

Rebuilding Nepal

by Implementing SFDRR



Photo: AIDMI.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

April 25th, 2015 will be seared into the collective memory of Nepal as a tragic date. That day a massive earthquake of 7.8 magnitude struck the small mountainous nation killing over 8,000 people and injuring more than 22,000. As complete buildings have been razed to the ground, tens of thousands are rendered homeless and their livelihoods endangered. Many UNESCO heritage sites in Nepal have also sustained medium to high damage. The unravelling of Nepal's social, economic and political fabric has precipitated a humanitarian crisis.

However, disguised opportunity is the inevitable result of any crisis. **As Nepal staggers towards recovery, it has the opportunity to set an example by becoming the first country to implement the Sendai Framework Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). This earthquake may have shattered the buildings and houses in Nepal, but it could not dent the spirit of its people. The grace and poise with which the Nepalese people are facing this crisis is highly commendable. The humanitarian leadership should leverage this opportunity and build a new Nepal that would act as the heart of Himalayas, pumping life and joy into the country's surroundings.**

This issue of Southasiadisasters.net focuses on the theme of 'Rebuilding Nepal: Through Implementing SFDRR'. As three months have passed since the tragedy, it is time for the Nepalese government and other donors to chalk out a plan for the country's long term reconstruction. Consequently, a donors' conference is being organized to decide on the best course of action. All such efforts should be aligned with the SFDRR. A lot of experts have different perspectives on what should be the nature of this recovery and reconstruction. This issue of Southasiadisasters.net tries to highlight these eclectic perspectives and is a must read for all who are interested to learn about the challenges and opportunities of rebuilding Nepal. ■

- Mihir R. Bhatt

Preface

As a member of the National Planning Commission (NPC), Government of Nepal, I encourage various efforts that address the challenges of rebuilding Nepal after the April 25, 2015 earthquake. I personally and on behalf of the NPC, would like to thank all those associated with Southasiadisasters.net, who decided to devote their insights to this issue on the theme of 'Rebuilding Nepal by Implementing SFDRR.'



The Nepal Earthquake is a test for those who have expressed their commitment to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) as well as to the principles of building back better. Rebuilding safer shelters, schools, health centres, and historical monuments as well as resumption of all kinds of services including the livelihood activities of the affected people are not easy tasks. I believe national efforts and leadership coupled with generous international support in terms of innovative ideas; technology and knowledge can help us to meet this challenge.

What we all are aiming at is not only to "Rebuild Nepal" but to "Rebuild a safer and sustainable Nepal". I propose the humanitarian leaders of the world to help build a new Nepal, which is sustainable and protected from the risks of disasters and climate change.

On rebuilding, four areas come to our attention that should be accorded the highest priority. First, investing in governance that reduces risk and builds resilience. Second, investing each Nepali rupee in a risk sensitive manner to ensure adequate financial allocation to the priority area. Third, each investment in recovery should be made in a way to ensure that the benefits of such investments outweigh their costs. And fourth, the investments in Nepal's recovery should benefit all, especially the marginalized communities of the country such as single women, people with disabilities, helpless senior citizens, orphans and the poor.

Starting from SFDRR, this issue of Southasiadisasters.net, provides insights to all the challenges and opportunities Nepal faces and provides valuable inputs for rebuilding Nepal. From this perspective, I welcome this timely and important publication from the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI). ■

- Dr. Govind Nepal,

Member, National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

Foreword

The Nepal earthquakes have been a long time coming. The tragic loss of life and the long-lasting damage to the country's economy from these events, go to the heart of the argument in favor of a stronger focus on disaster risk as outlined in the new Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

A lot has rightly been written about the resilience of the Nepalese people and their capacity to cope with the aftermath of these events but true resilience is not just about the ability of a proud nation to endure suffering, it is about acting on the priorities for action in a country where there is a clear and present danger of major loss of life and economic disruption resulting from an ever-present threat.

Much has been done to improve disaster risk governance in Nepal despite the turmoil of recent decades. The Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Consortium was established with a number of clear focus areas which illustrate the degree of understanding of disaster risk that exists already in the country.

The Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology has long been a voice in the wilderness calling for greater investment in disaster risk reduction,

particularly in schools and hospitals. It has done a sterling job in ensuring that several hundred schools have been built to earthquake proof standards and these are still standing, a testament to the ability of well-trained masons to do an effective job with local materials and technology.

The Nepal government recognized the need for a building construction code some twenty years ago and, unfortunately, given the pace of economic development in the country and other challenges, a satisfactory compliance mechanism has proved difficult to put into effect consistently across the country. This has impacted on efforts to reduce the existing stock of risk but also undermined efforts to avoid the creation of new risk.

This is the key challenge which needs to be addressed worldwide over the next 15 years as more and more governments align their existing strategies with the Sendai Framework in order to achieve "the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social,



cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries."

Nobody can do this work alone. While each State has the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk, this responsibility is shared by national governments and relevant authorities, sectors and stakeholders.

We are seeing now in Nepal a great coming together of stakeholders from across the full spectrum of society, including affected communities and business, under the coordination of the national authorities in, arguably, the most important element of any disaster, the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase.

The outcome will be important not just for Nepal but also as an example to other hazard-prone parts of the world seeking to build their resilience to disasters. ■

– Margareta Wahlström

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)

- AFTER THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE NEPAL HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT SFDRR.
- THE LACK OF COMPLIANCE WITH BUILDING CODES HAS UNDER NEEDED RISK REDUCTION EFFORTS IN THE COUNTRY SO FAR.
- ALL FUTURE EFFORTS SHOULD ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH CONSTRUCTION BUILDING CODES FOR A MORE RESILIENT NEPAL.

