



SAMBAD

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It gives us immense pleasure to come up with the 36th edition of SAMBAD, the official newsletter of IIDS. This newsletter is the platform to inform readers about the activities of IIDS. Though planned as a biannual publication, it took us a year to bring out this edition due to some unanticipated events. The delay is regretted.

On the fateful day April 25, 2015, Nepal was hit by a powerful earthquake of magnitude 7.8 followed by many aftershocks, the largest being of 7.3 magnitude on May 12, 2015. 14 districts were badly devastated. A large number of houses including temples and monuments of historical importance were destroyed. The Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan Durbar Squares, which were listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, were also damaged. The economic damage caused by the earthquake has been estimated to be nearly 30-35 percent of the country's Rs. 1.9 trillion GDP. The GDP growth rate for the year has been revised to a lower rate of 4.2 per cent from the earlier estimate of 4.6 per cent (ADB). However, the resilience shown by Nepalese people is impeccable. The response and support of different countries is overwhelming. The relief and rehabilitation work has been going on at rapid pace and hopefully everyone would have a shelter before the monsoon rain hits the country. Nepal is again returning to normalcy.

The political parties once again failed to keep up to their promise of drafting the new constitution within the self imposed deadline of January 22, 2015. The faith of people on the politicians and the government has eroded, substantiated by the fact that people want the relief aid to be provided directly to them and not through the government channel after the deadly earthquake. So, it would be a hard time for the government to regain people's faith and carry the country together into the next era of people's aspiration of political transformation.

The days ahead are challenging for the country. The earthquake has affected all sectors of the country including tourism, industry and agriculture. The banking and insurance sectors have been hit hard and the real sector will have to struggle to regain people's faith. The insurance sector has been under immense pressure due to the large number of insurance claims. While the banking sector has been relatively safer due to the insurance on their investment on real sector, they are still at risk because of the dilly dallying attitude of the insurance companies. The tourism sector too has suffered and the tourists are cancelling their hotel reservations. The manufacturing sector of the country faces the risk of labor shortage as large number of people have returned to their native villages to build their homes and chances are that more people would migrate abroad to fund the extra financial burden caused by the earthquake. The quake arrived during a prime time for agriculture activities and the country may face the problem of food scarcity.

Against all these backdrops of adversity, we are confident that we will bounce back. Historically, the Nepalese have fought against all the odds and this time too we will come out triumphant. It may take a while, but we will rise and take the country back on the track. Hopefully, the government does its part of the job with obedience and integrity. Like the silver linings on the cloud, this crisis is also an opportunity to stay strong and together, and work for the betterment of the country. Now, we can only move forward towards betterment, towards prosperity. Let us be together and build a better Nepal. Cheers.....

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Workshop on Econometrics and Its Application

With the objective to impart technical knowledge and the latest developments in the field of economics, Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) has come up with the idea of conducting and continuing workshops and trainings in different facets of economics on a regular basis.

One such initiative is the training entitled "Workshop on Econometrics and Its Application" conducted by IIDS from December 1-10, 2014. The extensive ten day program was focused on revising theoretical econometrics, modeling economic theories and forecasting issues. The training was designed for students, researchers and teachers in the field of social science and management education. The training introduced participants with the recent development in Econometrics and familiarized participants with statistical tools, namely STATA, Gretl and JMulti.

Dr. Subir Sen, Assistant Professor at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee, India was the instructor of the workshop. The training program started with the basics of econometrics and ended with the overview of econometrics as a whole. On the last day of the training, various issues related to Nepal were discussed. Dr. Mohan Man Sainju, chairman of IIDS board concluded the program by providing certificates to the participants.

B P Koirala India-Nepal Foundation (BPKF) provided the financial support for the workshop.

Nepal Economic Outlook 2014/15

IIDS released its flagship annual publication Nepal Economic Outlook for the year 2014/15. It is an annual publication highlighting and analyzing the key aspects of the Nepalese economy and providing suggestions to the government.

The Economic Outlook 2014/15 highlights that the unending political deadlock, serious energy crisis, poor and weak infrastructure and unhealthy environment for doing business, among other things, has brought about much hurdles in Nepal's development process. The economy that attained the target growth rate in the fiscal year 2013/14 may not repeat the same feat this year because of the devastating earthquake in the start of the fourth quarter of the fiscal year which is the peak

time for government spending. The gross domestic saving has been lower than previous year. The inflation, especially in the food prices nearing double digit is alarming and is a serious threat to food security. The agriculture production has remained dismal due to erratic rainfall and after the earthquake; issue of food security has gained high importance. The manufacturing sector's performance is not worth mentioning. Service sector has performed well due to the healthy growth of retail and wholesale trade and Tourism has been the major contributor to the economy. However, after the earthquake, the outlook of the sector looks bleak. Balance of Payment will not improve as imports are very high compared to exports. Remittance again proves itself the lifeline of Nepalese economy. However, the incoming money should be utilized in employment generation and capital accumulation within the country and not be wasted on conspicuous consumption. It has been estimated that the economic growth for some years is likely to be on the down side as more national resources will be used for reconstruction and rehabilitation after the earthquake.

At the administrative level, there is lack of coordination among Ministry, Department and its line agencies. Such a weak institutional framework has been a serious issue to the economic performance. Similarly, budget management is another issue which government needs to address as failing to release budget on time has negatively affected the capital formation and absorption capacity of the country.

Relocation of SANEI Secretariat at IIDS, Nepal

The Secretariat of the South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI) has been shifted in Kathmandu, Nepal from April 2015 and IIDS will be hosting the Secretariat for next 5 years. The Executive Director of IIDS, Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant has been appointed as the Coordinator of SANEI.

Relief Materials for Earthquake Victims

The devastating earth quake that shook Nepal on April 25 and May 12, killed many and left many people in the most affected 14 districts homeless and foodless. To provide humanitarian support in the aftermath, IIDS staff members raised Rs. 115,000 among themselves and distributed relief materials of equivalent amount to 80 households in ward number 5 of Jeevanpur VDC and ward

number 9 of Chhatreaurali VDC in Dhading district. The relief materials included rice, pulses, oil, beaten rice, salt, sugar, noodles and biscuits. In this work, IIDS sought logistical help from Bibeksheel Nepali (a political party working for earthquake relief).

