increased exposure. But increased exposure is by no means the only factor. The adage that *earthquakes don't kill people, buildings do*, highlights a key challenge in increasing resilience to earthquakes.

Rules of the Game: Other Factors of Importance

A Call to Serve - Youth and Public Service

Nepal has a tradition of service by young people, particularly the more educated, with norms enshrined in folklore and in traditional community organizations.[14] One such institution is "Guthi", a term in Newari culture, referring to a committee brings groups of people together to pursue common goals, particularly on occasions of celebration or crisis. Volunteerism in Nepal was institutionalized in the 1950s with the introduction of Charkha Pracharak Mahaguthi, an organization oriented to a Gandhian philosophy of development, which continued the tradition of organizing communities to cope with natural disasters and epidemics, as well as supporting small projects, infrastructure, etc. In the 1960s and 1970s the Nepali government experimented with official national service programs, including the National Development Service (NDS) instituted as a required one-year program in all colleges, from 1971-1979 when discontinued due to reported budgetary constraints. The NDS was implemented by Tribhuvan University in 1974 as a requirement for Masters level students, with the goal of ensuring that students left their studies with more than a theoretical knowledge of Nepal's development needs.[15]

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[13] See Nepal Growth Diagnostic, 2014, https://assets.mcc.gov/content/uploads/2017/05/Nepal_CA_withCover.pdf

[14] http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/opsa/pdf/OPSA_10_07.pdf

[15] See p. 4 https://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/RP09-30.pdf

While some point to the role of external NGOs and donors in weakening this culture of collective self-reliance, Tribhuvan University Institute of Disaster Studies and Department of Environmental Studies have fairly sophisticated programs of supplying students in their last year of studies to districts to assist them with planning requirements. A champion at the NPC had similarly organized a set of skilled students or graduates from planning departments as volunteers to fan out and assist with planning processes in the new municipalities. Several NGOs also had leveraged the input of youth and the capabilities they offer, such as with ICT, to crowdsource and map hazards leading to improvements in aspects of earthquake response and preparedness. Some informants cautioned that the support offered by young engineers to DRM might be limited by their lack of experience, noting “the problems of the people are not the ones taught on a chalkboard.” Overall, though, this seemed a durable resource and one that many informants indicated could be better leveraged through better supplementing the technical skills of educated youth with professional training prior to sending them into the field.

Hardware Versus Software - Popularity of DRM and Other Actions

Informants indicated that citizens did value DRM actions, not only in terms of disaster response when one struck, but increasingly through understanding and valuing mitigation and preparedness. As one informant noted, “when you’ve been waiting years for a bridge to be built and see it washed away, you become more interested in DRM.” Indeed, the names of some of the mitigation programs - the “People’s Embankment” program under the DWIDM for example - indicated an expectation of support and involvement from the wider public. The durability of local infrastructure has proven to be a critical issue for people and is high on their priority list to address.

However, such expectations must be nuanced by a strong preference indicated in multiple municipalities for the new local mayors to invest in infrastructure that could improve economic development and job prospects. Mayors felt pressure to deliver in terms of tangible products, which could itself increase risk, such as poorly situated roads increasing risk of landslides. While some DRM progress through land or other planning processes was cited as a local response, informants also revealed a sense that elected officials could not satisfy with plans - citizens “want hardware, not software.” Further, the difference between an effective and ineffective DRM action is difficult for lay citizens to observe in many cases, such as river training or building code adherence, with actual quality often not revealed until years later, limiting the incentivization of robust DRM planning and incorporation from these preferences.

Limited Market-Driven Engagement of Private Sector

The private sector has historically not been felt by observers to have robust coordination with the government of Nepal, though some sources indicated that they have come closer together after the earthquake, citing the example of private sector entities donating resources to the prime minister's fund for relief. Many private businesses have chosen to get involved with disaster response after the earthquake, but they have primarily done so independently, through working in their local communities, and through planning and engagement of their own staff. For example, a motorcycle distribution company got involved in distribution specialized motorcycles that could function almost like fire trucks but access difficult terrain more easily than a truck; however, they did not perceive this as a move into a market, but as a way to effectively donate from their own expertise.

