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Reversing the Flood of Forced Displacement: Shedding Light on Important Determinants of Return Migration

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ABSTRACT

Most current research on forced migration focuses on explaining patterns of displacement during armed conflicts and the role that social networks play in pulling people away from conflict torn areas. But what happens to displaced persons after a conflict ends? While many of these individuals are able to resettle in the place to which they fled during conflict, some individuals return to their places of origin while others remain in limbo. This research seeks to better understand behavior after flight. Using a rational choice framework, we theorize that people are strategic in their calculations of the costs and benefits of trying to return to their former lives. We argue that social networks and economic conditions are likely to play as important a role in return migration as in forced migration. Using primary data collected at the individual level, we examine the impact of various factors that affect the choices of displaced persons to return home or not in the aftermath of flight.

Keywords: Forced Displacement, Nepal, Return Migration, Forced Migration, IDPs

Reversing the Flood of Forced Displacement: Shedding Light on Important Determinants of Return Migration

This research investigates the circumstances under which individuals decide whether or not to return home after the end of a civil war. Every year, millions of people leave their homes to escape violent conflict and become either refugees or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a total of 45.2 million people were “forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, and/or human rights violations” from their homes by the end of 2012 with 7.6 million displaced in 2012 alone. These figure include 28.8 IDPs (UNHCR 2013, p. 6). Most current research on forced migration focuses on explaining patterns of displacement during armed conflicts. But what happens to displaced persons after the conflict ends? While some return to their previous lives, many do not. Some of these individuals are able to resettle in the place to which they fled during conflict, while others remain in limbo. According to the UNHCR, only 2.1 million of all displaced persons had returned home by the end of 2012 (UNHCR 2013). Although a number of studies have been conducted recently to explain the causes of forced migration, few studies look at whether or not refugees or IDPs return to their homes, or the conditions that might lead to their return. Understanding why some people return home while others do not in the aftermath of civil conflict has important implications for policy makers. For example, understanding the conditions under which individuals are willing to return to their place of origin can help in the development of intervention strategies and post conflict reconstruction policies.

Extending existing literature on forced migration, this research argues that the end of conflict by itself is not the sole factor affecting people's decisions to return home. Using a rational choice framework, we theorize that people are strategic in their calculations of the costs and benefits of trying to return to their former lives. We use primary data collected at the individual level in Nepal to examine the impact of various factors on the choice of displaced persons to return home or not in the aftermath of flight during the Nepali civil war.¹

Nepal is an interesting case to use in trying to understand why people return because a much higher percentage of people returned to their homes in the aftermath of the Nepali civil conflict than the global average. By the end of 2012, three-fourths of the estimated 200,000 displaced Nepalis had returned home, leaving 50,000 still “unable or unwilling to return to their homes” (IDMC 2012, p. 1), while globally less than five percent of the 45 million forced

¹ Nepal went through a decade of insurgency beginning 1996 and ending in 2006 with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government and the Maoist insurgents (see Adhikari and Samford 2013 for a summary of previous research on the Nepali conflict). The war began when members of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) walked out of parliament and launched a ‘people’s war’ with the stated objectives of overthrowing the monarchy and establishing a people’s republic. Existing literature in the field makes two familiar arguments regarding the causes of the insurgency. While one group of scholarship makes the ‘opportunity’ argument (Bohara et al. 2006, Do and Iyer 2007, 2010), others cite ‘grievance’ as the motivating factor for the insurgency (Murshed and Gates 2006; Nepal et al. 2011). Adhikari and Samford (2013) argue for a combination of both opportunity and grievance factors for the onset and growth of the insurgency. During the war, over 200,000 people were displaced (IDMC 2012), with nearly 14,000 killed and thousands disappeared (INSEC 2012).

migrants had returned home by the end of 2012. It is precisely these figures that motivated this research. More specifically we ask why some individuals were willing to return, while others, arguably displaced by the same causes, were not. Primary data collected at the individual level right after the end of the insurgency in Nepal enable us to more precisely predict individual-level decisions to return home or not after an insurgency (see Appendix for detail on the survey). The results show that while prior exposure to violence and threat of violence are important predictors of return migration, economic and socio-political factors also play a key role in affecting individuals' decisions to go back. Better understanding the factors that affect the return of forced migrants to their homes may help policy makers in their efforts to better deal with this global problem.

Prior Research

While a number of studies have been conducted recently to explain the causes of forced migration, studies on return migration are limited. The study by Arias, Ibáñez and Querubin (2013) is an exception. Using household level data collected in Colombia, the authors conclude that individuals' "desire" to return is influenced by economic opportunities at the place of origin, level of trauma experienced by the displaced persons, social networks, as well as demographic characteristics of the individual household. Although the authors acknowledge a potential self-selection mechanism at work in understanding the migration process, their study does not address the issue of selection bias in explaining causes of return. Additionally, due to the nature of their data, Arias et al. (2013) are only able to measure the *desire* of displaced households to return, not the actual decision of individuals to return, a flaw the authors acknowledge.

Because of the potential importance of selection in studying the decisions of individuals to return or not, understanding causes of flight also becomes an important part of the puzzle. Our survey data enable us to model individuals' decisions to flee during conflict as well as their decision to return in the aftermath of the insurgency. We argue that many of the factors that affect people's decision to flee or not will also play a role in their decision of whether or not to return, hence we review this literature here.

Existing research on forced migration argues that conflict, economic opportunity, social networks and physical infrastructure or geographic terrain are important to understanding causes of flight. Many existing studies, most at the aggregate country level, address the impact of violence, or of war in general, that generates threat of forced migration (Hakovirta 1986; Zolberg et al. 1989; Schmeidl 1995; Davenport et al. 2003; Moore and Shellman 2004, 2006, 2007; Melander and Öberg 2006; Melander, Öberg and Hall 2009; Edwards 2009). Recent studies conducted at the subnational and individual-level have drawn similar conclusions (Steele 2009; 2011; Adhikari 2012; 2013).

Scholars of large-*n* analyses also argue that economic opportunity, measured in terms of the level of economic development and poverty in the countries of origin and destination, is associated with forced migration (Zolberg et al. 1989; Schmeidl 1997; Davenport et al. 2003; Moore and Shellman 2004; 2006; 2007). These studies suggest that when confronted with conflict, people tend to stay when the opportunity cost of fleeing, measured in terms of forgone

economic opportunity at the place of origin, outweighs a physical threat to life. Individual-level studies have confirmed these aggregate findings (Adhikari 2013, Arias et al. 2013).

