

Migration as adaptation in situations of environmental stress: Concepts and Practice

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

Kathmandu, Nepal



Reasons for migration

- Do environmental shocks and stress influence the decision to migrate?
- What is the number of people whose decision to migrate was influenced by an environmental shock or stress?

Impact of migration on adaptation

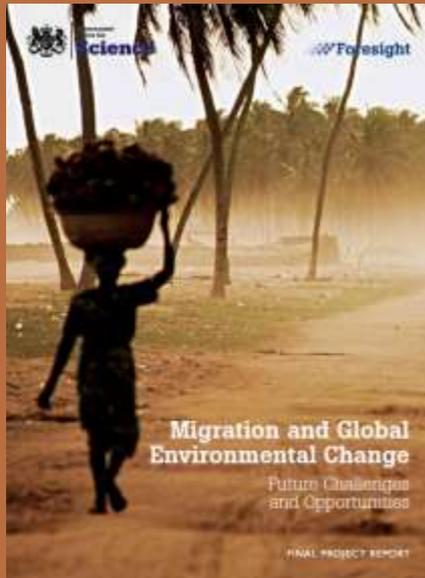
- Does migration build up or erode the adaptive capacity of the migrant sending households?
- Does migration influence the resilience of the origin communities?

Adaptation is defined as ‘the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploits beneficial opportunities’ (IPCC 2015:5).

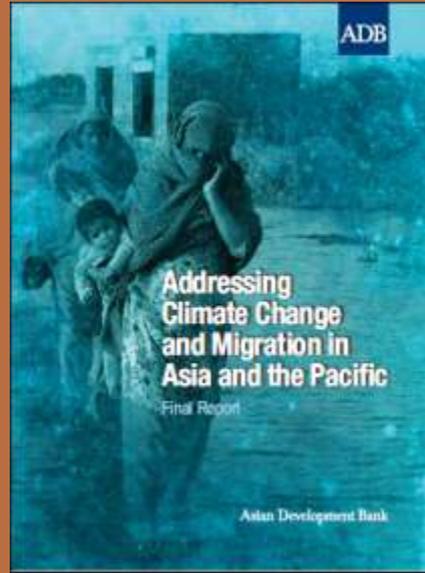
Forms of adaptation:

- Anticipatory vs. Reactive
- Planned vs. Autonomous
- Structural vs. Non-structural
- Incremental vs. Transformational





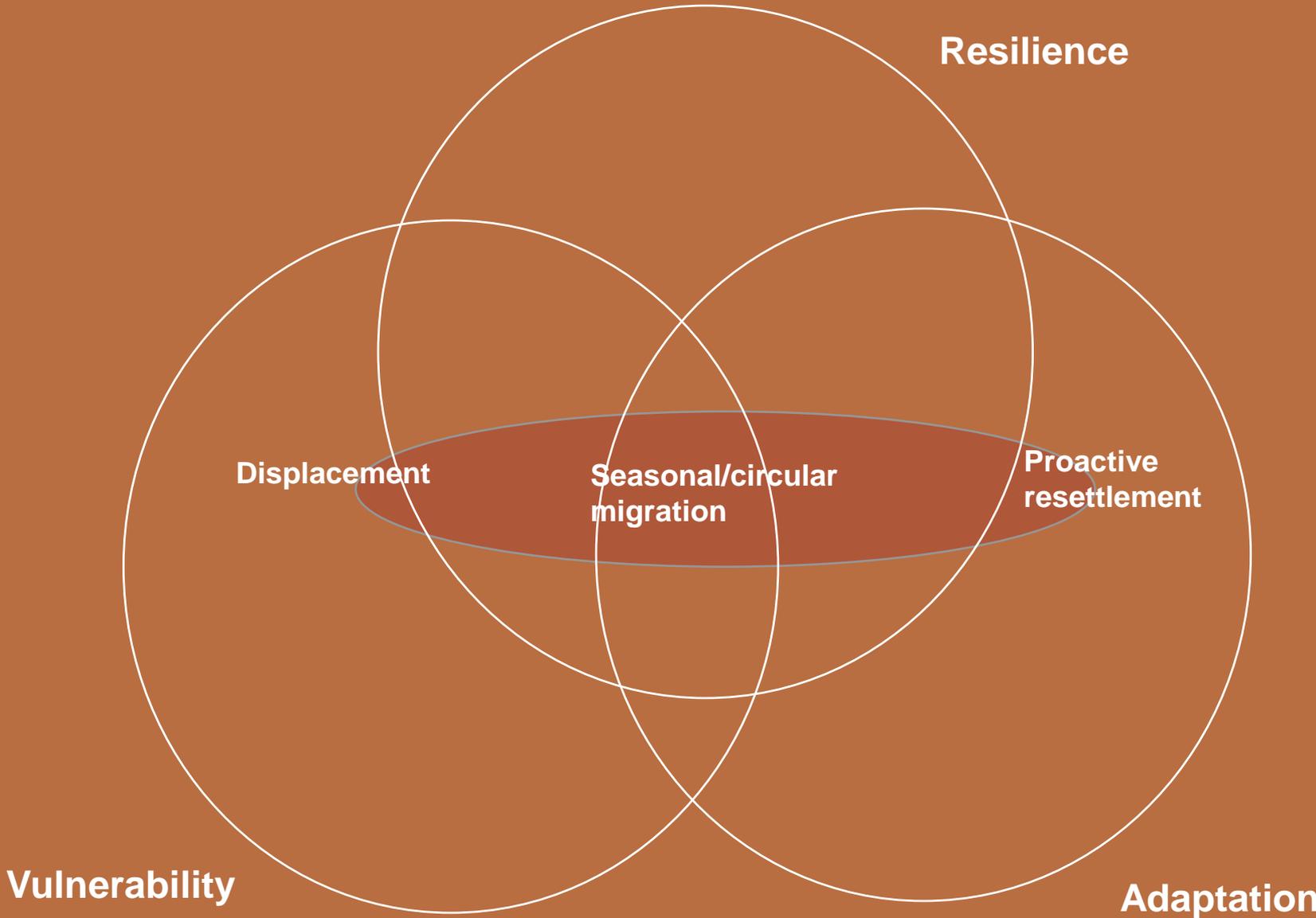
Migration has significant scope of increasing resilience of household members who migrate and those who stay behind (Foresight, 2011)



