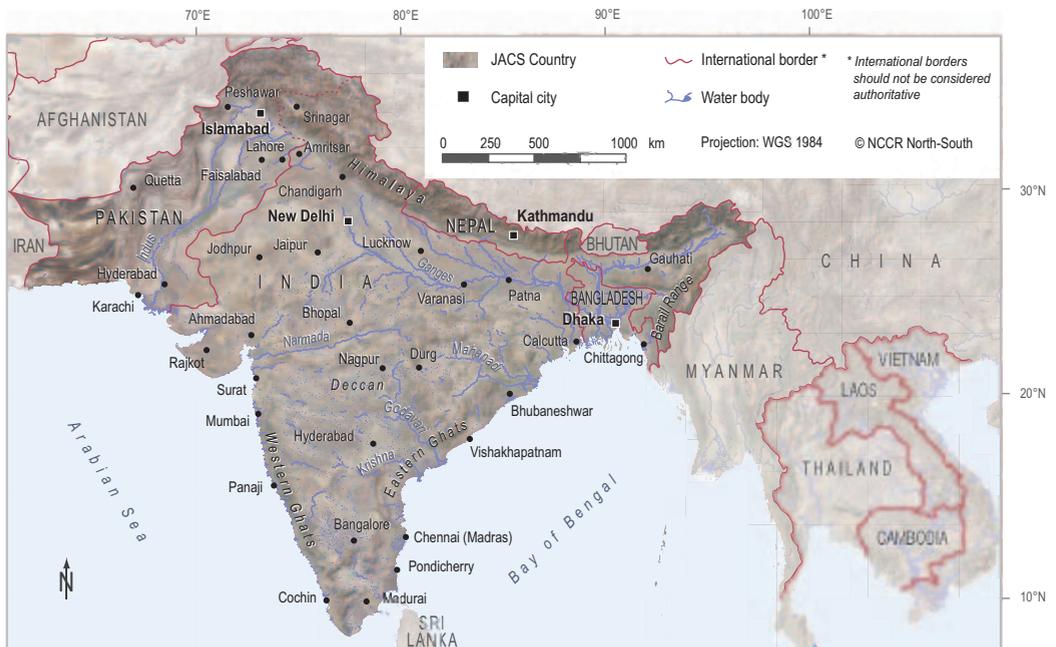


## Part V

# Addressing Livelihood Challenges Through Research: Insights from South Asia





## 17 Livelihoods, Institutions and Migration in South Asia

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### 17.1 The context

South Asia is one of the most populated regions of the world and is characterised by a diverse livelihood situation. The region is facing the problems of a skewed power structure, a diminution of the state's role, lack of capacity for implementation, unequal participation in decision-making, erosion of indigenous knowledge and institutions, intolerance towards ethnic and cultural diversities, growing inequalities and imbalances, widening gender disparity, migration, livelihood insecurity, land degradation, unequal distribution of resources, armed conflicts, and lack of adequate infrastructure and access to information and technologies (Müller-Böker et al 2004). However, at the same time these challenges are increasingly acknowledged, and interest in addressing them is growing. The region's problems and opportunities were identified accordingly during a multi-stakeholder workshop in Kathmandu at the outset of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South programme, in 2001. Since then, NCCR North-South research activities in South Asia have been based mainly on these problems and opportunities.

Table 1 gives an impression of the region's complexity. All eight countries would have represented too broad an area to apply the concepts, approaches and methodologies of the partnership arrangements in which the NCCR North-South collaborates. Therefore, research activities were concentrated in parts of India, Nepal, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, and Bangladesh (the latter only with regard to migration issues).

NCCR North-South research carried out in the Joint Area of Case Studies (JACS)<sup>2</sup> South Asia (SAS) over the past eight years has demonstrated that global change has had a negative impact on marginalised people, especially with respect to institutions, policies and practices at various levels. Research has addressed questions of access and power in relation to migration, conflict, livelihood insecurity, and degradation of natural resources. The

Table 1

South Asian countries	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population in mid-2008 (millions)	Projected population in 2050 (millions)	Infant mortality rate (per 1000)	Life expectancy at birth (years)			% of undernourished population (2002–2004)
					Total	Male	Female	
Afghanistan	65,209	32.7	81.9	163	43	43	43	–
Bangladesh	144,000	147.3	215.1	52	63	62	64	30
Bhutan	47,000	0.7	1.0	40	66	66	67	–
India	328,726	1149.3	1755.2	57	65	65	66	20
Maldives	300	0.3	0.5	16	73	72	73	10
Nepal	147,180	27.0	48.7	48	64	63	64	17
Pakistan	796,100	172.8	295.2	75	63	62	64	24
Sri Lanka	65,610	20.3	25.4	15	71	67	75	22
Total	513,954	1550.4	2423.0	–	–	–	–	–
Average	–	–	–	58.25	63.5	64.5	62.5	–

Overview of demographic features of South Asia.

Source: Compiled from Population Reference Bureau 2008.

findings have been synthesised focusing on the following three themes: 1) *The Functioning of Institutions in Relation to Access to Livelihood Assets*; 2) *State Performance in Resource Governance and Associated Conflict*; and 3) *Migration*. JACS SAS researchers pursued disciplinary, as well as multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches to address problems of sustainable development. The synthesis work done in the JACS SAS also focuses on concretisation, specialisation, application and generalisation.

## 17.2 Research achievements

The three syntheses provide a better understanding of rural livelihood strategies in South Asia and the role of institutions and their effects on state governance practices. The first synthesis is concerned with analyses of access to livelihood assets and the functioning of institutions (Chapter 18 in the present volume). It identifies the conditions that impede access of marginalised people to sources of livelihood, and hamper the functioning of state

regulations, customary norms, and institutions. It reveals that despite the efforts made in development interventions to create livelihood assets for poor people, their access to these assets is still shaped by local power relations and institutional performance. Customary rules remain influential in determining access to basic services such as health, education and livelihood assets (Figure 1). For example, women's mobility and access to resources in Pakistan's NWFP was very much shaped by the *purdah* (a customary law that confines women within a certain spatial boundary). Similarly, in Kerala's Adivasi (tribal) community, Paniyan and Kattunayakan were not allowed to milk cows owing to caste-based discrimination, which thus limits dairy farming as an alternative means of livelihood. Customary norms and power status are interrelated in the shaping of access and entitlement issues. Interactions between customary practices and socio-economic systems often influence access (see Chapters 18–20 in the present volume). Therefore, it is essential to have a better understanding of local dynamics in order to formulate development interventions. As argued by Scoones (2009), rural livelihood strategies are very much affected by local power relations.



Fig. 1  
Alpine pasture as a livelihood base in northwest Pakistan. Access to these pastures is strictly regulated through informal customary institutions. (Photo by Urs Geiser)

The second regional synthesis is related to state performance in resource governance and associated conflicts (Chapter 19 in the present volume). A comparative analysis shows that the governing practices of the state are one of the main causes of conflict over natural resources. State legitimacy and interaction with people determine the degree and intensity of conflict and collaboration with respect to natural resources. Once state legitimacy is weak and a top-down, controlling approach is adopted, conflict is inevitable. Analysis of forest management in the NWFP and Kerala, and of conservation management in Nepal, shows that the high vertical and horizontal legitimacy of the state promotes collaboration in managing natural resources. Once the state uses its vertical authority over management and utilisation of natural resources without considering the traditional rights of indigenous people, conflict and tension are inevitable. Centralised resource governance systems have created conflict and tension in all three countries. This synthesis chapter confirms the findings of Bergh (2004) and Ribot (2002) on the importance of democratic decentralisation and people's involvement in resource management. Moreover, this analysis has added a new 'legitimacy' discourse on managing natural resources and addressing related conflict (see Chapter 19 in the present volume).

Migration is the theme of the third regional synthesis. With changes in conventional livelihood bases for political and economic reasons, migration is becoming an important livelihood strategy (Figure 2). Chapter 20 in the present volume reveals that migration is a complex process which is not only due to push and pull factors. Migrants' lifeworlds are caught up between the 'source society' and the 'recipient society' with their differing rules and regulations, cultures and social norms, job markets and social networks. Hence, migrants operate in transnational social space. At the same time, the economy in South Asia is very much shaped by remittances.

Migration has also changed domestic labour dynamics. Changes in the dynamics of the labour market observed in Kerala are an example of how large numbers of migrant workers going to Gulf countries created labour shortages and increased wages; as a consequence, large numbers of migrant workers came to Kerala from other parts of India. Gender-biased policies pursued until recently by South Asian countries (restrictions on the mobility of female migrants) also created inequities and discrimination felt by female migrants. Control of trafficking in women is often linked with female migration, without exploring better options for the safe migration of women. When males migrate, household roles change; female members have to assume the responsibilities of male household members in their absence.



Fig. 2  
Young men on their way to urban areas on an early morning in northwest Pakistan. Very few of them find employment in their villages; thus, searching off-farm income has become an important livelihood strategy.  
(Photo by Urs Geiser)

Research on these three themes has produced complementary findings. The first analysis examines the role of formal and informal institutions in poor people's access to livelihood assets. Socio-economic and cultural diversity must be respected by the state to minimise potential tensions in local communities. Similarly, the second theme also addresses the notion of 'state legitimacy' to manage resources and resolve associated conflicts. Research on the third theme reveals that customary practices in a particular local socio-cultural setting define the mobility of females and determine access to basic services such as health and education. Hence, examining customary practices and their relations to the livelihood of local people is an important integrated issue in research carried out in the JACS SAS.