Prior research has also pointed out that social networks may be associated with forced migration. Scholars here tend to follow two arguments. One group claims that past displacement leads to more displacement at the present or in the future (Schmeidl 1997; Davenport et al. 2003; Moore and Shellman 2004, 2007; Edwards 2009), arguing that people who have moved in the past transmit information about their journey and place of destination to their friends and families back home; friends and family then feed this information into their decision equation of whether to stay or leave, and they flee if the associated risk of staying is higher than that of fleeing. The second argument regarding the relationship between social networks and forced migration is that people care about their place of birth and personal belongings, and therefore, they develop or take advantage of alternative mechanisms, such as social networks, that allow them to stay put. According to this argument, civil war reconfigures societies, changing the roles of existing social networks, while also creating new ones (Wood 2008; Colletta et al. 2000; Harpviken 2009; Varshney 2002; Adhikari 2011, 2012, 2013), offering some individuals enough security so that they choose to stay. Arias et al. (2013) found that the presence of a social network is positively associated with a households' desire to return. We extend the second argument and theorize that social networks are likely to play as important a role in return migration as in forced migration.

Finally, existing research on forced migration shows that a country's physical infrastructure and geographic features may be associated with the decision of individuals to flee or stay (Schmeidl 1997; Moore and Shellman 2006; Czaika and Kis-Katos 2009). These studies tend to argue that geographical terrain and lack of road facilities raise transportation costs, making it difficult for people to flee.

In sum, existing theory on forced migration suggests that when confronted with conflict, people tend to stay when the opportunity cost of fleeing, measured in terms of forgone economic opportunity at the place of origin as well as one's attachment to home, outweighs a physical threat to life. While these arguments are very useful in understanding why some individuals stay while others leave, what is missing from the literature is an equally important systematic analysis and understanding of individuals' decisions of whether or not to return home in the aftermath of flight.

Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses

The major objective of this study is to investigate the circumstance under which individuals decide whether or not to return home after the end of a civil war, conditioned on their decision to flee. Building on the rational choice model of forced migration we argue that return migration also involves some degree of decision-making wherein individuals examine the relative costs and benefits of staying in the place of displacement or moving back home. The decision to return or not to return is not only a function of one's expectation of being victimized, but also the presence of economic opportunities at the place of origin. The general environment of conflict and availability of socio-economic opportunities feed into the decision calculus of individuals, causing some to decide to return and others to remain displaced. In addition, social

networks such as community level organizations as well as family connections may play a crucial role in the return decision process. Examination of this powerful mechanism of social connectedness is lacking in the existing literature. More precisely, the decision to return home or remain displaced will be influenced by an individual's assessment of the costs of returning versus remaining as a displaced person, so the decision to return or not is a function not only of the end of a conflict, but also of perceived benefits and costs of returning.

Although prior studies have made a significant contribution to our understanding of factors explaining forced migration, due to the nature of the data these studies cannot explain return migration. We use primary data collected at the individual level to develop a two-stage multivariate model that explains individuals' decisions of whether or not to return home, conditioned on their decision to flee during conflict. Since the decision to return home is conditional on having fled in the first place, it is necessary to use a selection model, which incorporates both levels of decision making. Below, we discuss the research hypotheses designed to investigate at greater depth the causal factors leading to variation in both flight and return decisions at the individual level.

Existing research concludes that violent conflict and gross human rights violations are significant predictors of forced migration. We argue that if threat to physical integrity of life is a cause of forced migration, it may also affect individuals' decisions of whether or not to return home. We identify two means by which violent conflict may threaten physical integrity —*actual violence* and *threat of violence*. Threat occurs when an individual is affected by the general environment of violence and fear created by conflict; for example, when someone witnesses a neighbor being killed or abducted they may feel threatened even though they were not physically impacted by the act. The cumulative effect is increased fear that may force an individual from his or her home in the first place. Actual violence, on the other hand, is the actual physical assault that individuals suffer from an act directed at them or a family member, such as being abducted, which may compel them to flee, and make them reluctant to return. Both actual violence and the threat of violence that individuals experienced before they were forced to flee may be associated with their decisions to return or not return in the aftermath of the war. This leads to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *A decision of whether or not to flee is positively associated with actual violence or the threat thereof, while a decision of whether or not to return is negatively associated with such experiences.*

Existing literature on forced migration emphasizes the importance of economic opportunities at the place of origin for explaining flight. Arguably, threats to economic security may be as compelling as direct physical threats to life insofar as survival in economically precarious societies can be compromised by economic breakdowns. In fact, people may be willing to tolerate some measure of physical threat in contexts where favorable economic opportunities are present. For some, personal property such as land may be extremely valuable, making it difficult for them to leave. Assuming a constant level of physical threat, people are more likely to flee when economic opportunities also start depleting. This implies that people are more likely to flee from areas where economic opportunities are poorer and development infrastructures have been harder hit. They may also be more likely to leave when personal property such as land and crops are forcefully seized. Similarly, availability of economic

opportunities or personal property is likely to induce people to take a risk and go back. This leads to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *A decision to flee is positively associated with a lack of economic opportunity, while a decision to return is negatively associated with a lack of economic opportunities.*

Prior research on forced migration concludes that dense social networks at the place of origin provide a mechanism for individuals to cope with conflict, reducing the probability of flight. The same can be argued about forced migrants' return decisions. As an alternative to living in a limbo, individuals may choose to take greater risks, while seeking protection through social networks. Many community and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) become active in protecting civilians during conflicts. Such organizations may also provide support for individuals to return to their communities (Arias et al. 2013). Social networks are likely an important factor in individual's decision-making.

In the case of Nepal, many pre-existing community-level organizations became instrumental in creating social cohesion among villagers during the conflict (Gilligan, Pasquale and Samii 2013). Existing traditional indigenous community-level organizations that had been overshadowed or suppressed by the ongoing conflict started uniting villagers for the cause of protecting human rights due to excesses committed by the state and rebel armies. In the process, many community-level organizations were brought together for the cause of protecting the rights of members. Evidence suggests that there was a considerable decrease in incidents of human rights violations and displacement as a result of NGO and community organization's involvement (Adhikari 2012; 2013). Similarly, personal social networks in the form of family and friends may impact flight and return decisions. We know that a family network in a village may provide strong incentives not to flee, but family and friends outside of one's village may also help one to flee and resettle in a new place, rather than face the risks of returning home. This discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: *The decision to flee is negatively associated with the existence of community social networks, while the decision to go home after flight is positively associated with the existence of these social networks. In addition, the existence of personal social networks outside of an individual's community will induce flight and discourage return.*

An armed conflict involves fighting between groups that are often associated with opposing political opinions, and therefore partisanship is arguably an important element of present day civil wars. However, existing literature on forced migration has overlooked the importance of this variable. We assess the impact of conflict on targeted political parties in terms of displacement and return migration. Individuals who support the rebel party are less likely to be targeted by them, whereas those opposing the movement led by the rebels are likely to be systematically prosecuted or forced from their villages. By the same token, members of the targeted party are less likely to return for fear of being targeted again.

