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The plight of the forgotten ones: Civil war and internal displacement in Nepal

Prakash Adhikari

Mani Nepal

University of New Mexico

Although different theoretical arguments have been developed for understanding civil wars, very few efforts have been made to study their impact. This paper attempts to bridge this gap by providing a systematic explanation of conflict-induced internal displacement. We use sub-national data from Nepal to explain whether or not conflict is directly responsible for displacing people, as is generally assumed, or whether there is an indirect link between conflict and displacement. We argue that internal displacement occurs as a result of the direct as well as indirect impacts of civil war. Both the government and the rebels are involved in violating human rights during conflict that causes direct threat to civilians' life and forces them to flee. But civil war also leads to deterioration in economic conditions that causes a plethora of problems for people living in the conflict-hit area. Destruction of the local economy creates insecurity in the form of the lack of employment opportunities as well as other social services such as education, health, and communication. These problems, which are more indirect causes of internal displacement, also force people to flee home during conflict.

The present international arrangement for dealing with the internally displaced people is ad-hoc in nature. The policy has proved ineffective considering the seriousness of the problem inflicted upon the national governments. There is a need for a permanent solution to the problem of internal displacement. This calls for more theoretical work that may provide a foundation for designing appropriate policies. This paper focuses mainly on identifying the causes of conflict-induced internal displacement but in more detail.