One of the most important outcomes of this research is its theoretical contribution to the livelihood approach. In conceptualising and theorising on livelihood realities, for example, researchers from the JACS SAS analysed 'livelihood arenas', 'governance', and 'the changing role of the state'. These concepts require clear and transparent reflection on their meanings and their roots in scientific debates. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach, widely used in livelihood research, appeared to lack theoretical underpinning. Realising this deficiency, JACS SAS researchers began to address the enabling

Table 2

Title	Location	Duration (months)	Main outcomes
Literacy, Labour Rights and Health Courses	Nepal/India	12	Migrants were trained in labour rights
Courses for Unemployed Youths	Nepal	13	Youths applied livestock farming skills from training
From Mutual Learning to Collective Action: Self-reliant Local Development	India	14	Rights-based development was promoted
Radio Programme for Migrants from Rural Areas of Nepal	Nepal	13	Living conditions of Nepali migrants in Delhi were improved
IT-supported and Farmer-led Vanilla Marketing System	Kerala	10	Farmers found market for vanilla
GIS-based Slum Monitoring for Mitigating Poverty, Vulnerability and Disease in Urban Slums	Ahmada-bad, India	19	Slum dwellers were given a voice
Programme for Organising Labour Migrants from Far-western Nepal and Giving Courses in Literacy, Labour Rights and Health	Nepal/Delhi	13	Migrants were empowered to assert their rights; exploitation was reduced
Improving Livestock Output of Smallholder Mountain Communities in the Hindukush	Pakistan	24	Animal health-care practices were improved
Community Managed Livestock Insurance Scheme for Cost/Benefit Sharing in Kangchen-junga Conservation Area	Nepal	13	Human-wildlife conflict was reduced
Information for Migrants: A Radio Programme for Nepali Youths Working Outside the Village as Rural Livelihood Strategy	Nepal	12	Most important information was made available to Nepali migrants
Facilitating Access of Dalit People to Land Resources in Nepal	Nepal	16	Dalits' rights were recognised by state; Consortium for Land Research and Policy Dialogue (COLARP) emerged
Strengthening Communication and Trust Between Actors for Sustainable Forest Governance in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan	NWFP	18	Forged a link between local and policy actors in forestry
Strengthening Migrants' Wives in Rural North-west Pakistan	Pakistan	Ongoing	
Developing a Community-based Tourism Model in Kaski District in Western Nepal	Nepal	Ongoing	
Bridging the Gap between Research, Policy and Practice on Land Issues	Nepal	Ongoing	

Overview of Partnership Actions for Mitigating Syndromes (PAMS) implemented in South Asia during Phases 1 and 2 of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South programme, and their main outcomes.

or restricting institutional context within which people construct their livelihoods, for example by referring to various structuration theories (e.g. Giddens's agency-based approach and Bourdieu's notions of habitus and social capital) and working with the concept of political economy.

Among the unexpected innovations was spontaneous creation of new platforms to foster policy dialogue among different stakeholders (Figure 3). Examples include the Consortium for Land Research and Policy Dialogue (COLARP) and Radio Paurakhi in Nepal, as well as the Forestry Forum in Pakistan. Partnership Actions for Mitigating Syndromes (PAMS)<sup>3</sup> have proven to be one of the most effective tools to link research policy and practice in the region. The PAMS carried out in the JACS SAS related to migration, livelihood security of the poor, marketing support for farmers, and communication between policy-makers and resource users have become useful instruments for facilitating dialogue between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners (see Table 2 for details on the various PAMS, including outcomes).

### **17.3 Future directions**

Research collaboration in the JACS SAS over the last eight years has offered a number of important experiences and lessons. One important lesson is that dealing with new concepts and perspectives and implementing collaborative research initiatives is a slow and evolutionary process that requires constant engagement and backstopping. Partnerships that evolve as a result of this process are stable, mutually beneficial, and a crucial basis for developing capacity both in the South and in the North as well as for building trust.

Research activities in the third phase of the NCCR North-South programme will be guided by three specific themes: 1) livelihood realities in the context of globalisation; 2) development, environment and resource management; and 3) institutions, governance and conflict transformation. These themes were identified on the basis of past experience, relevance in the region, and available competencies. In the past eight years, JACS SAS researchers have gained considerable experience with and competence in these themes and their great societal relevance in the region. Moreover, migration, peace and livelihood security are globally recognised as important issues. All individual JACS SAS research projects as well as research activities by the NCCR North-South Regional Coordination Office (RCO) in South Asia will fall



Fig. 3  
Local people discussing the resolution of a resource use conflict in Baitadi district of far-western Nepal. (Photo by Siddhi Mamandhar)

within one or more of these themes. Main research activities will be related to livelihood options and social exclusion, migration and rural development, conflict transformation and peace building in order to consolidate past achievements, contribute to ongoing policy debate, and address the new challenges faced by the region. Expected innovations emerging from research will be interwoven with generalisations and applications through social learning. There will also be emphasis on publications and dissemination of the synthesis by bringing together all research findings.

The JACS SAS faces great opportunities and huge challenges in implementing the NCCR North-South model of research partnership, owing to the diversity and complexity of the region. Existing networks must be further expanded, along with communications and public relations strategies and joint efforts to enhance effectiveness. Concrete collaboration with regional and international networks and agencies must be developed, and the JACS SAS must participate in addressing challenges faced by the region. The major challenge for the JACS SAS is to position its RCO in the region and gain recognition within the region as a credible, capable and viable research network for addressing the challenges of regional sustainable development.

## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> The NCCR North-South is based on research partnerships with researchers and research institutions in the South and East. These partnership regions are called JACS (Joint Areas of Case Studies). Regional Coordination Offices (RCOs) were established in each of these JACS at the outset of the programme. The original function of the RCOs was to coordinate research; with the third and final phase of the programme, RCOs will also become independent hubs for generating new research projects and partnerships.

<sup>3</sup> Partnership Actions for Mitigating Syndromes (PAMS) are projects implemented by local actors together with scientific and non-scientific stakeholders. As a component of the NCCR North-South programme they are designed to implement and validate approaches, methods and tools developed in research, with a view to finding promising strategies and potentials for sustainable development. Moreover, they are intended to promote mutual learning and knowledge-sharing between academic and non-academic partners in sustainable development.

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## 18 Access to Livelihood Assets: Insights from South Asia on How Institutions Work

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### Abstract

The present contribution is an attempt to understand the conditions that impede some households and social groups in securing a decent livelihood by drawing on 'purported' facilitating institutions. It is generally agreed that access to livelihood assets is negotiated through institutions. However, the way in which these institutions operate in everyday practice and in specific contexts is less well understood. The four case studies presented here therefore analyse how customary norms and state regulations work. The article argues that a deeper understanding of the working of institutions, which in turn influence who is excluded from and who is entitled to access a particular livelihood asset, also provides a bridge to evidence-based development support.

**Keywords:** Sustainable livelihoods; institutions; customary norms; gender disparities; poverty; South Asia.

## 18.1 Introduction

*Meager assets, inaccessible markets, and scarce job opportunities lock people in material poverty. That is why promoting opportunity – by stimulating economic growth, making markets work better for poor people, and building up their assets – is key to reducing poverty. (World Bank 2000)*

Lack of assets has become a key factor in explaining poverty, and thus the *building up of assets* of poor people has become a central theme in development interventions by states, NGOs and international donors. In terms of research, this emphasis has received special support through wide use of the “Sustainable Livelihoods Framework” developed by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID 2001), which focuses heavily on assets or capitals. Asset-oriented interventions in the South Asian context include, for example, joint forest management programmes in Pakistan, infrastructural programmes focusing on health and education in Pakistan and Nepal, land reform programmes in Nepal, and agricultural extension schemes in India. However, many of these programmes face considerable implementation difficulties. Indeed, experience as well as research (see, for example, Sen 1981) indicate that many social groups find it extremely difficult to gain *access* to assets required for a decent livelihood:

*[Creating assets] is only part of the story. In a world where political power is unequally distributed and often mimics the distribution of economic power, the way state institutions operate may be particularly unfavourable to poor people. [...] Poverty outcomes are also greatly affected by social norms, values, and customary practices that, within the family, the community, or the market, lead to exclusion of women, ethnic and racial groups, or the socially disadvantaged. That is why facilitating the empowerment of poor people – by making state and social institutions more responsive to them – is also key to reducing poverty. (World Bank 2000)*

Although the difficulties of implementing asset-oriented approaches are acknowledged in principle (as the above quote from the World Bank indicates), the *actual working of* institutions, social norms or customary practices, and the concrete ways in which institutions tend to sustain access to livelihood assets for the already privileged and restrict them for the marginalised and poor, are less well understood. The present article aims to explore

this gap and add insights. It brings together the findings of four empirical case studies,<sup>7</sup> illustrating that poverty and insecurity are the result of a lack not (only) of “endowments” but (also) of “entitlements” (Leach et al 1999). The four case studies show which intra- and inter-community dynamics shape the rules of who has access to assets and who does not, whether in relation to health and education, forest resources, or new income-generating strategies and development programmes. We argue that an understanding of the actual working of institutions – which in turn support or obstruct different people’s endowments and entitlements – facilitates “strategic specificity in interventions” (Leach et al 1999).

The case studies reviewed here applied a livelihood perspective as well. However, they attempted to go beyond an assessment of *capitals* that (mainly poor) people in rural contexts have at their disposal, in order to grasp specifically the “social and institutional context within which rural individuals and families construct and adapt their livelihoods” (Ellis 2000). The studies focused on: 1) Access of women in northwest Pakistan to health and education services; 2) access of poor households to schooling in Nepal; 3) access of tribal groups in Kerala, India, to agricultural extension schemes; and 4) access of various social groups to forest resources in Pakistan.

