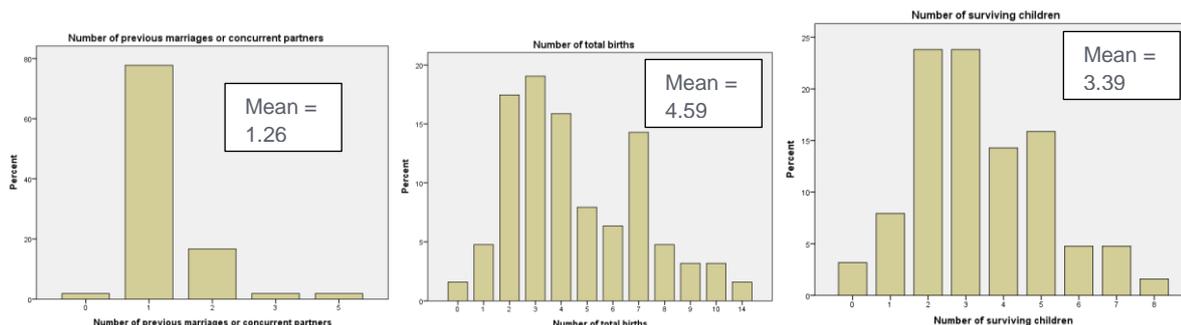




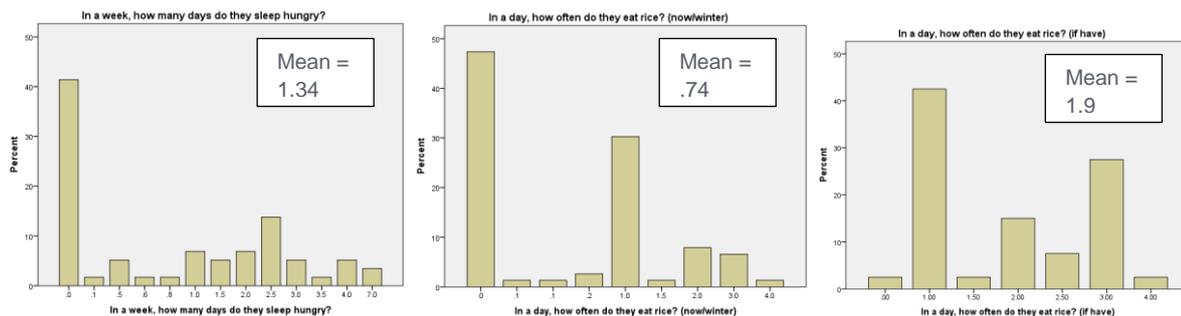
PROJECT OVERVIEW

At the time of fieldwork (Feb-Mar 2013), ISIS had implemented Nepal our Humla projects in four sectors: infrastructural, health, educational, and food security. The aim of fieldwork was to monitor and evaluate on-going ISIS projects in terms of villagers’ perceptions and needs. We talked to men and women from roughly half the households (n=163) in six of our project villages¹ to ascertain their views on our projects and current development in Humla in general. In addition, we observed many of the projects in use, and identified differences among villages in terms of wealth and perceptions about socio-economic status that will help us tailor our projects to their primary needs. This research was conducted by Catherine Sanders, ISIS Research Associate, with the assistance of Wangduk Lama, research assistant. Data were entered by Catherine, and the RM&E team in Montana, USA, and were analyzed by Catherine and Kimber. This report summarizes our findings (please see also the report on our health camps).

SOME FINDINGS FROM SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS RESEARCH
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:



HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY DURING WINTER 2013:



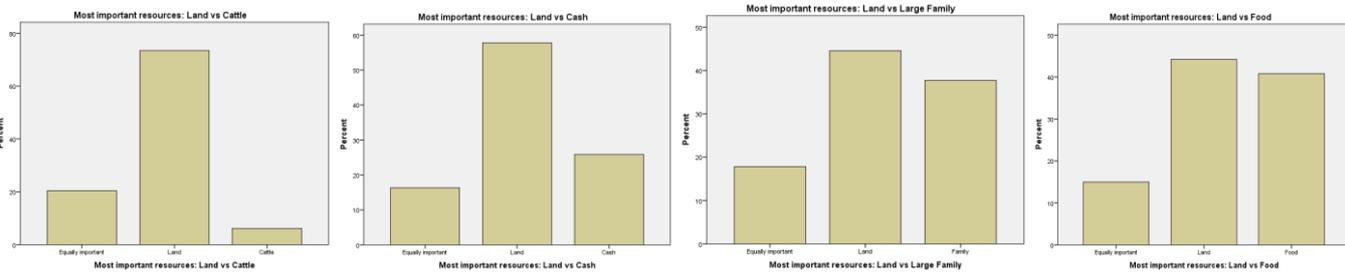
“WHO IS POOR?”: COMMON RESPONSES

Seven categories were associated with poverty. They ranked: 1. Resources, 2. Ownership of labor 3. Ability to work, 4. Education, 5. Inheritance, 6. Household size, 7. Spiritual/emotional well-being. Having control