IIDS Scholarship

With the objective to increase the number of women with higher level education and encourage and provide them with more opportunities to pursue further education and research, every year IIDS provides scholarship for women scholars pursuing a Master's, MPhil or PhD degree. IIDS

have been awarding the scholarships since the year 2003/04.

The women scholarship for the year 2014/15 (Fourth round) was awarded to Ms. Kavita Joshi. She is a student pursuing her Masters in Business Administration (Pokhara University) at Uniglobe College, Kathmandu. She has been awarded with a scholarship amount of Rs. 25,000. The title of her research is "Impact of Monetary Policy on Finance Performance of Commercial Banks: A Case Study of Nepal".

A snapshot of scholarship provided by IIDS through Women's Scholarship Program has been provided in the table below.

Table: IIDS Women's Scholarship Recipients

| Year | Name | Program | Research Title | Scholarship Amount (NRs) |
|---------|---------------------|---------|--|--------------------------|
| 2003/04 | Rama Basyal | PhD | Impact of Micro Credit Programmes for Poverty Alleviation in Nepal | 52,000.00 |
| 2005/06 | Minerva Rajbhandari | PhD | Economic Issues and Perspectives of Women's Enrollment in Higher Education of Nepal: A Statistical Approach | 50,000.00 |
| 2006/07 | Smriti Karanjit | MA | Perception of Working Women on their Role in Economic Development in Nepal | 29,000.00 |
| 2007/08 | Kawita Sharma | MA | Technical and Economic Efficiency in Agricultural Sector in Nepal: An Economic Analysis of Vegetable Production at Kumpur VDC of Dhading District of Nepal | 20,000.00 |
| " | Bijaya Giri | MA | Contribution of Multilateral Foreign Aid in Economic Development of Nepal | 20,000.00 |
| " | Laxmi Timisina | MA | Saving Behavior in a Development Economy: An Empirical Case Study of Kapan Village | 20,000.00 |
| " | Prathibha Shrestha | MA | Issues and Prospects of Nepal-India Trade | 20,000.00 |
| " | Parbati Karki | MA | Lending Recovery Analysis of Development Banking | 20,000.00 |
| 2011/12 | Sujata Simkhada | MBS | Investment Policy of Commercial Banks in Nepal: A comparative Study of Nepal SBI Bank & Standard Chartered Bank Ltd | 15,000.00 |
| " | Shristi Sharma | MSc | Analysis of Benefit Sharing Mechanism under Gandak Treaty and the Associated Local Movement | 25,000.00 |
| " | Manisha Bhattarai | MA | Analysis of Economic Benefits of Solid Waste based Bio-gas: A Study from Kathmandu | 15,000.00 |
| " | Sujata Shrestha | MA | Applicability of Payment for Environmental Services in Community Forest: A Case Study from Godawari Kunda Community Forestry | 10,000.00 |
| " | Binu Thapa | MA | Analysis of Income and Expenditure patterns of Slum Dwellers in Kathmandu: A Case Study of Bagmati Corridor | 25,000.00 |
| " | Madhavi Lamichhane | MBS | Investor Awareness and Equity Investment in Nepalese Capital Market | 10,000.00 |
| " | Parbati Karki | M Phil | Export Trade Diversification of Nepal with SAARC Countries | 15,000.00 |
| " | Anjeela Gorkhaly | M Phil | Vegetable Production and Its Role in Income and Employment Generation: A Case Study of Dadhikot VDC of Bhaktapur District | 20,000.00 |
| " | Rashmee Rajkarnikar | PhD | Remittances: Impact on Poverty Reduction in Nepal: Case Study of Several VDCs | 50,000.00 |
| 2014/15 | Kavita Joshi | MBA | Impact of Monetary Policy on Financial Performance of Commercial Banks: A Case Study of Nepal | 25,000.00 |

IIDS New Building

The construction of new building of IIDS was completed on November 25, 2014. The building was inaugurated amid a function on March 25, 2015 by the Chief Guest Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, life time member, IIDS Governing Council. He also inaugurated the Kul Shekhar Sharma Conference Hall, named after one of the founding members of IDS, Late Kul Shekhar Sharma amid the same function. In the program, Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant (Executive Director, IIDS) felicitated the two living founding members of IDS (predecessor of IIDS), Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani. Among the participants were members of IIDS Governing Council, intellectuals associated directly or indirectly with the research activities of IIDS, News reporters and current and ex employees of IIDS.

IIDS and IFPRI Collaboration

The IIDS and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) are in the second year of the three year contract for the implementation of the project “Policy Research and Strategy for Agricultural Development and Food Security in Nepal”. The two have been jointly conducting activities in various fields of research, capacity building, assessment and policy analysis and dialogue on related issues in appropriate areas in collaboration with various local partners. The activities related to seed, food safety and contract farming will be implemented.

IIDS Board Meetings

The quarterly board meetings of IIDS for this year were held on September 22, 2014; December 31, 2014; March 25, 2015; and June 16, 2015. The management committee of the Board discussed on different ongoing and prospective projects, plans and administrative issues related to IIDS.

Workshops and Seminars

IIDS in collaboration with Seed Quality Control Centre (SQCC), IFPRI and USAID organized a workshop on “Enhancing Private Sector

Investment in Seed Business” on October 27, 2014. The program was organized at Hotel Annapurna, Durbar Marga, Kathmandu.

IIDS organized policy engagement workshop on “Tax Policy and Enterprise Development in South Asia” on November 18, 2014 at Trade Tower business Centre, Thapathali, Kathmandu. The program was organized in collaboration with Governance Institutes Network International (GINI). It was the first of its kind of workshop by IIDS where real time video conferencing with participants from other South Asian countries was held via Skype.

A two day workshop entitled “Best Practices in Contract Farming: Challenges and Opportunities in Nepal” was organized at Hotel Annapurna, Durbar Marg, Kathmandu on February 10 & 11, 2015. It was jointly organized By USAID, IFPRI, Ministry of Agricultural Development (MOAD), IIDS & Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI).

