



Changing Glaciers and Hydrology in Asia

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Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Edited Transcript – Mary Melnyk

Yes. To follow-up on Liz's conclusions from her perspective in diving in deep to this issue, I'd like to just provide some summary remarks on what this means for USAID and for development.

And I think what's really important is that the results of this report allow me, Kristina, USAID, and others to understand really the complexity of the issue -- this is the first time we actually tried to learn about it -- and to understand what are the critical gaps and what is needed to really to start to prepare to respond to the changes in the glaciers that will come but we don't know if it will be fast or slow right now. And so, this is really a learning process for us and a step towards taking a very specific climate-related issue and providing recommendations on how we should be responding.

For example, we're learning what are the potential impacts on individual sectors? There is a start from what does this mean for agriculture, what does this mean for health, and then moving into how do you begin to work cross-sectorally and mainstream the glacier-melt issue, a climate-change issue across the development portfolio, and then searching for those actions that have the multiple development benefits.

Now, from that I'd like to go back to the program concepts that Liz laid out for us. And the first one was about the scientific research. And so, this report really demonstrates how critically important science, and specifically, basic scientific research, is needed in finding the responses to the future challenges, such as glacier melt, for enhancing development and ensuring again, as I said in the beginning, that our investments today are going to have an enduring impact and success. And in the recent years, I think we've moved away from this sort of basic scientific research. But without it, we really can't program our development and responses.

And then, on the programming responses to the vulnerabilities, issues like water resources management and ecosystem management are a part of a lot of the day-to-day business of USAID and the health vulnerabilities. So we recognize that. And the



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question, then, is how do we enhance what we're already doing to get that broader impact in scope.

Now, moving towards the one-program concept on high altitude communities, they're important because they're at the immediate edge of some of the glacial lakes and will be the victims of any potential disaster, but also taking a broader watershed approach. If you look across the region, it leads to the question of if we were to focus on these very small populations, but that they happen to be at the head waters of these major river systems, maybe they'll be a lot of benefits with the smaller costs -- well, the cost in investing in that area, there would be greater costs to get up to those areas, but they would have a potential much larger impact downstream for the very highly densely populated and agricultural areas that Liz pointed out.

And I think just wrapping up, you know, one final message is really although there is uncertainty, we need to move forward. The time to act is now and to begin to understand this. And if you saw the title to this presentation, it made reference to a blueprint. And in talking about the way forward, I think it will be beginning to connect the dots. We have pieces of the blueprint, putting it together, building alliances, whether it's among researchers, among USAID operating units, among the varying groups that were inventoried about who have an interest, what's the way we can begin to maximize impacts by building synergies among all these different people working together.

So I just want to say the reports are outside now, literally, hot off the press. And thank you again for your attention and time, and we welcome your comments and questions. Thank you.



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