The party system in Nepal provides an excellent opportunity to test this hypothesis.² When democracy was reinstated in 1990, the Nepali Congress (NC) along with the Communist

² The first democratic government of the 1950s, which lasted for only one decade, was led by the Nepali Congress (NC) party. When democracy was reinstated in 1990, the NC reemerged as the largest party forming the new government. The NC was strongly in favor of a constitutional monarchy in Nepal until the reign of Gyanendra Bir

Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and *Rastriya Prajatantra Party* (RPP) were in favor of a constitutional monarchy. When the Maoists launched their insurgency in 1996, members of the NC and RPP were labeled as enemies of the ‘people’s war’ and often targeted. Therefore, members of the CPN (M) are less likely to be displaced whereas supporters of the NC, RPP and UML parties are more likely to have fled and are less likely to return.

Nepal also has a long history of caste and class-based discrimination (Whelpton 2005). The Maoist insurgency started in the Midwestern region of the country by mobilizing disaffected youths from minority ethnic groups and *dalits* who had historically been marginalized by the Nepali state. Members of the upper caste were labelled as the “principal agents” of socio-economic oppression and often targeted by the rebels (Eck 2010, 40). We expect members of the Brahmin and Chettri castes to be more likely to flee for fear of being attacked and less likely to return for fear of being targeted again.

Hypothesis 4: *The decision to flee is positively associated with membership in the targeted party, while the decision to go home is negatively associated with membership in the targeted political party and caste.*

In addition to the above factors, this study also provides an assessment of the possible impact of demographics, such as education and number of children on the decision to return home. Demographic features such as education and number of children are likely to play important roles in the decision of an individual to flee or return. For example, educated youths, who are more likely to flee to cities and towns in search of jobs and a safer environment, are less likely to return. And families with more children may flee to protect them, but may also have greater kinship ties to the village and therefore may be more likely to return. In societies where children tend to marry at a very young age, networks of kinship ties may be created in a village making the emotional attachment even stronger. We test for the impact of these demographic factors in both decision models.

Finally, previous studies on forced migration have also pointed out that factors such as geography and access to road facilities are likely to condition displacement. Mountainous terrain may raise the transaction costs for people on the move by raising transportation costs (Moore and Shellman 2006; Adhikari 2012, 2013). While rough terrain may constrain individuals’ decision to flee, such factors are less likely to affect their decision to return home. Unlike flight decisions,

Bikram Shah Dev, the last king of Nepal, who was forced from his palace in May 2008. When the Maoists launched their people's war in February 1996 with the major objective of abolishing the monarchy, the NC was in power. Acting on the information of preparation for an armed conflict by the Maoists, the then government mobilized police forces in November 1995 under the name of ‘Operation Romeo’ to suppress the Maoists. The operation resulted in gross human rights violations, including, rape, arrest, disappearances, and illegal detention of hundreds of left-leaning but mostly innocent villagers in Rolpa district (Karki and Seddon: 2003). This incident encouraged many villagers to join the Maoists, and the members of the NC came to be included in the list of the “enemies of the people's war.” The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) CPN (M) is a splinter faction of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), formed in 1949. The CPN party was divided in its opinion over the issue of constitutional monarchy following the restoration of democracy in 1990. Those who stood in favor of constitutional monarchy came together to form the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), and those who were in favor of abolishing the monarchy joined together to launch the 'people's war' in 1996. Consequently, CPN -UML) was included on the list of the “enemies” and the party supporters were systematically targeted during the conflict. The *Rastriya Prajatantra Party* (RPP), which was formed after the reinstatement of democracy in 1990 by those who used to be in the king's court during the Panchayat regime, were also openly targeted by the Maoists and often forced to flee their homes.

return decisions are usually made during peacetime and people can take time to hike the mountains or arrange transportation on their return journey. Nepal provides an excellent opportunity to test the importance of physical terrain because of its diverse topography. This leads to a fifth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: *Higher elevation is negatively associated with the decision of individuals to flee.*

Research Design, Data, and Measures

Data for the present study come from field research conducted during the summer and fall of 2008 in Nepal. Over 1800 randomly selected people were surveyed, including displaced and non-displaced individuals. Nepal is divided into three topographical regions (mountains, hills and plains) with 75 districts. The districts are further divided into 3,914 Village Development Committees (VDCs), each with 9 wards for a total of 35,226 wards. We used a weighted multi-stage cluster sampling technique to go from region, to VDC, to ward level, and then randomly drew two samples, one of individual households at the ward level and another of displaced persons originating from those wards. The displaced were randomly sampled from a list generated by the Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) according to individuals' ward of origin. Use of wards as the sampling unit has the advantage of offering a paired design of individuals who decided to stay and those who decided to leave, and who decided to go back and who decided not to return within the same contextual environment. Besides being a mountainous country, Nepal is very poorly served by road networks. It can take several hours simply to walk between wards. Cluster sampling down to the ward level and then randomly sampling within wards also made the project feasible given time and financial constraints. (See Appendix I for further details on the research design and data.)

A two stage selection model is used to predict whether or not individuals return home, controlling for the initial decision of whether or not to flee in the first place. The main dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of whether or not individuals had returned (*RETURNED*) home by the time the survey was conducted (after the end of the conflict). Returnees are coded as 1 and non-returnees as 0. But the decision to return or not is conditioned on the initial decision to flee. In other words, we only observe individuals' decisions to return or not if they made the initial decision to flee. Thus a Heckman selection model is used to control for possible correlation in the errors between the two decision stages. Below, we discuss operationalization of the specific independent variables used to test the research hypotheses proposed above.