A validation workshop on “Fast Track breeding, Release, Registration & IPR Mechanisms for Seed Sector in Nepal” was organized by Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC), SQCC, IFPRI, USAID & IIDS on April 15, 2015 at Hotel Annapurna Durbar Marg, Kathmandu.

IIDS Staff Participation

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant, Executive Director of IIDS participated in “Third Asian Think Summit” held in Manila, Philippines from May 20 to 22, 2015. It was jointly organized by ADB, ADBI and University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant and Mr. Ram Khadka (Senior Economist at IIDS) participated in the “16th Annual GDN Conference”, held in Casablanca, Morocco from June 11 to 14, 2015 in the capacity of SANEI Coordinator. The theme of the conference was “Agriculture for Sustainable Growth: Challenges and Opportunities for a New Green Revolution”. During this time, Dr. Pant also attended GDN Board-RNP meeting as well as served as the Jury Member of the Selection Committee for the Japanese

Awards for Outstanding Research on Development.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant participated in “Regional Planning Workshop” in Bangkok, Thailand from October 15 to 17, 2014 organized by CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS).

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant participated in the 7th South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) from November 5 to 7, 2014 in New Delhi, India in the capacity of Special Guest. The theme of the Summit was “Towards South Asia Economic Union”. It was organized by RIS, in association with the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka; South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu; South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS), Kathmandu; The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad; and The Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), Colombo.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant attended a Meeting on Agrobusiness Network Dialogue on February 6, 2015.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant participated in Public Policy Dialogue on Public Expenditure on Agriculture, organized by MOAD on February 6, 2015.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant participated in Consultation Workshop on Seed on March 19, 2015.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant participated in FNCCI Dialogue Program on ADS, organized by FNCCI on March 29, 2015.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant and Mr. Madhu Ram Maharjan (Research Officer) attended the “Networking Meeting for Discussions on Issues, Constraints and Potentials for Investment in Seed Related R & D by Private Sector Seed Industries” organized by MOAD and IFPRI on March 30, 2015.

Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant participated in “South Asian Agricultural Economists and Related Conference” held in Kathmandu on February 13 and 14, 2015.

Mr Ram Khadka, Mr Manbar Khadka (Economist) and Mr. Madhu Ram Maharjan participated in the

workshop “Capacity Development Program on Priority Setting and Enhanced Monitoring and Evaluation” from July 14-16, 2014 under USAID’s Policy Reform Initiative in Nepal Project in partnership with IFPRI held in Kathmandu.

Mr Pravin Dangol (Research Associate, IFPRI-IIDS) and Mr Madhu Ram Maharjan participated in Training-cum-Orientation Workshop on “Contract Farming in Nepal” from April 23-24, 2015 under USAID’s Policy Reform Initiative in Nepal Project in partnership with IFPRI in Kathmandu.

Mr. Saurab Man Shrestha (Research Assistant) and Ms. Shailie Rimal (Economist) attended the training workshop on Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Modelling using GTAP. The workshop was organized by National Planning Commission (NPC), Government of Nepal. However, unfortunately, the workshop had to be discontinued mid-way due to the earthquake.

New Appointments and Internships

Appointments

Mr. Saurab Man Shrestha was appointed as Research Assistant on August 2014. He has completed M.A. in Development Economics from South Asian University, New Delhi, India.

Ms. Shailie Rimal was appointed as Economist on March 2015. Before that, she served as Research Assistant for six months from September 2014. She has completed M.A. in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

Ms. Nava Durga Joshi was appointed as Administrative Assistant on November 2014. She is pursuing her Bachelor in Business Studies from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Mr. Buddhi Man Tamang was appointed as Driver on February 2015.

Mr. Ashutosh Mani Dixit was appointed as Manager for South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI) Secretariat at IIDS effective from May 2015. He has completed Master of International and Development Economics from

The Australian National University, Australia. He also holds Master of Business Administration from Kathmandu University School of Management, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Internships

Mr. Sudip Luitel worked as an intern for three months from November 2014. He has been pursuing Bachelor in Development Finance (BDFin), a four year course under Kathmandu University from National College, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ms. Sarita Sapkota worked as an intern on March 2015 for one month. She has been pursuing Bachelor in Business Studies, a four year course under Tribhuvan University from Jaya Multiple Campus, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ms. Rabina Luitel worked as an intern on March 2014 for one month. She has been pursuing Bachelors in Community Development from Kathmandu University School of Arts, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ms. Rojina Khatri worked as an intern on March 2014 for one month. She has been pursuing Bachelors in Community Development from Kathmandu University School of Arts, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Mr. Navin Khadka worked as an intern on March 2014 for one month. He has completed M.A. in Economics from Tokyo International University, Japan.

Projects

Completed Projects

Tax Policy and Enterprise Development in South Asia (2012-2014)

IIDS had signed a three year contract with Governance Institutes Network International (GINI), Pakistan in 2012 to conduct a study on tax policy and enterprise development in South Asia with financial support from International Development and Research Center (IDRC), Canada.

The project was completed in November 2014. It was a multiyear, multi-country joint research program that looked at the various tax policies in South Asia and their impact on business enterprises. This study examined the relationship between tax policy and enterprises development in South Asia. More specifically, it focused on three themes consisting of impact of tax exemption and tax concession, VAT reforms and property tax on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) development in South Asia. The specific objectives of the studies were to develop three policy research studies that focus on the impact of tax exemptions and concessions, value-added-tax (VAT) reforms, and property tax (respectively) on the development of small enterprises in Nepal.

Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreement in South Asia: An Outline on Implication of Trade Agreements in Nepal

This was a year-long project signed under the South Asia Network of Economic Research Institute (SANEI). It was completed in December 2014. The objective of the study was to study the implication of Bilateral and Regional Trade Agreements (BRTA) of Nepal in relation to South Asian countries.