¹ Hindu villages: Kholsi, Dharapori, Chauganphaya; Buddhist villages: Kermi, Lama Kholsi, and Yalbang.

over one's own labor, coupled with accessing/having material resources, stood out as foremost among Humlis' concerns.

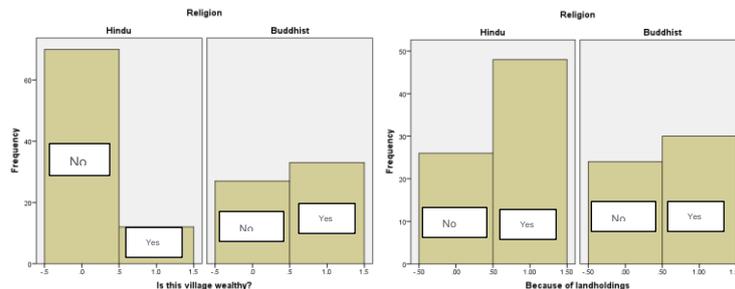
“WHICH RESOURCE IS MOST IMPORTANT?”



The emphasis on land was unambiguous across the sample. Land continues to take primacy among Humlis' possessions generally. Cash/income was rated second, followed by family, then food, then cattle. Two issues of note arise from these findings. First, we had hypothesized that the Buddhist villagers would place more emphasis on cattle than land because of conventional wisdom and their emphasis on international trade, but they did not. Second, social support in the form of family was of greater importance than we had expected, signalling on-going pressures on high fertility rates as well as the primacy of informal/local trade and markets in this region. Local trade and markets are central to villagers' ability to cope with scarcity, so it is important that ISIS' actions support and protect these resources.

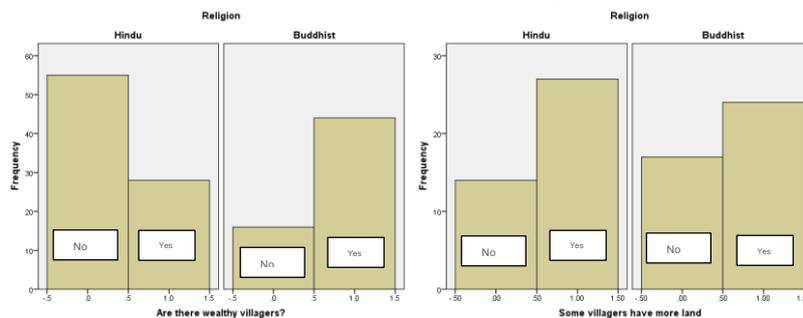
BETWEEN-VILLAGE INEQUALITIES

Villagers were split fairly evenly about how unequal their relationship to their neighbors was, but they often attributed inequalities to a history of disproportional land distribution. See below for how views of inequality associate with caste/ethnicity/religion.



WITHIN-VILLAGE INEQUALITIES

Similarly, perceptions of wealth within the village were significantly associated with ethnicity (see below) and emphasize land as the most important resource in determining inequalities.



SOCIAL MOBILITY

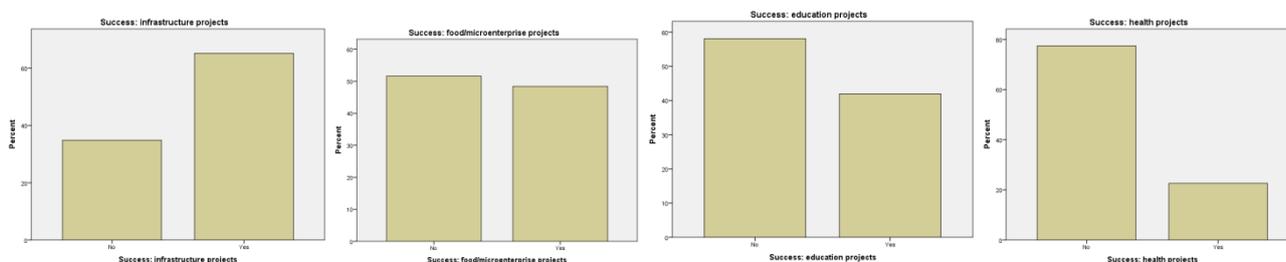
Many Humlis felt that poor people in this region may become rich through hard work (78%) and education (66%), and fatalistic comments were relatively uncommon. This is interesting in light of the development classic written about Nepal by Dor Bahadur Bista, Fatalism and Development. Perhaps with the passage of

time and the experience of the insurrection, Humlis have been inspired to action; alternatively, maybe they were never as fatalistic as the villagers described by Bista.

PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN THEIR VILLAGE MOST & LEAST SUCCESSFUL

Villagers usually mentioned ISIS projects as the most successful among development efforts in the region, but a typical tendency to politeness among Nepalis and the research associate's disclosure of affiliation during the consent process remind us to accept these responses with a grain of salt. Infrastructural and food and microenterprise-oriented projects were villagers' top priorities, followed by education and health projects. This is good. It means Humlis are looking at building things and making money. However, it also reveals that food, a basic matter of survival, still ranks too highly for most villagers' (and our) comfort. Because villagers ranked infrastructural and food concerns highly, they were more disappointed when these projects failed. Education was among the most successful of the projects, since education is highly valued for its potential to lead to (real or imagined) lifestyle opportunities, and because it is difficult to access in Humla. Villagers were genuinely grateful for and relieved by ISIS' school material support program.

VILLAGERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MOST SUCCESSFUL TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS



High suspicion of the villager committees that disburse development benefits continues to be an issue. People in every village talked about mismanagement and mishandling of funds by village committees, indeed for every project, and some went so far as to say no project would ever truly succeed in Humla as long as programs funnelled materials and funds through committees. This is related to the popular belief that NGO projects tend to benefit the already-rich, rather than the most disadvantaged villagers, so we may use this opportunity to explore other ways for distributing project goods, ideas, and benefits. This criticism was not specifically levelled at ISIS, as reliance on committees is a common approach used by various development groups.

DISAGGREGATED RESPONSES: HINDU AND BUDDHIST VILLAGES WEALTH AND POVERTY

- Hindu villagers were significantly more likely than Buddhist villagers to attribute poverty to resource scarcity and an inability to do one's own work (when forced by circumstances to labor for others, rather than on their own land). Similarly, they attributed wealth to an abundance of resources and the ability to employ others for labor significantly more than Buddhist villagers (who tended to value less material, more fungible resources).
- Buddhist villagers valued cash over land resources significantly more than Hindu villagers, perhaps reflecting their greater integration with the cash economy in Humla.
- Buddhist villagers attributed village inequalities to differences in inheritance and hard work significantly more than Hindu villagers. Hindu villagers had slightly more fatalistic responses to the question of wealth differentials.
- Buddhist villagers responded positively to the question, "Is this village wealthy?" significantly more than Hindu villagers.
- To the follow-up question, "Why or why not?" Buddhists answered about hard work more, while Hindu villagers tended to mention education and disability (typically as reasons why their own

village was *not* wealthy). Similarly, as to how a poor person might become wealthy, Buddhists responded about working hard more (in general), while Hindu villagers said they should work on NGO projects, signaling the narrowness of options Hindu villagers felt they had for attaining wealth.

- The sample size for the Buddhist villages is small for this question, but Hindu villagers tended to answer that both rich and poor people were in debt, while Buddhist villagers attributed debt to the poor alone. This reflects the pervasiveness of debt in Hindu communities, a reality against which the Maoists actively campaigned but which has not faded from significance.
- Buddhist villagers felt that their villages had become less stratified over time, in part as a result of development activities that distributed benefits evenly throughout the village.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- Hindu villagers answered that they needed education, health, and traditional resource programming more often than Buddhist villagers. Buddhist villagers listed infrastructural projects among the most and least successful projects, in that they were the most grateful for them, but also the most disappointed when the projects ran into trouble. Buddhist villagers also said health projects were among the least successful, while Hindu villagers gave primacy to education-based projects as the most successful and food/microenterprise projects as the least successful.

Differences among villages were attributable to the specific obstacles to development implementation defined by ecological and historical context.

Chauganphaya residents, for instance, had struggled unsuccessfully to implement drinking and irrigation water projects in their high, difficult-to-reach, prone-to-erosion village for over two decades. Due to the difficulties of piping water long distances, and to limited NGO budgets for infrastructural projects of this nature, residents still have no access to water and pointed to the snow as their water source when we asked. Their frustrations bordered on anger. We note that multiple NGOs have worked on this problem, ISIS among them but not alone.

