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SUSTAINABLE POVERTY ESCAPES: WHAT RESILIENCE AND RISK FACTORS REALLY MATTER?

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT, PANEL 2

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PRESENTERS

Panel 2

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MODERATOR

Greg Collins, USAID Center for Resilience

Greg Collins:

Thank you all very much. I think we have a very exciting first panel. And as Andrew kept pointing out, some of that stuff would be handled in the second panel because of course what we're all interested in beyond the sort of just analytic intrigue of what this poverty dynamics data tells us is what does it mean for what we do? What does it mean for policy and programming? And that's gonna be the subject of this panel.

So I'd like to quickly introduce our panelists before turning back over to Andrew who's gonna provide his own reflections and sort of set the stage for the discussion. Next to me is Susan Markham. She's the senior coordinator for gender equality and women's empower at USAID. In this role she works to improve the lives of people around the world by advancing equality between females and men, empowering women and girls to participate fully and benefit from development. I'd also note as with Beth, Susan is an active member of the Resilience Leadership Council. So for those not familiar with this council it's a cross agency leadership council that's helping guide the resilience work in the agency.

Over here I have Syed Hashemi. Dr. Hashemi's had a long career in teaching, researching and managing programs for the poor. Dr. Hashemi spent nine years with the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor which is housed at the World Bank. Among other things, his work includes financial inclusion of the poorest. He continues to work with CGAP as a senior advisor for graduation programs. And I just started to get a sense of the impact this work at a meeting that he and I were both asked to attend. It was Pep Far partners looking at orphans and vulnerable children graduation programs. And they heard wind of this work on sustainable poverty escapes and were interested in. So I think it just speaks to the sort of wide reaching impact of this work.

Maybe I'll just take that as a moment to say, you know there was this question raised earlier about where does resilience fit in relation poverty? Are they independent? I agree that we can't fully unpack them, but the really interesting thing about resilience is that it's not an outcome at all. It's a set of capacities that allow us to achieve wellbeing outcomes in these complex risk environments that were described in the first panel. And that means we can look at it in relation to poverty. We can look at in relation to any outcome we're interested in. And I think that's one of the powerful sort of cross sectorally motivating things about the concept of resilience.

And then we have Lily Kenny who is an agricultural office and USAID Uganda and fortunately was on home leave and able to join us here today. We really wanted someone from one of our field missions to let you know how this research is influencing their work and thinking. She's helping lead the Uganda's mission's efforts on resilience in the chronically vulnerable region of Karamoja. As well as the broader effort to build resilience as a core development objective country wide in the country. Uganda's one of the first missions in USAID that's put resilience as a development objective for its entire portfolio. So, again, moving us to doing resilience not just in the drylands but in broader relation to poverty and other development objectives.

And last but not least we have Anna Garloch who's the program manager for the Leveraging Economic Opportunities contract which enabled this research and director in the technical learning and application teams at ACDI VOCA. She specializes in market systems development, analysis and brings experience working with USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walmart Foundation. Great to have you here to have that implementer perspective.

So I think we have a great panel. But with that I'm gonna turn to Andrew to sorta set the stage on his own reflections on policy and programming implications.

Andrew Shepherd:

Okay, thank you very much. You've already heard – maybe I should stand up here cause actually I can't see. Some people can't see me around the corner. I hope everyone can hear me.

I mean we're at the stage in this work where we are trying try to draw out the policy and program implications. So the questions that you've been asking and no doubt the discussion that we'll have here on the panel and from the audience will all be very useful in shaping that work. And you've already heard some of my reflections. So I will try not to repeat too much. And I'm under instruction to take no longer than ten minutes. So that's a bit of a challenge.

One of the questions is, you know how to prioritize. I mean there are so many potential interventions that we've already skated over in the first session. And the question is in any local context or any national context how to prioritize. And I mean this is not a failsafe method but I'm gonna just make two suggestions. One is that in the chronic poverty report that was mentioned earlier we said that there were several sets of interventions or areas for policies and program which would help with all three objectives under the general heading of eradicating poverty. So the three objectives have been tackling chronic poverty, stopping impoverishment and sustaining poverty escapes.

So we identified social protection, education, context appropriate prosperous growth measures. And I guess a lot of the interest in this room will be in those. And also sexual and reproductive health as areas which are gonna have an impact across those three different objectives.

If you want to refine this a little bit, perhaps, you know and ask well, you know where should the emphasis go in any particular area? Perhaps we can think about these ratios that we've begun to play with. So in the chronic poverty report we developed an impoverishment ratio which looked at the ratio, from panel data, looked at the ratio between people who were falling into poverty and people who were escaping from poverty. And in this work we can look at the ratio between temporary escapes and sustained escapes. So for the three countries we've got a graph here which shows those two different ratios. I think it's fairly clear from this graph, you know if the ratio, if the score is one, then it means that you've got an equal proportion of people who are being impoverished and escaping or temporarily escaping and sustained escaping. So I think it's pretty clear which country it would be better to live in. From that graph.

But perhaps this can help with deciding on what sort of policies and program supports might be useful. I'm not really gonna pursue that idea here. But it is something that I want to try and pursue as we work out the policy and program implications.

What does it mean in terms of these three countries? Perhaps Ethiopia and Uganda need more focus on that process of sustaining those escapes. That there are escapes. There are not very many but they certainly need to be sustained. More focus on getting escapes in the first place.

Secondly, in Ethiopia it's a very high level of impoverishment and temporary escape. So as I mentioned earlier, the PSNP is there but perhaps, you know we need a much strong suite of policies and programs to prevent downward trajectories.