Independent Variables

To underscore the weight of physical threat to an individual's decision, over 1800 subjects, displaced, non-displaced, and returnees were asked about the violence and threat of violence they experienced during the war. Two variables, created from the information gathered, are employed to assess the impact of violence on individuals' decisions. Actual violence (*ACTUAL VIOLENCE*) is comprised of information based on the actual physical assault experienced by individuals. This is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent experienced

any one or more of the following: physical assault, abduction, physical and mental torture, sexual violence, punishment for not quitting their position with the national army, and forced participation in political activities such as protest rallies, mass gathering and indoctrination, otherwise 0.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

VARIABLES	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
RETURNED	1298	.51	.50	0	1
IDP	1804	.72	.50	0	1
ACTUAL VIOLENCE	1804	.85	.35	0	1
THREAT OF VIOLENCE	1804	2.12	1.31	0	6
INDUSTRY PRESENT	1782	.06	.23	0	1
INDUSTRY DESTROYED	1745	.07	.25	0	1
INCOME	1761	2.21	1.46	0	6
CROP/ANIMAL LOSS	1780	.69	.85	0	2
LAND LOSS	1671	2.40	3.88	0	12.7
COMMUNITY SOCIAL NETWORKS	1804	.68	.47	0	1
PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS	1804	.25	.43	0	1
TARGETED PARTY	1804	.32	.47	0	1
UPPER CASTE	1804	.50	.50	0	1
TOTAL CHILDREN	1804	2.02	2.16	0	22
EDUCATION	1767	1.26	1.40	0	6
LAND (LOGGED)	1804	7.49	2.95	0	12.9
ELEVATION (meter)	1804	906.99	630.90	60	2100
Note: N varies due to random missing data					

The threat of violence (*THREAT OF VIOLENCE*) is expressed in terms of a composite index.³ This index measures an individual's perception of the threat of violence. Threat of violence is different from actual violence in that the former represents the prevailing environment of threat created by conflict in a given community and the degree of its impact as perceived by individuals in the community, whereas the latter expresses an actual human rights abuse realized by individuals in that community. The mean level of actual violence and threat of violence experienced by respondents during the conflict is .85 and 2.23 respectively, and the two measures are modestly correlated at .13. The extent to which conflict affects an individual's decision to leave or not and the decision to return or not may depend on the significance of both perception and realization of the impact of violence emanating from war and its aftermath. For our purpose, these measures are expected to be positively associated with the decision to leave and negatively associated with going home.

The present study moves to the micro-level to assess the significance of individuals' economic conditions and economic opportunities at the place of origin. To capture the decisions to leave or not, and to return or not made at the individual level, the present study uses a number of measures of the economic conditions facing an individual.

A root cause of the recent civil conflict in Nepal lies in the nature of the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few privileged classes. Because of a history of over 230 years of feudal oligarchy, coupled with direct rule by a royal dynasty, wealth (mainly land) came to be concentrated in the hands of the elites (Whelpton 2005). This landed class was labeled as 'feudal' and was targeted by the Maoists during the initial phase of the conflict. People were asked to either surrender their land or leave. The Maoists also systematically targeted villagers who were relatively better off in terms of the amount of crops produced, animals farmed and annual income earned. In the process, family-owned lands were seized and given to the landless, forcing the families to flee. Others were asked to contribute crops in the form of a seasonal tax. Many were also asked to contribute animals to feed the Maoist army. Job holders and business owners were forced to contribute part of their income as a 'donation'. Those who defied the Maoists' orders sometimes had their crops, animals, or land seized, their homes destroyed, and were often forced from their villages. Those who complied were more likely to be allowed to stay. Nepal is an agrarian country where nearly 40 percent of the population lives on subsistence farming. As

³ This composite index has been computed from information about the gravity of threat as perceived by each respondent on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 4 (very important) for the following six components: (1) physical threat intended at physically harming the respondent either by beating or some kind of physical assault, (2) political coercion such as forced conversion of political ideology or related acts intended at curtailing one's political freedom, (3) forced recruitment into either the rebel or state army, (4) murder of a family member, (5) physical and mental torture such as amputation, harassment, etc., and (6) sexual harassment.

Given that X_{ij} , $\min(X_{ij})$, and $\max(X_{ij})$ represent the actual, minimum and maximum gravity (on a scale of 1 through 4) of the i^{th} respondent ($i = 1$ to 1804) and the j^{th} component of threat ($j = 1$ to 6), then the *Threat of Violence* _{i} is defined as

$$\text{Threat of Violence}_i = \sum_{j=1}^6 \frac{X_{ij} - \min(X_{ij})}{\max(X_{ij}) - \min(X_{ij})}$$

The threat of violence index represents individual respondents' feeling about the level of physical and mental threat that they faced during the conflict. Equal weights have been accorded to all the 6 sources of threats mentioned above in computing the aggregate threat of violence index.

such, land, crops and animals are the most critical assets of a villager. If any or all of these assets are either seized or destroyed, a family is likely to suffer a crippling economic loss, and consequently is likely to be forced from their home. If these assets have not been returned, the individuals are less likely to return.

To capture the impact of economic conditions, we use two sets of variables. The first set measures economic opportunities and individual economic conditions and the second set measures destruction of economic opportunity and personal economic loss. The variable *INDUSTRY-PRESENT* is a dichotomous measure of whether or not at least one industry is present in the respondent's village. As a retaining factor, this variable is expected to have a negative coefficient in the flight model, and as an attracting factor, a positive coefficient in the return model. The variable *INCOME* is a measure of annual household income expressed in terms of Nepali rupees.

At the village level, the dummy variable *INDUSTRY DESTROYED* measures destruction of economic opportunity and is expected to be positively associated with displacement and negatively associated with decision to return. Personal economic loss is measured by loss of one's property. *CROP/ANIMAL-LOSS* is a measure of whether or not an individual's crops, animals or both were forcefully seized by either the Maoists or the national army during the conflict. No loss is coded 0. A positive loss of crops or animals is coded 1, and a loss of both is coded 2. *LAND-LOSS* is a measure of the amount of land owned and lost by an individual. Individuals whose crops, animals, or land were seized are more likely to flee and they are less likely to return home.