Assessment of factors for promoting contract farming in Nepal: Ginger

This project was completed in January 2015. IIDS, in collaboration with IFPRI, conducted field study in selected districts of mid-western and western development regions to assess the economic significance and viability of contract farming mechanisms in Nepal. The main objectives of the studies were to explore the Socio economic characteristics and cropping-pattern of ginger farmers and economies of cultivation of ginger for contract farmers and non contract farmers, etc.

Ongoing Projects

Strengthening Nepalese Seed Industry through Facilitating Seed Regulation, Enhancing Private Sector Participation and Variety Role / Registration Process (IFPRI)

IIDS is undertaking three studies under this broader headings “Strengthening Nepalese Seed Industry through Facilitating Seed Regulation, Enhancing Private Sector Participation and Variety Role / Registration Process”. These studies are funded by IFPRI/USAID.

The objectives of the studies are:

- Finalization and endorsement of eight guidelines and directives needed for effective implementation of newly approved Seed Regulation 2069,
- Analysis of the constraints and recommend proactive measures for enhancing private sector participation and investments in seed sector through commercial seed business, and
- Recommend fast-track varietal release and registration processes, formulation of more practical and conducive IPR regimes for seed and varietal development.

Providing support to Ministry of Agriculture Development (MOAD) towards conducting an assessment study to establish the need for food safety policy and new food act while reviewing the existing draft food safety policy and preparing new draft

This study is being funded by the IFPRI/USAID. The objective of the study is to assist MoAD/GoN in bringing new policy and revising the current Food Act as per the changing scenario. The specific task include conducting an assessment study to establish the need for Food Safety Policy and a new Food Act and then review the existing food safety policy draft and prepare a new draft for public-private dialogues followed by the preparation of the final draft for submission to the GoN. The total budget of the study is NRs 4,776,300.

Institutional Consultancy to Implement Urban Multidimensional Poverty and Deprivations

This study is funded by UNICEF. The objective of the study is to examine the child deprivation

especially in the poor urban rural households of some of the selected municipalities. The specific objectives are to conceptualize and operationalize the multidimensional child deprivation index in the context of Nepal and to make policy suggestions and recommendations to the governmental and non governmental organisations for reducing child poverty and deprivation from Nepal. The total budget of the study is NRs 3,759,360.

Promoting informed policy dialogue on migration, remittance and development in Nepal

IIDS is undertaking a study on “Promoting informed policy dialogue on migration, remittance and development in Nepal”. This study is funded by ILO. The total budget of the study is NRs 2,419,600. The main goal of this study is to work with the Government of Nepal and concerned stakeholders to maximize the development potential of labor migration through productive usage of foreign remittances, returnee-migrant skill and expertise transfer and development of remittance-backed savings and investment products. This will be done through the following process:

- By conducting an evidence-based study on the relationship between migration and development in Nepal with recommendations for policy changes and concrete suggestions for product development,
- Development of a migration and development strategy/road-map and multi-stakeholder action plan towards appropriate investments of remittance in income generating sectors,
- Mobilizing returnee migrants in (self) entrepreneurship development, and other financial products useful for migrant workers and their families.

Poverty Alleviation Project in Kapilvastu District

IIDS has been implementing the Poverty Alleviation Program in partnership with the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) for assisting in the social, economic and physical development of the Dalits, indigenous people, muslims and women by helping them realize their intrinsic self-reliance capacity and identifying their needs through the process of social mobilization. The long-term objective of the project is to enable the poor and vulnerable groups of people of

Kapilvastu to gain access to resources for their productive self-employment, to encourage them to undertake income-generating activities for poverty alleviation and to improve the quality of life of the neediest groups, as specified by the Poverty Alleviation Fund on a sustainable basis. It is an ongoing program benefiting about 3,643 households covering 161 community organizations of Kapilvastu district.

Youths and Poverty in Nepal: The connection

- Bishnu Dev Pant and Mukesh Khanal

According to the United Nations, over a billion people in the world today live in an unacceptable poverty. Most of these people live in low-income countries that suffer from malnutrition; hunger; limited access to education; higher mortality rates; social discrimination; lack of participation in civil decision-making; homelessness and inadequate housing. The UN suggests that the best way to escape poverty and develop economically in these poverty stricken countries is through programs designed to uplift the youths. It is believed that program focusing on the youths is much more effective than programs focusing on other demographics when it comes to lifting a nation out of poverty.

The latest National Labor Force Survey (NLFS) of 2008 shows around 60 percent of the Nepalese population is below 25 year of age. If the ratio holds today, it means that around 18 million people in this country are below 25 years of age. It implies that most people in this country are young. If Nepal wants to develop, it should increase its funding to the programs that help the youths. Programs supporting education, health, family planning and employment for youths should receive more and adequate funding.

At the start of 1800, a Nepali mother was giving birth to 6.2 children on average, compared to 7 children by an American woman, and 4.5 children by a Norwegian woman. This shows that in the beginning of 1800 Nepal was better than America but worse than Norway in terms of fertility rate. However, the industrial revolution in the US that began in the early 1800s, contributed to develop the US economy. As a result, healthcare facilities and nutritional intake improved among its population. Programs on health education, poverty reduction, sanitation and hygiene started receiving increased fundings. So, the fertility rate went down. In comparison, Nepal saw no economic development until the 1970s. As a result, a Nepali woman was still giving birth to 6.2 children on average in 1970. However, foreign aid started pouring into Nepal beginning in the 1970s, especially in the field of health and education. This resulted in improving health and education facilities in the country. As a result, the fertility rate in Nepal started dropping during and after the 1970s. Today, on average a woman in the US gives birth to 2.2 children. This statistics goes on to show that although Nepal was slow to start the progress, it has rapidly caught up with most developed nations when it comes to lowering the fertility rate.

Between 1990 and 2011, the fertility rate (birth per woman) in Nepal declined from 5.16 to 2.6. On the other hand, births per 1000 teenage mothers (aged between 15 and 19) between 1988 and 2010 declined from 126 to 81. This shows that, on average, a Nepali woman gave birth to less than 50 percent fewer babies in 2010 compared to 1990, while an average Nepali teenage mother gave birth to less than one third fewer babies in 2010 compared to 1998. So, there is a noticeable improvement since the 1990 democracy in terms of fertility rate. The possible factors that resulted in this improvement could be the increasing female education, liberal abortion policy, the equality laws, increased opportunities for minorities and women in government services, and increasing foreign and domestic aid for minorities and women.