Lessons Learned from Nepal Earthquake

The earthquake of 25 April 2015 that struck Nepal was an event that the disaster risk reduction community in Nepal and the region had been anticipating for many years. Some of the early efforts to develop an earthquake scenario and an action plan¹ for risk reduction go back almost two decades. Over these years, efforts have been made on several fronts to: 1) prevent the accumulation of new risks through greater compliance to building codes and better building codes; 2) reduce existing risks through retrofitting of buildings and other non-structural measures; and 3) enhance preparedness to respond to a major earthquake.

A few months after the earthquake, as the humanitarian situation stabilizes, and as communities gear up for long-term recovery, it is an opportune time to take stock of lessons learned. While an exercise of this kind should obviously involve a range of actors on the ground, as a DRR professional who has had the opportunity to work in Nepal for many years, I offer following reflections:

1. Investment in prevention pays: In Kathmandu valley, one could see many buildings that had sustained serious damage. Right next to these buildings one came across buildings that had not even a single crack or had very superficial damage. Most of these buildings have been constructed in the last ten years and seem to have complied with the current building codes in Nepal. It is indeed possible that this is because of the unique characteristic of earthquake forces in a particular location or local sub-soil conditions. However, the number of such buildings is sufficiently large in Kathmandu valley to deduce that this was due to systemic improvement in the building process.

2. Investment in risk reduction pays:

Over the last 15 years, more than 150 school buildings have been retrofitted in and around Kathmandu valley. Barring a few of them all of these buildings escaped unharmed from the earthquake. Even those buildings that were damaged did not suffer catastrophic collapse. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, these buildings were used as temporary shelter. If there was ever any need for "proof of concept" on the efficacy of retrofitting, it is now available. Building on this experience, we must redouble our efforts to retrofit school and hospital buildings in earthquake-prone areas.

3. Investment in preparedness pays:

Prior to the earthquake, the Government of Nepal with support from the international agencies and the civil society organizations had been investing in preparedness. Parts of this preparedness system proved vital in the aftermath of the earthquake. The earthquake highlighted the importance of regional preparedness. It was so critical that the Indian response was swift and comprehensive. The Indian Search and Rescue teams were operational within six hours of the earthquake and were responsible for 75% of the live rescues by international teams. We can build on this experience and further strengthen regional preparedness systems.

4. The importance of risk communication after a disaster:

The main earthquake event was followed by a series of aftershocks including one of magnitude 7.2 on Richter scale. This created a lot of fear and panic among communities. In this regard, efforts were made to issue easily understandable advisories for the general public. There are important lessons here. Strategies for



communicating risks emanating from secondary hazards after a major disaster event need to be in place before a disaster.

5. Planning is everything!: Over the last several years, many planning efforts have been undertaken to prepare for a post-earthquake response. In the aftermath of the earthquake, these plans themselves may not have worked exactly as they were envisaged, but the planning process underneath, and elements of a preparedness plan that were put in place prior to the earthquake proved invaluable. These included measures such as pre-identification of open spaces for temporary shelters, warehousing facilities at the airport and model customs agreement. The post-earthquake response also threw in many surprises both on the demand as well as supply side. This called for not a fixed preparedness plan but a system of planning that responds to emerging needs, evolving dynamics at the local level as well as incoming offers of support.

Overall, Nepal earthquake has been a tremendous opportunity to learn, where the DRR community can evaluate the efficacy of its efforts over the last two decades. As far as the initial humanitarian response is concerned, it is once again clear that the humanitarian action operates in a given context, and in turn it also shapes the context. This calls for a more dynamic and flexible system of planning that responds to emerging needs of the affected people. ■

– Kamal Kishore,

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), New Delhi

¹ The National Society for Earthquake Technology in collaboration with Geohazards International and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, with financial support from the US Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (US-OFDA) developed the first comprehensive damage and loss scenario under the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Programme (KVERMP) in 1998.

Nepal Earthquake: Agenda for SFDRR Compliant Donor Response

Background

Disaster recovery in Nepal presents a wide range of challenges. Donor assistance in Nepal can be more effective if made in accordance with the new international framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR). This short note draws on the experience from the disaster responses to various natural disasters by the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) in a variety of forms such as direct implementation, monitoring and learning and evaluations, including capacity building and policy advocacy with national governments and humanitarian donors. The note highlights key lessons to guide donor community to support and promote SFDRR priorities in the context of long-term recovery in Nepal. The overall purpose of this note is to provide advice on useful strategies to donor community for implementing the SFDRR through distillation of South-Asia experience on disaster risk management.

Relevance of SFDRR to donors

The SFDRR was adopted by 187 member states at the 3rd UN World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan. It aims at the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries. The Framework makes a major shift from disaster management to disaster risk management as well as prevention of existing and new risks as imperative to development for resilience and sustainability. It also



Photo: AIDMI.

A women stands to her damaged house in Sankhu.

recognize importance and need for a more people-centred and human rights-based approach to disaster risk. It has a major section on international cooperation, global partnership and means of implementation, which is of particular relevance and use to donor community.