To assess the impact of social networks, the present study uses information about the respondents' knowledge of the presence and/or absence of three community level organizations operating at the village level, as well as a measure of the respondent's personnel connections outside of the village. The variable *COMMUNITY SOCIAL NETWORKS* is coded 1 if the respondent was a member of or expressed knowledge of the presence of any of the following three organizations: community forest users groups, mothers group and small farmers' development program, and zero otherwise (see Adhikari 2012). This proxy measure for the degree of micro-level social networking is expected to reduce the likelihood of displacement and the expected sign of coefficient in the flight model is negative. Presence of a dense community social network is also likely to induce individuals who did flee to return home, hence the expected sign of the coefficient in the return model is positive. Additionally, we also test for the impact of an individual's personal connections as a form of social network. The variable *PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS* is coded 1 if the respondent had family or friends living outside of the village (such as the capital city of Kathmandu or abroad) from whom they were able to seek help, 0 otherwise. Presence of family or friends in the city or away from the immediate conflict is likely to pull people from villages; therefore the expected sign of the variable in the flight model is positive. On the other hand, family members living in cities are likely to help people resettle, thus the expected sign of the variable is negative in the return model.

During the survey, respondents were asked to identify their political party affiliation. This information is used to test the impact of party affiliation on displacement and a decision to return. The variable *TARGETED PARTY* is a dichotomous measure of whether or not the respondent identified her or himself as affiliated with either the Nepali Congress (NC) party or

Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) party. Members of the Nepali Congress and RPP were systematically attacked by the rebels during the conflict (see Adhikari, Hansen and Powers 2012 for details). We expect the variable to be positively signed in the flight model and negatively signed in the return model. In addition, an often cited cause of the insurgency in Nepal is caste-based grievances, emanating from centuries of authoritarian regimes that favored upper castes. We test for the impact of caste system on forced migration. The variable *UPPER CASTE* is coded 1 if respondents belonged to Brahmin and Chettri castes, 0 otherwise.

The variable *EDUCATION* is a measure of the level of education attained and the relationship is expected to positively affect the decision to flee, but negatively affect the decision to return. The variable *CHILDREN*, which is a measure of the total number of children an individual has, is included to test for a possible impact on flight and return decisions.

Finally, in a Heckman selection model it is necessary to include at least one explanatory variable in the selection equation (here the decision to flee or not), which is not included in the outcome equation (here the decision to return or not). We use two variables in the flight model, which are not included in the return model. The variable *ELEVATION* measures altitude of the respondents' district in meter. As previously discussed, remoteness of an individuals' village may constrain flight decisions as they are often made in haste. However, terrain is unlikely to impact return decisions because individuals can plan their return journey, and in the aftermath of civil war, they often receive help such that terrain is not an impediment. The variable *LAND* (logged) measures the amount of land owned by the respondent, expressed in terms of square meters and is logged to control for the highly skewed pattern of land ownership in Nepal. Land is a critical asset for an individual family in villages across Nepal and the size of land holdings is likely to act as a retaining factor for villagers in their decision to flee. Once they have fled, however, it is seizure of land that is more likely to impact the decision to return or not, not initial land holdings themselves.⁴

Empirical Results and Discussions

The empirical results of the Heckman selection model are reported in Table 2. Stage 1 reports result for the flight model and Stage 2 the return model. The empirical results confirm the main hypotheses — that physical threat to life is an important cause of displacement as well as a deterrent to returning. The measures of threat to physical integrity of life provide strong evidence in support of H_1 . The estimates for the coefficients of actual physical assault (*ACTUAL VIOLENCE*) and threat created by a violent environment in the villages (*THREAT OF VIOLENCE*) are both positive and significant in explaining displacement (Stage 1), and negative and statistically significant in explaining return (Stage 2).

⁴ Although the civil war ended seven years ago, Nepal has yet to institute a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and many families who lost land and property have yet to get them back (See Adhikari, Hansen and Powers 2012 and Adhikari and Hansen 2013).

Table 2: Heckman Selection Model of the Decision to Return Home Conditional on Flight

Independent Variables	Stage 1 Flight Model	Stage 2 Return Model	Marginal Effects Pr (Return Flight)
<i>ACTUAL VIOLENCE</i>	1.05** (.19)	-0.93** (.47)	-0.26** (.08)
<i>THREAT OF VIOLENCE</i>	0.44** (.07)	-0.14** (.05)	-0.05** (.02)
<i>INDUSTRY-PRESENT</i>	-0.60** (.20)	0.22 (.23)	0.08 (.08)
<i>INDUSTRY DESTROYED</i>	0.51* (.29)	-0.53** (.25)	-0.20** (.10)
<i>INCOME</i>	-0.07* (.04)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.01 (.01)
<i>CROP/ANIMAL-LOSS</i>	0.48** (.13)	-0.23** (.07)	-0.08** (.02)
<i>LAND LOSS</i>	0.12** (.03)	-0.07** (.01)	-0.03** (.01)
<i>COMMUNITY SOCIAL NETWORKS</i>	-0.27** (.12)	0.21* (.12)	0.08* (.04)
<i>PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS</i>	0.71** (.16)	-0.26** (.12)	-0.10** (.04)
<i>TARGETED PARTY</i>	0.22* (.13)	-0.24** (.09)	-.09** (.03)
<i>UPPER CASTE</i>	0.14 (.10)	-0.16 (.11)	-0.06 (.04)
<i>TOTAL CHILDREN</i>	-0.03 (.02)	0.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)
<i>EDUCATION</i>	0.04 (.04)	-0.09** (.04)	-.03** (.02)
<i>LAND (LOGGED)</i>	-0.01 (.02)	-	-
<i>ELEVATION</i>	-0.0006** (.0001)	-	-
Constant	-0.86** (.26)	2.15** (.54)	
<i>N</i>	1,588	1,157	
% positive (% correct)	73 (86)	51 (64)	
Rho: -0.91; Wald test (rho = 0): $\chi^2(1) = 0.40$ Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.53$			
Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at the Ward level; ** p<0.05; * p<0.1			

The measures of economic opportunity provide strong evidence in support of the argument that economic factors are very important in predicting displacement as well as return. The estimates in Table 2 show that displacement is significantly less likely in the presence of employment opportunities created by the presence of industry (H_2). As expected, the coefficient for the variable *INDUSTRY-PRESENT* is negative in Stage 1 and significant at the 5% level. This suggests that the more economic opportunities available in the villages, the less likely that people will leave their homes. They are likely to accept greater personal risks if they see a possibility of economic security and employment opportunities. The results in Stage 2 suggest that once displaced from home, presence of industry in the village is positive, but not significant in bringing people back, possibly because these individuals have found alternative employment in the place of their displacement.