In a more recent project site in Kermi, by contrast, villagers were also unhappy with the water situation, but that was due to a relatively recent failure and ensuing conflict due to miscalculation of the level of water needed for irrigation and hydropower, respectively. This problem is actively being addressed.

Likewise, in Dharapori, conflicts over resources were more recent and were being addressed, and villagers there are very active in political and educational sectors. However, there are widening divisions between political parties in that village which factor into every development project implemented there.

Lama Kholsi's issues with development had to do with village status, as they are located in a land-squeezed area overshadowed by the larger villages surrounding them. Lama Kholsi villagers felt that those larger villages had leveraged political clout to take advantage of them, so their recommendations in terms of development sought to rectify that ancient injustice.

Kholsi villagers were most concerned about their isolation from other villages, the rate of physical and mental disability there, and the lack of education that hinders their ability to become more "developed".

Yalbang contained a health post, but new management meant that villagers were unsure of access to it, and most felt more comfortable relying on the nearby monastery for health support. They also struggled to be empowered over where they installed their latrines (they want them at their shops first as a comfort to travellers and a business strategy, and they prefer a second latrine in the home, whereas various NGOs pressure villagers to locate them in the home first and to distribute just one per household).

ISIS PROJECT IMPRESSIONS

LATRINES

After struggling for years as unenthusiastic participants in safe sewage projects, Humlis are beginning to be familiar with and to appreciate the benefits of latrines in terms of health, convenience, and safety.

Unfortunately, NGOs implementing them have lost trust in the villagers for the ways materials were used in the past, so many of the latrine projects are at a standstill and considered unsuccessful by NGO workers.

Given adequate investment by villagers, adequate materials, and an intensive education effort targeting both adults and children about the germ theory of disease and common vectors of diarrheal disease, the latrine project could become one of the greatest successes in illness-prevention in the region. It should be a comprehensive, holistic project including not just buildings and materials, but education and a handwashing program, complete with soap.

GREENHOUSES

Considering the emphasis in the region on land and agricultural resources, it is no surprise that food-oriented programming is the most sought after of ISIS programs. Villagers have familiarity with the basic concepts of the technology, and know intuitively how it might help improve their lives, so there is no great initial obstacle to implementation. Villagers are concerned about the quality of materials and their ability to water and maintain the greenhouses going forward. In terms of recommendations for future food-related projects, villagers expressed concern about the erosion of their agricultural knowledge due to rice distribution in the region, so supporting and enhancing the acquisition, implementation, and transfer of that knowledge may be a direction to explore in the future.

SCHOOL SUPPORT MATERIALS

This new project was also seen as a great success. Educational time commitments, the cost of purchasing supplies, and competing agriculture and herd husbandry demands are still a heavy burden on local people. At the same time, education is seen as a way out of remote Humla and traditional Humli livelihoods. Thus, the supply of materials was a huge relief to the families who received them. There is some reason to question whether people will come to depend on this aid and then suffer if/when it is no longer available, and from our standpoint, it is perhaps not the most sustainable project design.

ORCHARDS

Most villagers approved of the concept, but were unable to follow through for several reasons. First, as with orchards implemented by other organizations in the past, management and monitoring by villagers broke down in the face of competing labour demands and the fact that these were communal resources with the burdens of labour distributed unevenly. The project suffered from the collective action/cooperation problem identified in Kimber's work on the pit latrine project (captured in her blog, conference presentation and forthcoming publication). Next, the apples were distributed at the wrong time of year, so they could not grow and become hardy before winter set in. Finally, there was no provision for fence-making before the orchards were planted, and the people appointed to act as guards were unable or unwilling to neglect their other duties to insure the proper care of the orchards. As a result, animals and humans respectively destroyed or stole most of the plants. Individual and wholesale distribution of apple seedlings was thought to be a possible solution.

FAMILY OF 4 (FO4): STOVES, LIGHTS, WATER, LATRINE

People are very happy with these programs in general but there are issues with the quality of materials and maintenance requests. In the Buddhist villages, elders have a residence away from their families for health and meditation, and these residences generally lacked the FO4 technologies (likewise, all households in both Buddhist and Hindu villages have seasonal homes in other locations that would benefit from FO4 technologies). Hindu villagers reported barriers in accessing supplies for maintaining the technologies.