## **18.2 The case studies**

The methods used in the individual studies generally included case study research by means of exploratory triangulations and subsequent interviews and selected questionnaire surveys. Conceptually, the studies applied a broad definition of institutions along the lines of North (1990), i.e. as “rules of the game” in the sense of norms, rules and regulations that structure everyday life, as well as the organisations linked with these. Each of the four studies is briefly summarised below, followed by a discussion of its implications.

### **18.2.1 Gender norms and access to health in Pakistan**

This study by Sadaf and Siegmann (Sadaf 2006; Siegmann and Sadaf 2006) investigated household power relations and gender norms in northwest Pakistan in order to understand why women have less access to education and health facilities even though educational and health institutions are present in the villages. Women’s literacy rate is lower than that of males (national average for males: 64%; for females: 39%; Government of Pakistan 2005).

In terms of health indicators for women, the country ranks among the lowest in the world. In the rural North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, gender gaps in access to health and education services are even wider than in urban areas of the province and the country as a whole.

Although there is general criticism of the functioning of educational and health infrastructure, educational and health services are in principle available throughout the province. Reasons for low female access, therefore, need to be sought elsewhere. Given this context, the researchers hypothesised that *social gender norms* are crucial. To study the impact of these norms on access, the case study localities were selected on the basis of different levels of remoteness, as well as distinct 'cultural spaces': One village was located in a relatively poorly accessible highland region (Kanshian), the second in a foothill region (Gali Badral), and the third in the lowlands (Chamtтар). Whereas Kanshian and Gali Badral are located in the Hazara region, Chamttar is a Pathan village.

The Pathan, or Pakhtun, are the largest ethno-linguistic group living in the NWFP, and are characterised by rigid gender norms of female seclusion, restricted mobility, gendered division of labour, and *pardah*. *Pardah* refers to women's confinement within the spatial boundary of a house and covering themselves with a veil whenever they go outside the home; it also relates to male honour. This code of behaviour, deemed to be ideal amongst the Pakhtun, is known as *Pakhtunwali*, and attaches great importance to family prestige, where men are dominant in decision-making and women represent their *ghairat* (honour). This is reflected in the following statement made during a male focus group discussion in Chamttar:

*Actually we are Muhmand [a Pathan tribe], we are very strict, and we don't allow women to be educated. It is a sense of shame for us. If someone does this, other villagers consider it bad; they consider him as shameless. We can't allow our girls to participate in co-education.*

As mobility is a meaningful and operational indicator within this context, a female mobility index was formulated on the basis of the frequency of female visits to local shops, need for permission from males, and the type of company required for their visits. The Likert scale's lowest value was 2, the highest 20. Overall, the survey revealed that the majority of the respond-

ents (38%) perceived restricted female mobility (index value 5), while 37% of the respondents were assigned an index value of 10. However, mobility was more restricted in the Pathan village (Chamttar) than in Gali Badral and Kanshian (index values were 7, 8 and 15, respectively) – even though female educational institutions were available in all of the study villages. Qualitative data indicated that in Chamttar, female education, particularly learning with and/or from males, was discouraged due to *ghairat* (honour). *Purdah* is considered necessary for female adolescents who attend school. Another impeding factor was that after marriage, demand on females for household work is likely to increase, and parents consider it a liability to educate them. They prefer to send boys to school, as in their perception a boy's education will later contribute to improving the family's financial assets.

Health was also selected as an indicator of human capital. The data revealed that 55% of all women had reported to have suffered from diseases during the past six months, whereas this figure was only 25% for males. Females suffered from chronic diseases, infection and respiratory illnesses more than males. The gender difference was found to be more striking in the Pathan village of Chamttar (44%) when compared with Kanshian and Gali Badral (32% and 20%, respectively). The qualitative survey revealed that men were preferred to women for medical treatment. Childbearing and continuous work during illness and pregnancy makes women victims of additional diseases. Medical facilities were easily available in the city near Chamttar, but *Pakhtunwali* culture was the main reason why female mobility to hospitals was restricted. In Chamttar 99% of all (female) respondents related that they had to seek permission to leave home, as compared to 82% in Kanshian and 92% in Gali Badral (Siegmann and Sadaf 2006). The following statement made during a female focus group discussion in Gali Badral describes this situation from a female point of view: “[...] she feels unprotected when she moves outside. Home is considered a safer place for women; [...] men's *ghairat* does not allow females to work outside.”

Thus, apart from lower investments in female education, gender norms – particularly those related to female mobility and traditional ascription of feminine and masculine standards of behaviour – play a central role in poor female education and health.

### 18.2.2 Livelihoods, social position, and access to education in Nepal

This case study examined the patterns and causes of gender inequality in primary school attendance in the area of Lumbini, Rupandehi District, Nepal (Schärer 2005). The study sample focused on Hindu and Muslim households, and on both government schools and *madrassas* (Islamic schools). It highlights that access is influenced by a blend of 1) livelihood realities of households (incomes, asset base, etc.); 2) images and norms regarding gender; and 3) the social position households have in the local social fabric.

Livelihood strategies are decisive, as they determine the labour contribution required of a given child, as well as the amount and regularity of available financial capital. Hence, a household's livelihood strategies influence parents' perceptions of both direct and opportunity costs associated with children's schooling. Furthermore, the household's composition influences its capacity to pursue different livelihood strategies. The number, age and sex of the household members are crucial factors relating to children's and particularly girls' educational opportunities. A higher number of productive members is likely to reduce opportunity costs for children who come later in the order of birth.

The study showed why girls' education is particularly vulnerable in the poor rural study communities. Gendered division of labour also places a heavy burden of work on girls. The patrilocal marriage system does not lead parents to regard investment in girls' education as beneficial, since girls marry out of their natal family; boys, as future household income earners, are given preference. One Hindu parent even stated: "She is a girl so why should she study? [...] She has to be married. After all she has to do household work and handle the family [...] what's the use of education?" (Schärer 2005, p 89).

Finally, the practice of early marriage is a key reason for girls' disadvantage in educational opportunities. Poverty, the dowry system, and girls' exclusion from the labour market further constrain parents from giving their daughters the same schooling opportunities as their sons. As a result, girls are 'at risk' of not being enrolled, or of being temporarily and permanently withdrawn from school.

Data from this study suggest that caste status and religion are influential factors in parents' choice of the type of school for their children. The majority

of Muslim parents regarded the culturally and religiously oriented education in the Urdu and Arabic languages at the *madrassa* to be essential for their children's needs. As a religious minority in Nepal, some Muslim parents consider the maintenance of religious and cultural identity to be in jeopardy if children are sent to government schools instead of a *madrassa*. None of the Muslim households in the study sample sent girls to government schools, as the practice of *purdah* prohibits Muslim girls from attending co-educational schools. Although both *madrassas* participating in this study included English and Nepali in the school curricula, most Muslim parents nonetheless considered that government education would give their sons access to better jobs, such as government posts. However, young Muslim males have become disillusioned due to limited prospects of finding a government job despite their educational qualifications, and focus instead on vocational training in practical skills or seek labour migration. The majority of Hindu parents send their children to government schools. Parents who can afford to send their children to private schools send only boys for the most part. Quality private schooling is beyond the reach of most low-caste children, and girls in particular.

The exclusion of females from the labour market and from co-education in government schools is a factor that discourages Muslim parents from sending girls to government schools, as well as better-off Hindu parents from sending girls to private schools. In addition to differences in gender and livelihood strategies, the specific situation (e.g. distance from the school) of each study village also influenced parents' motivations and schooling choices. Furthermore, different households in both the Hindu and the Muslim communities under study pursued individual educational strategies. This indicates that motivations and schooling choices are not necessarily primarily determined by culture and religion, but are also influenced by a household's individual financial and social situation.

### **18.2.3 'Tribals' and access to dairying in Wayanad District of Kerala, India**

Wayanad is one of the very few districts in the Indian state of Kerala where agriculture is the primary source of livelihood (SPB 2001). It also has the largest indigenous Adivasi population in the state. According to the census of 2001, 36% of the total Adivasi population in the state live in Wayanad District. The Adivasi are heterogeneous in terms of their traditional livelihoods. At village level, they are divided into the following groups: Kuru-

man, traditionally cultivators and agricultural workers; Paniyan, formerly bonded labourers; and Kattunayakan, traditionally forest gatherers.

Following a distressful situation induced by volatile price fluctuations for cash crops such as coffee and pepper in the context of import liberalisation and the opening up of the country's economy, dairying has become an important livelihood strategy for many poor households. But hardly any of the marginalised Adivasi households have opted for dairying. Why are these Adivasi households not able to adopt dairying as an alternative livelihood strategy although enabling institutions exist and can help to create a favourable environment for them?

This study selected one administrative ward in the village of Pulpalli, where households across various socio-economic groups have adopted dairying as an income-generating strategy. There are many institutions in the village that should enable households to practise dairying. Formal institutions generally include welfare agencies, state policies, societies, and credit organisations in the cooperative sector. For example, the functions of the local 'milk society' include collection and marketing of milk, extension services, and organisation of farmers in self-help groups. Informal institutions include traditional local arrangements, such as *pottanvangal* (adoption of a calf). In this system of exchange a poor household adopts a calf from a household that has several calves, and later, after the first delivery by the adopted calf, the new-born animal is given to the recipient household. *Valam kotukkal* (exchange of manure) is another type of informal institution through which a poor household exchanges cow dung for green fodder from larger holders.

In his ongoing study, the researcher (C.P. Vinod) identified two issues limiting the Adivasi's access to dairying. One is their historical position in the division of labour. Although livestock was part of the farming systems practised by other groups in the area, the Adivasi communities of Paniyan and Kattunayakan were employed only as grazers and were not allowed to milk the cows due to the practice of caste-based untouchability. The second, more important reason refers directly to images of caste. This can be illustrated by the case of Mr. Chamayan, one of the very few Adivasi involved in dairying.