The Nepal context

Nepal was struck by a devastating; magnitude 7.8 earthquake on April 25, 2015. According to the May 15, 2015 situation report issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Office of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal, the earthquake severely impacted 14 out of the 75 districts in the country, left over 8,000 people dead and destroyed over 480,000 houses, which led the Government of Nepal to request international humanitarian support on 26 April. Apart from Nepal the earthquake jolted parts of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India and Pakistan. Countries such as US, UK and Australia, including United Nations have already pledge a financial support.

SFDRR compliant donor agenda

In line with its goal, SFDRR has identified four key priorities for action and seven key targets to achieve. The four priorities for action focuses on, a) a better understanding of risk; b) strengthened disaster risk governance; c) more investment and; d) more effective disaster preparedness and embedding the 'build back better' principle into recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The following 12 key lessons are organized as per the four priorities of the SFDRR.

Priority 1: Understanding Disaster Risk

Lesson 1: Informed assessment of needs, vulnerabilities and capacities for better targeting

The assessment of loss and damage for meeting current needs of affected populations in Nepal needs to go beyond what is lost to incorporate future risks in the light of existing vulnerabilities and multi-hazards scenario. Donor community must emphasis use of important risk assessment reports such as the Global Risk Assessment Report of 2015 (GAR)

and the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), including the IPCC's global report on SREX (Special Report - Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation). Integration of Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and DRR in recovery is an important aspect of addressing root causes of vulnerability as scientific community has already warned about a series of more fatal extreme climate and geological events such as earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis, including floods and cyclones.

Post-disaster needs assessments have mostly missed out on this opportunity for integration and donors in Nepal can address this gap by aiming at more comprehensive and futuristic assessments of needs, vulnerability and capacities for better targeting of its activities to vulnerable populations. AIDMI's work on Climate Risk Management (CRM) with Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) suggests that donors should approach such assessments as a part of long-term process and not a short-term activity to justify project needs.

Lesson 2: Multi-hazards disaster risk assessment for micro and small enterprises

Micro and small enterprises are often among the worst sufferers of disasters. These enterprises are the backbone of any under-developed or developing country as they contribute immensely to GDP. Continuity of their businesses is crucial for promoting a speedy and lasting community recovery. Still, limited knowledge exists on how disasters affect them and what measures can make them more resilient. With support from UNDP's BCPR, AIDMI prepared the India case study on MSMEs and disasters. The research in India shows that direct impact of disasters on small and medium enterprises is not well-captured across disasters and communities by

Post-disaster Needs Assessments (PDNAs). At the most, ad-hoc assessments are conducted in select locations to arrive at some estimates of loss to decide immediate relief measures. As a result, needs of these enterprises are often overlooked in recovery programmes. Thus, it is crucial that donors support assessment of disaster impact and risk to micro and small enterprises in Nepal for that their crucial requirements for rapid recovery in terms of business continuity, capital requirement for development, growth and risk reduction, including risk transfer and social protection could be mapped and addressed.

Lesson 3: Assessment of vulnerability of vulnerable groups, especially children

Along with women, elderly, disabled and certain socially and economically excluded groups, children remain most vulnerable and at risk when a disaster strikes. Disasters can have several direct as well as indirect negative effects on children. Our work with UNICEF and Save the Children shows that while short-term needs of disaster affected children such as food, water, health and shelter are easily addressed; long-term needs are often overlooked in PDNAs. Long-term needs of children following a disaster include continued support for education, immunization and nutritional diets, including development of child-friendly infrastructure and adequate provision of WASH facilities. But all of these require detailed assessment of children specific needs and data. However, data in typical PDNAs reports is hardly disaggregated by age.

In such scenarios, special needs of nursing babies, infants and children with disabilities requiring special protection are often overlooked. Donors need to highlight such gaps in PDNAs and advocate for inclusion of age gender and age desegregated data. Similarly, the experience of

working with State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) in India shows that school safety audits are necessary to protect children from disaster risks.

Priority 2: Strengthening governance and institutions to manage disaster risk

Lesson 4: Addressing key gaps in national regulatory frameworks

Every disaster offers an opportunity to upgrade and improve national disaster management frameworks, policies and plans to reduce and avoid future risks. Donors engaged in Nepal recovery must focus on improving the existing environment for safer recovery to take place. This may include, revising and revisiting existing policies and plans for disaster risk management, including existing structures and decision making hierarchies. Helping and supporting the national government of Nepal in developing specific recovery standards will be an important area for donors to bring about long-term change in preparedness, response and recovery practices. For example, donors need to ensure that the National Building Code of Nepal is enforced properly and its provisions are incorporated in Municipalities which are responsible to issue building permits in Nepal. It was witnessed in 2001 Gujarat and more recently in Odisha in response to the cyclone *Phailin* what effective administration and enabling policy environment can do to achieve safer recovery and saving lives.

Lesson 5: Mainstreaming DRR for resilience

Mainstreaming DRR in development processes and key sector for resilience is a long-term goal. Mainstreaming is important to ensure that developmental planning and processes do not create new risks and put people at greater risk. The need for mainstreaming is highlighted by the first international framework of

DRR, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015 as well as the current international framework for DRR i.e. SFDRR. Such integration is also important and desirable to achieve sustainable development goals. To effectively mainstream DRR, risk arising out of natural disasters and climate extremes needs to be understood and integrated into development plans, sectors, legislation, structures as well as national budgetary allocations. Donors need to support and promote activities that lead to long-term integration of risk into development processes rather than operating in a project made by providing leadership, necessary finance and offering incentives.