The results for the measure of wealth provide further evidence in support of this possibility. The negatively signed and statistically significant coefficients for the income variable (*INCOME*) in Stage 1 suggests that individuals with higher incomes are likely to stay put and cope with the conflict, possibly by supporting the warring parties monetarily. Although statistically not significant, the coefficient for the variable *INCOME* is negative in Stage 2, suggesting that people, who had higher income and had escaped anyway, are less likely to return. They have possibly bought new property and settled down elsewhere.

The results indicate that destruction of the existing economic opportunities and personal property is likely to force people from their villages and make them less likely to return even when the dust of war has settled. The positively signed and statistically significant coefficients for the variables *CROP/ANIMAL LOSS*, *LAND LOSS*, and *INDUSTRY DESTROYED* in Stage 1 suggest that loss of economic opportunities and personal property are significant factors in forcing people from their villages, while, the negatively signed and statistically significant coefficients for the same set of variables in Stage 2 suggest that loss of economic opportunities and personal property in the villages makes people less likely to return home. These results support the hypothesis that forced migration tends to be low from areas with greater economic opportunities even in the face of political violence. Individuals weigh threat to physical integrity against threat to economic security before leaving their homes. Moving to a new and unknown location involves a great deal of risk, especially for people living near the margin of subsistence. For some, it could mark the beginning of a never ending cycle of economic hardship. Knowing that moving to a new location involves great uncertainty, individuals tend to stay put and take personal risks so long as economic opportunities remain intact. However, displaced people become less willing to go back when economic opportunities and personal property are destroyed. The empirical results confirm these hypotheses.

The empirical results also provide evidence in support of H_3 , which stipulates that presence of community social networks is likely to enable families to stay behind during conflict, while also enabling them to go back in the aftermath of the war. The coefficient for *COMMUNITY SOCIAL NETWORKS* is negatively signed and statistically significant ($p < .05$) in Stage 1, suggesting that presence of social networks is likely to enable people to cope with conflict and stay put, and positive and statistically significant ($p < .10$) in Stage 2 making people more likely to return. At the same time, personal social networks outside a person's home village may induce flight and discourage return; the significance of the variable *PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS* in both stages confirms the impact of these social networks.

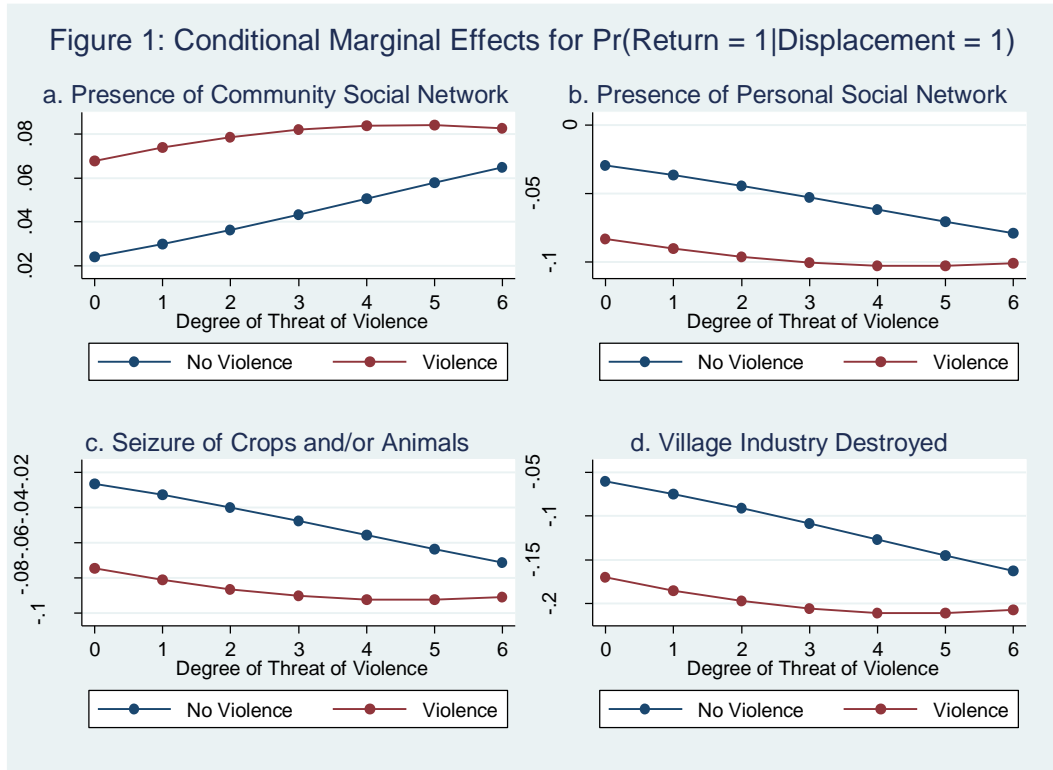
The empirical results provide strong evidence in support of H_4 , as the coefficients for *TARGETED PARTY* are positively and negatively signed and statistically significant in Stage 1 and Stage 2 respectively. As posited, individuals affiliated with the NC or RPP in particular were more likely to flee for fear of systematic attack by the rebel party. They are also less likely to return for fear of being targeted again. The variable signifying a member of the *UPPER CASTE* which was also targeted is similarly signed, but insignificant.

The empirical results regarding the impact of demographic features on internal displacement and a decision to return are interesting. While individuals with a higher level of education are found more likely to flee than those with lower levels, they are also less likely to return. Arguably, more educated individuals are more able to find a job and better able to adjust to city life than those without an education. Interestingly, families with a greater number of children are found less likely to flee perhaps because of logistics of flight or family social ties to the community, but this does not significantly impact the decision to return.

Finally, both of the two control variables used in the Stage 1 flight decision and not in Stage 2 of the model have the expected sign, but only the coefficient for the measure of physical terrain (*ELEVATION*) is statistically significant at the 5% level. People living at higher elevations are less likely to flee because of poorer transportation and difficult terrain. It is also possible that villages in the remote mountains came under rebel control during the initiation period of the war and restricted population movement. These results support H_5 that physical characteristics of the countryside condition people's flight choice.