Mr. Chamayan, a member of the landless Paniyan community, was doing exceptionally well. He owned a cow and a calf, which he had received through a development scheme implemented by the local *panchayat* (*panchayat* is a locally elected government with considerable financial and

administrative powers, especially after implementation of the decentralisation programme in 1997). Mr. Chamayan also owned a small piece of land attached to his house, which enabled him to construct a cattle shed. The proximity of the forest and access to it helped him to rear a cow. But the problem he faced was selling the milk. Initially, he was able to deliver his milk to the local cooperative society, but later on they refused to accept the milk on 'scientific' grounds: at some point he failed a quality test because traces of dung were found in the milk. Another option for him was to approach the local tea shops or neighbouring households. But usually local shops do not accept milk produced by the marginalised Adivasi because they believe that milk collected by Adivasi is not pure and hygienic enough. Under these circumstances, dairying as a livelihood option was a daily struggle for Mr. Chamayan.

Thus, a cultural bias against the Adivasi community on the basis of hygiene restricts them from adopting a livelihood option such as dairying. Most of the non-Adivasi in the village believed that the living conditions of marginalised communities are extremely unhygienic. This perception is closely related with the concept of purity and pollution within the Hindu caste system, and also the untouchability practised in earlier times. Even though untouchability based on 'purity and pollution' is a matter of the past, people today 'construct' hygiene by transferring the elements of untouchability into the modern public concept of health.

#### **18.2.4 Communities and access to forest resources in northwest Pakistan**

The North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan is rich in forests, as about 40% of the country's forest area is situated in this province. However, the forest depletion rate is very high in Pakistan in general (FAO 2005) and in the NWFP in particular. To stop this trend, the provincial Forest Department, with the support of several donors, introduced the system of Joint Forest Management (JFM) in selected villages. Here, village development committees (VDCs) and women's organisations (WOs) were established to manage the natural resources of the village and to initiate village infrastructure improvement projects under the coordination of the Forest Department.

Research findings (Shahbaz 2007) indicate that poor villagers in particular have less access to these new institutional arrangements, even though these are expected to improve poor people's access to forest resources. In

order to understand the reasons behind this situation, case study analyses were combined with a quantitative survey based on stratified sampling. The research findings hint at two main reasons: one is the considerable differences in expectations regarding the new institutions among the various groups involved; the second refers to a misconception of the notion of community.

Most of the households were using forests and forestland predominantly for subsistence needs (e.g. firewood, timber for house construction). Financial livelihood needs are not met by forests, but through remittances in the context of migration (see also Steimann 2005). Therefore, livelihoods were based in areas far from where the family in question was living. In turn, forest conservation was a lower priority for these people as compared to financial security. This implies that the households' expectations from the VDCs (established in the context of JFM) related to fulfilling their subsistence needs – whereas the project documents and actual practices indicate a commitment of the Forest Department mainly to forest protection, with little attention paid to income concerns.

Research showed that access to forest resources for poor households was more difficult than for wealthier people, as expressed in comments such as the following:

*[...] we are poor people and we cannot survive without wood, but the Forest Department imposes restrictions on us while for the wealthy people there is no problem at all.*

*[...] we have to use firewood during winter otherwise our children will die of cold. We also have to use wood to repair our roofs because during the winter heavy snowfall badly damages our houses. But these governmental employees consider the forests as their property and not only demand money from us but also allow the rich people and outsiders to cut trees just for a few hundred rupees.*

*[...] the timber smugglers are influential and they can give money to the Forest Department but I don't have enough money even to buy food for my family therefore I cannot bribe them to take wood from the forest.*

Access to forests is first of all negotiated through the intermediary agents of the Forest Department staff – and this everyday reality is reproduced in the

new institutional arrangements as well. As a matter of fact, poor households have the least participation and representation in new JFM institutions such as VDCs and WOs. The study specifically probed whether the forest reform process has taken care to include marginalised (low-income) segments of the population.

The correlation of income (per capita) and the participation rate (and related trust in these new institutions) were calculated. Significant positive correlation was found between income as well as relationship and trust of the respondents in the VDCs and the Union Council<sup>8</sup> (UC). Similarly, significant positive correlation was found between income and extent of participation (in the activities of VDCs, WOs, and the UC). These positive correlations indicate that people with less income had less trust and participated less in these institutions, whereas comparatively wealthy people (with more income) had a higher degree of trust in the institutions. This was confirmed by qualitative interviews, in which respondents mentioned the dominance of elites and influential households in these institutions, as well as the uncooperative attitude of the Forest Department. For example, one respondent stated: “[...] what are you talking about? Nobody listens to us. I don’t know much about the committee (VDC), whose president is a Sayyed and most members are Khans and Sayyeds [the influential tribes].”

### **18.3 Conclusions and outlook**

The case studies summarised in this article address the issue of how institutions actually work. They examine educational and medical institutions, institutions created for the management of natural resources (forests), and traditional ‘rules and regulations’. These studies go beyond the conventional approach of assessing livelihood capital as advocated by DFID in its Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. The DFID approach – if used as a blueprint recipe – has its shortcomings, as has been stated by a number of critics (De Haan and Zoomers 2005), most notably because it emphasises poor people’s assets and their potential improvement, but gives no explanation of the causes of unequal access. The studies presented here embarked on an explanation of the reasons behind unequal access and showed why an ‘enabling’ institutional support system – which should help poor households in the case study villages to enhance their asset base and adopt viable livelihood options – was inaccessible for some social groups.

The insights gained in three South Asian countries show how, for example, customary norms (gender norms, ethnic affiliations, cultural bias, etc.) determine who is excluded from and who is entitled to access particular assets. Socio-cultural contexts and power relations influence access to certain assets. In practice, ‘marginalised households’ are quite heterogeneous in terms of socio-cultural norms and traditional livelihood strategies. Therefore, the “room for manoeuvre” (Long and Long 1992) they have depends on their position within the Adivasi group in the Kerala case, their ethnic and gender affiliation in the Pakistan case, and their religious affiliation in the Nepal case. This means that the socio-economic and cultural specificities of an area, and the ways in which they work in everyday reality, need to be taken into account in development projects, and that policies and interventions should be tailored to specific local contexts.

## Endnotes

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<sup>8</sup>The Union Council is at the lowest tier of the local government system and usually comprises 6–8 villages.

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## 19 **The State, Resource Governance, and Conflict: Reflections from South Asia**

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### **Abstract**

The role of the state in modes of resource governance is increasingly becoming a source of conflict over natural resources. Based on studies of resource governance practices in South Asia, this contribution argues that conflict or collaboration in natural resource management depends upon the legitimacy of the state and its interaction and cooperation with resource users. When the state shows a controlling attitude towards managing natural resources, conflict and tension are unavoidable. On the other hand, challenges arise in resource management if the state is too weak to provide a conducive policy framework, institutional arrangements, and a facilitating environment. This article concludes that expanding the horizontal and vertical legitimacy of the state is essential to promote sustainable governance of natural resources and to resolve associated conflicts.

**Keywords:** Conflict; governance; institution; legitimacy; natural resource; power; state.

## 19.1 The state, participation, and natural resource use

Poor governance of natural resources (NR) in different parts of the world is resulting in communal disharmony, social tension, and even armed conflict. Consequently, it causes extensive loss of life, damage to property, and harm to the environment. In many instances, mismanagement and poor governance of NR are caused by non-participatory, centralised and exclusionary resource-management policies and practices. 'Controlled' forms of resource governance have had adverse effects on sustainable management of natural resources and have made already precarious social, economic and environmental conditions worse, particularly in local communities.

The issue of proper management of NR has long been debated among practitioners and scholars. In the present article, we understand governance as a tool to achieve proper management of natural resources.<sup>5</sup> Decentralised resource governance is expected to enhance management efficiency and result in greater equity for local people. But this is not easy to attain, and conflict has resulted in some cases where decentralised resource governance was not effectively practised. There are several reasons for this. One of the major reasons is said to be the lack of democratic decentralisation. It has been observed that decentralisation accompanied by the participation of local communities is not enough; the quality of decentralisation in terms of institutional arrangements, monitoring mechanisms, ownership and accountability is of fundamental importance. Ribot (2004) and Agrawal and Ribot (1999) have documented that most ongoing decentralisation efforts are characterised by insufficient transfer of power to local institutions, taking place under tight central government oversight, with local institutions often being neither representative of nor accountable to local communities. They further argue that transferring power without accountable representation is dangerous, while establishing accountable representation without power is an empty gesture.

Thus conflict and/or cooperation in natural resource management are related to the characteristics of the governing policy and practices of the state, as well as the public legitimacy of the state. Table 1 illustrates the relationship between a state and its population, and the impacts of this relationship on governance of NR.

Table 1

<b>Vertical public legitimacy (state structures, laws, etc.)</b> ↑	<b>Controlling state</b> (high vertical but low horizontal public legitimacy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Centrally controlled power</li> <li>– Lesser sense of belonging and trust</li> <li>– Low level of ownership and accountability</li> <li>– Poor participation by people</li> <li>– Rigid legal control and legal domination</li> <li>– Assumption that state controls and people obey as passive recipients</li> </ul>	<b>Facilitating state</b> (high vertical and horizontal public legitimacy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– High degree of interaction between state and people and high level of trust in state</li> <li>– High level of participation and representation leading to greater ownership and accountability</li> <li>– Effective legal performance</li> <li>– Fewer conflicts; win-win settlements</li> <li>– Conducive policy, responsive institutions</li> </ul>	The state and its public legitimacy in governing natural resources.
	<b>Dysfunctional state</b> (low vertical and horizontal public legitimacy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Non-functioning state institutions and regulations; massive corruption, nepotism and bureaucracy</li> <li>– Law and order not respected (might is right)</li> <li>– Impunity and lack of accountability</li> <li>– Irrational exploitation of NR</li> <li>– Erosion of people’s trust in state; anarchy</li> <li>– Smugglers, mafia and elite groups control NR</li> <li>– Increased conflict and tension in society</li> </ul>	<b>Weak state</b> (low vertical but high horizontal public legitimacy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unbalanced legal and social interactions leading to weak enforcement of state policies and regulations related to NR</li> <li>– Weak state and very strong non-state actors, creating imbalance in decision-making and policy and regulation enforcement</li> <li>– Poor decision-making and poor management of NR</li> <li>– Uncoordinated planning, implementation and duplication</li> <li>– Demoralised state administrative apparatus</li> </ul>	
<b>Horizontal public legitimacy</b> →			

A state with high vertical and horizontal public legitimacy provides a strong basis for sustainable management and governance of NR, as it incorporates democratic decentralisation, distribution of power, local accountability, and ownership.