Lesson 6: Reduction, South-South cooperation

Countries from the Global South with similar socio-economic and development contexts are often better placed to help each other with knowledge and skills in the area of DRR. However, South-South cooperation for DRR remains weak, underfinanced and dominated by powerful actors located outside the Global South. There is a need to intensify the effort to reduce fragmentation, promote consensus and better understanding of South-South cooperation practices within the donor community. The SFDRR stresses promotion of South-South Cooperation. While the new framework is still to be fully understood and integrated into national policies and plans as well as in regional initiatives, there is a need for a major drive on promoting South-South cooperation approaches in Asia. Nepal recovery is an opportunity for donors to do so. Our work with UN Office for South-South Cooperation since 2010 shows that there is tremendous demand for South-south inputs and capacity of Southern nations to deliver such inputs to each other.

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Lesson 7: Cash transfers

Since the 2004 India Ocean tsunami, the overwhelming majority of reviews in South Asia shows that cash is an effective option to re-build lives and livelihoods, especially when markets are functional and accessible to communities as they offer important advantages such as speed and flexibility and most importantly shift power of decision making to victims. Cash transfers also boots local market recovery.

AIDMI with EU and DFID support used cash transfer in 2001 for the Gujarat earthquake victims and over the years has pursued cash transfer across six states and four types of disasters covering estimated 18,000 families over ten years, showing when cash works. The experience of using cash transfer shows that even though most cash transfer interventions are not envisioned as a long-term economic solution, cash transfers are used beyond intended use of meeting immediate needs to repair houses and restoration of critical community infrastructures, including re-starting of micro-enterprises and sending children back to school. Recent drive on using cash transfers for development and disaster recovery spearheaded by the MGNREGS and number of civil society organizations in India indicates that cash can also be used to support recovery of MSMEs. Cash transfers can keep many community members employed during the recovery phase; our experience shows

that cash transfers can effectively be used as an entry point for active women participation in later states of reconstruction. Given the obvious advantages of cash transfers, donor community needs to consider this and similar experiences and insights on cash transfers by various agencies in Nepal to use substitute cash where possible.

Lesson 8: Risk transfer

Micro-insurance can be a potentially viable option for protecting assets of the poor against disasters but is often unavailable to them. Although micro-insurance and other forms of risk transfer are considered an integral part of comprehensive disaster management, assets of micro and small business enterprises remain exposed and unprotected against disasters. Despite its potential, micro-insurance is rarely used in humanitarian context and very little is known about how it actually benefits the poor and micro enterprises. Our experience on risk transfer in India and South Asia shows that in spite of initial challenges in setting-up such schemes, disaster micro-insurance offers a unique opportunity to reduce financial risk. A client impact evaluation in 2010, covering communities from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka showed interest in and willingness to pay for disaster micro-insurance programs. An overwhelming majority (80%) of clients felt that disaster micro-insurance should be promoted to others while only a minority (2.3%) thought it should not. The study concluded that the key to everything seems to be awareness

- THE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN NEPAL CAN BE MORE EFFECTIVE IF IT IS DONE IN ACCORDANCE TO THE SFDRR.
- THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH AN SFDRR COMPLIANT DONOR AGENDA FOR NEPAL RECONSTRUCTION.
- AIDMI'S PREVIOUS WORK OFFERS A LOT OF LESSONS TO FIND COMMON GROUND BETWEEN SFDRR AND NEPAL RECONSTRUCTION.

and information; even non-insured clients showed interest after receiving information on product, benefits and pricing. Nepal recovery is an opportunity for donors to introduce risk transfer mechanisms. Insights from piloting *Afat Vimo* (disaster insurance) scheme in India across four disaster contexts in four states of India suggests that convergence of micro-insurance with micro-credit and micro-mitigation can lead to better impact and provide operational stability on the ground for such schemes for long-term sustainability.

Lesson 9: The connectedness of shelter and livelihoods

Reconstruction of shelters and restarting livelihoods is fundamental for recovery efforts in Nepal. As we have seen in many disaster in last two decades of so, level of satisfaction with housing is directly related to participation and ownership of the process and output. Owner-driven approaches tend to succeed more and score more points in comparison to donor-driven reconstruction. Suitable provision of water and sanitation services in and around households is also important for owner satisfaction. Since access to clean drinking water and sanitation still remains an unfulfilled promise in many areas of Nepal, housing reconstruction offers a new opportunity to make a sizable difference in increasing number of households with suitable WASH facilities. In South-Asia, home-based work is a way of life for many poor households. For them house is also a place to work. Thus, housing reconstruction approaches and strategies in Nepal must recognize this link and the process itself must lead to employment opportunities for owners. Unemployment rate in Nepal is as high as 40 percent and agriculture support more than 70% of the population. Thus, special attention must also be given to agriculture and allied sectors.

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness

Lesson 10: Early warning system

Lack of baseline geospatial data for disaster risk management and early warning that reaches last-mile in timely and appropriate manner make the poor in South Asia more vulnerable to the risk of natural disasters and climate extremes. Nepal recovery is an opportunity for establishing a more comprehensive and more effective multi-hazard early warning system. The impressive work done by the UNESCAP on Geo-referenced systems for disaster risk reduction and Typhoon Committee on standardization of operating procedures for coastal multi-hazard early warning systems must be further strengthened. This work is important for supporting emergency response and decision making by national authorities in Nepal. Donor investment to support use of satellite data for monitoring hazard and planning response in Nepal will be cost-effective and timely. Similarly, donors need to consider possibility of investing in developing.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for various hazards in Nepal for effective early warning and timely response to natural disasters and climate extremes.