The improvement in fertility rate, which is comparable to developed nations like the US and Norway, is a matter of pride for all the Nepalese women. However, Nepal has a long way to go in terms of infant mortality rate. Less than 3 infants out of 1000 live births die in Norway, and about 6 infants out of 1000 live births die in Nepal before their first birthday. This high infant mortality rate suggests that Nepal still lacks the proper healthcare facilities and infrastructure to ensure the survival of its babies.

Nepal cannot, seriously, expect to develop and prosper economically if it continues to lose its labor force through infant mortalities. However, there's some good news in this front. The immunization rates for DPT and Measles in Nepal was below 10 percent in 1980. This shows that despite a decade of introduction of these vaccines, the population was skeptical on using the vaccines. But, the vaccination rate was around 80 percent in 2011. The increasing vaccination rate coincides with the lowering fertility rate. This shows that women in Nepal, before 1970, were giving birth to too many children to ensure at least a couple of them survived diseases like Diphtheria, Polio, Tetanus, Measles, and Mumps. Once the population discovered that vaccination was increasing the survival rate of babies, they started having fewer babies. And, this is good news for the fight against poverty in Nepal as well. Research has shown that poverty has a strong correlation with fertility rate.

Another factor that correlates with poverty is the literacy rate. As youths become more literate, they gain invaluable information on sex, family planning and diseases. Such knowledge empowers the population to make right choices. Statistics show that literacy rate among youths has increased in the last few decades. Today, about 81 percent of female youths, and 90 percent of male youths in Nepal are literate. Grouped together, the time series of youth literacy in Nepal shows that around 86% of all youths, aged between 15 and 24, are literate. This is exciting news for the future of Nepal.

About 60 percent of Nepal's population is below 25 years of age. So, Nepal is a country of young population. The youths in this country are the driving force of the nation and its economy. Hence, an increase in the literacy rates among Nepalese youths suggests that our population is becoming more literate, more educated, and hence, more productive. Since youths make most of the population in Nepal, and therefore most of its labor force, it becomes our responsibility to make sure that we provide education and training to them so that they can compete with the global labor force. Total expenditure on education has increased since 1990. However, foreign aid for education is still low, has erratic fluctuations, and not very contributing in promoting education.

Despite an increase in total education spending, there has been no increase in public education spending. After 1990, increase in public expenditure on education has been less than 1 percent. To call that increase 'unsatisfactory' would be an understatement. Urban areas do not suffer from this lack in spending as they have increased private spending on education. However, lack of public funding affects the rural areas because they are not attractive to private spenders. Rural youths lack the the same opportunities as their urban counterparts in terms of access to affordable education. For a country that keeps mentioning the issues of education and poverty as its top most agendas, public spending increase of less than 1 percent in the last 20 years does not help sustain its image of 'trying'. An increase of less than 1 percent does not qualify as trying; it suggests 'giving up'. This governmental 'give-up' has resulted in millions of rural youths who will be undereducated if not uneducated, and will be poor all their life.

Besides education, the factor that affects poverty is the health of the population. We should provide healthcare and medical benefits to our citizens in order to make our labor force healthy and productive. However, the total health spending as a percent of GDP has declined in the last decade. This lack of healthcare spending has resulted in an unfit and unhealthy population. This, in turn, has resulted in declining productivity and sustained poverty rates. The worst is that out of the total spending on health, government's contribution is only around 31 percent. Most spending is incurred by private sector, which is always limited to urban areas. So, there are millions of rural Nepalese who lack basic healthcare due to low private and public spending in rural areas. If it wants to improve the quality of life among rural population and lower their poverty level, this

trend needs to be reversed. Everybody knows that health is wealth. So, we cannot even think about reducing poverty levels unless we improve the health related investments.

One positive facet of the current Nepalese demography is that the ratio of young literate females to males has increased steadily since 1990. This suggests that although there are millions of youths in Nepal who lack education, among the ones who are educated, female youths are becoming equally educated as male youths. This gender equality in education has contributed in reducing poverty, increasing productivity in the labor force, and improving the overall economy.

The level of national poverty in Nepal has declined by 40 percent between 1996 and 2011. The urban poverty has declined by 1.94 percent, and the rural poverty by 2.47 percent each year during this period. This difference in urban and rural poverty decline suggests that there has not been a conscious effort to reduce rural poverty, and that rural areas need more help. Although extreme poverty, those making less than 1.25 USD a day, has lowered significantly. The Gini coefficients on the other hand have shown a significant increment. Between 1995/96 and 2010/11 the Gini index in rural areas increased from 30.8 to 31.1 and decreased from 42.6 to 35.3 percent in urban areas; and increased from 32.2 to 32.8 nationally. Also, the highest 10 percent of earners have increased their share of national income significantly from 36.9 to 39.5 percent and lowest 10 percent earners have seen a decline in their share. In other words, the poor are getting poorer, and the rich are getting richer. The increase in the Gini index and the degradation in the income share ratios suggest that our society is becoming more unequal every year. These statistics also show that there has not been a conscious effort to help those at the bottom of the society. The poor, essentially, have been left to fend off poverty on their own. In other words, if anything has been done by the government, that has not been reflected in the statistics. Until and unless the people at the bottom of the income strata are helped, alleviation of poverty and the thought of an equal society will remain unfulfilled in Nepal.