Migration can be considered as a part of the adaptation portfolio mobilized by migrants themselves to cope with climate change (ADB, 2012).



Migration as a household risk management strategy to rainfall variability and food and livelihood insecurity (UNU, 2012).



What role does migration have as an adaptation?

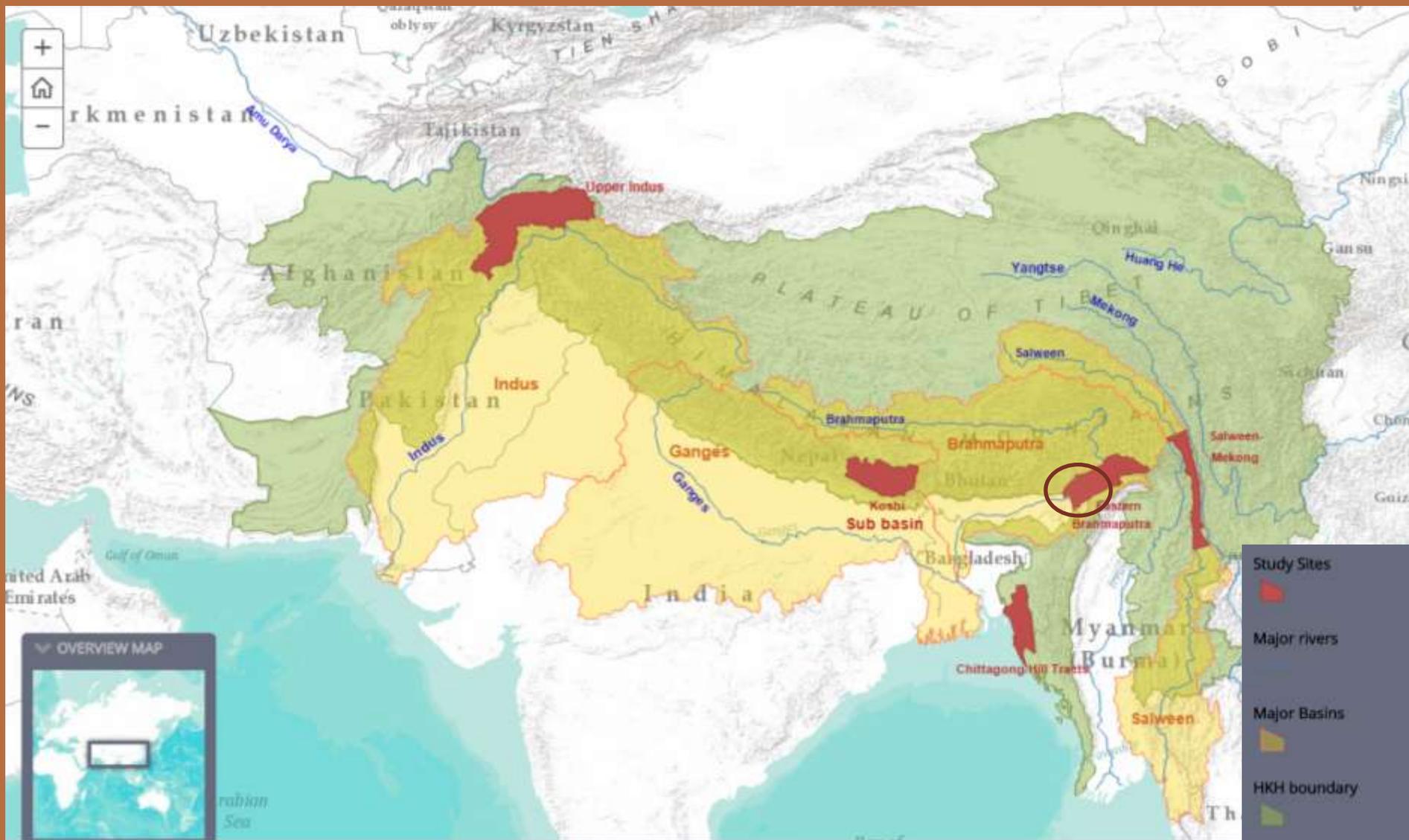
- Migration outcomes are counter-cyclical in nature (Mohapatra et al., 2009).
- Lead to reduction in vulnerability, through enhancement of livelihoods (Adger et al. 2002).
- Reduce pressure on resources in origin communities (ADB 2012).
- Represent an income source that is generally not disrupted by environmental hazards (Osili 2004).
- Help people to better withstand the impacts of environmental stressors (Suleri and Savage 2006).
- Allow for better access to information and social networks (ADB 2012).