To be sure, there are large conglomerates that can function almost as cartels in certain segments of the economy, whose influence and connections may be higher. They tend to collaborate in order to push back, formally or informally, on policies and legislation that are seen as restrictive, and there is some evidence of coordination in order to extract rents from procurement processes.

Across the private sector, DRM is also primarily understood through a response lens, with many stakeholders only now starting to come to grips with the implications of the full DRM cycle for their businesses.

Informants also described the role of financing as a gatekeeper to private behaviors. For example, in "building back better" under reconstruction, informants described there being two markets for construction, one applying to large businesses contingent on financing that would be carefully verified, and another for more informal construction where rules on the books were often ignored. The dividing line between the markets seems to be the extent of the push by those providing financing to insist on construction requirements and verification.

Here and Now

The past three years have had no shortage of dramatic events which resulted in altering the incentives for particular actions. The April 2015 earthquake impacted an estimated 6 million of Nepal's population of 28 million, and immediately resulted in pressures on government actors. It is credited with the adoption of a new constitution on September 20, 2015, after many years of delay, and seemingly worsening factionalism.

The constitution adopted a federal system bestowing great responsibility upon municipal governments. Local elections in 2017, the first in 20 years, were carried out before the

full structures of decentralization were in place, as actors sought to capitalize on a moment of consensus, taking a dramatic step to shift power, without awaiting all of the details. As such, these new municipalities are beginning work before clarity on their exact responsibilities and resources have been determined, and before the establishment of their provincial counterparts.

The work they do in practice, and the limitations placed on them, will be critical in determining how their roles will be understood going forward. These considerations, and the uncertainty inherent in the context, frame the other sets of events and developments within the here and now.

Localized Disasters

The broad attention to disaster in Nepal may have been driven recently by the singular event of the 2015 earthquake and ongoing recovery, but field experience confirms that the foundational reality of localized disasters resonates more greatly in different localities. For example, although even in flood zones local stakeholders referenced earthquake as a potential hazard (including in cases where they estimated no earthquake had been felt for over 500 years), their focus was not only on floods, but on particular flood and landslide experiences in fairly discrete geographies. Neighboring districts or provinces that had been affected differently revealed wide disparities in attention and priority to disaster risk and its management. Existing investment (both financial and time/coordination) for preparedness was strongly oriented in response to localized disaster experience. This implies a strong diversity of what is understood by "disaster" and of incentives facing local actors around disaster risk management.

An App for That - the Promise of Technology

Technology has offered the potential to overcome information constraints with regard to preparedness, and may have the potential to contribute to future mitigation efforts as well. A well-known example is Kathmandu Living Labs (KLL) which introduced open source mapping technology, able to crowdsource and communicate easily understood information to connect disaster victims with relief. Active during the 2015 Earthquake, KLL is now seeking to expand its partnership with municipalities, including Pokhara, and Nepalgunj. While maps do not include hazard information, or other data that might support mitigation efforts, KLL reported that this was of interest to them and to municipalities, if they could connect with the technical knowledge and approach to verifying hazard locations. The Institute for Crisis Management is another group using mapping technologies to help municipalities grapple with their risks.

The GON Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) began to operate a toll free 24-hour hotline in 2014 to provide flood risk updates. DHM has also started mass SMS

in 2016 in collaboration with major telecom companies. During 2017 floods, DHM early warning message reached 1,700,000 mobile users. The initiative is perceived as contributing significantly to the reduced death toll due to floods. MoHA, National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) runs the Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Portal, available to all online. And finally Ministry of Information and Communication operated a toll free emergency phone number during 2015 earthquake for the flow of information for search, rescue and relief. While these initiatives are promising, however, most agree that there is much room for improvement in order to create a functional and real-time multi-hazard early warning system.