Since agriculture is still the major component of our GDP, the decline in agriculture in Nepal has meant that more people are unemployed and poor. The agricultural contribution to GDP is at its lowest level during the last 30-40 years. The liberalization of Nepalese economy post-1990 democracy was always bound to allocate resources, including capital and labor, to other sectors of the economy like manufacturing and service. While agriculture was always en route to decline, which has occurred too rapidly, without giving the agricultural labor an opportunity to train and educate itself so that it may be employed in other booming sectors. Government's failure to act on this matter has resulted in millions of agricultural laborers losing their jobs with no alternatives and migrating to overseas countries for possible employment. Lack of training and education has resulted in these laborers not being able to find jobs in other sectors within Nepal. As a result, they have been forced, in a way through government inaction, to seek employment overseas. While such overseas employment brings remittances and is beneficial in the short-term, it is not a desirable outcome of the unemployment and poverty situation. A long-term solution to the agricultural unemployment and poverty is to provide education, health benefits and jobs to these laborers and retain them in our economy. As a growing economy, we cannot afford to lose our labor force in its prime working age to some other country. We should develop policies to keep our youths at home.

A glaring and sobering statistic in the fight against poverty comes from the latest National labor Force Survey conducted in 2008. The survey showed that 1 million male and 1 million female children between the ages of 5 and 9 are active in the labor force. Another 1.2 million male and 1.1 million female children between the ages of 10 and 14 are also active in the labor force. The government has programs and laws designed to ensure that children in Nepal do not have to work. The fact that a government sponsored survey showed these results, and there was no subsequent

action taken to mitigate the issue of child labor, shows a systemic failure of our government. This shows that we, as a society, have failed in our duties to educate and take care of our children. These 4.3 million children deserve better life if they stay active in the labor force, they will grow up to become youths with little or no education. And, an increase in number of youths with little to no education means poverty will rise again in Nepal. This is a current problem, and a major one at that. Somebody needs to ask the government: Why are these 4.3 million children in Nepal working, and is there something being done to help them ?

In conclusion, Nepal currently suffers poor spending in health and education. Rural areas have been neglected, and rural youths do not have equal access to various amenities like their urban counterparts. There are too many children active in the labor force, and these children are being robbed of their childhood while our society looks the other way. The abandonment of our rural youths and our children will lead to increase in poverty level in Nepal when these children and youths grow up and become a member of our labor force. In order to grow and develop economically, we need to nurture and educate our children and youths. We need to provide healthcare benefits to all our citizens. Only then we can dream about economic development and alleviation of poverty in Nepal.

(The author is the Executive Director of IIDS. He is thankful to Mr. Mukesh Khanal, former Economist IIDS, for his assistance in preparing this paper)

Lesson from earthquake: open space must be protected

- Ram Khadka

The 7.8-Richter-scale massive earthquake that struck Kathmandu on April 25 was catastrophic, causing significant loss of life, untold damage and destruction and incalculable loss of several treasured UNESCO Heritage sites. Devastating and tragic as it was, it also underscored the critical importance of open space— including playground, parks and other public spaces—that people can seek refuge in times of natural calamities and disasters. While provision of relief to the victims of the earthquake is the first priority (we are past the rescue and recovery of phase), it is also time to reflect upon and reassess our natural disaster preparedness and the importance and need of open space in the Kathmandu valley.

Nepal, and Kathmandu valley in particular, is prone to earthquake as it sits on newly formed and still grinding tectonic plates. A major earthquake of similar magnitude to the one that occurred recently, scientists warn and predict, is inevitable in this region about every 70-80 years. A monstrous and catastrophic earthquake, with epicenter in eastern Nepal, struck Nepal in 1990 B. S, killing about 5,000 people. The strongest quake to ever strike Nepal, the 1990-quake measured 8.2 in Richter scale. Seismologists had been warning and many feared that an earthquake of similar strength in Kathmandu was long overdue. May be not in most people's minds, but it loomed large in minds of many experts. It was just a matter of time. And that time came Saturday, April 25th—of course without any warning. A powerful and sustained quake lasting about a minute was all it took. Apart from obliterating many iconic and centuries-old landmark structures, toppling buildings and killing thousands of people, it exposed our less than adequate disaster preparedness as well as recovery and relief efforts— and also the critical importance of open space. For many, having open space in their surrounding area or neighbors made the difference between having a place to seek safety, and even life and death.

Kathmandu valley has been undergoing rapid and unplanned urbanization. A growing population and increasing density coupled with unplanned, haphazard and, in many cases, unregulated construction, as well some very old houses and structures, makes Kathmandu valley very vulnerable to serious damage and destruction. When natural and other disasters, including earthquake or fire occur, having an access to open space is extremely important. The sustained and strong tremor of Saturday sent thousands of people out of their homes forcing them to seek safety in open space—nearby fields, gardens, parks, playground, Tundikhel, and any other open space, even roads. In downtown areas with no open spaces, frightened and terrified people poured out on to roads to wait out the recurring and powerful aftershocks. The recent widening of roads, besides easing the often snarling traffic, also provided spaces for people to stay and camp out in a crisis situation. Useful and necessary as the roads were in the last few days, they are not designed to hold people in times of disaster. Emergency and other rescue vehicles, fire trucks, police need to pass and reach affected areas as soon as possible. Obstruction of roads, from people sitting on or camping out, will make the passage for the emergency response team difficult and significantly increase response time. Ideally roads and streets should not be obstructed or blocked.

Unplanned urbanization and shrinking open space is a major concern that experts and environmentalists have been pointing out. In Kathmandu valley, as large as it is, open space has been declining over the years, more rapidly in recent times. As population has exploded, paddy fields have given ways to houses and buildings. Many of these structures are flimsily built, often ignoring earthquake resistance recommendation, and cannot withstand powerful seismic shocks. What was once one of the most pristine and scenic places in the world has been largely transformed into a maze of ugly concrete jungle. As the government and experts begin the process of assessing our emergency preparedness and look for ways to improve it, these are key dimensions: earthquake resistance construction, strict enforcement of building codes, zoning laws and open spaces. All

future constructions need to be earthquake resistance and building codes should be strictly enforced. At the same time, the importance of open spaces cannot be overlooked.

While all of our thoughts and prayers go to the suffering-people and families that have lost loved ones, at this time, we all need to seriously think about open spaces in our neighborhoods. The government should formulate and pass a well thought out zoning law in Nepal. Residential area, commercial and area for factories and manufacturing, should be clearly demarcated. At the same time, increasing open space in Kathmandu valley, vulnerable to powerful earthquakes, should be an integral part of future disaster preparedness and management planning. Where there is public land, it should be developed into public places—parks, playground, gardens or other purposes. At the same time, government should make it a priority to reclaim encroached public land and put it to public use.