In a ‘controlling state’, capture of management processes and resources by elites at the local level strengthens or maintains unequal power relations. By contrast, a ‘facilitating state’ promotes better distribution of power, applies principles of subsidiarity, fosters accountable and representative institutions, and accommodates the collective concerns of all actors who depend on NR (Castro and Nielsen 2001).

## 19.2 Reading empirical evidence

The present contribution addresses these concerns about the respective roles of the state and local bodies. It analyses whether conflicts over resource use in selected localities of South Asia can be explained by variations in horizontal and/or vertical governance relations. It is based on three case studies (Figure 1):

- Forest management in Pakistan
- Conservation area management in Nepal
- Joint forest management in India.

More specifically, the following questions were asked in reviewing these cases:

- To what extent do the characteristics of the state and its legitimacy affect resource governance and resolution of associated conflicts?
- What role should the state play in governing NR and addressing related conflicts?
- What is the relationship between democratic decentralisation of resource governance and the legitimacy of the state?
- What factors determine the state's ability to mediate?
- What are the prerequisites for successful decentralised governance of resources?

Methodologically, the case studies followed a livelihood approach, with reviews and analyses of different studies conducted in South Asia.



Fig. 1  
Overview map  
of South Asia.  
(Map by Andreas  
Brodbeck)

## **19.3 Empirical results and findings**

### **19.3.1 Forest governance in North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan**

Prior to British colonial rule, forests in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan were managed by customarily defined by-laws and traditional institutions. Forests were traditionally owned by landlords, while the landless enjoyed certain privileges in the use of forests (Sultan-i-Rome 2005). There were fewer conflicts and minimal pressure on forests due to a low population and a subsistence economy. After 1850, when most parts of the province came under British rule, forest management was assumed by the state, and existing local rights to forest resources were restricted. Following the independence of Pakistan in 1947, the state perpetuated its controlling role through various forest policies promulgated from time to time.

Several studies (e.g. Geiser 2005; Sultan-i-Rome 2005) have shown that local people who once had access to forest resources through traditional institutions and regulations have always resisted state authority over forest resources. In fact, non-participatory approaches failed to stop forest depletion, and the deforestation rate in Pakistan became one of the highest in the world. At the same time, conflict and confrontation between the state (represented by the Forest Department) and local people increased (Geiser 2005). The state was perceived to be playing a controlling role and to be in competition with the interests of local people.

In response, a system of participatory forest management was introduced in some parts of the province around 1996, through donor-funded projects. Under this system, the state was to perform a facilitating role. Village-level committees were instituted and authorised to join Forest Department officials in the preparation and implementation of local resource use plans, the execution of development activities, and other tasks.

However, studies by Steimann (2003) and Shahbaz (2007) indicate a significant lack of trust and interaction between local people and the state Forest Department, even after the implementation of joint forest management systems in some areas. Historically rooted mistrust between local people and the state, on the one hand, and the unwillingness of actors with great bargaining power – such as officers from the Forest Department – to devolve power, on the other hand, contributed to the failure of the participatory approach.

State-initiated decentralisation of forest management has not overcome these tensions. For one thing, it does not take account of traditional forest use practices (*rivaj*) but maintains state authority. Moreover, it has not overcome traditional access discrimination among local people. One of the main reasons for the failure of participatory forest management projects, therefore, is the Forest Department's lack of sensitivity to customary local practices.

Political will is indispensable for successful decentralised forest governance (Agrawal and Ribot 1999; Ribot 2002, 2004); without it, state control over resources will simply be strengthened. In the case of the NWFP, basic reality suggests that the state, represented by the provincial Forest Department, is reluctant to change its top-down form of governance and attitude, and is thus unwilling to give local people more say in forestry-related issues. Trust between the state and local actors can only be strengthened if a genuine participatory approach is taken in such a way that local institutions are given the right to manage the forests through locally defined by-laws and customary regulations. The state needs to change its role from controller to facilitator.

### **19.3.2 Governance of conservation areas in Nepal**

Governance of conservation areas in Nepal is a vivid example of interaction between horizontal and vertical public legitimacy. Empirical studies by Upreti (2004, 2009) on the management of the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR), situated on the eastern terai plains near the border with India, and the findings of Gurung (2006) on the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Project (KCAP)<sup>6</sup> in Taplejung District illustrate the distinct character of the controlling state and the facilitating state, respectively.

In the KTWR, the reserve authority took an authoritarian approach characterised by force and rigid legal control. The role played by the state exacerbated livelihood insecurity and vulnerability among poor people residing in or around the protected areas. Local people had earned livelihoods from fishing, driftwood collection, harvesting of thatch grasses, hunting, and other forms of use in the KTWR area prior to the establishment of the KTWR. After the establishment of the KTWR, the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act prohibited the following activities: poaching of wildlife; construction of houses, huts, shelters or any other structure from any material; occupying any part of the land; uprooting plants; cultivating or planting and cutting of plantations; access to drinking water or grazing for domestic animals or birds; chopping, lopping, dismantling and blocking trees, plants and

bushes; arson or damage of any kind to forest products; mining, stone excavation, or displacement of mining resources, stones, boulders, soil or other similar resources; carrying or using arms, ammunition or poison; transporting domestic animals and dead or live wildlife or wildlife body parts, except by regular wayfarers or government officers; and blocking, diverting, or placing hazardous or explosive materials in rivers, streams or water fountains. Section 4 of the Act prohibits entry into the national parks and reserves without prior approval in writing from the authorities concerned. Similarly, the Act empowers the authorities concerned to inspect, search and arrest violators of the Act even without a warrant. The reserve authority used a heavily top-down and coercive approach in executing these provisions. This has not only caused severe livelihood insecurity but has also become a perennial source of conflict between the reserve authority and local people.

Many people in Nepal live within the boundaries of protected areas. In light of the increasing number and size of protected areas and changing societal needs, Gurung (2006), in the case of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Project, examined how the livelihoods of local people could be enhanced without compromising protection of biological diversity. The results of his study show that people-orientated participatory conservation projects can successfully reconcile conservation with the livelihood needs of local people, through long-term interventions that carefully integrate development issues into conservation strategies and can be implemented in a transparent manner and facilitated skilfully through local institutions.

The participatory management approach adopted in the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area, integrating the livelihood needs of local people, was successful (Gurung 2006) mainly because it made special provisions to include people in project planning, implementation, monitoring, and benefit sharing. By contrast, the KTWR, managed by the government through controlling mechanisms (laws, use of force), led to long-term conflict between the park and the people (Upreti 2009).

It is apparent from the above discussion that the approaches used by representatives of the state (conservation management authorities) largely determine whether there is conflict or cooperation between local people and the state. If state representatives have an open attitude and promote both vertical and horizontal engagement in managing natural resources, there is less conflict and problems are solved through dialogue, collaboration and cooperation, as in the case of the KCAP. Tension, conflict and mistrust are high when

state representatives use coercive, top-down and exclusionary approaches, as in the case of the KTWR.

### **19.3.3 Indigenous people and their relations with the state and forest resources in Kerala, India**

The Paniyan are the largest community among the marginalised Adivasi (tribal) segment of the population of Kerala. They reside in and around the Wayanad region, a place known historically for coexistence of Adivasi populations and the forest. All Adivasi groups in the region used to be traditional forest users. They enjoyed open access to forests until the onset of the colonial regime, which brought the forest under the ownership of the state and local elite families, thus initiating 'systematic' control and use of forest resources (Logan 1992; Nair 2000).

Tribal populations and their subsistence-based relationship with the forest were not given priority in successive laws, even after the formation of the State of Kerala in 1956. The state's conservative policy regime perpetuated control through a hierarchically ordered departmental structure. Furthermore, large-scale migration of small-scale farmers from the Kerala plains to the Wayanad region in the 1950s and their clearing large tracts of forestland to cultivate commercial crops severely constrained relations between the Adivasi and the forest. A strong nexus was developed between the migrants, the dominant political and religious forces, and government officials, who disregarded the interests of the marginalised Adivasi.

In 1990 the central government initiated the policy of Joint Forest Management (JFM), which was implemented by the government of Kerala in 1998, coinciding with the People's Plan Campaign launched by the leftist democratic front government (Issac and Franke 2002). The primary unit of local level participation in JFM was the *Vanasamrakshana Samithi* (Forest Protection Committee), an association of people dependent on forests, NGOs, individuals interested in the conservation of forests, a forester or guard from the Forest Department, and a member of the local *Panchayat* (local unit of self-government). The expansion of modern governance and a market economy based on commercialisation of the forests and cultivation of plantation crops have forced further changes in the livelihoods of many forest-dependent Adivasi (Nair et al 2007).