Increasing Focus on Preparation - 5% and more

During field work, the team found consistent knowledge of, and in many cases pride in, the dedicated resource streams for disaster risk - the 5% of funding directed to be used for DRM. While many officials did not describe this as a legal requirement (it was often seen as a significant sign of commitment to the issue on the part of different government actors) it also was often the basis for joint planning and coordination spanning district and municipal levels and including district-level disaster response and coordination efforts. Several municipalities noted that they had established different units around DRM, including down to ward levels, with task forces focusing on specific aspects, though the details changed according to the geography. District-level response coordination centers also came up frequently as important investments. While this is a positive stock of investment and planning around DRM, it also was oriented very much toward coordinating response, with preparedness a focus, and other parts of the DRM cycle de-emphasized or ignored. As one stakeholder noted in describing DRM considerations at local level, “Nepal has not left the fire-fighting approach to disasters.”

Shifts Out from Districts - or Not

One of the lines of question that received the largest spread of responses from stakeholders was the question of how staff belonging to different line ministries and deployed until recently at district level would, in accordance with the Constitution, be distributed to municipal level - as mayors are now responsible for overseeing staff in these areas. The plans to shift line ministry staff to municipal control and to new geographic locations stirred some controversy, in that bureaucrats had questions about career path as well as competence of mayors to oversee their areas of work; it was also clear that the numbers of such bureaucrats who had staffed 75 districts would not be sufficient to fully staff 753 municipalities. In some places, teams heard that line staff had not moved at all and were still under the control of Chief District Officers; in other places, it seemed that staff had already moved and many were reporting to mayors at municipal level. Central stakeholders noted that some staff who pushed back had been told to either move or retire. We also heard that in practice, line ministry staff were

seeking letters of support from political or ministry leaders to direct them to be assigned to posts they preferred, either for being larger towns or to their home regions, complicating a technocratic approach. Most agreed that urban municipalities would have more access to staff than rural municipalities. Large numbers of new hires by municipal officials were also anticipated - several academic staff told us they expected a lot of hiring of civil engineers to fill roster spots.

Within DRM, this already ambiguous picture is further complicated by the DRRM act defining concurrent responsibilities at municipal and district level. Some stakeholders described districts as phasing out and irrelevant, while others pointed to language in the Constitution and law that allowed for them to continue to play important roles even if not in charged of municipal resources and spending. No single picture emerged of how different districts and municipalities were incorporating the shift in line ministry staff into coordination or plans around DRM.

DRRM act - Why Now, What Now

Many stakeholders asserted that the passage of the DRRM act, after the DRM Bill had been introduced but not moved forward for several years, was a surprise. Several stakeholders suggested that their work had contributed to the overall pressure to pass the Act, but the most convincing account we heard of the specific timing and adjustments incorporated into its revisions was that the timing was dictated by a combination of parliamentarians not wanting to leave the issue to a new Parliament, hence passing it on nearly the last day they could, and the MoHA concern that if they did not get in front of the issue of DRM, the newly-forming provinces would define their own role in disaster response and management, and preempt important MoHA functions - or as one put it, “MoHA was worried to be on the wrong side of history.” This also is why it was suggested that the compromise allowing the Act to pass included moving the NDMA from a Prime Ministerial level to being situated under MoHA, despite a number of the law’s proponents opposing that shift as limiting the accountability of other ministries to the NDMA.

The DRRM act has already begun to inform different actors response to DRM, but in different ways. As noted above, the knowledge of the Act among key stakeholders in disaster at local level is fairly high - many Red Cross chapters in different municipalities cited it without being asked, for example, and had familiarity with some of its provisions. At central level, stakeholders usually described it as significant and a good step forward, particularly given the age of the prior law it replaced. Despite this, they also tended to associate the DRRM act and the NDMA with roles in response, often explicitly citing this as being a function of the NDMA being part of MoHA. Other Ministries with roles in mitigation expected to continue their work in the new federal system under their own

existing authority, with a nod toward coordination, but a sense of continuity rather than a new regime for DRM. This has already been borne out in practice, when the NRA was asked to lead actions for flood response despite the NDMA appearing on paper to be the appropriate Agency to be tasked with the issue. Asked for reasons why, stakeholders various pointed to the competencies of the NRA having been proven, and the sense that it could, as well as the sense that MoHA wouldn't have interest in recovery.