Contribute empirical evidence to the global discourse on migration and adaptation.

Actionable recommendations for government institutions, non-government organizations, and international development agencies.

Research sites in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region

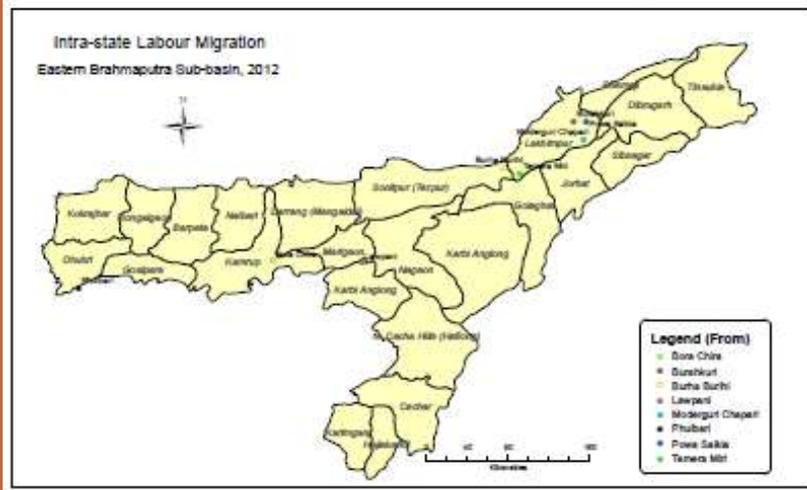
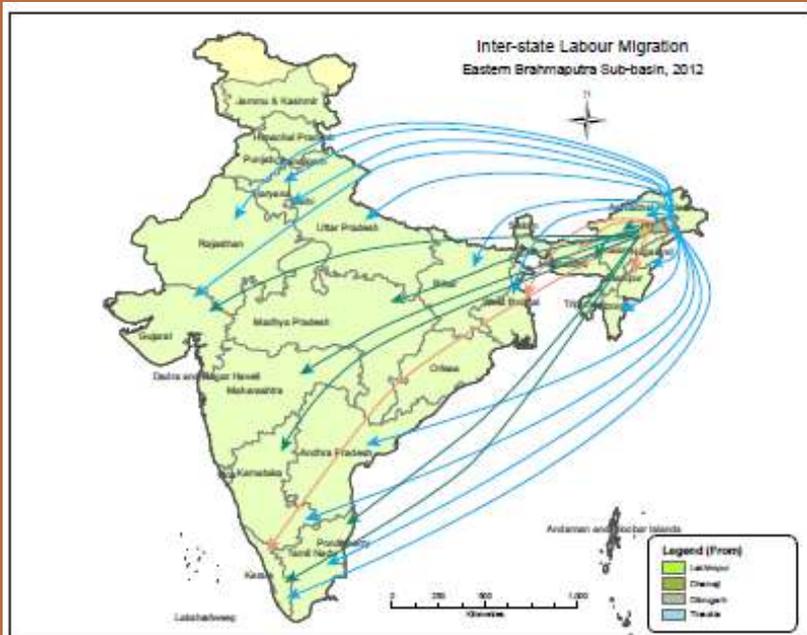


Floods in the Lakhimpur district, Assam



- Annual floods.
- 2-3 periods of inundation every year.
- Sand casting.
- Damages farm land, destroys standing crops, kills livestock, disrupts transport and communication, and damages infrastructure and property.

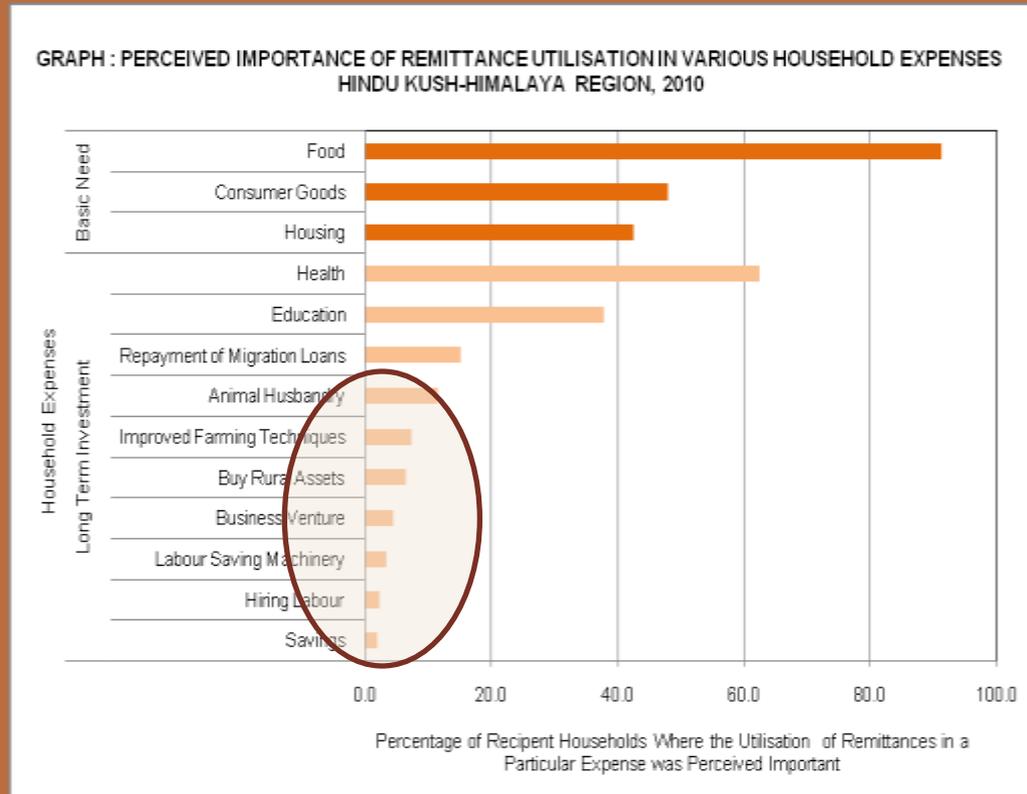
Major destinations of the migrant workers from Upper Assam