Our research looked into local practices of decentralised resource governance and management in relation to the livelihood experiences of Adivasi, mainly forest-dependent members of the Paniyan community. We found that local governance practices do not include the Adivasi in natural resource management and decision-making processes. Present failures in decentralised resource management can be explained in terms of poor representation and participation of Paniyan in democratic bodies, along with a low level of accountability in governance. Participation by Paniyan in public decision-making is virtually nil.

Lack of trust in public administration and alienation from forest resources has resulted in conflict among the Paniyan. A Paniyan explained, “Government has no land when we demand [...] why don’t they see this forest? [...] they had given it to *nattukar* [settlers]. Why don’t they give it to us? If they give us this forest land, we will also clear it and do cultivation as they have done [...] we can cultivate coffee, pepper and all [...]” At present, the Paniyan are seeking greater access to forest resources and participation in governance processes.

## 19.4 Analysis and discussion of empirical results

The three cases discussed above raise several issues related to resource governance and associated conflict that are summarised in the following sections.

**Effects of state characteristics and legitimacy on resource governance and conflict resolution:** The cases of the KTWR (Nepal), Kerala (India) and the NWFP (Pakistan) demonstrate that social tensions and conflicts are inevitable when states opt for centrally controlled governance of NR and treat local people merely as resource users rather than as managers and owners. Governance of natural resources is largely shaped by the degree and intensity of interactions between resource users and the state. Examination of the two cases of protected-area management (KTWR and KCAP) shows that when the state opts for a controlling approach to resource governance through imposition of law and the use of force, the vertical legitimacy of the state diminishes and conflict escalates (in the case of KTWR). But when the state interacts with resource users and serves as a facilitator, it promotes both horizontal and vertical legitimacy, thereby making resource governance effective. Hence it was concluded in all three cases that the characteristics of

the state have a direct relation to effective governance of NR and resolution of associated conflicts.

**Role of the state in managing NR and addressing related conflicts:** The cases of the NWFP, Kerala and the KTWR show that high vertical and low horizontal public legitimacy result in deep-seated conflict and tension, whereas the case of the KCAP (Nepal) illustrates that balancing horizontal and vertical public legitimacy in governing protected areas minimises conflict and supports the livelihoods of users. Hence it can be generalised that the state has a fundamentally important role in achieving sustainable management of NR and resolving associated conflicts. The study by Matthew and Upreti (2005) also demonstrates that environmental stresses created by poor environmental governance on the part of the state were one of the fundamental causes of the armed insurgency in Nepal.

**Relationship between legitimacy of the state and decentralised democratic resource governance:** The case of the KCAP in Nepal demonstrates that decentralised democratic resource governance is directly related to the legitimacy of the state. If the state plays the role of a facilitator rather than a controller, resource governance is more democratic and decentralised. In contrast, the cases of the NWFP and Kerala show that if people do not trust the state, decentralisation does not work. Protected-area management in the KCAP illustrates that decentralisation, democratic governance practices and democratic processes function well together and are closely interrelated.

**Factors determining the ability of the state to mediate:** People's sense of belonging to the state, and trust in the state on the part of resource users, are crucial factors that enhance the state's ability to mediate. The other factors are the willingness of the state to empower resource users by providing a decentralised legal framework, conducive policies, and responsive institutional arrangements. State engagement with resource users in terms of interaction and collaboration are important factors that determine the state's ability to mediate. In examining the relationships between resource governance and resource conflict in Nepal, Upreti (2004) found that strengthening people's access to decision-making processes also strengthens the state's ability to mediate and vice-versa.

## 19.5 Conclusions

Our research illustrates that the state has an important role to play in effective community participation in natural resource management. In this context, the concept of vertical and horizontal public legitimacy is a powerful approach for analysing livelihood-based resource governance and resolving associated conflicts. The strengths of this approach are that it closely represents people’s perspectives on resource governance and also provides a conceptual framework for examining state characteristics (controlling or facilitating) and performance (functioning of state institutions, use of laws and regulations, erosion of people’s trust in the state, etc.). However, this approach also has some weaknesses. One is its silence about the technical aspects of resource governance. Forest management and protection are highly technical processes, and sustainable governance of NR depends upon combining social and technical aspects.

From a comparison of cases of resource governance in Nepal, Pakistan and India, we conclude that decentralisation of resource governance should be democratic, and that decentralisation alone is not enough. Conducive policies, responsive institutions and appropriate operational mechanisms are equally important to make decentralised resource governance successful (Figure 2).

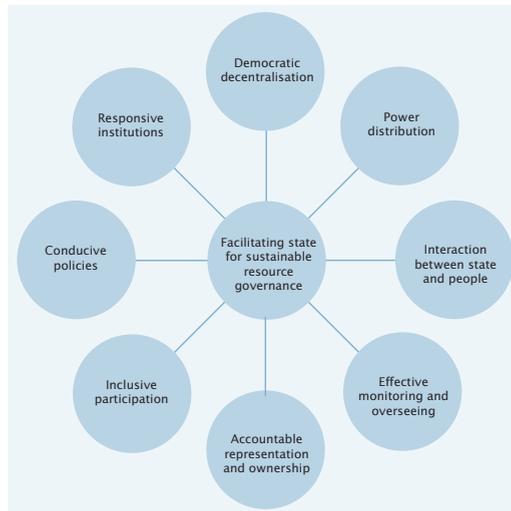


Fig. 2 Elements of a facilitating state that promote sustainable resource governance and minimise conflict. (Developed by Bishnu Raj Upreti based on research experience in the natural resources sector)

When analysing cases in South Asian countries, it is not appropriate to generalise with regard to the standard characteristics of a state. The same nation-state can be found to have controlling and facilitating governing characteristics. For example, the government of Nepal demonstrated a facilitating quality in managing the KCAP, whereas it took a very controlling approach to managing the KTWR. Therefore, the notion of characterising a country as a failed, fragile or transitional state is too simplistic.

In the NWFP, local social realities were not taken account of in the decentralisation of forest management. Trust and confidence can only be built between state actors and local communities if real decentralisation takes place and the state plays a facilitating rather than a controlling role. In such cases, local, clearly defined social entities are given the right to manage forests according to locally defined by-laws. This has not yet been observed in the NWFP.

The interrelationships between resource governance and state legitimacy in resolving or creating conflicts over NR are complex and require further research and analysis. Some of the questions that merit further examination are: a) Why do some state structures collaborate with local people in managing NR and in resolving associated conflicts while others ignore, refuse or resist such collaboration? b) What power relations, negotiating processes and decision-making processes exist among involved stakeholders at different levels (intra-household, regional, national, and global) in the context of natural resource management?

## Endnotes

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<sup>5</sup> “[...] a general conceptual framework for addressing the evolution and organising principles of governing processes in a society. It refers to the ways decisions are taken and implemented, and takes into account formal as well as informal arrangements and actors” (Hurni et al 2004).

<sup>6</sup> See [http://nepal.panda.org/our\\_solutions/conservation\\_nepal/kangchenjunga/](http://nepal.panda.org/our_solutions/conservation_nepal/kangchenjunga/)

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## 20 **Patterns and Politics of Migration in South Asia**

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### **Abstract**

Migration is an important social and historical reality in South Asia. In the past decade, migration from one country to another and internal migration (i.e. migration within a particular country) have assumed different dimensions for people in the region. Contemporary research on migration is placed in a spectrum that ranges from exponents of economic benefits at one end, to those who see migration as a security threat, at the other. This paper combines the work of three researchers and looks at the different political locations from which the South Asian subject is induced to move. It also discusses the economic and political implications that arise from these migration trajectories. Drawing on their research, the authors emphasise the need for understanding how migration is linked to a complex set of processes that reflect power relations in unequal societies.

**Keywords:** South Asia; multi-locality; migration; remittances; livelihood; citizenship; frontiers.

## **20.1 Introduction**

Today, South Asia is the locus of extensive migrations that link cities and villages in the region to diverse places and that cut across the concerns of governments, policy-makers, migrants themselves and their families. Large migration streams already occurred at the outset of South Asia's post-colonial history, when millions fled communal violence on both sides of the Indian-Pakistani border. The significance of migration is likely to increase in future as a result of the global economic and climate crises. The patterns of migrations and their meanings vary, with motivations ranging from migrant workers' aspirations for upward mobility to the desire to escape from socio-economic or political distress.<sup>4</sup>

The present article<sup>5</sup> is based on migration research carried out mainly in Nepal and northeast India, complemented by case studies in Pakistan, within the framework of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South programme, and also on secondary literature. It highlights important commonalities and differences in the patterns and politics of mobility in South Asia. We first cover recent trends in labour migration and remittance flows, as well as the ambiguous impact of labour migration on the macro-economy, on migrants, and on the families they leave behind. Second, we examine the political economy of mobility. Besides an outline of institutional frameworks, especially those constructed for channelling labour migration, we provide a historical perspective on the demarcation of borders, which has often induced conflict and led to forced internal and international migration. Finally, we look at conceptual issues and question some common notions in mainstream discourses on migration. We emphasise migrants' multi-locality, the ambiguous role of social networks in enabling migration, and the political economy of colonial frontiers.