In Bangladesh it needs continuity and, you know maybe some focus also on converting temporary escapes into sustained escapes. For example, addressing that credit trap if there is indeed one. Going big on health insurance. We were just having a discussion about crop insurance in Bangladesh. And clearly – I mean insurance is a really promising but also very challenging field in a country like Bangladesh. But it needs to be, even health insurance would need to be complemented by massive health investment as well.

Just, oh, yes, here we go. Just keeping on the ratio just for a second and then I'll move off and back on to program and policy issues, within a country – this is Uganda – you might find different ratios in different regions. So bringing these issues down to the regional, down to the local level is a theme that I will come back to at the end. And I know that – I mean many USAID programs are at that regional or local level. So that's the level that you operate at. And I don't see why one shouldn't produce this kind of analysis for much smaller areas.

Okay. Coming on to this specific policies and program implications. I'm gonna focus on insurance. I'm gonna focus on this issue of balancing agricultural and rural nonfarm programming. I'm gonna focus on wage labor cause that's something that has come out quite strongly from the research as well as self-employment and entrepreneurship. And also thinking of migration as something to be perhaps supported. I know that's quite a controversial issue in some quarters.

So coming on to risk management, social assistance, cash transfers can be pushed in an insurance direction. So, you know whether our covariant shocks, substantial shocks, can you cash transfer program expand to help people cope with those shocks? I think they can. But the mechanisms to do so need to be built in from the design of the cash transfer scheme. You need good early warning systems to forecast the shock and particularly climate related events. And it's easy to say that. It's very hard to deliver those.

You need funds specifically earmarked in accounts for the purpose which can be rapidly distributed. Again, easy to say it. Not difficult to deliver it. And you need some kind of

coordination between humanitarian and development action. And that's one of the kind of fault lines of development work really, isn't it? So, again, a big challenge there. So it can be done but is difficult.

What can we say about introducing specific insurance schemes? I think with both crop and livestock insurance and health insurance if you want to include the poorest people in those schemes their premiums are gonna need to be subsidized.

Often lack of understanding of an insurance product is quite a major barrier to uptake. So communicating, getting people to understand insurance is something that programs need to undertake.

Where you've got index based insurance there are complex issues, challenging issues about reducing what is called basis risk. The likelihood that the claim does not closely relate to the loss. And the solution to that is generally to use multiple indicators to trigger insurance payments. But of course this can lead to inefficiencies, can lengthen the time before there's a payout and that is a problem. You need to try to ensure rapid payout. So there is some difficult, very difficult tradeoffs here.

And in contexts where insurance markets are very weakly developed, without government taking a strong lead on this, it's quite difficult to see ways forward in a way. And I think the, coming to health insurance the successes that have been had there are in countries like Rwanda where the government has taken a very strong lead and has eventually changed the eligibility criteria so that you're not expecting voluntary contributions. You're expecting everybody to contribute in one way or another. And the government takes care of the contributions of people who can't afford to contribute.

So some really quite strong government intervention. And I think we were just talking in the break about the difficulties of introducing insurance on a small scale in Bangladesh. Next door in India you have a government which is willing to invest over decades in livestock insurance, in crop insurance and increasingly in health insurance. In Bangladesh I think the government has been much more reluctant. But I think that's something that we might take up in the conversation later on.

So that's a little bit on insurance. I think one thing that might be worth adding on insurance is that in many situations the political commitment so social protection is quite fragile. And, you know you will find significant critiques from elites about the dangers about dependency. You will find critiques from ministries of finance about the financial sustainability of providing cash transfers on scale. And the tax implications and so on.

Perhaps introducing an insurance element to the discussion of social protection at a reasonably early stage of development may go some way to address some of those – some of the skepticism around social protection.

Okay. The rest of the implications that I'm gonna draw out now are around the area of poorest growth. So involving the poorest people, involving people who are vulnerable to

poverty in growth on decent terms. I think it's very clear from this research and so much other research that small holder agriculture is central. It's – and small holder agricultural market development is part of the story of sustained escapes I think in most places. And this needs continued emphasis. This is something that I think USAID has a very good track record in. But as you well know, not all countries have similar – have small holder agricultural development and particularly development of markets as such a high priority.

I suppose that in addition to the sustainability problems that we were talking about earlier, land degradation, which needs to go along with the emphasis on market development, there was a question actually about land availability, land tenure. Something like that. And I think that the underlying land policy frameworks need to be supportive too. People need to be able to rent out land securely. So that there's mobility in the system. Not everybody should be trying to hang on in there. Stepping out and stepping off, of course are also options. So I think having a land framework that is, that allows those things, allows people to rent in particular is also quite a critical factor.

Integrating the poorest households into small, into kind of dynamic small holder agriculture I think it's very much easier to work with households which are not among the poorest. So there needs to be that ladder built into programs. People need to intervention – interventions need to understand the constraints that the poorest small holders face which are often different from the constraints which slightly better off households face. And so there needs to be a process of disaggregation. I'm not sure how much that is built into certainly into government approaches to small holder agriculture. But I think it needs to be.

The rural nonfarm economy we talked about is very much symbiotic with small holder agricultural development. Where agricultural development is not very dynamic, what are the other potential sources for demand for products from products and services from the nonfarm economy? Local level urbanization. Tourism perhaps. Social protection also. Those cash transfers are gonna be spent locally. And can generate some demand for the nonfarm economy.