- Internal migration.
- Predominantly, male outmigration
- Minimum primary or secondary level of education.
- Social network driven.
- Informal sector job in secondary or tertiary sectors.

Role of remittances in households of Upper Assam

- Mean annual volume of remittance received by a household was estimated to be INR 36,000.36.
- Remittances were used on food, housing, consumer goods, health, and education.
- Relatively, less investment in rural assets, livestock, micro-enterprises, and savings.



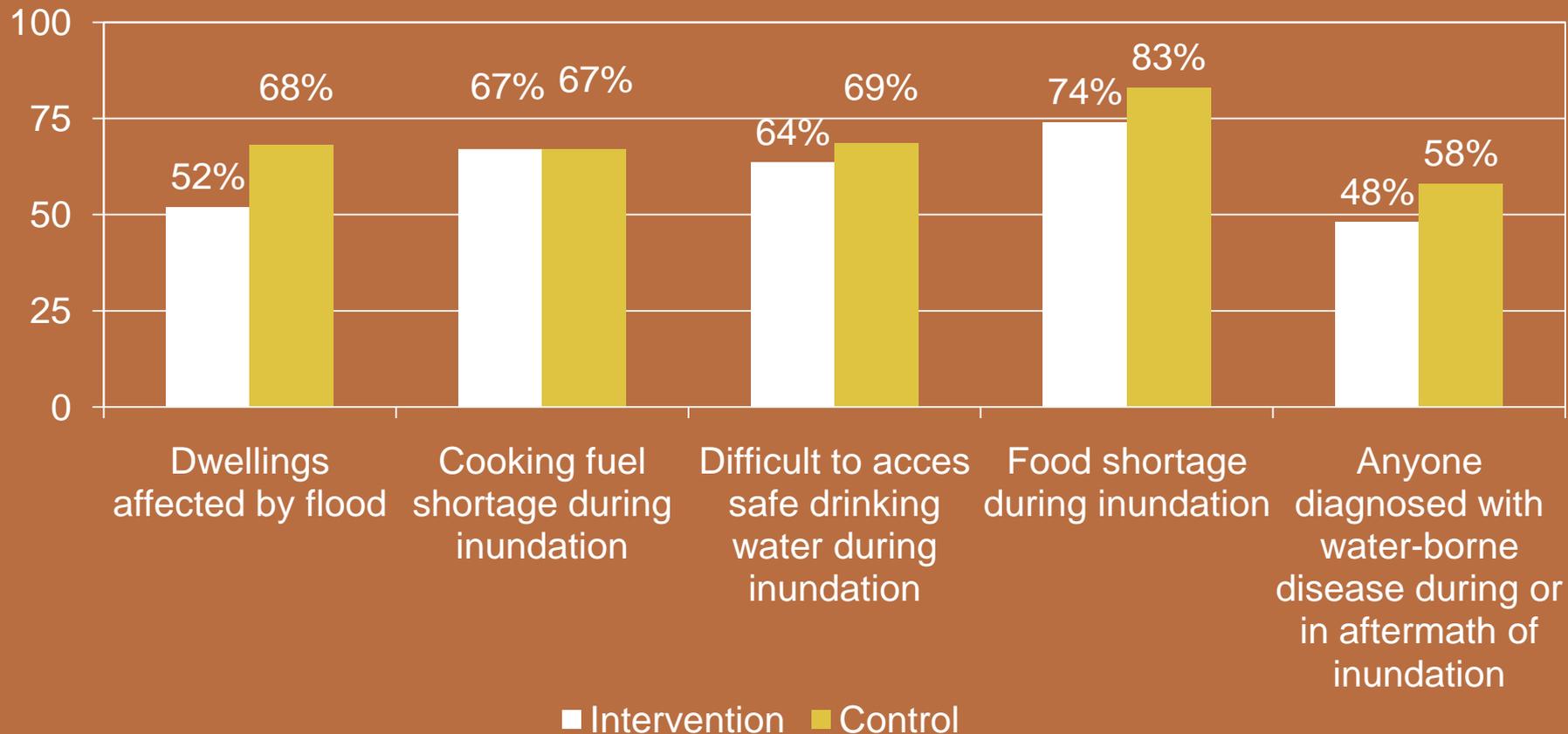
Note: The percentages show the combined figures for the categories very important and fairly important

Constraints to the use of remittances in flood preparedness in Lakhimpur District, Assam