## **20.2 Migration patterns**

### **20.2.1 Recent trends in migration flows**

Migration is common throughout South Asia and its patterns are diverse. Today, the majority of South Asian migrants are workers who make significant contributions to the economies of both migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries. Regional migration, such as between the neighbouring countries of India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan, has a long history that

remained largely undocumented for a long time (Schrader 1988; Gazdar 2003; Nichols 2008). East Asia and the Persian Gulf region have become other important destinations since the 1970s, for two major reasons. First, the oil-driven construction boom in the Gulf region created a demand for skilled and unskilled labour that the booming countries could not meet with their domestic labour force (Gazdar 2003). Second, the rapid expansion of mobile telecommunication and the Internet since the 1990s have accelerated the speed and volume of information on foreign employment opportunities. In Nepal, the private sector took the initiative to connect thousands of unemployed people – mainly youths – officially to labour markets overseas, whereas in Pakistan it was public institutions that promoted and facilitated the initial waves of contract labour migration to the Gulf region (Gazdar 2003; NIDS 2008). Increasingly restrictive immigration policies in host countries in the Gulf region have led to a rise in undocumented migration (Gazdar 2003; Shah 2006). For many people, both migration and living and working on a temporary contract basis have become a permanent feature of their lives. It has also become common for family members to live apart from each other and be organised in multiple locations throughout South Asia. Consequently, people's livelihoods have assumed multi-local dimensions (Thieme 2008).

Linkages between international and internal migrations are manifested throughout the region. For example, in the Indian state of Kerala, massive emigration of workers, mostly to the Gulf, has triggered a large inflow of migrant labour from other parts of India. This response to the labour shortage that arose in Kerala was motivated by higher agricultural and non-agricultural wages in Kerala.

A crucial aspect throughout the whole South Asian region is distress-induced migration, mostly to destinations that do not require official paper work and where there are no bureaucratic hurdles to be overcome, or where there is not much of a waiting period and where not many skills and capabilities or much initial investment are required. Migration between Nepal and India is facilitated by the open border between the two countries (Thieme 2006), whereas ethnic networks that transcend the Afghan-Pakistani border have eased the absorption of Afghani refugees in Pakistan (Gazdar 2003). Massive internal migration from the highlands of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) to the urban centres of Punjab and Sindh has been induced by low agricultural productivity under conditions of harsh climate, poor infrastructure, and few non-agricultural employment opportunities (Gazdar 2003; Steimann 2005).

### 20.2.2 The role of remittances

Common patterns identified in South Asia's experience with migration include the appreciation of remittances at various levels. With remittances of US\$ 27 billion in 2007, India is ahead of all other countries that also receive huge financial transfers from international migrants (Zachariah and Rajan 2006; World Bank 2008). According to World Bank estimates, remittances have grown exponentially for the past 35 years (World Bank 2006).

Labour migration is also an economic mainstay of Nepal's economy. However, there is still insufficient documentation on the scale and significance of this process. Kollmair et al (2006) compared the latest national statistics with nine case studies carried out within the NCCR North-South. Whereas the authors' estimate of 1.15 million migrants corresponds closely with the National Living Standard Survey (CBS 2004) and challenges estimates of up to 2 to 3 million Nepalese migrants working in foreign countries (Seddon et al 2001; estimates by Nepalese immigrant associations in India in Thieme 2006), the amount of remittances indeed seems to be higher than the official volume of US\$ 150 million. The estimated total of US\$ 604 million in 2003 is close to estimates by Graner and Seddon (2004). The amount of money remitted varies considerably from country to country. Although the majority of migrants (77%) go to India, they send the lowest share of remittances (less than 20%). Remittances from Western and Gulf countries represent 75% of workers' transfers to Nepal.

Within states, regional economies display different degrees of dependence on overseas workers' transfers. The highlands of Pakistan's NWFP, as well as the part of Jammu and Kashmir under Pakistani administration, can plausibly be called remittance economies. Of all Pakistani provinces, rural NWFP is most dependent on foreign remittances. About one-tenth of average monthly income consists of remittance flows (Government of Pakistan 2007). Similarly, the state of Kerala in India is heavily dependent on worker remittances from the Gulf countries. Foreign remittances were seven times what Kerala received from the Government of India for the state budget and 1.6 times the state's annual governmental expenditures in 2004 (Zachariah and Rajan 2006).

Whereas migrant remittances help to fill the national exchequer with foreign exchange, the economic role of migration at the household and individual levels is ambiguous. The role of remittances in poverty reduction has been

emphasised across the region (Gazdar 1999; Bhattacharya and Deb 2006; Thieme 2006). There is evidence that migration from Nepal to India contributes to secure livelihoods (Thieme 2006). In rural communities with little cash income, even small transfers of cash may be of great value in reducing the risks of seasonality, harvest failure and food shortage (Ellis 2003). Moreover, aspects other than financial returns, such as sending goods, must also be taken into account. In addition, each person less in the household reduces total food consumption. Having family members in India assures access to medical treatment and schooling in India, and migrants cover these expenditures rather than sending money to Nepal (Thieme 2006). For Pakistan, Suleri and Savage (2006) highlight the fact that households receiving remittances were less vulnerable to the effects of the earthquake catastrophe that hit NWFP as well as Kashmir, on both sides of the Indian-Pakistani border, in 2005. Individuals had used the cash remitted by household members to reinforce their houses. While their neighbours' houses constructed with mud and stone were reduced to rubble, many of the cement mortar houses of families with migrant members withstood the quake.

On the other hand, regions where land and employment are scarce and poverty is widespread often become major migrant-sending regions. The mountainous districts of Pakistan's NWFP are examples. In the highland locations of a NCCR North-South study on sustainable livelihoods, a typical household had one or two (male) migrants. In the two villages studied, one out of four adult men was a migrant (Steimann 2005). The mountainous Dir and Swat districts bordering Afghanistan have displayed the highest absolute emigration of all rural districts in Pakistan in the past 25 years (BEOE 2007). At the same time, they are located at the bottom of the district-wise Human Development Index (Hussain 2003). The remittance economy of rural NWFP has created vulnerabilities of its own. Siegmann and Steimann (2005) found that irregular remittances are a source of major financial crisis for households in the region. A flow of cash transfers interrupted, for instance, by the illness or unemployment of a migrant, could disturb the delicate balance of indebtedness and repayment for households that hardly have access to other sources of cash income.

Overall, recent evidence of the poverty-reducing impact of migrant remittances has been scarce in the case of Pakistan. On the contrary, Ballard (2005) shows that in the absence of reasonable infrastructure and manufacturing activity in the international migrant-sending communities of Mirpur district, local banks redistribute surplus capital to the urban elite. They hence

fuel a cycle of ‘capital-rich underdevelopment’, which is likely to reinforce the local propensity to migrate. There is evidence that it is not the poorest income group for which foreign remittances represent the largest share of household income (Gazdar 2003; Azam 2005; Government of Pakistan 2007). This raises questions about the poverty-reducing effects of international migration. Similarly, in Nepal it is the better-off people, with more financial resources, education and access to information, who are more likely to go to the Gulf States, the East Asian ‘Tiger States’, or even Europe and the USA. Migrants with a more modest socio-economic background opt for neighbouring India, which is a more affordable journey.

### **20.2.3 Migration and social change**

The meaning of migration goes beyond remittance transfers, however. It has consequences that encompass radical changes in the lives of migrants as well as the communities to which they are connected back home.

In many parts of South Asia, migration changes the social spaces available to the individual. In deeply stratified caste communities, many see migration as a means to move away from constraining traditional occupations. In South India, migrants from the washer people’s castes in Tamil Nadu have occupied a highly organised niche in Kerala. They have not inserted themselves into caste-stratified social space, but have moved into urban residential localities as ‘mobile ironers’ who visit homes or offer their services on street corners, bringing along their coal and iron in push carts. These kin groups iron clothes for the households in the localities demarcated for them by municipal bodies, escaping day-to-day caste expectations in their original habitats in Tamil Nadu.<sup>6</sup>

Migration may also redefine the division of labour and responsibilities within a family. Different environments within South Asia display diverse dynamics, however. In the case of migrants’ wives in parts of Nepal, NCCR North-South researchers have found an increased workload but also greater participation in decision-making (Kaspar 2005). During the Maoist conflict in Nepal, women were left to negotiate with the conflicting parties, which was new in the Nepali societal context. In Pakistan, a feminisation of agricultural work (Kazi 1999) going hand in hand with a strengthened position for women in the household (Naveed-i-Rahat 1986; Alavi 1991) was associated with domestic and international emigration in some earlier studies. Others perceived greater vulnerability among migrants’ wives to exploitation

by their in-laws once their husbands moved abroad (Burki 1984). Lefebvre (1999), on the other hand, found stability in the gender division of labour and decision-making. He interprets this as evidence that economic improvement through foreign remittances must not be accompanied by a loss of prestige, as will inevitably be the case if the role and authority of women in a Pakistani village are radically transformed. Recent NCCR North-South related research has tended to support the latter conclusions. For mountainous districts in Pakistan's NWFP, women's workloads partially buffer the loss of male workers due to outmigration. At the same time, they do not gain higher status in the household. Considerations of family honour even increase the vulnerability of migrants' wives in the absence of their husbands (Siegmann 2007).

Children are also affected when remittances alone cannot replace the overall contribution of a family member to family care. The study quoted above indicates that socialisation of boys especially suffers when they lose a male authority figure to labour migration. In an environment where female mobility outside the home is severely constrained in the name of family honour, supervision of school attendance by boys, for instance, becomes a major challenge (Siegmann 2007).

Obviously, separation from their homes implies a burden on migrants themselves as well. In the host countries, migrants' movements are often restricted, their livelihoods unprotected, and they themselves discriminated against by their employers and the authorities (Thieme 2006; SDPI 2007a). Generally, Nepali migrants going to India possess limited financial means and are not well educated. On the segmented job markets in India, they do not learn new skills, incur even greater debts due to poorly run financial self-help groups and gambling, and face poor working conditions. Consequently, many migrants live from hand to mouth (Thieme and Müller-Böker 2004; Thieme 2006). Migrants' value systems are shaken by confrontation with a different culture (SDPI 2007b). In the 1980s, *Dubai chalo* ("Let's go to Dubai") became the label for a socio-psychological stress syndrome common amongst Pakistani international migrants to the Gulf States. It consists of a sense of disorientation resulting from harsh working conditions, social isolation, culture shock, and the sudden acquisition of relative wealth (Ahmed 1984). Many women migrants who move outside their home territories to perform domestic labour, home nursing or agricultural or non-agricultural labour, have insecure working and living arrangements that threaten their personal safety. International human rights organisations, for instance,

report a heightened risk of sexual abuse of female domestic workers from South and Southeast Asian countries employed in the Gulf States (Amnesty International 2005).