We include Figure 1 to illustrate the conditional marginal effects of the probability that an individual will return home, given he or she was displaced, for four of the independent variables used in the model, controlling for violence and threat of violence. Figure 1.a shows the impact of the presence of a community social network for individuals who experienced actual violence compared to those who experienced no violence, across the whole range of possible degrees of threat of violence, holding all other variables at their means. The results show that under a low degree of threat with no personal experience of violence, presence of a community social network has an impact of about .02, while combined with a personal experience of violence that impact is about .07. As threat of violence increases, the probabilities increase and converge, with the respective impacts at about .06 and .08 at the highest degree of threat. So someone who experienced actual violence and a high degree of threat is about 8% more likely to return home in the presence of a community social network, than someone whose village does not have such a network. Overall, those who experienced an act of violence are more likely to return to their homes given the presence of a community social network in their village, than those who experienced no violence, holding all other variables at their means.

Figure 1: Selected Marginal Effects on the Probability of Returning, Conditioned on Displacement and Controlling for Degree of Threat and Existence of Violence



Among the factors highlighted in the figure, having a village industry destroyed has the largest overall (negative) marginal impact on the probability of returning home (Figure 1.d). At a low level of threat and no personal experience with violence, the negative impact on the probability of returning is about .06 compared to those who experienced actual violence at .17. At the highest degree of threat, again the graphs converge, with the respective impacts at about .17 and .21. So someone who experience actual violence and felt a high degree of threat of violence is about 21% less likely to return home if their village experienced the destruction of employment opportunities in the form of an industry being destroyed, than someone whose village industry was not destroyed.

Conclusion

What explains individuals' decisions regarding flight and return in the aftermath of an insurgency? The empirical analysis shows that physical threat to life, even when combined with other causes, is an important factor in explaining both decisions. But in addition, economic wealth and opportunity, as well as the costs associated with the loss of such opportunities, were found to be very important. Social networks in an individual's village play an important role in dampening individuals' assessment of risk, making them less likely to leave, but more likely to return once they have fled; and personal social networks outside one's village makes flight more

likely and return less likely. These results suggest that ending a violent conflict is not the only factor affecting individuals' decisions during conflict and its aftermath. Even when life is under threat, multiple factors affect individuals' choices. Besides conflict, there are considerable economic, social, physical and political factors that likely affect both flight and people's decisions of whether or not to return to their homes once they flee.

In sum, in addition to the fears of violence and persecution, poor economic conditions and loss of employment opportunities contribute to making people reluctant to go back after the end of conflict. More importantly, presence of village and personal social networks seem to play a significant role in people's decisions. Social networks in a person's village likely promote social cohesion as well as providing critical support for a returning population, and thereby serve as a useful mechanism to cope with conflict allowing people to choose to return to their communities. These micro-level community organizations, often overshadowed by the 'fog of war,' play a crucial role in affecting individuals' decision during insurgencies. In addition, personal networks outside one's village likely make both flight and resettlement easier.

Taken together, the importance of both economic conditions and social networks in people's decisions to flee during conflict and to return to their homes should provide governments faced with civil conflict some guidance as to how to deal with the problem of displacement. Conflict-induced displacement is a worldwide problem that imposes huge costs on governments and societies. In addition to working towards ending civil conflicts, governments may be able to adopt economic and social policies that allow people to avoid leaving their homes, but more importantly facilitate their return in the aftermath of civil wars.

Appendix I: Sampling, Data and Measures

Forced migrants typically include two types of individuals, refugees who cross an international border and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who flee their homes but do not cross the border into another country. Given the general difficulties worldwide of obtaining accurate data on forced migration caused by conflict, a detailed account of the issue in this case and a description of the problems one faces in enumerating conflict-induced displacement in Nepal is provided below.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that only around 2,600 Nepalis had sought official refugee status by the end of 2006 (UNHCR 2007). This figure does not include individuals who went to India for reasons discussed below. Although the factors forcing refugees and IDPs from their homes are arguably the same, we do not have data on the district of origin for these refugees, so due to data limitations, the present study is limited to analyzing the impact of only the ‘push factors.’

The more difficult issue for this study is the flight of individuals to India and the accuracy of the estimates of IDPs. Individuals displaced to India are not considered refugees. An open border, established in a 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Nepal and India, makes it easy for Nepalis to cross the border into India and difficult for them to be tracked. Citizens of the two countries are treated on par with each other, no travel documents are needed to cross the border, and citizens crossing the border are well tolerated. Although many Nepalis are reported to have fled to India, no refugee camps were established for displaced Nepalis and no systematic documentation was carried out by either side.

Most researchers on forced migration acknowledge the fact that acquiring accurate data on forced migration is challenging, if not impossible; Nepal is no exception to this. Figures on displacement during the Nepali civil war vary dramatically. For example, according to a study by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC 2005), between 100,000 and 200,000 people had been displaced in Nepal by the end of 2004. NRC derived this estimate from figures generated by different governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. Sources cited by the NRC include: the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, which estimated that some 120,000 Nepalis crossed the border in January 2003 alone; the Asian Development Bank, which estimated the IDP figure to be between 300,000 and 400,000; the Finance Ministry of the government of Nepal issued estimates between 300,000 and 600,000; the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which cited a figure of 80,000, and so on. The politics behind displacement estimates as well as the 1700 kilometer-long open border between Nepal and India further confound the issue. Hence, we did not include pull factors in designing the survey for the present study.

Only one organization, namely the Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), a national human rights organization operating throughout Nepal since 1988, made a concerted effort to document and verify displacement figures. Their work was conducted on a sub-national, district by district basis. According to INSEC, 50,356 people were displaced from across the 75 districts from the start of the war to the end of 2004. There is strong reason to believe that the data collected by INSEC is the most reliable and accurate representation of relative displacement across the 75 districts of Nepal for a number of reasons. Because INSEC operates in all 75

districts of Nepal, the data collected by their district offices are more reliable than the national estimates cited above. INSEC was the only organization to collect data on displacements at the level of the village development committee (VDC), the smallest administrative unit in Nepal. The number of VDCs per district range between 13 and 115 with an average of 52 villages. In most cases, INSEC recorded not just a count of displaced but also the names of the persons affected by the conflict — displaced, killed or abducted. In addition, INSEC made a concerted effort to track individuals displaced within the country and later assist them in their return.

INSEC's primary focus was to document internal displacement. Because of the open border with India, it became very easy for individuals, especially those living in the districts along the border, to flee across the border for short periods of time to temporarily escape impending violence. The much larger figures on displacement cited by various organizations during the war likely included these temporary displacements across the border. While these figures are important to acknowledge, INSEC's data is likely the most accurate in terms of capturing the lasting impact of the war on displacement and the relative impact across districts.