Dynamics

They Have Homes in the Hills - Migration, Land, and Vulnerability

Generally speaking, officials in the flood-affected areas consider many of the most vulnerable people in their jurisdiction, those living hazardous flood plains, as a particular challenge. Although mayors mentioned land use planning and relocation, including the potential for "model villages" in Dharan, they also cited legal and resource limitations that made relocation difficult. Several also noted that many of those vulnerable people were not, as generally depicted, "landless," but are understood to have land higher in the hills. These people relocated for a range of reasons, including conflict, but are loathe to return given limited economic opportunities. Given the proximity of these hazardous flood plains to markets and sources of income, some also expressed the understanding that regardless of the response, this challenge would not go away--if a particular group was relocated, others would arrive seeking the same economic opportunities, and would settle in the same flood-prone areas if they could.

Complex questions of fairness and equity, as well as in-group/out-group conflict where migration patterns reflect ethnic differences, complicate the sense of responsibility for dealing with mitigation of risks for these populations. This arose most saliently in discussions with INGOs who pointed to pressure from mayors for "blanket coverage" of preparedness actions such as distributing kits or positioning resources, rather than purely targeted preparedness driven by vulnerability. The continued playing out of issues over land tenure and rules at local level, internal migration and economic opportunity, and incentives to go beyond rescue and into mitigation or recovery at municipal level is difficult to predict but will strongly influence DRM at local levels, since many of the most vulnerable in the Teraj fit this profile.

Looming Shadow of the Provinces

In discussions with stakeholders around what will change the situation on the ground in years to come, the standing up and defining of roles of the provinces were regularly cited as one of, if not the, most important area still to take shape. Provincial responsibilities and role on paper are both important and not fully defined, and the

implementing legislation and policy as well as their own political clout will shape resource flows, planning, coordination, and incentives in meaningful ways. Many stakeholders anticipated turf battles between provincial and federal levels, as well as important influence of provincial governments and provincial political party leadership over municipal leaders.

Where Were You When: The 2015 Earthquake, Memory and DRM
An interesting dynamic to watch as it evolves in different localities is the question of priority around DRM, and how that persists or fades in relation to a particular region's experience of disaster. The significant disasters of recent years have informed a high sense of need to do better, though as noted above, this is significantly impacted by the specifics of local experience. In the earthquake-affected areas, for example, informants reported that there is a market even in informal housing for signs of better construction (though some of these require specialized knowledge to distinguish; for example, there is apparently a practice of houses being built with fake cross-beams that look safer but are not).

Earthquakes in any one location in Nepal are actually quite infrequent: before 2015, the most recent earthquake with a nationwide impact was 81 years prior – and so memories of just how catastrophic earthquakes can quickly fade. As time goes by and other disasters do or don't happen, both nationally and in particular localities, the sense of collective memory of these events - and how disasters and associated preparedness/response/reconstruction fit into other narratives - will influence how strong incentives to invest in DRM, and toward which aspects, remain, or whether those shared memories fade and other challenges or opportunities crowd them out.

Who Calls the Shots - Local Elections, National Parties, and Disruption/Reformation
While the new mayors and deputy mayors are almost all associated with national political parties, stakeholders described many of them as not being professional politicians who were part of existing party structures (even where they had background in official roles at some point), but as credible local leaders who were recruited into different parties as it became clear that they could win locally. As they gain experience and also fit themselves into shifting political party networks and patronage networks, at both national and provincial levels, it remains to be seen to what extent they will take cues from national party platforms or leadership, or rise to become influential in their own rights. The space for working with local leaders on different issues, and the feasibility of different innovations to spread quickly or be confined, will bear some relationship to the changing dynamics within political parties to which local officials formally belong.