Lesson 11: Local capacities and disaster management plans

A review and overhaul of local district disaster management plans across Nepal, especially of earthquake hotspots is long overdue. A third party review of the plans of key districts is overdue. Our experience shows that most local disaster management plans are prepared with constraints of necessary knowledge, skills and resources and remain top-down and single-time exercise. These plans and processes are hardly shared between two districts or made inclusive from the point of view of

the poor and marginalized. As envisaged by the SFDRR, donors must support development and up-gradation of local disaster management plans in Nepal. Similarly, donors must also consider supporting emergency management exercises, including mock-drills to improve community and system response to natural disasters and climate extremes. Such exercises in India have been well-received and extremely useful to gauge capacity of response systems and strengthening resilience.

Lesson 12: adherence to the national codes, the Sphere Standards and Red Cross Code of Conduct

One of the key roles of donors in Nepal will be to promote recovery standards and enhance transparency and accountability of humanitarian aid. While adherence to national standards and procedure will be important, it will also be important for donors to promote international standards and codes, including best practices for speedy and safer recovery. A number of standards such as the Sphere Project, Oxfam minimum standards for gender in emergency and minimum standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction by IFRC and CDKN and codes such as the Red Cross Code of Conduct, including indicators of resilient communities and CDKN guidelines such as What does it take to mainstream disaster risk management in key sectors? must be applied and used.

Nepal has a unique opportunity for building back better lives and livelihoods through a renewed focus on public infrastructure and essential services. Reconstruction and recovery in Nepal is also an opportunity for the international aid community to put the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in practice and ensure its success. Last, but not the least, recovery and development in Nepal has to be smart and climate compatible. ■

- AIDMI Team

Disasters: A Creative Moment

It is proposed that Sasian Journey rests, from time to time, to reflect on disasters as a creative moment. Disasters challenge system capacities and human intelligence and in most cases brings out best of human capabilities to deal with sudden shock with creative and constructive thinking.

Citizens of South Asia (Sasia) have inventively found disasters to be a creative moment to search for new meaning in life suddenly disrupted, and pouring fuller life in the meaning destroyed. And that is what I have found in my work of two decades with the citizens, mostly poor, and endlessly creative, of South Asia. For disaster victims, especially the poor, being creative is not a choice but a way of life. A strategy to survive, make use of what is available, sustain

and bounce back. Thus, creativity is also a way of coping with reality.

I moved in the villages on the coast of Tamil Nadu and later of Sri Lanka, with Rajeev Sethi few weeks after the 2004 tsunami, I started consolidating my above thoughts from time-to-time which I express here. What is striking is the remarkable similarity across disasters and communities, the manner in which victims see a crisis as an opportunity and the manner in which they innovate. I have found their vision and innovations emerging out of crises more rooted and realistic than of most non-victims or any government officials.

Again and again citizens in South Asia have found creative ways to turn a disaster into an opportunity to reduce their poverty. Policies, on poverty or

disasters, may not have recognized this creativity yet, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) disregard creativity of the poor, but there on the ground, practice in fast developing South Asia shows their creativity, disaster after disaster. Use of cash transfers is one such area where victims have shown immense creativity and business sense to recover better and faster, may it be after 1998 Kandla cyclone or 1999 Odisha super cyclone, or 2009 Pakistan floods. Given cash, how inventively it is turned into not only purchasing power but also a tool to make choice, barter, disrupt dialogues, protecting privacy, outsmart delays, boldy gamble for safety, check reality of remaining risk, move from managing to leading and making smart decisions. Owner-driven housing reconstruction is



Photo: AIDMI.

another such area where the owner of lost or damaged homes after 2001 Gujarat earthquake or 2007 Koshi floods become creative customers, smarter information users, or embraced complexity of who is owing what from whom that is lost. Ownership is about home as well of imagination.

The most striking, but unrecorded creativity is shown with the use of money, cash as it is and in its cashless form, as compensation or relief. How citizens have used cash, or lack of cash, in their recovery and also preparedness from micro credit or savings groups to beyond is a journey of creativity. What is not very hard to observe is that victims know the value of money and use money carefully; only when required and only on what is needed. Thus, letting victims control financial resources is the real value for money.

A wide range of financial instruments and services come up in humanitarian camps and linger on into recovery stages. Sadly none are recorded or recognized. Only few and only those financial instrument and services have made any significant impact in a long-run that considered victims trustworthy and let creative ideas of clients build in to their programmes. This holds true for both, SEWA Bank in India and for Grameen and BRAC Banks in Bangladesh for example.

Far more creativity is shown in integrating disaster, climate, and development risks into day-to-day life, especially in agriculture—from animal husbandry to perma culture—as well as water use in South Asia. What is planted when and by whom is what I was looking for in coastal Tamil Nadu where in 2007 I found over 2000 farmers who decided to de-salt the land and reclaim rice planting with organic processes: a slow but far more sustainable way to recover economy and ecology, both. Victims

do not compartmentalize disaster risk from climate risk in their day-to-day life. They are far more creative and knowledgeable to see the connection—not only one but many—and the first ones to make the integration, direct and multiple.