The sampling frame used in this study is INSEC's list of people displaced from each district. INSEC made every attempt to include and document all individuals that were displaced from each district between 1996 and 2006 due to conflict. While INSEC was most interested in documenting incidents of human rights violations and focused on tracking displaced persons with the intention of protecting their rights and assisting them in their return, ambiguity remains as to the destination of some individuals listed by INSEC.

Given the long open border with India, some individuals crossed the border into India, temporarily or permanently, and some may have gone on to a third country. While discrepancies exist as to the precise number of people displaced by the war in Nepal, and politics likely played a role in the estimates produced, especially by the government, a number of national and international organizations credited INSEC with having had the most extensive monitoring network and the most systematic means of data collection and documentation. Furthermore, as a non-governmental human rights organization, INSEC had far better access to the villages throughout Nepal since government officials were openly targeted by the Maoists. Indeed, according to INSEC officials, the government often turned to INSEC when it needed data on human rights violations, including conflict-induced displacements. In sum, the individual-level data collected on displacement by INSEC are believed to be the most accurate and the means of data collection used by INSEC was consistent across all 75 districts of the country.

Data for this study come from field research conducted in Nepal during the summer and fall of 2008. The full data set used in this study consists of a national sample of 1804 respondent households from 56 village development committees (VDCs) drawn from 11 districts of Nepal, plus the capital of Kathmandu. Households were selected from 226 sampling units, called wards, from across these 11 districts. The sample represents all the five development regions (east, central, west, mid-west and far-west), three topographical zones (mountains, hills and plains), and both rural and urban parts of the country. The survey was also administered in Kathmandu where many of the internally displaced persons fled. A weighted multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used to go from region, to district, to VDC, to ward level and then two samples were randomly drawn — one of individual household at the ward level and another of displaced persons originating from those wards. Use of wards as the sampling units has the advantage of

offering a paired design of individuals who decided to stay and those who decided to leave within the same contextual environment.

The sampling method involved multiple stages because it sought to ensure that the sample represents (a) districts that were hard-hit during the conflict, (b) all three topographical regions, (c) all five development regions, and (d) both rural and urban parts of the country. In addition, given resource and logistic constraints the method aimed at ensuring that samples would be drawn from areas that produced displaced persons as a result of the conflict. In the first stage, all districts that had recorded at least 500 casualties or 500 displacements during the conflict were selected. The selection criteria were based on secondary data provided by the Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) on the number of people killed and displaced from each district. A total of 19 districts met this threshold. Four of the five economic development regions contained exactly two districts that met our threshold, and varied topographically, so these eight were chosen. The remaining eleven districts were in the mid-western region where the fighting originated; three out of these eleven districts were chosen, one in each topographical region. This resulted in a total of 11 districts, plus Kathmandu, being retained for sampling. Given resource constraints, the total number of interviewees was set at 1500 for the 11 districts, with a target of 1000 displaced and 500 non-displaced, with the remaining 304 interviewees coming from the capital. The number of displaced was further divided into two groups: 500 interviewees still displaced and 500 interviewees that had returned home. In each of the 11 districts the target number of interviewees was determined by the proportion of displaced identified by INSEC in each district. This captures the dynamics of conflict as well as the economic and geographical variance in the country.

Each district is divided into VDCs, with each VDC further subdivided into nine wards. Only VDCs with ten or more displaced persons were used in the sampling of respondents. From each district, 5 VDCs meeting this threshold were randomly selected, and the targeted number of respondent was determined by the proportion of displaced in each of the VDCs. Next, the targeted numbers of respondents from each of the 5 VDCs were randomly sampled from the wards in proportion to the number of displaced in each ward. Displaced respondents were randomly selected from a list of all displaced persons originating from the wards. This list was maintained by INSEC at the ward level throughout the conflict.

The 500 Non-displaced respondents were randomly selected from the same districts/VDCs/wards in which the displaced originated. Target numbers of non-displaced from each ward were based on the same proportions used for sampling the displaced.

The table below lists the 11 districts identifying the economic development region and topographic zone where each is located, and the target number (and actual number) of displaced respondents based on the proportion of displaced originating in each of the districts out of the total number of displaced persons identified in the eleven districts. So, for example, Rolpa had 1,817 displaced out of the total 17,386 displacement in the 11 districts, resulting in a target number of 105 displaced interviewees, and 52 non-displaced. Rolpa is further broken down into the five randomly selected VDCs. Based on the proportion of actual displacement in each of the five VDCs, a target number of interviewees is given, along with the actual number of displaced persons interviewed and the number of non-displaced interviewed. The target and actual number of interviewees differs somewhat for each VDC because INSEC's and the Nepali government's identification and documentation of displacement persons as well as people injured, killed and

disappeared were still on-going at the time the interviews were conducted, so the identification of conflict-induced displacement was still somewhat in flux. In addition, the monsoons were ongoing during part of the interview period. Farmers had begun to work by the time the first phase of the survey was conducted and many displaced persons were working in the fields to earn a living.

Eleven Districts Selected for Sampling with Target (and Actual) Number of Respondents Interviewed

Economic Development Regions						
Topographic Zones		Far West	Mid-West	Western	Central	East
	Mountains	Bajura: 84 (70)	Kalikot: 203(218)			Taplejung: 44(50)
	Hills		Rolpa: 105(96)	Lamjung: 49(47)	Ramechhap: 73(88)	
			<i>Thawang</i>			
			<i>Kureli</i>			
		<i>Uwa</i>				
	<i>Mirul</i>					
	<i>Bhawang</i>					
Plains	Kailali: 118(124)	Bardiya: 94(108)	Kapilbastu: 152(151)	Chitwan: 48(43)	Jhapa: 30(17)	

Rolpa as an Example of the Sampling Process

VDCs	Proportion of actual displacement in five randomly selected VDCs	Target Number of Interviewees	Actual Number interviewed	Actual Non-displaced interviewed
Thawang	0.27	28	19	28
Kureli	0.26	27	37	12
Uwa	0.23	24	20	11
Mirul	0.20	21	15	7
Bhawang	0.03	3	5	2
Total	100%	105	96	60

The survey includes responses to questions about different types of threats individuals experienced during the conflict, specific reasons behind their decisions to flee from their villages or not, whether or not they were physically assaulted by either the rebels or the state army, party responsible for displacing them and so on. It also includes information on the economic conditions of the village, demography and socio-economic conditions of the individual and households.

The overall response rate for the survey was 86.3 percent. While some of the randomly selected individuals for the sample refused to be interviewed, others halted in the middle of the survey, and still others could not be found.

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