

Jeevan Sahota
Reaction Paper 1

The readings for this week especially by Pelling, brings in a very important perspective of 'human dimension' in the context of vulnerability from disasters, which otherwise has been long dominated by engineering oriented physical reduction of disasters, which of course is limited in its impact. This is not to undermine the importance of physical intervention, but rather to highlight its very limited scope in that its benefits are largely received by elites and those who have access to formal sector resources. The Pelling readings appropriately traces the link between poverty and vulnerability in urban areas which is of great concern as according to recent estimates, by 2015, more than half of worlds population will be living in urban areas. While the readings by Pelling addresses role of social capital and vulnerability reduction, the discussion on political assets of communities was limited and it was not clear how the political assets could be leveraged to guide policy change intervention. I am particularly apprehensive about the political assets in the vulnerable communities as experience from India shows that most vulnerable urban population are often manipulated by political leaders by promising regularization of their houses without provision of basic amenities, and the communities are rarely organized. On global front, the extension of UN IDNDR agenda through UN Disaster Reduction Strategy is a welcome step. The need of the hour is to much initiate more participatory development planning and engage communities in the decision making.