Cities not only kill but also create ways of living, with income, and non-income. From city-to-city disasters and their risks are understood in many ways and even more ways address while the policy makers in Kathmandu or Delhi or Dhaka strive for uniform, coherent, and clear policy! This creativity in housing or shelter is somewhat more recorded, and even more argued, but in other urban sectors this creativity remains unexplored, by us, not the disaster victim citizens. The victims manufacture meaning in new settlements, negotiate resilience, and thrive in a warmer world. They place their expectations, never in upright or uptight position, but listen, to them, as rivers in South Asia have taught to Herman Hess. Listening becomes their passport to the power of the right advice.

Similarly, creativity shown to deal with loss and damage in rural areas is amazing. Amazing in its most common starting point of crop diversification, to all the way to dealing with conflicts around livelihoods of artisans and their clans recovering from 2001 Gujarat earthquake. Sadly, we are quick to jump and record humanitarian innovations but not the creativity of victims. It is the creativity of victims that inspire our innovations. The South Asian conversation should start here, unlike anything else on morning television. Though the victims build their house of cards like birds or bees, they hum even when not anointed.

With what creativity, spatial inequalities are dealt with across borders by making border itself a risk

reduction measure by the victims of cyclone Aila in the Sunderbans that is divided, or in fact unites India and Bangladesh. The pervasion, depth, and severity of risk is not only addressed with income, but also with non-income measures of work by these citizens where tree after tree that is logged taken away a whole different variety of Delta forestry and horticulture.

These, and above measures, cannot be comparable within borders or across borders.

In addition, this creativity has addressed issues of sustainability, but also found sustainability of the efforts, even when labour migrates across cities and countries but also across sectors and markets in Asia after a disaster.

Most heart wrenching creativity is shown by children out of school, under kinship care all across South Asia and yet any art or design show is yet to be devoted to their these children who see disasters in South Asia in their own terms. In Assam, after a flood in Brahmaputra, the school boy drew his home inside flood, and titled it "airport" and when asked why said "a new place to take off from".

Who says economic class or labour market cause stagnation in the use of creativity to deal with disasters? Even the middle class corporate workers show the creativity that can match to an extent to their low income counterpart in South Asia.

It is proposed to find moments of rest in SAsian Journey, maybe after a disaster such as the one in Nepal, or more importantly between two disasters, to capture this creativity and make its good use in reducing risk and building resilience in South Asia. A journey only becomes a journey when one rests. ■

- AIDMI Team

Making Gender Central to Nepal Recovery

In the aftermath of every mega disaster gender issues make headlines and highlight the importance and urgency of gender sensitivity in the emergency management, relief and recovery. Gender issues however are commonly and regularly prevalent in society, in disaster situations these issues get showcased, they become more visible, accentuated by sudden breakdown of family protection, social and law and order situation.

Social status of women and girls in South Asia give them comparatively fewer choices for education, employment, ownership as well as access and control of productive assets; land, equipment, capital and credit. Due to these gendered asymmetries, women have fewer opportunities for participation and contribution, or for using their skills and experiences to influence planning processes.

Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-15) recognized that vulnerabilities of women and men differ, that women and men are equipped with different skills and capacities. HFA underscored gender integration as a core factor in its implementation and promoted integrating gender 'into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training'¹. However, there has been underachievement in the engagement of women across all 5 Priorities for Action.

Review of this poor outcome indicate that a stronger focus and attention on

the 'vulnerability' of women and girls overlooking their productive role and capacity acted as a barrier in gender integration. Deep rooted perceptions of women and girls as weak and inferior, combined with their subordinate position in society have resulted in the categorization of women as incapacitated in all aspects of disasters.

Gender-based inequalities in their totality lead to a complex status of vulnerability across all social and age categories of women, placing them at greater degrees of risk to disasters, including the risks of sexual violence and abuse. These impact on their own preparedness and survival and that of their family. In effect, social and institutional dynamics in their current form work simultaneously to exacerbate and highlight women's vulnerabilities and to downplay their capacities. This is a 'twofold disadvantage' that demands recognition and corrective action.

The Post Disaster Needs Assessment of the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal² brings to attention the differential impact on women. Overall, women constitute the single largest disadvantaged group who have been most adversely affected across the key sectors. According to UN estimates outlined in the Flash Appeal approximately 3.2 million women are among the population affected by protection concerns.

Relief Web provides an analysis of possible implications on their recovery with reference to livelihoods; 'as agriculture is largely female-dominated, comprised of 60%

women, the disaster's impact on agriculture has had disproportional effect on women. In the tourism industry, women who are found more in less skilled jobs such as housekeeping and waitressing are likely to be the first to be laid off. Time spent for water and firewood collection by women has increased by up to 3 hours per day in some districts. Such strains, combined with loss of family protection and desperation for alternate livelihoods, could promote negative coping strategies among poor households thereby increasing the risk of sexual and gender based violence, human trafficking, child labour, and early marriage for women, girls and boys³.

UN Women notes that in the aftermath of April 2015 earthquake in Nepal 'women, in particular single women, female-headed households, women with disabilities and older women, are reporting discrimination in access to relief and information. Men are experiencing higher levels of stress due to their inability to fulfill their traditional gender role as family providers, leading to a reported increase in substance abuse and other risky behaviours'⁴. It is further cautioned that while women have been disproportionately impacted by the earthquakes, simply viewing them as victims only however will exacerbates their vulnerability.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)⁵, the global guidance framework for Disaster Risk Reduction endorsed in March 2015 emphasizes on the critical

1 http://www.unisdr.org/files/1037_hyogoframeworkforactionenglish.pdf

2 <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.php?id=44973>

3 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/gender_equality_update_no_3_-_9_july_2015.pdf

4 http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news/stories/2015/genderbulletin_special_final.pdf

5 http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

importance of gender considerations and women's leadership role to achieve its expected outcomes. Sendai Framework specifies that 'women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk. Designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for

preparedness as well as build their capacity for alternate livelihood means in post-disaster situations. Priority area 4; 'Building Back better' states that empowering women to publicly lead and promote gender equitable response, recovery rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches are key.