Public parks, play grounds, gardens or libraries are public goods—open to the public and for everyone's benefit. As Kathmandu has urbanized at a torrid pace, one obvious casualty has been open spaces and public places. As in many other countries, public spaces and places should be central fixture of communities. In addition to providing benefits to the public during normal times and raising quality of life, parks, gardens and public playgrounds can serve a critical function in times of disaster—as was evident in the last few days. Thousands of people—many traumatized and too scared to go inside their houses— camped out in open, including on roadside, seeking safety from earthquake. This underscores the necessity and significance of open space in Kathmandu valley and other densely populated urban areas in times of disaster and crisis.

(Ram Khadka is Senior Economist at IIDS. The article was also published in The Himalayan Times Daily on May 15, 2015).

There is a great economic divide between the first world and the third world countries. Third world countries are nowhere near to the developed countries in terms of income as depicted by Per Capita Income (GDP or GNI) or in terms of well being as represented by Human Development Index (HDI). A large number of people in developing countries live in poverty. Over three billion people, nearly half the world population live under \$2.5 a day. The richest 20 percent holds nearly three-quarters of the world income and the world's poorest 40 percent have 5 percent of the global income. This is the situation of inequality at the world level.

Now let us take a look at the situation of poverty and inequality within a developing/ underdeveloped country. Let's take a case of Nepal, one of the underdeveloped and poorest countries of the world. Nepal is currently ranked 145th in the HDI as per the latest Human Development Report, 2014. The poorest 20 percent have 4.1 percent share of income while the richest 20 percent own 56.2 percent of the income. Regarding poverty, 25.16 percent of the people are poor; the urban poverty rate is 15.46 where as the rural poverty rate is 27.43 percent.

So, what do the above suggest? They suggest that poverty is rampant in Nepal and there is a huge gap between the haves and have-nots sections of the country. This poverty and disparity has been largely reflected in the urbanization pattern of the country. This urbanization pattern is applicable to the other developing and under-developed countries as well. This pattern has come up as a major head ache for the urban planners; to manage the growing number of people in the cities who throng from villages and rural areas. This problem is known as **Urban Giantism** which gives rise to the First City Bias in most of the developing and underdeveloped countries.

Urban Giantism is the phenomenon of urban settlements growing very large in size due to rapid migration of people from other areas to these urban settlements. People migrate in large numbers to urban areas because of the perceived better income, infrastructure and the economies of agglomeration¹. According to Harris Todaro model of Rural-Urban Migration, the rural to urban migration occur not due to the actual wage differentials but the perceived wage differentials by the migrants between rural and urban areas and until people perceive the urban wage and job opportunities to be higher than rural wages and job opportunities, migration of people from rural to urban areas will continue as people find it beneficial to migrate. In case of Nepal, security of life has also been one of the important factors for migration. This was particularly evident from the large exodus of people from rural to urban (headquarters or cities) areas during the decade long civil unrest in the country. As per the census of Nepal 2011, the density of population density in rural Nepal is 153 persons per square km. In sharp contrast, the population in urban areas is 1,381 persons per square km. This shows that the population distribution is highly skewed towards urban settlements.

Among the urban settlements too, Kathmandu, the capital and the largest city of Nepal has a population of 1,003,285 which is nearly 4 percent of the total population². Among the urban areas, Kathmandu has close to 22 percent of the urban population. The second largest city of Nepal, Pokhara has a population of 264,991. However, the first largest city, Kathmandu is nearly 4 times as large as the second largest city, Pokhara in terms of population. This high disparity in the population between the largest and the second largest city is what has been termed as first city bias.

First city bias is a situation in which the country's largest city receives a disproportionately large share of the public investment and incentives for private investment in relation to the rest of the economy. The large city receives all the investments, public goods and services, employment opportunities and most of the economic activities are largely concentrated in this city only. People

are attracted to this city and they migrate for better life and opportunities. This further expands the economic base of the city and the city further expands when the increased population demands more economic activities. This cycle continues and the bias further increases. The major problem with this first city bias is the complexity in managing the resources and creation of employment in the city and the rise of urban informal sectors. The piling population in the city puts pressure on the employment opportunities which reduces the wage rate in the city. This makes living in the city very difficult and costly. One of the offshoots of this problem is the creation of urban informal sectors and shanty settlements which often undermine the legal economic system and law and order situation of the city. In Nepal, Kathmandu has been facing similar problems. The first city is generally the capital city.

So, why does the urban giantism or the first city bias arise? To answer this question we need to look back into the political and economic structure of the country. Firstly, the hub-and-spoke transportation system with its centre in the capital (largest city) results into large companies to have its base in the capital city. Locating in the capital city can also help the firms and businesses in currying favor from the politicians and bureaucrats and lobbying for their business as they can have direct and easy access to the influential people in the political system. Secondly, it has been observed that under the totalitarian rule or infant democracy, the rulers in their bid to retain their power and prevent uprising and revolts tend to provide better facilities to the city's residents. We have observed that during the monarchy in Nepal, the government provided special facilities to the capital denizens so that they would be affirmative about the government and not take part in activities to disrupt or overthrow the government. Even current governments have been doing that.

Thirdly, the government policy of high protectionism (import substitution industrialization) for the local products and high transportation cost can also promote urban giantism and first city bias. When there is high protectionism for domestic or local products and the cost of transportation is very high, the producers would be willing to have their manufacturing units in and around their largest markets. This would help them have comparative and cost advantages. Lastly, close to urban core, the surrounding areas might be a good option for the businesses for reducing the costs while also enjoying the benefits of urban agglomeration. This expands the urban area further until there is incentive of reduced costs to the producers. But locating in other cities, which do not have adequate infrastructure and do not provide the benefit of agglomeration do not tend to grow.