I think urbanization is something that should get a lot more attention because I think the evidence is growing, and I know some work will be published which could be cross country comparative work which could be quite influential on this. Where you have dispersed urbanization in a country as opposed to highly concentrated urbanization, you get a much better impact in terms of poverty reduction. And part of that will be through the spin off effect. And I've only got two minutes left so I'm gonna have to run very rapidly through.

But key policy supports for the rural nonfarm economy. I'm just gonna draw out one. There are many. But the expansion of the electricity grid and the where you can't expand the grid, small scale off grid expansions are gonna be a key aspect of that. And particularly if you want to have enterprises which are a little bit more capital intensive, little bit more productive, a little bit more dynamic.

I think the other comment I would make here is that supportive policy frameworks are very rare across developing countries. And this is a real area where innovation can take place. That could be said even more so for interventions in rural labor markets. So, you know what can be done to support rural labor markets and how is a key question.

I think we had a brief mention in the earlier session about the importance of labor absorbing industrial development. And there are various policy supports for that. If we think about farm wage work, which many people are involved in, especially at the bottom of the wage distribution, you know they are questions about what can be done to improve those wages. If they are right at the bottom. Which they generally are.

So social protection is again something that can help there because if you've got a public works program or if you have people who are benefitting from cash transfers this can help to raise the kind of, the lowest level of acceptable wage. Minimum wages can help. Minimum wage is usually enforced only in the formal sector but can have knock on spin off effects. And gradually you can incorporate groups of informal workers, domestic laborers, domestic workers, construction workers into minimum wage schemes.

I guess in terms of programming here, partnerships with the private sector on raising work conditions and wages. Partnerships with critical value chain actors. Developing standards joining. Developing standards. These are things which include labor standards. These are things which I think are beginning to be tried. I know that USAID has been working with the private sector very intensively over the last 15 years and perhaps more recently has begun also to work on wage labor issues through those same mechanisms. Recently the LEO project, Leveraging Economic Opportunities project produced a very good paper on these issues. And I'm just wondering whether there's any hint of a change in programming as a result of that paper.

Migration. And this is a controversial issue. But it does happen. It can be a very helpful strategy in terms of not only coping but also for sustaining escapes from poverty. And there are costs to migration as well as benefits. So I guess as a framework for thinking about migration, if you can program measures which will reduce the costs of migration as well as increasing the benefits you're on to a winner.

There are, especially in Asia, an increasing range of migrant support programs which attempt to do that. Providing information, which was mentioned earlier. Information on labor markets and so on. Knowledge of the rights that you carry as a migrant. Yeah, communication. Enabling migrants to communicate effectively back home. Legal support occasionally which they may need. Safety issues. Working on harassment. For example, police harassment in receiving areas. Being able to carry your social security, your social service entitlements for children with you and so on. So a lot of different components there.

I think – I've been looking recently for whether there's a good review of migrant support programs and not found one. Maybe there's a need for a good review of that

area. Migrants also need access to finance. Independent from the labor contractors that they very often depend on. So having a competitive financial services market is gonna be very beneficial for them.

But this is a risky area for donors clearly. To get involved in. And maybe donors if they get involved in it tend to go for a slightly paternalistic approach in which they try and manage all these risks. In practice, of course, these risk are generally managed by the migrants themselves working in often quite hostile environments. So it's – I think perhaps the big issue in relation to migration is the attitudes and policies of receiving areas and of elites. Very often these are quite hostile to migration still. So, you know migrants are penalized for being migrants. They are not allowed to carry their rights with them and so on. So I think change in receiving area attitudes and regulations affecting migrants, the role of the media, these are quite important issues there.

There are one or two more generic issues that also come out from our work. One is this question which I mentioned earlier of working down to the local level. And I guess partnerships with local governments and strengthening of local governments, increasing the capacity of local governments is quite important. In the World Bank's moving out of poverty studies, which were done in the early 2000s, a big quantitative, qualitative research program, capable local governments came out as a major feature for groups of people who were escaping poverty. So this is one issue.

A holistic or joined up approach and getting the synergies between different areas of programming. I wonder in AID how much joint programming across sectors there is. It sounds like there's more than there used to be. But, you know can you harmonize program requirements down to a community level so that at least you get some overlap across social sector and economic sector programs in some communities. And then maybe test out using RCTs, you know what the effect of getting that overlap might be.

I think obviously working with local governments, regional governments would in theory at least help with joint and joined up programming. However, I think thinking back to the era of integrated rural development there are some lessons there. I mean I just mentioned a couple of them. You know there was a big attempt to set up special time bound agencies to implement integrated rural development. And that really wasn't a very good idea. And also special incentives for people who were to work in a kind of cross sectoral way. And again that wasn't a particularly good idea. So I think there's some dangers in going very heavily down a sort of holistic integrated programming way of working.

And just very lastly some data issues. I mean we have deliberately chosen countries where there is panel data. Where we've been able to go and do qualitative research. But what happens when you don't have that situation? You can use your monitoring and evaluation systems to create a panel at the baseline stage by building on a previous survey instead of starting absolutely from scratch, find a good previous survey in your locality and build on it.

You can carry out participatory and other qualitative work at the baseline stage to generate the timeline that we've been able to use. The kind of timeline we've been able to use. And understand also how people have got where they are at the moment. At the beginning of a program intervention.

Do as we discussed earlier, do good quality follow-ups. Not too often. Annual is too often probably. So that the data is well analyzed and absorbed. And maybe three to five year intervals is good enough. And when it comes to evaluation do good qualitative as well as quantitative evaluation to understand the causes as well as changes over time. And of course at the chronic poverty network we're very happy to work with people on those issues. Thank you very much.

Greg Collins:

Great. Thank you, Andrew. That was wonderful.