Diffusion of Innovation - How Ideas Will Spread

Given the rise of the new municipalities as structures, and the election of so many new actors at local level, one of the key uncertainties is how ideas and approaches (whether DRM or otherwise) will spread across them. On the one hand, the strongly bureaucratic history of the Nepali state and general sense of risk aversion will shape how local actors seek and respond to guidance in terms of central planning and policy. On the other hand, the sense that the Constitution is a deliberate disruption of ineffective governance arrangements, and its value is the local mandate of elected officials, suggests that actors will seek to take action quickly and push the boundaries of what they can do without waiting for all policies to be defined centrally. It is likely that local officials will therefore seek and use ideas through other channels, such as from peer groupings, from technical expertise they can access in the form of professionals, universities, or INGOs, or the like, often building on their existing relationships. For programming to influence DRM behaviors at municipal levels, it will have to explore which channels of influence can be leveraged, much of which may be informal or not yet defined.

Your New Post is - Reallocation of Civil Servants, on Paper and in Practice

As noted above, there is uncertainty around how the reallocation of civil servants and the shift from vertical, line ministry reporting mediated by districts to line ministry expertise organized under municipalities will play out in practice. Given the important expertise, authorities, and functions belonging to line ministry staff, the ways that this occurs in practice will play a vital role. It may or may not coalesce around a single process for reallocation, but in any case, programming will need to match expectations of how line ministry expertise is accessed with the realities of where those staff move.

Path of the NDMA

It seems clear that the NDMA can play a key role, but the role it does ultimately play is open to many possibilities. The qualities of leadership of the NDMA, its ability to establish its independence and exercise its authorities on paper, and its ability to require or inspire cooperation from other ministries involved in DRM will be shaped by interactions between its leadership, MoHA leadership, and others at Federal and Provincial levels. Stakeholders did point out that the DRRM act requirements for NDMA head do not preclude the possibility of a standard party cadre being assigned as leader, but there is a pool of potential leaders who are skilled operators and champions of DRM as an issue. Further, the leadership of the NDMA is likely to have a limited time in charge, given the broader coalition politics, and depending on how electoral fortunes vary. Finding appropriate ways to work with and amplify the NDMA - and hedging bets on it with other expectations for how to ensure DRM receives attention and investment at federal, provincial, and local levels - will be key areas for exploration in programming.

Flocking to the Cities

While the population remains widely rural, urbanization is taking place at a dramatic rate. Several commenters referenced the rural-urban divide as increasingly important in reshaping culture around hierarchy, caste, and class. The peri-urban areas in the Kathmandu valley also were cited as beginning to generate their own challenges. Provincial capitals are expected to grow rapidly as well. What are the differences caused by this rural, urban divide? How are new social patterns shaping household resilience to disaster, and incentives to mitigate or respond by local governments?

"What to do? -- Can We Do Something Together?

While many youth continue to look elsewhere for their futures, there is also a palpable energy emerging from youth- centered initiatives. Kathmandu Living Labs is just one example of an effort that harnesses resources that already exist--young people with access to technology, and knowledge of their own communities, to prepare for future disasters. As noted elsewhere, schools and students in engineering are heading to work with local communities to mitigate disaster risks. Young actors within the media have become energized around the subject of DRM, and are credited in some circles, with the ultimate passage of the NDRRMA. One informant spoke about this trend, referencing Nepal's habitual refrain of "ke garne" and said "we can do something together."

Implications: Exploiting Opportunities, Mitigating Threats, Monitoring Unfinished Stories

Opportunities

The Time is Now

Nepal at critical juncture, in the midst of a momentous process of transformation to redefine the nature of the political system and power dynamics between citizens, and government at all levels. This refers to the space created by the implementation of the new constitution, and the energy accompanying the new municipal governments, but it also refers to the opportunity created by the fairly immediate memory of disaster, and the dedication of resources, and systems through the DRRM Act to support those efforts.

politically-valued wins of DRM integration at local level - cherish and celebrate, and identify innovations that can spread on their own. While future activities to address DRM, as such will take time to award, options to pursue independent of programming should be considered. Learning should continue to capture dow cost, politically-valued

wins of DRM integration at local level--these should be celebrated in a way that may help their ultimate diffusion. Such efforts will necessarily include active coordination with other Mission programs, outreach or communications initiatives, which may have relevance to the key actors, in particular at the local level.