## **20.3 The politics of mobility**

### **20.3.1 Institutional frames and governmental responses**

In order to address the risks that labour migrants face, but also to regulate their movements and manage the associated financial flows, countries such as Bangladesh have constituted separate ministries for the welfare of their migrant communities overseas. The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment is entrusted with protecting the rights and interests of Bangladeshi migrants in the host countries; ensuring the welfare of remittance senders; facilitating overseas employment for prospective Bangladeshi migrants and increasing their resource capabilities; and increasing the skills of the labour force (IOM 2006, p 219). In Pakistan, in the context of the ongoing re-shaping of the country's emigration policy, it has been suggested that research on migrant labour demand and supply as well as migrants' skill development be strengthened in the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, which is currently in charge of regulation, facilitation and monitoring of the process of emigration from Pakistan (BEOE 2007). In Nepal, structural changes at the government level were still under discussion at the time of writing of this article. It has been suggested that instead of having a separate government department, a foreign employment bureau under a public-private partnership would be better suited to address key issues affecting foreign employment and combine what is at stake in the private sector – such as recruiting agencies and banks – with concerns about public goods in the public sector (NIDS 2008).

South Asian national migration policies are often gendered, limiting the international migration of women. Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and, until recently, Bangladesh have placed various types of restrictions on legal migration by their female citizens (IOM 2005; Piper 2005; Migrant Forum in Asia 2007). In Nepal, for example, women were not allowed to migrate to specific countries such as the Gulf States. This was to protect them from potential exploitation and harassment in domestic work. However, women continued to migrate in many other, often illegal and riskier ways, increasing their vulnerability (Thieme 2006; NIDS 2008). In Pakistan, a ban was

imposed on the recruitment of young females for overseas employment, after reports of sexual abuse of women in some Middle East countries had been received (Jolly and Reeves 2005). For the first time, the Draft Emigration Policy currently under preparation is intended to promote selective female labour migration (Ghayur 2008).

### **20.3.2 Political economy of frontiers**

Public efforts to manage migration not only mirror the gender norms of the subcontinent, but also reflect the post-colonial history of border-making in South Asia. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed bold cartographic exercises that resulted in demarcation of national territories and spaces. However, these were carried out on a terrain that was for the most part not easy to map, such as the Bengal and Assam borderlands and the eastern Himalayan region, or the mountainous border regions that separate Pakistan from India and Afghanistan. This resulted in the transformation of ambiguous frontiers into national boundaries within which populations were subjected to different policies regulating identity, livelihood and mobility (Hutt 2003; van Schendel 2005). Cartographic solutions for post-colonial countries have also transformed the language of citizenship (Baruah 2005). States in the South Asian region must regulate the movement of people from territories that are contiguous and porous. Migration thus forces reconsideration of given categories of space and identity. It is a crucial element in what Rouse calls “a world of crisscrossed economies, intersected systems of meaning and fragmented identities” that challenge the notions of centre and periphery, of citizenship and nationality (Rouse 1991, pp 8–9).

Barbora (2007) looks at how this historical process has created modern problems of forced migration, the complexity of which South Asian governments are ill-equipped to handle. Forced migration is a very pertinent issue in South Asia. The movement of refugees fleeing from conflicts in Sri Lanka (to India) and Afghanistan (to Pakistan); forced eviction of Nepali-speaking citizens from Bhutan (to Nepal); forced migration of Muslim Rohingya from Burma (to Bangladesh); and periodic migrations of ethnic minorities such as the Nagas and the Chins from Burma (to northeast India) owing to conflict are part of the international dynamic of conflict-induced migration in South Asia. Insistence on a unitary citizenship regime has exacerbated this problem in places such as northeast India.

However, population flows between and within states are as much a result of a lack of human security arising from armed conflicts and natural disasters as they are a concern for states that see population movements as a reason for security legislation and regulation. This securitisation of migration has been seen in northeast India as well. Since the 1960s, ethnic conflicts and political confrontation have broken out over the issue of migration. As a result, the Indian state and significant portions of civil society have begun to view migration as a threat to social order (Bhattacharyya 2001; De 2005).<sup>7</sup> The response to such concerns has been to bar entry to anyone suspected of being a migrant, with the adjective ‘illegal’ prefixed to the already vulnerable migrant. This notion of illegality is something that makes social space very contentious for ethnic minorities in regions like northeast India.

The phenomenon of internal forced migration has also been subjected to critical inquiry within the South Asian context. Some of this migration is linked to conflict, although much of it is linked to developmental strategies pursued by South Asian states (Banerjee et al 2005, pp 13–29). Conflict-induced internal forced migration has to do with the manner in which ethnic communities have been forced to negotiate territorial arrangements in different states. In India’s northeast, ethnic groups often contend with one another over territorial reorganisation of existing federal units. Claims to exclusive homelands have resulted in large-scale conflict and displacement (Kumar Das 2005, pp 113–143). The areas where such processes take place are also highly militarised. The sustained deployment of government forces, violent activities carried out by armed ethnic militia, and lack of constitutional safeguards for indigenous communities have made India’s northeast a hub for conflict-induced forced migration within the territorial borders of India (Barbora 2009).

## **20.4 Summary and conceptual reflections**

The dignity of migrants must be respected and their contributions to the economy appreciated by societies and national governments in South Asia. However, this is easier said than done. Insights resulting from migration-related research conducted by the NCCR North-South have highlighted that efforts to show such respect and appreciation are still fragmentary and need to be calibrated by a nuanced grasp of what constitutes the life of a migrant and where migrants look for support.

There must be a shift of focus from financial flows to the well-being of migrants and their families and communities in order to produce more nuanced analyses of the patterns and politics of migration in South Asia. In order to understand the multi-locality of migrants' livelihoods, for instance, the relations of migrants to their places of origin as well as linkages to their other places of residence and work must be considered. These places are distinctive in terms not only of their spatial context but also of their social context, whereas work, household formation and day-to-day activities differ in their nature and consequences. The way migrants live is influenced by social identities and structures from 'home' (i.e. their place of origin) as much as by the structures of new places of residence (Thieme 2008). For example, social networks formed by family members or friends are essential for low-skilled migrants to find a job in new destinations. While this social capital is appreciated in some parts of the labour market, it carries no value in other sub-fields of the labour market – for example, when migrants look for better-paid or higher-skilled jobs. In addition, the same social capital that can help some colleagues to find a job may exclude others if they cannot satisfy certain preconditions laid down by their fellow villagers in order to obtain a job.

The role of social networks in enabling migration has been emphasised in mainstream discourses. Using evidence of exclusion through networks as a springboard, researchers associated with the NCCR North-South have questioned their purely positive role as 'social capital'. They have opened the black box of the household to capture power relations linked to the stratifiers of gender and generation. Siegmann and Thieme (2007) suggest that relations of domination and subordination within networks of family and kin determine whether household members experience a greater degree of vulnerability or of resilience as a result of migration.

Attention to the embeddedness of migration in a political economy of border-making is also necessary. The post-colonial history of the sub-continent has shown that frontiers are not given, but are drawn and guarded with intent. This sheds light on discourses on globalisation, transnationalism and time and space compression that undermine the nation-state as a unit of regulation or analysis. It has also become apparent that transnational ties are circumscribed in important ways – by the regulatory authorities of migrant-receiving states in the form of immigration criteria and procedures, and in the policies that migrant-sending states apply to their overseas citizens or co-ethnics (e.g. Kelly 2003). These increasing restrictions on migra-

tion have contributed to an increase in activities in the informal and illegal sectors that block the social mobility of migrants.

Challenges in further migration research in South Asia are associated with power relations from the intra-household to the national and international levels. These need to be conceptualised not as fixed resources but as fluid and changing conditions. There is also a need for multi-local research. A complete record of migration patterns and circuits will reveal the possible linkages between internal and international migration, the linkages between different sources of income, and how power relations between people change. In addition, research should take account not only of 'the migrant' and his or her household members but also of non-migrating people affected by migration owing to the fact that they live in the receiving place (e.g. Thieme 2008).

Migration and the resulting multi-locality of livelihoods can be driving forces that challenge power imbalances. However, migration and multi-locality do not always generate greater equality; they can also produce inequality and exclusion, and do not therefore necessarily provide human security.

## Endnotes

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<sup>4</sup> We do not address marital migration here, although it is probably the most common type of migration in South Asia.

<sup>5</sup> This article is based on Barbora et al (2008).

<sup>6</sup> The authors wish to thank Vineetha Menon for sharing this information (personal communication, December 2006).

<sup>7</sup> This concern is widespread among non-state actors in South Asia. We wish to cite two examples of such concerns in the region. The National Human Rights Commission in Nepal mentions in its report of 2005 (NHRC Nepal 2005) that trafficking of women and children along its long and porous border with India is a cause for concern. It also states that non-governmental organisations have been asked to help with detection and interception of supposed victims of trafficking along selected border points. Migration rights activists argue that such measures go against notions of agency and restrict the livelihood options of mobile populations. In another example, the All Assam Students Union has been at the forefront of the demand to seal the border between India and Bangladesh, as it claims that there are daily incursions of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh into northeastern Indian states such as Assam. In response to such demands, the government of India has often rounded up "suspected" Bangladeshi migrants and, in violation of domestic and international law, forced them into the no-man's-land between the two countries.

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