The recovery and re-construction opportunity in post earthquake Nepal

needs to be used in full to ensure the guidance and commitments of the Sendai Framework is adhered to. It also presents an excellent opportunity not only to set out concrete targets for gender inclusion, but also for long term resilience building of girls and women. ■

- Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu,
Sub Regional Coordinator- Central Asia
and South Caucasus, United Nations
Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstructing Shelter in Nepal



A house with collapsed shorter length wall in Sudal VDC.

Nepal has witnessed its worst disaster after a gap of 80-85 years. Last time there was an equally devastating one in 1934. The extent of damage during 1934 earthquake still exists as a fade memory in minds of elders who were kids at that time. An earthquake of Magnitude 7.8 is well capable of creating massive destruction, which it did all across the beautiful hilly nation. It took relief efforts of many days after the earthquake to reach upto remote villages, leave aside the assessment of damage. When the picture started

to get clear, the numbers were staggering. Total deaths are being estimated to be close to 9000, completely damaged Govt. buildings-2656; partially damaged Govt. buildings-3622, completely damaged private houses-508734 and partially damaged private houses-283145(drrportal.gov.np).

An estimated 2.8 million people are directly affected by the Earthquake. These numbers give a terrifying picture of the damage which has been done.

A closer look from architectural perspective can reveal some basic fundamental problems, these structures were having. AIDMI visited several villages in the worst affected districts of Sindhupalchowk, Dhading, Gorkha, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. Most of the houses which got damaged were having very similar pattern of failure. The plans of houses are generally rectangular, 2-3 storeys high and walls are made out of mud and stone stacked over each other. In most of the cases shorter walls have collapsed, but the longer ones are still standing. The floor joists helped them to hold onto each other, while the shorter wall, which didn't have any bond with other elements of house fell apart. The materials used for construction of mud and stone were not used in proper manner. The stones of any size or cut were piled upon each other with just mud as raw binding material. The roof is done from thatch and terracotta. Sometimes stone shingles are also used, but they are now slowly getting out of tradition, as it takes more time and efforts to put shingles in place. There was one very striking contrast also, that a traditionally built house in the valley had lesser damage, whereas a cluster on the top of ridge just 100 mts. away from the traditional house

was completely damaged, leaving behind mounds of dust and debris. In urban areas the scenario is different as most of the inhabitants are originally residents of villages, and came to cities in search of better jobs. They used reside as tenants and after the earthquake most of them had gone back to villages to help their families in time of crisis. Kathmandu alone saw migration of nearly 1.5 million people out of the city.

The reconstruction process is going to be a long journey, as it will require multiple aspects to be taken into consideration. The monsoon season had already started and the shelter reconstruction work can commence only after the rains are over. Till then the planning part with ideal approach should be worked out. The most important points which need to be kept in mind are- to keep alive the traditional cultural aspects of a shelter and not to impose new technique, which will be non-compatible with the environment. Architects have this weird thinking that they can impose any principle or design element without considering the context. This practice should be kept in check from the beginning. Use of local materials must be promoted as much as possible and foreign material should be introduced only when there is no other option left. Communities must be taught and trained how to rebuild rather than just giving them money or material. The involvement of people in this process will ensure livelihood support as well as making it cost efficient. The idea to involve communities in reconstruction is necessary to make the approach sustainable as it will also train them for future livelihood possibilities. The use of local material and traditional skills will make reconstruction environment friendly in long term results. Also before the construction takes place, the design of shelter should be made multi hazard risk resilient. These small steps can make huge differences in the long term recovery process focused on shelter. ■

- AIDMI Team

RESPONSE

A Model Response by Government of India to Nepal Earthquake

Government of India's response to the earthquake in Nepal was swift, timely and given a high priority. Disaster relief and rescue teams were immediately deployed after a high-level meeting chaired by the Prime Minister of India on April 26, 2015. Operation 'Maitri' (friendship), engaging more than two dozen aircrafts, including heavy lift planes with hundreds of personnel from the military and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) was one the largest rescue and relief efforts by India on foreign soil¹. The operation started within 15 minutes of the earthquake². Mobile hospitals were transported to Nepal and IAF aircraft also carried blankets, tents, tonnes of food, paramedics, stretches, and medicines³. The National Disaster helpline (011-1078) was made operational and a nodal officer to attend requests for relief and rescue within two days of the earthquake that shocked Nepal and parts of India by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was appointed.⁴ A 24-hour 'Control Room' was set up in South Block in the Ministry of External Affairs on April 25, 2015⁵.