[Clapping]

Just a couple of reflections before we move into the other panels. One on the methods issues. I mean I think we see the power of panel data. I think we see in this research the power of combining that with life histories. You simply cannot get at a true understanding of the compound complex nature of risk through the qualitative instrument in the same way you get through those life histories. So one thing beyond the content I was struck by how the data methods actually merge together quite well. I do think there is an emergent rethinking about migration and seeing it less as necessarily a negative thing, a constraint to on farm labor or focusing solely on the negative social consequences and appreciation that globally it's an adaptation under way in some countries extraordinarily significantly. So I think that's changing.

On the cross sector, I think one of the potential advantages we have, again, with this concept of resilience of working across sectors that maybe integrative rural development have the same motivator. Perhaps I'm just fooling myself. But I'll do it for the moment. Is that just what I said earlier, resilience is a set of capacities necessary to achieve any wellbeing outcome. So it's of inherent interest whether you're a health professional working on a health program, some of them working on poverty reduction, education outcomes. It doesn't matter because all of those outcomes cannot be achieved without the capacity to mitigate shocks and stresses given the risk environments in which we're working.

And then on the flip side it's, as we've seen today and as you've alluded to and the panelists will get to, we can't build that set of capacities thorough single sector intervention. It's just simply not possible. This isn't about one intervention or one thing. So there's an inherent maybe trans sectoral nature to the concept of resilience that I think's powerful.

So let's start with questions. Lily, we're gonna go to you. As I mentioned, Lily's with USAID Uganda. USAID Uganda is one of USAID's focused resilience countries for work that began in Karamoja region. Actually David Hughes who used to be an implementing

partner, can wave his hand, was one of the Food for Peace development programs in Karamoja that's sort of given rise to this broader effort.

But the interesting thing in Uganda is it's one of the first missions that really moved from a sole focus on dry lands. Places where repeat shocks resulted in repeat large scale humanitarian emergencies. To this broader pivot of understanding the importance of resilience to everything they're doing in Uganda. Top line poverty reduction but across the outcomes you're trying to achieve.

So it'd be interesting to hear from you, Lily, to what extent the poverty dynamics research by ODI has helped substantiate and inform this evolution from the initial focus on Karamoja to the broader relevance of resilience to what you're doing across the development portfolio in USAID Uganda.

Lily Kenny:

Okay. Thank you, Greg. And just thanks for everyone for being here. I'm excited to represent USAID Uganda and also thanks to ODI for this really great assessment.

This assessment does substantiate lessons learned on resilience that we've learned in Karamoja that where we really took more of a livelihood and kind of facilitative approach. And now we're able to apply it through different areas of planning of new programs. The assessment came out during a good time for us because we're working on our new country strategy. And it really helps support our either anecdotal or other assessments that we've done that shows that we really need to have a holistic approach to our new activity planning. Whether it's in agriculture, health, etcetera.

Whoops.

So as Greg had mentioned earlier, we actually have, are starting to create a new development objective on reliance. And we have other development objectives to deal with kind of the population growth and also system strengthening.

Our development objective will still deal with drylands and kind of drought resilience activities, but it will also focus on agriculture. It will include orphans and vulnerable children. It will also include certain aspects of Pep Far. So we're being reconfigured in a way that we haven't always worked together before in the mission. So it's an exciting time but we're also a little bit anxious to figure out how this will all work. But what we've seen is that in districts that we're working in, I work in vulnerable population in the vulnerable populations unit. So I work with very remote farmers trying to help them be more sustainable in their agriculture process and activities. But there's also Pep Far activities happening in the same district. Yet we're in the same district but I don't know who's working there in my own mission. So we're trying to stop that from happening in the future so that we can either not duplicate each other's efforts or we can work to leverage off of each other's efforts. Because a lot of the PEPFAR livelihood activities could also benefit the farmers that we're working with.

So right now this resilience DO I think will help address some challenges that we're facing in Uganda. Right now 61 percent of Ugandans are living less than \$2.00 a day.

Fifty percent of the population is under the age of 15. So the future of Uganda is going to be very different than what it is right now. So how can we make sure that we can help enable the government of Uganda and work with Ugandans to work within these constraints and these challenges so that there are opportunities and that the opportunities are attainable and sustainable.

Just at a working level, more of a technical level, a lot of the findings from this assessment, the ODI assessment in Uganda has been really compelling for us. And things that we really should keep in mind as we move forward with our activity design. Especially around gender. Lucy had mentioned earlier about the assets from off farm livelihoods are beneficial to male headed households. But could pose a threat to female households. I think it's also very interesting that they found that also increased asset value, increased assets of female headed households could actually make that household more at-risk because perhaps that woman could be a mark for theft, etcetera. So that's something we really need to take into account more so at our new activity designs.

I think we still want to focus on diverse livelihoods and focus on women headed households. But just make sure that we try to do no harm and not increase the vulnerability of those households.

Something else that was very compelling was the mention of livestock, small livestock. Goats, sheep and chicken. We haven't been focusing on that as much in the past, but as we move forward we'll include that as a way, as an intervention to help mitigate some of the vulnerabilities of these households.

Again, I think there was a mention earlier how do you know if it's, you know if there's too much emphasis on livestock? Again, we'll have to figure that out as we move along. Which involves including a lot of kind of collaborative learning and adaptation in our activities as they move ahead. But we definitely want to focus on it more. Because we haven't seen it go too far the other way yet.