The Law is Good Enough

The 2017 DRR/M is response focused but relatively broad in its language and considerations of DRM. This leaves enough room to make use of the act to place emphasis toward the whole DRM cycle as it exists across the decentralized structure as mandated by the constitution. The Act itself, with strong bylaws, can serve as a sufficient legal basis and mandate for comprehensive DRM, even if it will not drive such an approach on its own.

So Hurry up and . . Wait?

In recent years, progress around DRM and general governance issues has been highly non-linear. Further, politics in Nepal have had a tendency to develop at key moments in relative secrecy and speed. For donors, this means that good plans can matter at critical junctures. Strategies should be developed for specific priorities for ministerial or cross-ministerial actions, with the the understanding that they may not be subject of immediate action, and the expectation expectation that opportunities to press will arise and should be exploited quickly.

Probe Where Contextual Factors Suggest Receptivity

As discussed above, the memory of disaster maintained by a significant portion of Nepal's population has created the potential for space to further DRM. In addition to this, the perception of DRM as a valuable investment is greatest where first, there is sufficient wealth to focus on future priorities as opposed to immediate needs, and second, where underlying cultural factors support order, planning, citizen empowerment, and adherence to rules. Dharan is the example pointed to where these factors come together to the greatest extent in the Nepali context. It may make sense to probe elsewhere, where these characteristics--or at least two of the three--exist, likely to a greater extent, as potentially fertile ground for efforts to diffuse strong DRM planning.

Network Interested and Enthusiastic Actors

Nepali citizens have demonstrated a sense of public goods and responsibilities, and their eagerness for development progress, including DRM where it is considered a priority. While financial, human resource, and technical capacity vary widely, many mayors, deputy mayors and their staffs demonstrate the desire to satisfy these expectations--presumably in part due to their own interest in reelection, but apparently, in many cases, also due to a sincere desire to see progress within their own communities. Mayors cannot and should not wait for guidance and support, particularly from above, but might welcome the opportunity to exchange, and learn from one another, and support the diffusion of ideas. New generation with ideas, attitudes, and willingness to help; some limits e.g. quote on they don't train you on chalkboards to assess mud houses for engineers/building code

Leverage and Strengthen NDMA Partnerships with Forward-Leaning Ministries

Several steps already taken toward coordination of DRM across ministries, and ownership within ministries, are promising. This includes the extent to which the Ministry of Education sought to place itself within the DRRM Act and emphasizes effective retrofitting of schools; the priority places by the Ministry of Health in setting up key hospitals to not only be resilient to disasters, but further to be ready to serve as anchors of emergency response; and the DRM mainstreaming efforts pursued by the NPC in recent planning instructions and processes. Further, the model of accompaniment demonstrated by the WHO on cross-cutting issues such as Road Safety and Non-Communicable Disease show that substantial improvements can be made through a facilitative approach, overcoming coordination challenges even absent highest-level political will driving accountability.

Threats and Potential Unintended Consequences

Politics and the Challenge of Prevention

That political payoff of preventive action is challenging, simply based on the fact that the counterfactual is invisible. Wherever possible, consider supporting enhanced incentives for politicians and others to engage in preventive DRM celebrating those investments that are made and proven, through linking it to other priority issues (e.g. youth, employment) and other efforts at framing. For example, a sign in Dharan stated *Poor maintenance is murder*. Using donor influence to incentivize those willing to invest in less-visible aspects of DRM may reward early adopters and make such efforts seem less risky or more politically valuable.

