## SESSION SUMMARY

**Session Title:** South Asia – Where Resilience and Inclusion Meet
**Session Type:** Thematic Session
**Date and Time:** Monday, May 13, 16:00-17:30 pm, Room 3

**Key Speakers and Agencies:**

**Opening Remarks:**
o **Dr. Maitreyi B. Das,** Practice Manager, World Bank

**Moderator:**
o **Ms. Keiko Sakoda**, Disaster Risk Management Specialist, World Bank

**Speakers:**

o **Mr. Sushil Gyawali,** CEO, National Reconstruction Authority, Nepal
o **Mr. Syed Salman Shah,** Director General of Provincial Disaster Management Authority Sindh, Pakistan
o **Dr. Mazhar Aziz,** Project Director, Project Director, Component-C of Bangladesh Weather and Climate Services Regional Project, Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh
o **Mr. Chaminda Pathiraja**, (presented by Keiko Sakoda) Director of National Disaster Relief Services Center, Ministry of Disaster Management, Sri Lanka
o **Ms. Sasja Kamil,** Coordinator Partners for Resilience, Cordaid International

The session highlighted the importance of framing different areas of Disaster Risk Management and integrating them with social needs so that these areas become social inclusion entry points. Examples of such areas include risk assessment, structural resilience, hydro-met, emergency response services, and community resilience. The hope is that lessons from technical approaches

that work in one country can successfully be transplanted to other South Asian countries.

**Maitreyi B. Das**, Practice Manager, World Bank opened the session by emphasizing how South Asia is unique in two ways: the increasing frequency of natural disasters over the last 10-20 years, which affect its large populations and densely populated areas, and its very heterogeneous population groups with a unique age profile comprising many children on the one hand and many elderly on the other. She also pointed out an increasing awareness of the need for inclusion of persons with disabilities, both in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, and in the recovery and the rebuilding processes.

**Sushil Gyawali**, CEO, National Reconstruction Authority, Nepal, shared experiences from the devastation wrought by the 2015 earthquake. Post disaster needs assessment and recovery effort focused on not just social, but also technological, economic, cultural, legal, and institutional aspects. He shared the main challenges: political transition and federalization, geo-spatial and seasonal hurdles of access, and a significant financial resources gap. The future action plan is to focus on socio-economic recovery and livelihood with special support to socially excluded and vulnerable groups, federalization and localization of reconstruction for sustainable socially inclusive resilience in disaster risk management, and urban housing reconstruction including traditional settlement and heritage conservation involving the local population. The key messages are that the principle of subsidiarity is vital for successful recovery and ensuring sustainable inclusive resilience, reconstruction has to be connected to the achievement of SDGs and Nepal's goal of becoming a middle income country, social inclusiveness and resilience should be considered from a broader perspective, and that the people must remain front and center of all decisions and actions taken.

**Syed Salman Shah**, Director General of Provincial Disaster Management Authority Sindh, Pakistan spoke about floods, Pakistan's most representative disaster in terms of frequency and affect. Social inclusion challenges include gender and patriarchy, class, social and ethnic inequality, embankment-protected and unprotected agricultural settings, and disabilities being defined in terms of immobility. He enumerated multiple efforts presently being undertaken to enhance the social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups. He shared the action plan for mainstreaming inclusive resilience,

which includes socially inclusive disaster vulnerability assessments, community response plans and drills, and community consultations.

**Mazhar Aziz**, Project Director, Component-C of Bangladesh Weather and Climate Services Regional Project, Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh opined that the challenges to mainstream inclusion were presented by economic status, gender, lack of capacity to translate early warning and forecasts, and lack of a dissemination mechanism to reach vulnerable communities in time. Opportunities for more socially inclusive DRM in disaster prone areas include strengthening information services and early warning systems in meteorology and hydrology, developing agro-meteorological information systems, and an effective dissemination mechanism for farming communities. Key challenges include lack of sufficient network to draw weather data, absence of sufficient location-specific research data, issues in dissemination, and technical problems of forecast. Key problems in agricultural climate services include the need to empower various stakeholders, increase cross-sectoral awareness, and enhance coordination among climate service providers.

**Chaminda Pathiraja**, (presented by Keiko Sakoda) Director of National Disaster Relief Services Center, Ministry of Disaster Management, Sri Lanka called attention to Sri Lanka's vulnerability to floods and landslides. Existing efforts to enhance social inclusion include ensuring equity and priority in resource distribution to vulnerable groups, recognizing the right of disaster prone communities to participate in and contribute to decision making, and addressing the specific concerns, vulnerabilities and capacities of vulnerable groups, and prioritizing them in the delivery of emergency supplies and compensation under the national natural disaster insurance policy. The presentation emphasized gender and social inclusion in DRR, specifically, enhancing hydro-met service delivery systems, flood mitigation infrastructure, and resettlement assistance to be inclusive for persons with disabilities and vulnerable households. The challenges to social inclusion in DRR relate mainly to translating theory into practice. Practitioners need to be trained and empowered to convert theory into concrete plans that include vulnerable profiles. Data collection and sharing, and coordination among agencies continue to be significant challenges, as does investment in inclusion, since the output is not tangible.

**Sasja Kamil**, Coordinator Partners for Resilience, Cordaid International shared that only two of the eight countries they worked with paid clear attention to inclusion, showing that much more needs to be done. Lessons include the importance of including marginalized groups in all steps of the disaster management cycle, and working on prevention in disaster risk reduction analysis and planning, be it in terms of preparedness, data collection and sharing, or rehabilitation. It was emphasized that all stakeholders need to work together, and the need for committed staff who know how to work with marginalized groups. A bottom-up approach with the participation and involvement of the community is vital to achieve inclusion, as is capacity building in both 'mainstream' organizations, and marginalized groups. Lastly, setting up monitoring mechanisms for inclusion is important.

There was an important question from the audience on how to create mechanisms to overcome deep-rooted exclusion as a way of life in the communities themselves. Various speakers responded with solutions. Salman Shah said two-way communication and engagement with the community was the way forward. Mazhar Aziz said the mind-set had to be changed through a community approach, and Sushil Gyawali suggested mainstreaming inclusion by documenting all processes planned and implemented across all sectors, and creating Knowledge Management Centers to disseminate this resource, which would be available to all. He also suggested that DRR should be an integral part of planning, budgeting, and all areas of governance across all levels of government functioning.

The session showed how far governments in South Asia have come in terms of excellent risk management, and inclusion of people who are most at the risk of being left out. Inclusion becomes a reality when three things happen. First, policy makers acknowledge that there are excluded groups, and that something needs to be done about them. Secondly, data and evidence exist. Lastly, there is learning from the past. Countries are doing well on the first and third score, but much more needs to be done in terms of collecting robust data and evidence rather than relying on anecdotal information. The panelists agreed that specific, relevant data collection, cooperation among stakeholders, participation and contribution from the community, capacity building, and a focus on livelihood resilience were needed to ensure better inclusion.