Again, some of the suggestions in this assessment involves making sure that our interventions are more holistic to help improve resilience. Which that's what our new country strategy is all about is becoming more holistic and more integrated. So it's really at the core of our new strategy. And that, it's also, they also suggest to have a longer term goal. So although our country strategy is just for five years, it's actually part of a 25 year goal that we can kind of work on in 5 year increments so that we don't get tunnel-visioned.

Also, something that we need to look in further from this assessment I mentioned earlier is the effect of the kind of youth bulge. Again, 50 percent of the population is under age 15. So that's really going to affect farming, agriculture, education, and I think what we need to do is kind of take the lessons learned from this assessment further and then apply that youth lens to this.

Besides that, I think any questions you guys have afterwards I'll be happy to answer.

Greg Collins:

Great. No, I think that was very useful and I think it's interesting Uganda's one of those missions that had sort of embraced the idea of working across funding streams and across offices and resilience and some of this research provide the conceptual and empirical rationale needed to actually motivate that. So I think it's, in a lot of ways this research does move this from, yeah, resilience must be a good thing, to actually here's why it's an essential thing. And I think those are important shifts in why this evidence is so powerful.

So next we're gonna move to Anna. As manager of the LEO or Leveraging Economic Opportunities program and an implementing partner you're particularly well positioned related to sort of ground this in the realities of how you guys design programs, how you implement programs and how this sort of high level research that's focused on three cases but kinda has a broader message might inform the way you guys work.

So building on the policy and programming implications that Andrew outlined, what do you see as the role of implementing partners in terms of translating the specific findings in the principles underlying the research into the design and implementation of projects that you're working on?

Anna Garloch:

I'm glad you asked that question. I think it's a really important one. Is this on? Yeah? Is it on?

Greg Collins:

Does it work? I think when you dropped mic earlier it might –

[Cross Talk]

Anna Garloch:

All right. I'll talk over here. I mean for me I think one of the big – thanks. I think one of the big overarching kind of takeaways for me was just how much this work really reemphasizes and reiterates the importance of taking a systems based approach. These are very complex issues. These are very complex systems. And we really need to – a lot of the work that's been done I think, and LEO has been a leader in a lot of this around complexity theory and sort of building our sophistication in the market development field in understanding not just what a system is but really going several layers more deep and really understanding what is the system that I am working in right now. How is this organized? How is information flowing in this system? How is it structured? Understanding, sort of building our toolkit around better understanding how to analyze these systems and understand, sort of unpacking the complexity of what's happening and building our own sophistication in the kind of analytical processes and tools that we're using to understand systems.

For me that was – that's sort of an overarching takeaway at the implementation level from here is just really reemphasizing how important taking a systems based approach is.

Another big takeaway for me was, and, Andrew, this has already been covered, so I won't talk about it too much. But just in the area of sector selection. Certainly as you said, this doesn't – a lot of this research certainly reinforces the importance of

agriculture and sort of a production based pathway out of poverty. But it also pokes a lot of holes in our almost exclusive focus on agriculture. And so for me it really sort of brings challenges that focus and kind of calls us to widen our peripheral vision a little bit more.

Fair to say, of course, that on the implementation side we're often constrained by, you know we're responding to the RFPs that are being provided to us. And so this – I think one of the reasons why this work is really hopeful is that it certainly has been led from USAID. And that's an encouraging thing.

Greater focus on the nonfarm economy and a greater sensitivity even within agriculture to understanding livelihoods that are not own account farmers. Sort of non-own account farmer based livelihoods and diversities within farming households. Rural farming households. The diversity of work that is taking place either within the farm based economy or the nonfarm economy.

There's a lot of improvement that I think we can do in kind of expanding our understanding of what's happening at the household level and tailoring – better tailoring of activities to promote and support alternative sort of livelihood strategies.

A second major takeaway for me was just on the kind of partnership level. I find – so particularly the findings around the importance of health shocks in really sort of eroding away at some really hard fought progress on the economic sphere. The issue of migration. The sort of importance of remittances. Education. Family planning. All these things that are sort of off the radar of a traditional market systems development project. And I find the whole concept, sort of construct of sustainable poverty escapes and transitory escapes as a helpful way to have some conversations with field staff around some of these – you know there's certainly a resistance I think a lot of times to layering yet another lens, yet another kind of, you know we're already doing nutrition and gender and youth. There's definitely kind of built in resistance I think to thinking about yet one more area. But having that conversation in the context of transitory escapes, our field staff are obviously very personally invested in seeing these outcomes that they devote their lives to. To seeing these outcomes sustained.

And so to me that's the kind of – it's a helpful way to have that conversation that's somewhat divorced from kind of a general education is important or we know health is important. But linking it back to sustaining the advancements on the economic side is helpful way to have some of those conversations.

And certainly partnerships. Better coordination. Better conversations with other programs, with other government support options that are out there as well is a important thing.

One other interesting thing that I took away from this, it's certainly not surprising. I know that one sort of finding from the research was the further away from the poverty line that you are the less likely it is that you would fall back into poverty. Not surprising at all, but thinking about that in terms of how we target beneficiaries and

our programs. There's definitely, definitely sort of challenges. The push on focusing so exclusively on the very poor. It definitely sort of adds merit I think to also targeting the less poor in the communities that we're working with.

Greg Collins:

Great.

Anna Garloch:

I would say that covers it.

Greg Collins:

Great. Thanks, Anna. I mean I think the points you're making about this heterogeneity of pathways and the need for, you know there's a tendency in the way that we receive our money to think about single pathways. But I assure you that there's one thing that it's probably the most important thing or an important aspect of this research and that's timing. And as Beth alluded to today, we recently had the Global Food Security Act approved and we're moving forward with the rethinking about, the next strategy. All this is feeding in. And I think there's a much greater appreciation around the different pathways out of poverty. And that they're not gonna be the same depending on asset based, depending on individuals with the household, depending on gender. There may be different factors. So engaging in that does require maybe moving beyond a sort of monolithic vision of the poor. And I think that is very healthy.