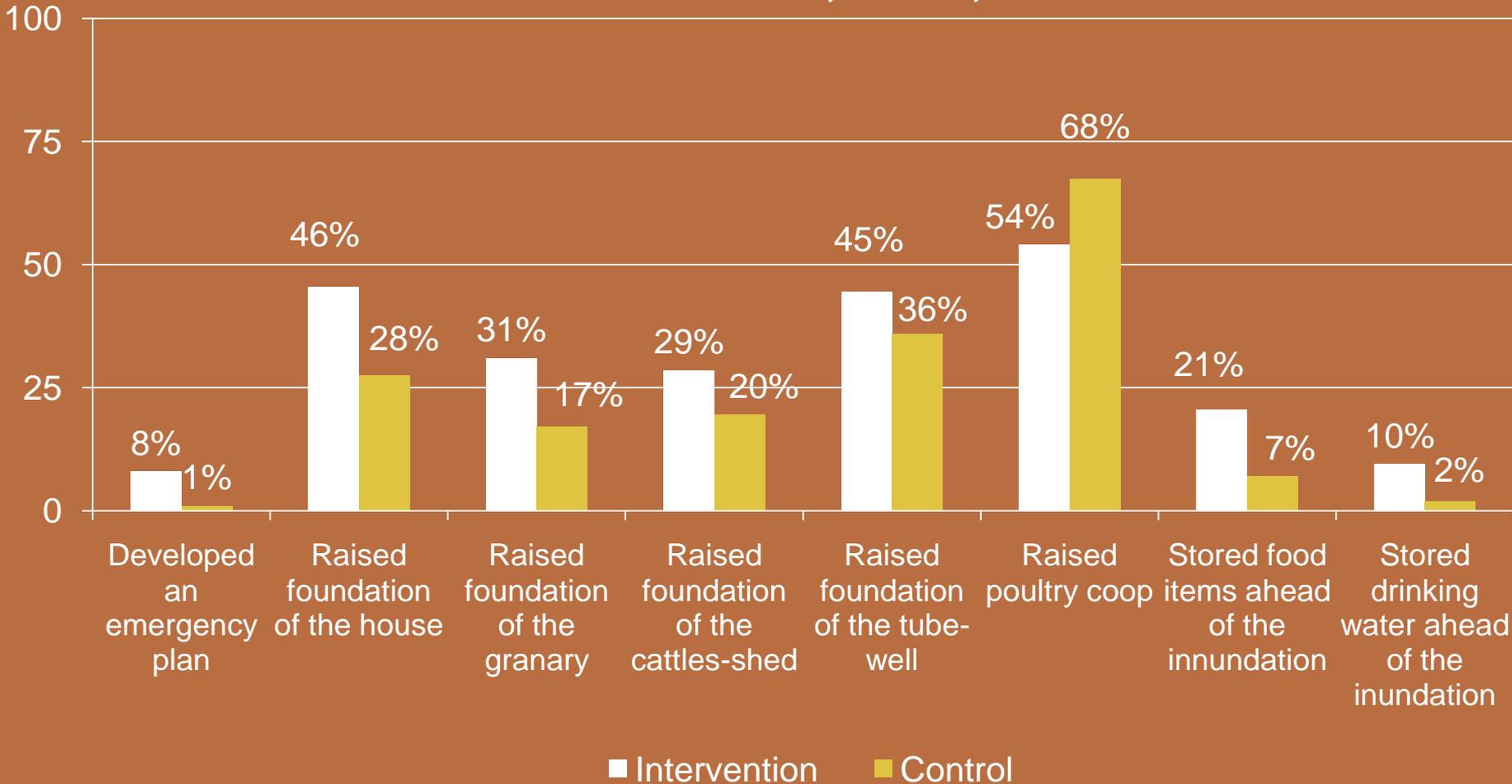
- Partial understanding of **environmental impacts** and their long-term implications on lives and livelihoods.
- **Uncertainty about the benefits** of building household-level adaptive capacity while the basic needs (e.g. food, healthcare, shelter) remain unaddressed.
- **Low volume** of remittances.
- **Lack of financial planning and savings** required for capital formation or asset creation over the medium and long term.
- **Lack of financial literacy**, particularly among women who are often the recipients and managers of remittances.
- **Lack of access to technical inputs** on how to invest remittances in 'low cost' and 'low risk' flood preparedness and livelihood diversification options.
- Notion that flood preparedness is the **responsibility** of the government agencies or NGOs.

Major flood impacts experienced by households in the Lakhimpur district

FLOOD IMPACTS AMONG THE REMITTANCE RECEIVING HOUSEHOLDS DURING THE 12 MONTHS PRECEDING THE BASELINE SURVEY LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT, ASSAM, 2014