So, what can be done to balance the pattern of growth all over the country? The answer looks simple: provide incentives and infrastructure in the alternative (rural) areas so that economy could flourish in these areas too. However, the solution is not as simple as it looks. In developing countries like Nepal, the effects of agglomeration economies and urbanization is created by market forces and the government can do very little to implement the planned development as they usually do not have sufficient funds to build the infrastructures. The nascent governments tend to protect their own political interests than be concerned about the economic development of the country as a whole.

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(Footnotes)

¹ Economies of agglomeration is used to describe the benefits that arise for the firms by locating near each other that provides cost advantages to producers and consumers.

² National Population and Housing Census 2011

(The author is Research Assistant at IIDS).

The contract farming has been practiced in very preliminary stage in Nepal in very fewer crops. Most of the report has emphasized that it is more helpful and the best mechanisms to promote commercial farming in countries like Nepal. While contract farming has been in practice in several parts of the world, it is still not so prevalent across Nepal. Moreover, the nation is yet to have its own Contract Farming Bill. The contract farming is the agreement between two or three parties that involved in farming communities. The main objective is to minimize the losses in both the farmers' and buyers' side. It is more beneficial to contracted farmers than not contracted farmers as a whole. In this regard, there are a lot of prospects in Nepal that most of the lands are kept fallow due to the migration or people go abroad for seeking employment. The simple process of contract farming helps in addressing such issues and also helps in maintaining the productivity and income of farmers.

Contract farming involves agricultural production being carried out on the basis of an agreement between the buyer and farm producers. Sometimes it involves the buyer specifying the quality required and the price, with the farmer agreeing to deliver at a future date. More commonly, however, contracts outline conditions for the production of farm products and for their delivery to the buyer's premises. The farmer undertakes to supply agreed quantities of a crop or livestock product, based on the quality standards and delivery requirements of the purchaser. In return, the buyer, usually a company, agrees to buy the product, often at a price that is established in advance. The company often also agrees to support the farmer through, e.g., supplying inputs, assisting with land preparation, providing production advice and transporting produce to its premises.

Basically, the contract farming is practiced to overcome transaction costs of both farmers and buyers. It is obvious that small producers are benefited from transportation costs so as to small amounts of produce to bear the same cost. This mechanism helps in imperfect credit markets. The contracted farmers are well informed from market price. The buyers are provided technological knowledge as well as technical inputs to the marginal farmers to absorb the risks of loss as well.

There are different models of contract farming prevalent in the world such as informal, intermediary, multipartite, centralized and nucleus. Normally there are three types of contracts are practiced such as market specification contracts, production management contracts and resource providing contracts. In contract farming, the farming contracts are variable such as verbal and written; informal and formal; farmers and farmers group; seasonal and long term and specification etc.

Despite of having more benefits, there are more challenges prevalent while adopting contract farming in Nepal that are specified both from farmer's as well as firm's/buyer's perspective. On farmer's perspective, lack of credit for crop production; lower price for crop produce; faulty grading by buyers; difficulty in meeting quality requirements; lack of quality inputs; provision of inputs at higher rate; poor service delivery by firms; delayed payments; delay in procurement of produce and cheating by buyer etc are the prominent challenges.

On the other hand, there are also some challenges in firm's/buyer's perspective such as lack of proper management by the company; non-availability of extension staff; high rate of rent for

hiring transport vehicles; inability to provide proper transport facilities to farmers due to poor road networks and strikes; scarcity of transport vehicles during peak period; holding-up of transport vehicles by farmers; frequent price fluctuations in international markets; violation of terms and conditions by farmers; selling of produce to other companies by farmers and farmers' negligence in maintaining quality etc. These prominent challenges should be taken account while contracting among the partners. Maintaining and building trust among the contracting partners by sticking in win-win situation in order to maintain good relationship. Making good relationship between the contracting parties is the secret of success in contract farming.

As we know from various reports, journals and some empirical study that the contracted farmers are more beneficial than the non-contracted farmers. So that farmers are benefited and assured more than non contracted farmers. In this connection, the government has taken initiative on implementing of contract farming practices that better addresses the issues of fallow land despite of having irrigation facilities. The major contribution of contract farming is to minimize the risk of both the parties. The prior agreement that specified all clearly between two parties in contract farming builds the trust. The main requisite for the successful contract farming practices in Nepal are - technological transfer and innovation, better involvement of third party or tripartite and good investment climate, sound analysis and planning, economic viability and incentives etc.

However, contract farming practices in Nepal is very preliminary stage, the government needs to educate, sensitize, raising awareness among the Nepali farmers in its importance, implications and beneficial impacts that can be replicated by adopting the best model what the neighboring country India has already been adopted in high value crops. The farmers of Nepal can be motivating by accessing to improved seeds at low/subsidized rate, accessing to assured market for crop, accessing to information on cultivation of right crops, reducing in overall risks and uncertainties, and reducing in both production and transaction costs (Source: Contract farming in Ginger: Implications for smallholders in Nepal). The contract farming mainly enhances the income, improving access to technology, inputs, market and capital along with improving good agricultural practices.

(The author is Research Officer at IIDS).

Photo Gallery



Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa starts the new office building inauguration ceremony by lighting lamp.



Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa inaugurating the new building by cutting the ribbon



The new office building of IIDS



Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa inaugurating the Lt. Kul Shekhar Sharma Hall



Conference after the inauguration ceremony.



Dr. Mohan Man Sainju addresses the participants of econometrics workshop. Alongside him are Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant, Executive Director of IIDS (left) and Dr. Subir Sen.

Photo Gallery



Dr. Mohan Man Sainju providing certificates of participation to one of the participants of the econometrics workshop



The founding members of IIDS (from left to right) Dr. Prakash C. Lohani and Dr. Bhekh B. Thapa with Executive Chairman Dr. Mohan Man Sainju.



Dr. Subir Sen, Asst. Professor, IIT Roorkee conducting *Econometrics and Its Application* training



IIDS board members and staff team



Participants in the workshop *Best Practices in Contract Farming: Challenges and Opportunities in Nepal*



IIDS staff volunteering for providing relief materials to earthquake victims.

Nepal Economic Outlook 2014/15

Summary Report



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