Also what you said about, you know when we first began talking about resilience it was around the horn and the drylands. And it was about resilience to drought. But anyone who knows these places know that drought's an exposing moment to a complex set of risks. There are health shocks. Personal crises within households where they lose a wage earner. And I love how this research brings that out and I love the way it forces us to think about risk in a complex way. So those are great points.

Susan, next. So we're gonna go to you. I mean I think one of the more compelling aspects of this research is the gender dimensions of it. It came up earlier this question about, you know how to, what about women's empowerment. And, again, the ODI team was a bit constrained at how to get at that because of the datasets they were working with. But we do have a very similar set of research in Bangladesh that was done and shared with Andrew and his team that actually measured women's empowerment through the Women's Empowerment and Agriculture Index. And it was one of the strongest predictors of whether a household moves out of poverty and stayed out of poverty. As was off farming com sources. So there is this sort of, you know there's a lot of contextual specificity but there is some very general things, one of them clearly being gender.

So as the agency gender coordinator and as an active member of the Resilience Leadership Council, how do you see these findings informing and influencing the sort of integration of gender into our poverty efforts, into our feed the future efforts, into our resilience efforts, etcetera?

Susan Markham:

Thank you so much. Well I think it starts with the gender analysis part of it. Looking at the data not just as gender when there's a female head of household, but looking that within a household oftentimes men and women, boys and girls experience poverty

differently and actually have different responses to that poverty. So starting with that, which I understand that it's hard to collect that data at the sub household level, but understanding the necessity of it to really get at some of these issues.

If you look at access to resources and how men and women might have access not only to education or economic opportunities but also to land or credit or other physical things as well. Looking at the issue of gender based violence and how poverty and GBV play together increasing gender based violence oftentimes when there is increased poverty. And how we can help prevent not just respond to gender based violence.

And also looking at decision making. In the household I think there's the data that shows that when women are empowered to cooperate with the male head of household and make decisions together that that leads to greater resilience. And so really digging down into what that means. And the ___ actually has done a great job within agriculture specifically on empowerment not just on the seeds and the training but also what happens when that money comes back into the household and the empowerment that women gain when men and women, mom and dad, the husband and wife are making those decision together on what happens with those funds.

So looking broadly on kind of the broad issues of gender, I think you can't go too far without talking about social norms and behavior. So if you're thinking about resilience, if you just think about from the moment men and women wake up in the morning, when they wake up, oftentimes women get up hours earlier in order to prepare food. Oftentimes going to seek water and fuel. So if you think about just how they spend the hours during the day, the work that's counted as formal or informal, how they're allowed to travel, the mobility issue which has been brought today. All these issues around what's appropriate for a woman or a girl to do during her day can really have a great impact on gender issues around poverty and resilience.

And then finally, I think it's important to talk about when you're doing an analysis not just looking at the vulnerabilities of women and girls and saying, because of a lack of education or something, this will be the impact. But also looking at the strengths of women and how they can help build resilience in the family. Whether it's through income generating activities. Oftentimes there are strong social networks among women that can be used to benefit the family and the community. And once again, making the decisions. As we move forward, the power of having those differences of opinions and having stronger decision making in the family. So kind of looking at all that from the analysis point of view.

Then when you get to programming it's a whole different issue. But if you're moving from analysis to program and you think, instead of talking about beneficiaries or people or farmers, when you say, okay, let's talk about men and women, right away if you change the question from a generic group of people to talking about men and women, you can think differently about the programs.

Just last month I was on a trip across Africa. I went to Ethiopia, Malawi and Niger. And I was traveling with Dr. Jill Biden. And her point of the program was to look at women

and girls' empowerment. But what I saw was a great broad spectrum of the work that we're doing, USAID is doing with resilience across the three countries. And how they were both so specific to the context but also where the country was with regard to their – the government was involved with the programming. And it really showed the importance of having cross sectoral work. That it wasn't just one thing here. We weren't just working with the government here or doing the insurance and the safety net in Ethiopia. It wasn't just the community based. But really thinking broadly. And then, of course, Niger we did a lot of work with resilience around countering violent extremism. And so it wasn't just a natural disaster but it was also the circumstances that they were living in.

And so as we moved through the countries, it was also interesting to see very sector, both cross sectoral and sector specific work that we were doing. Because although we do, at USAID, work to do more cross sectoral work, it is still kind of awkward or clumsy at times. But we're trying to do better.

So sectoral specific, we were looking at women's economic empowerment. And it's not just the pure you know agriculture where there are a lot of women farmers, but also bringing women into the formal workforce. It's also, as I mentioned before, access to credit and land. It's also the kind of livestock. So cattle, which might be more controlled by men, versus chickens or goats which might be controlled by women or even adolescent girls, and how does that add to the income generating activities in the family.

In Malawi we had the opportunity to visit a program that USAID does with the World Food Program and the United States Department of Agriculture. And there we were looking at the crop production. Both how to keep the seeds from year to year and not have them mold. Store them in such a way that could be used. But also if they had crops that they could then sell, how do they make them marketable and meet the standards of going to market?

And so it was very interesting how the men and women in those communities played different roles but really had to come together to add to the economic empowerment of women and all the partners in their community.