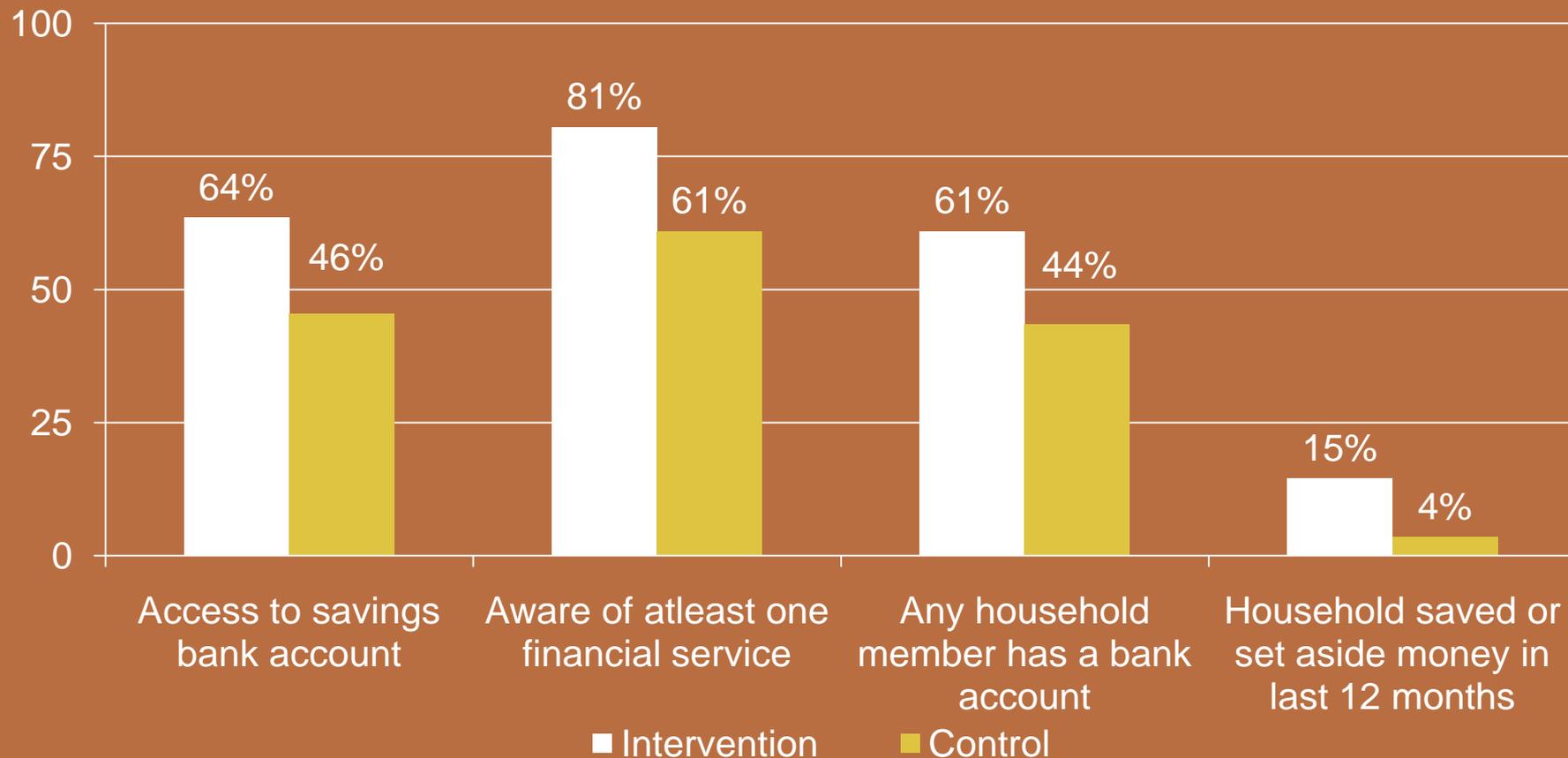
FLOOD PREPAREDNESS AMONG THE REMITTANCE RECEIVING HOUSEHOLDS LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT, ASSAM, 2014



Source: HICAP Baseline Survey, 2014

FINANCIAL INCLUSION AMONG THE REMITTANCE RECEIVING HOUSEHOLDS

LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT, ASSAM, 2014



- Adaptive capacity

The combination of the strengths, attributes (quality), and resources available to an individual, community, society, or organization that can be used to prepare for and undertake actions to reduce adverse impacts, moderate harm, or exploit beneficial opportunities.

- Objective

To examine whether trainings on financial literacy and flood preparedness for women from the remittance recipient households could help build the adaptive capacity of the remittance recipient households.



- Financial literacy
 - ✓ Monthly household budget (risk as a line item)

- Financial services
 - ✓ Savings bank account
 - ✓ Savings as a part of flood preparedness