Uneven and Unpredictable Progress

The uncertainty of transformation process--may lead to different outcomes in different places, cost time for hesitation and clarification. Unrealistic expectations of what local authorities will be able to achieve may ramp up pressure on local officials, and ultimately hinder the consolidation of their capacities. Further, the unfolding process of allocation of line ministry staff is likely to be uneven.

While these costs are likely to be unavoidable, programming should structure its plans to mitigate this challenge by emphasizing practical and achievable models. Limiting the dependence of programming on broad, top-down processes to inform local planning and action, particularly where such processes hinge on availability of technical expertise, will limit the vulnerability of programming to sudden stops and reversals.

Urgent Crowding Out Important

The set of expectations on mayors, while providing an important reason for hope of action, will also push for action to be taken quickly. Where DRM steps, particularly mitigation, are about adjustments to plans or investments - shifting the location of a school, the height of a bridge, the land use plan to better reflect hazards, etc - the expected plans or investments are likely to face pressure to be initiated quickly. As such, DRM integration into these issues should be made straightforward and efficient wherever possible.

In addition, because local authorities may have more expectations and desire to pursue their mandates than they do available resources, the ability of programming efforts to use resource availability (e.g. through World Bank financing) to incentivize DRM actions, as well as to highlight less costly DRM actions, may represent opportunities to more robustly influence local action.

“Disaster” frames issues toward response

As described in the findings, the experience and terminology of disasters is, for most Nepalis, anchored by response. While many stakeholders are better informed, it is advisable not to allow re-education of common understandings to serve as a rate limiting step of programming. Where other framings such as “safe investment” or “risk-informed procurement” allow quicker uptake or greater impact, particularly in discussions with local stakeholders, programming should leverage these or seek to discover other terms. Programming should not define knowledge of key precepts of DRM cycle as a necessary precondition to action that successfully reduces disaster risk

- not all stakeholders need familiarity with Sendai principles in order to apply them to actions they lead.

Continued Diffuse Lack of Ownership at National Level

As noted above, despite several bright spots, coordination and line ministry ownership of DRM remains uneven and is not seen as a top-level political priority at this point in time. It is possible but unlikely that MoHA or the PM office will show a newfound willingness to define and drive coordinated action across multiple ministries. Therefore, consensus around change at scale may be a challenge. This implies that the existing rules and norms, while affording ample space for those ministries persuaded of DRM as core to their own interests and incentives to take it on, do not offer high prospects for an enforcement approach to ensuring DRM integration. Achieving scale in behavior change is likely to be achievable, but not facilitated through a top-down process that aims to drive behavior nationally through central efforts. Programming should consider and use more voluntary methods of achieving scaling of DRM behaviors.

Continue Learning - Following up on Unfinished Stories

The findings above highlight how dynamic the governance context in Nepal is, in ways that will profoundly affect the uptake of DRM. Below are some particular questions about the shifting context that programming should monitor in order to maintain relevance and effectiveness:

1) What new incentives emerge from the interplay of political parties, provincial government formation, and local officials' time in office? How are quotas influencing these incentives?
2) What roles are districts playing in disasters, across the DRM cycle, as compared with other levels of government?
3) What resources are municipalities afforded in practice - tax and fee revenue collection, transfers, ability to retain revenue, spending rates and priorities?
4) How are innovations spreading at local levels? This is not only with respect to DRM, but other innovations such as financing or revenue approaches, planning processes, specific forms of infrastructure investment, economic development, etc. The way knowledge spreads through municipalities will be an important factor in how programming can scale particular approaches to DRM.
5) How are municipalities resolving the tension between a general sense of risk aversion and fear of sanction for violating policies or procedures versus the public mandate to take meaningful action quickly? How does this play out within the relationship between elected officials and bureaucrats, with political parties, and with private business leaders?

6) What priorities are setting the national policy agenda? Who remains focused on reconstruction from the 2015 earthquake, or on issues linked to DRM more broadly? As new priorities emerge, how is DRM considered within them?