Another key sector that we talk about individually but also has to be integrated is the health sector. So everything from the age of marriage or the age of first pregnancy has been talked about before and the full range of sexual and reproductive health issues. But oftentimes these health shocks can be maternal mortality. And so how that affects both the household, the children that are there. So taking into that account as we look at the programming.

And finally, the last one is education. There's been a big rise in primary education. Now we're really focused on secondary education because it continues to increase the age of marriage, first child, as well as we're seeing second generation impact that for every year a girl stays in school her children are more likely to be healthy, to stay in school and that sort of thing.

But I think it's important to look at linking it to jobs. Not just – I think education is important. But also linking it to I think it helps encourage the family to keep the girls in school. Quite frankly, if they say, okay, what is she gonna do with this extra year of school and you can link it towards those jobs. And in Ethiopia we were able to go to a Girls who Code graduation. And in that case it wasn't just the teaching her computer skills or the internet, but really leading towards how she might be able to stay in school, help her family, provide an income and have a job for herself later.

So from the analysis through the program there's just so many aspects that come together.

Greg Collins:

That's great. I think, Andrew, you're getting a sense of how this is creating new connections. I mean we've always liked each other. But now we're like, how are we gonna engage in joint research together in this? And I think that it is opening a lot of those doors. I think one of the biggest problems we have is the demand for missions. When am I getting this done in our country? So that's gonna be a challenge. We'll talk about it tomorrow.

So last we're gonna pass to Dr. Hashemi. Throughout your career you've explored various models or pathways out of poverty, including the work on graduation for the poorest of the poor. That is those who are caught in poverty traps and often excluded from the development enterprise. As you reflect on the findings that have been presented and some of the discussion that's been had, what stands out to you as the major contribution of this research for this broader body of work and how do you situate it in that broader body of work in terms of poverty traps, graduation, etcetera?

Syed Hashemi:

Can I stand up there?

Greg Collins:

Please, please.

Syed Hashemi:

I think since Bangladesh figured so prominently, maybe let me just start with a couple of things on that. I mean why have we had successes. And those successes have been in spite of military dictatorships, electoral authoritarianism when people do get elected. But it's vicious. It's corrupt. It's the worst political climate ever.

But in spite that, in terms of the social objectives, the social goals, there's been a consistency. Whether it's been the army in power or one of the two women who have been ruling the country for the last 25 years. And the social indicators have been strongly promoted. Family planning. That's been a government thing from way back when. And I was in Ecuador and I couldn't believe the church reaction against family planning was so strong that the government doesn't want to talk about it. And that's so true in so many countries. Especially in the Muslim countries.

But in Bangladesh even the clergy say very positively about the need for family planning. We have legalized abortions. That's unthinkable in so many places including so many parts of the United States.

Immunization. That's in the high 70s now. The rates of immunization. Far higher than any city US. And that's been going on for many years. Education. Primary school education at 98 percent with 99 percent of girls in school attendance. Of course we have to improve the quality of that. We need to move towards secondary education as is pointed out. That needs to happen too.

Disaster management. The health crisis that happened here. If it was Bangladeshis we could have solved it within a day. Of course you can't stop the storms hitting, but immediately what goes on, civilians moving and NGOs and then the government, not only providing relief but providing works program, building infrastructure.

Also with the Bangladesh government, infrastructure has played an extremely strong role. And probably the right kind of infrastructure reduces poverty to far greater extent than any other household level interventions we do.

So all of that has played a role and consistently improving things, including the NGOs. We have some of the largest NGOs in the world. BRAC, for example, has 130,000 employees alone. BRAC, for example, has been able to cover, talk to every household in half of the country on how to do diarrhea control with oral rehydration therapy.

So I just wanted to lay this out. Oh, and the garments industry. Of course there are problems with wages. There are problems with working conditions. But women getting employed, that's been instrumental in not just women's empowerment but the high level of incomes from that.

International migration. Economic migration. Especially to the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. That's created huge amounts of remittances coming in. So it's all that. And what that does is tells me in terms of the paper today, is that if we're going to be getting rid of backsliding, if we're going to be building resilience to ensure sustained escapes from poverty, it can't be any one intervention. More importantly, it can't be only households level interventions.

We have been doing a lot of work at CGAP on the graduation programming. In fact, for the last 12 years. Taking a model from BRAC in Bangladesh, ensuring that we try it out in many different countries. We have rigorous randomized control trials. Evidence from that that shows that except in one country in most of the pilots we've done it's been a tremendous success and the graduation program and the program alone has contributed to that success.

However, and this is where I've gotten drawn into both the resilience agenda, the resilience framework and the work of today. How do you ensure that this escape from poverty is sustainable? And two things that stand out for me for that is instead of just focusing on getting out of poverty, that trajectory must be leading into the emerging middleclass we need to be sustaining this. If we stop thinking about extreme poverty as soon as they're beyond that level, then we're in deep trouble.

Secondly, how do we build resilience? And here it start resilience at the household level. It's at the mesolevel. How do we manage the agrological issues that come up? Droughts. Floods. Increased salinity in different places. We work in Ethiopia with drought. Southern Pakistan with salinity problems. The arid and the semiarid areas in – well the Sahel, even in parts of Khulna. How do you solve that? And there are many things that are going on. Both at a household level but far more importantly, at the mesolevel.

Opening up markets. Sure, you can have individual households doing off farm employment, running enterprises. But then how do you sustain that? If no one knows with even basic economics 101 that if you have too many bakers or candlestick makers or tailors in any local economy that's gonna hit the absorptive capacity. So what do you do?