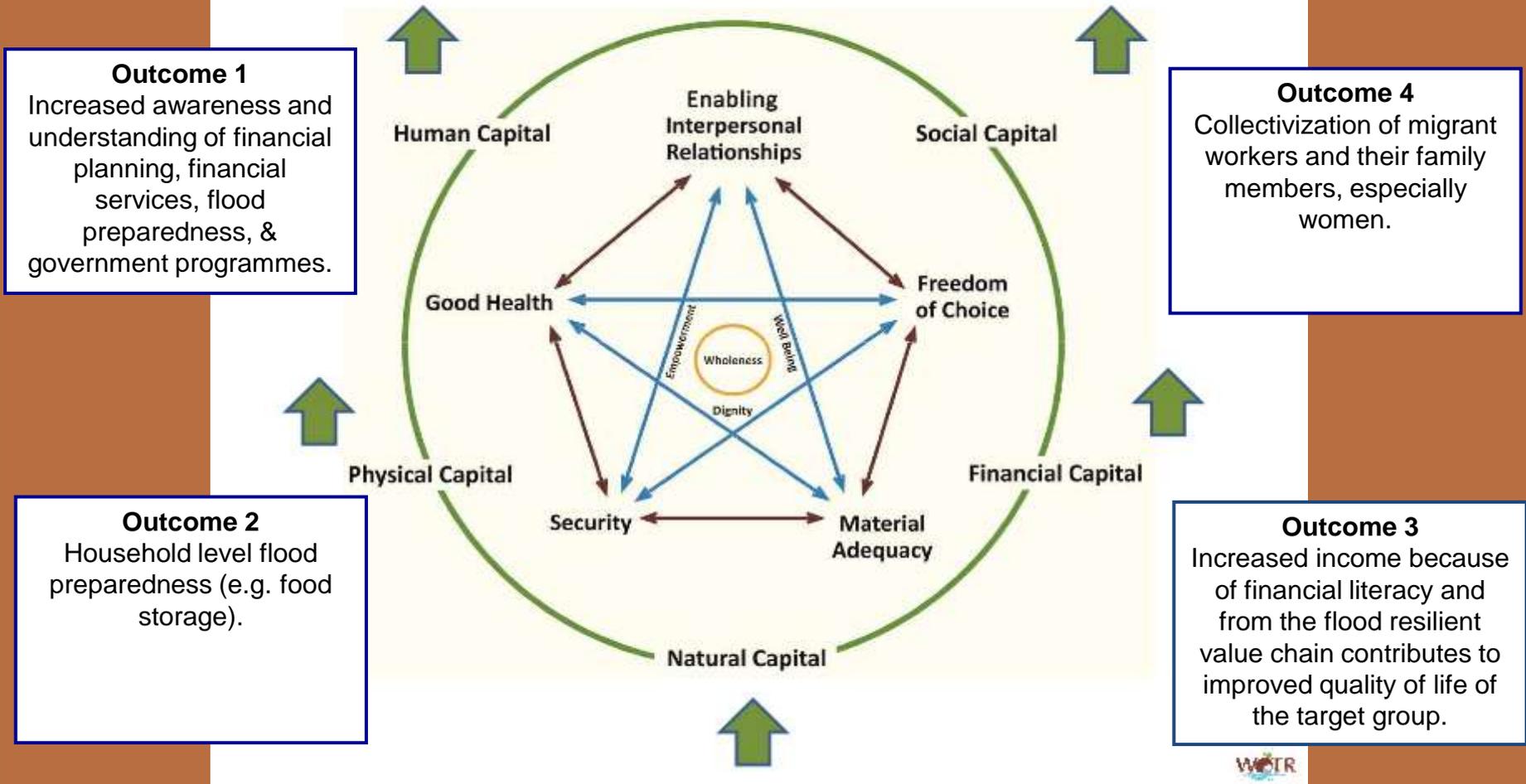
- Flood preparedness
 - ✓ Safe drinking water
 - ✓ Food storage
 - ✓ Go-bag
 - ✓ Improved cook stove

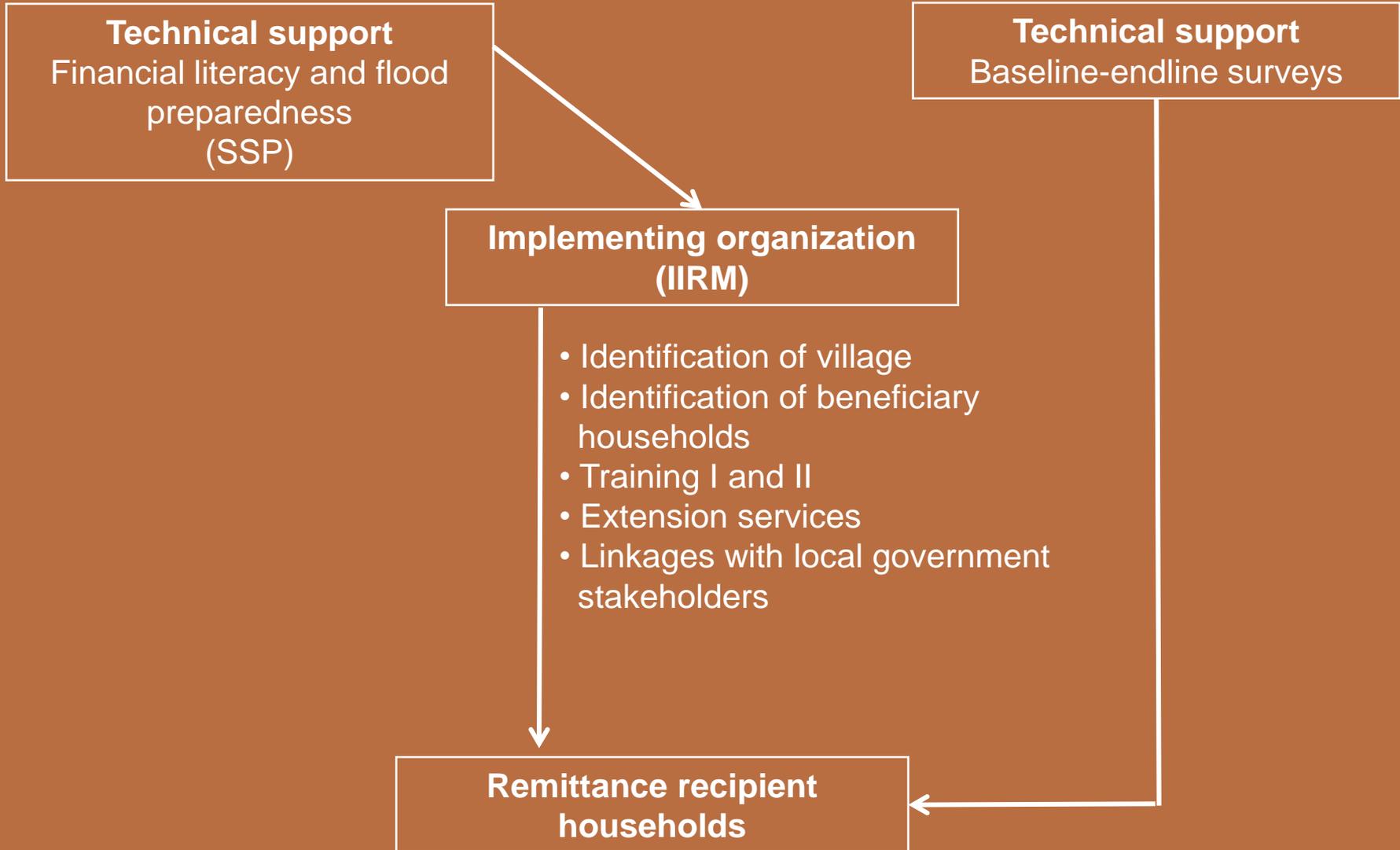
- If adaptive capacity is used to address the future flood impacts that leads to reduction in vulnerability.