I was in Paraguay last week and there I saw, of course it's a small country. Just 7 million people. That's half the size of my city that I come from. Well, incidentally, Bangladesh is as big as Wisconsin with 170 million people. Just to put that in comparison.

But the minister, has been bringing in the private sector. And too often we working in development far closer to NGOs, we forget the strong role that the private sector can play. So he was bringing in the private sector, figuring out, well, all right, if we have 30,000 extra chickens that are being produced by the extreme poor, is there a market? The retail shopping chain says, yes, we can absorb that if it's given, you know at this rate. Or what are the export markets for chamomile? And so they've been planting chamomile with this whole system of value chains in place and payment to the farmers based on what they've been planting. And this is from knowledge we have on contract farming and agriculture for so many years.

So markets. The agro climatic zones. Health. It's not just about a demand for contraception or a demand for immunization or a demand for maternal health. There's got to be health systems in place. So that gap needs to be filled in.

Incidentally, while we've addressed food security to a great extent, and you saw in many of these countries and globally reduction of extreme poverty, stunting in Bangladesh has still been persisting. Which says there is something fundamentally wrong in terms of the nutritional impacts that we're having. So that too comes into place. But then if you don't have the meso-level systems addressing nutritional issues, you're in deep trouble.

Political control. At the local level, people's control over local level government ensuring accountability. That's fundamentally important. To open all this up.

So what we're learning from all this is the backslide – to stop the backsliding, household level interventions are important. But not just in self-employment. Formal labor employment becomes fundamentally important. And that's where private sector hiring people, government fiscal policies and monetary policies, providing support to

the private sector to set up industries in the rural areas become fundamentally important.

The point of all this is it is holistic. But all of these things need to be in place. But that's not to suggest inaction. Not to suggest being overwhelmed. That look, it's too many things. We've gotta be addressing droughts. We've gotta be addressing health shocks and risks. Crop damages.

The point is to suggest that there are varied entry points for different groups of people. For the macroeconomist to ensure inflation rates are low. Ethiopia that was the biggest problem we were facing with savings. Inflation rates are high. In Bangladesh, the Central Bank has been able to keep inflation rates at single digits. Which is a fundamental achievement.

So whether you're a macroeconomist or you're a paramedic or you're a barefoot doctor or a school teacher or a natural resource manager, there's an entry level for all of you. However, to make sure that there is a permeant escape from extreme poverty that has to be the central lens through which we decide what we do in our own area of work. And if we have that focus, as I come to the end of my career, I used to think of major transformations when I was young growing up in the 60s. But now I still feel strongly optimistic. With groups like ODI doing academic work, USAID being a proactive donor, NGOs, so many governments I think if we do focus on the issues of extreme poverty and we're focused on stopping backsliding and building resilience, we can maybe make that reality of reducing, not just reducing but eradicate extreme poverty a reality. Thank you.

Greg Collins:

Great. Thank you, Dr. Hashemi. That was wonderful. I mean I think we really got there a sense of not only the heterogeneity of pathways but the multiscale nature of this. And we tend to focus on that which we can measure. Which tends to be households. We are trying to do some exploratory, some more systems level measures. It's super challenging. But that shouldn't in any way suggest we don't need to engage at those levels. So that was very powerful. I appreciate it.

I think we're running fairly late.

Moderator:

Yeah, I just wanted to say that in terms of questions, we're happy to capture those and try to respond to them afterwards. So feel free if you've got something you want answered to still submit that.

Greg Collins:

Okay. So sorry for that. But some rich discussion to be sure. And of course we always think things are going to move more quickly than they do.

So I think it's up for me to offer just a few closing remarks. I'm not going to summarize yet again some of the conclusions that have been made. But I am impressed by not only the coherency across the different case studies but the coherency of some of the questions that have been raised here. I think beyond what we're able to tackle through the existing data sources, some of the questions are pushing us in other

measurement challenges, whether it's how to capture change at different scales, resilience is not only having a locus at a household or individual level but a community level, a systems level. But also some of the psychosocial issues, some of the social capital issues. We can build that into primary data collection. And we are doing so. So that's very exciting.

But mostly I'd like to thank everybody who made this event possible. As you heard at the beginning, it's a collaboration between many parts of USAID, different partners in Agrilinks, Microlinks. And it really has been a wonderful experience from a seed of an idea to being here today to see how these teams have worked together. It's been incredible to watch.

In terms of post event products, there will be a recording of the webinar. The PowerPoint presentations, follow-up questions and blog posts will be found on the micro links and agro links websites. You will receive an email with more information about this in about a week.

The full site or the suite of seven research products – so we had the case studies, we have a methods note, we have a synthesis, we have a policy brief. And they've actually churned them out quite quickly. We were told late September and I've seen many of them actually came through last night. So they will be on micro links before the end of September if not before.

And then finally, well, two things. One, we have been doing a lot on resilience and USAID over the last few years. We've actually attempted to capture this in a progress report. There are copies on the back. Please grab a copy. And that's both our focused efforts in the drylands of the horn and the Sahel and some work in Nepal, but also this broader pivot. And then there's also gonna be – the next micro links event webinar on September 8 on facilitating systems change, insights from Feed the Future in Rwanda, Senegal, Ghana and Zambia. There's a flyer in the back that you can look at for that.

And also a reminder that the LEO project's Transforming Market Systems conference will be held on 27 September. And I believe some of the folks from ODI and some of us will be attending that as well. Very exciting. As that project sets down. More information on that you can find on the micro links homepage.

So with that, I thank you for your attendance and especially thank you for those who stuck around for the whole thing. It was great. Thank you.

[Clapping]

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