How does the intervention relate to household level adaptive capacity?

The WOTR Engine for Adaptive Sustainable Development









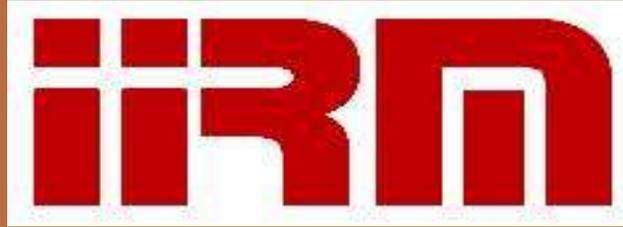








- Remittance recipient households need support in terms of information, technical inputs, tailor made plans, and handholding.
- Need to build a discourse on the role of migration and remittances in supporting adaptive capacity in the HKH region, and mainstream it in adaptation planning and practices to build resilience.
- Support households to build adaptive capacity to climate variability and extreme events at present, is as important as facilitating adaptation to future changes.





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About Migration and Adaptation

Better understanding of the relationship between migration and adaptation will increase the ability to foster desirable outcomes when a migrant sending community experiences a climatic or environmental hazard

[READ MORE](#)



- OBJECTIVE**
- Contribute empirical evidence to the global discourse on migration and adaptation.
 - Provide actionable recommendations for the government institutions, non-government organizations, and international development agencies.



NANGEN MEETING NEPAL

Nansen Initiative South Asia Civil Society Meeting: Climate Change, Disasters and Human Mobility in South Asia
2 - 3 February 2015

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- THEMES**
- Multi-stakeholder consultations
 - Policy review on the role of labour migration and remittances in climate change adaptation
 - Case study on migration and adaptive capacity
 - Action research on migration and adaptive capacity.
- [READ MORE](#)

- NEWS & EVENTS**
- A roundtable on the role of migration and remittances in the climate change adaptation policy in Pakistan (21 Nov 2014)
 - A roundtable on the role of migration and remittances in the climate change adaptation policy in Nepal (27 Oct 2014)
- [READ MORE](#)

- PUBLICATIONS**
- People on the Move in a Changing Climate
 - Migration as an Adaptation Strategy and its Gendered Implications
 - The Changing Hindu Kush Himalayas: Environmental Change and Migration
 - Migration and Global Environmental Change: Drivers of migration in mountainous regions of the developing world: a review

- WORKSPACES**
- The research in China and India is supported by the HICAP (Himalayan Climate Change Adaptation Programme)
 - The research in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan is supported by the Himalica (Rural Livelihoods and Climate Change Adaptation in the Himalayas)



THANK YOU

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What is adaptation to the people concerned?

- Is adaptation all about moderating or avoiding harm or are there opportunities as well?
- Can adaptation proceed only through deliberately planned actions focused specifically on adaptation to climate change?
- How much must be known about future climates to make decisions about adaptation?
- Can adaptation to climate change be distinguished from normal development and planning processes? Need it be?
- Are we adequately adapted to current climates, or do we have an 'adaptation deficit'?

Preliminary findings from the baseline survey

- Remittance recipient households are aware of financial institutions. But do not have a vision or plan to use it for flood preparedness.
- Remittance recipient households are aware that they will need to store food for the inundated period. Yet, there is decrease in number of meals and quality of food during this period.

- Paragraph 14f of the Cancún Adaptation Framework (2010) invites all the Parties, ‘to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at national, regional and international levels (UNFCCC 2011:5)’.
- This has received little attention from the national and sub-national policies on adaptation, sustainable development, and poverty reduction across the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region.
- Limited empirical evidence is available regarding the specific impact of migration on vulnerability and adaptation and the manner in which they offset the impact of climatic events.

Remittances and household level adaptive capacity

- Remittances had a positive impact on:
 - Expenditure on food items
 - Expenditure on non-food items
 - Livelihood diversification
 - Access to bank accounts
 - Access to insurance
- Remittances were used to procure provisions during the floods period.
- Remittances were used to rebuild livelihoods and reconstruct houses.



Suren Lahan (male, 25) from Chokham village in Assam worked in Dibrugarh for a year and a half. With the money earned, he bought a boat to be used during floods to shift his family and belongings to a safer location.