Operation 'Maitri' successfully evacuated 170 nationals from 15 countries via commercial and IAF aircraft⁶. "We have to thank the Indian government as within six-seven hours of time, a flight reached Kathmandu with all the necessary equipment. It helped many people survive," said Nepal Ambassador Deep Kumar Upadhyay⁷. India is emerging as a major player in disaster risk reduction sector, especially in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations. India is developing a SAARC monitoring system that involves developing tools for early warning system and risk mitigation in member states, which includes Nepal. The initiative will include setting up a regional monitoring system, assessment and early warning systems and standby arrangements for disaster relief, the kind India has deployed in Nepal⁸. ■

- AIDMI Team

- 1 <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nepal-earthquake-india-ramps-up-operation-maitri-airlifts-nearly-2-000-nationals/article1-1341393.aspx>
- 2 <http://www.thebetterindia.com/22797/india-role-in-nepal-earthquake-rescue-mission/>
- 3 http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-27/news/61578451_1_ndrf-teams-air-india-relief-efforts
- 4 <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-nepal-earthquake-government-launches-national-disaster-helpline-1078-2081265>
- 5 http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/25127/Earthquake_in_Nepal_Control_Room_established_in_Ministry_of_External_Affairs
- 6 <http://www.ndtv.com/cheat-sheet/nepal-earthquake-india-has-helped-evacuate-170-nationals-from-15-countries-by-air-says-government-758888>
- 7 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-3067835/Nepal-thanks-India-earthquake-response-sends-home-foreign-rescue-teams.html>
- 8 http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-27/news/61578451_1_ndrf-teams-air-india-relief-efforts

Building Back Better after the Earthquake

In November 2012 I visited Nepal to assess the Disaster Risk Reduction work of an international agency.¹ For many years the risk of an earthquake affecting Kathmandu had been identified as quite likely or even 'overdue' and potentially the most serious of all risks facing Nepal. Accordingly the donors had committed large sums of money to emergency preparation and risk reduction. Today, after a series of earthquakes, the need to 'build back better' is well recognised but what does that mean?

Even though the risk of an earthquake in Kathmandu was well known, people with enough money and influence flouted the building codes even when they were building new houses or constructing extensions. Rules about the ratio of height to width of the building were openly flouted in teetering pinnacles of narrow floors piled on top of each other. The donors had spent a great deal of money developing and

promoting the Building Codes but the Codes did not change the attitudes towards risk or the corruption that allowed people to evade the rules.

Donors poured money into retrofitting schools to make them resistant to earthquakes but there was still not enough to cover every school in the Kathmandu Valley and this raised a question of priorities. Seismic mapping had shown that the effects of an earthquake in the Valley would be very 'patchy'. There is very little rock in the Valley and the alluvial sub-soils and gravels of the Valley create huge variations in the vulnerability of different areas. Not all the donors (and NGOs) took notice of this but instead prioritised the schools which appealed to them because of some other preferences and interests. Others gave the money to the government but although the Minister of Education had access to the seismic surveys and advice based on it, he did not follow this advice. Decisions appeared to be made largely on political grounds or because of interests and 'special pleading' of various kinds. As a result, spending on retro-fitting was much less effective than it could have been.

The root of these problems is lack of public accountability. Neither the building inspectors nor the Minister are open to public scrutiny and influence. Citizens are certainly keen to play their role and help the authorities. Long before the recent earthquakes, people in Kathmandu had noticed that the emergency services such as the ambulances and fire brigade very often lost their way trying to reach the scene of an emergency. There were no useable maps. Aerial photographs were

available but did not indicate whether a route was passable and what the buildings were.

An NGO mobilised volunteers to go out onto the streets and add detail to the maps. They did this by using their mobile phones linked to a satellite navigation system to give their precise location. They found out if streets were passable and what buildings were located along those streets. They then entered this information on an 'open source' map available to the public. The results were not only available to the emergency services but also to officials and members of the public who might want to know where services were located. For example, members of the public faced with a health emergency could now locate the nearest health post and find out what facilities were available. Those in charge of the system said that one of their aims was to make it easier to hold the authorities to account. Many people simply did not know where government offices were located. Now they could find them through the map.

All this goes to show that there is much more to reconstruction than bricks and mortar. The biggest challenge in 'building back better' is not to put houses back up again, or to write new codes and rules, but to ensure that the interests of the people are better served by the state. ■

– Tony Vaux,

Humanitarian Activities, UK

¹ Tony Vaux worked for nearly thirty years with Oxfam GB including six years living in India. He now works as a consultant and has visited Nepal many times, conducting assessments for DFID, UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank and others.

- FOR MANY YEARS, THE RISK OF AN EARTHQUAKE STRIKING NEPAL WAS 'OVERDUE'.
- THE APATHY OF THE WELL-OFF PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT WORSENERED THE SITUATION.
- DESPITE GREAT RESOURCE-INVESTED BY DONORS, NEPAL STILL SUFFERED IMMENSELY.
- THE ONLY WAY AHEAD IS TO ENSURE THAT THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE ARE BETTER SERVED BY THE STATE.

Rebuilding Nepal: What Donors Must Fund

Following devastating earthquake of 25 April, there has been 328 aftershocks¹ of Local Magnitude 4 or more until 22 June 2015. The major damage was caused by quakes measuring 7.9 Richter scale on 25 April, 6.6 Richter scale on 26 April, and 6.8 Richter scale on 12 May. According to the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) coordinated by the government, the earthquake has impacted the housing and human settlements sector the most. The PDNA has been a participatory and credible effort with support from bilaterals and multilaterals. It has been launched as the framework for donors to support the government's recovery efforts. The PDNA report estimates huge reconstruction needs of US\$ 6.7 billion.

An international conference on national reconstruction was organised by the Government of Nepal on 25 April to coordinate efforts among its partner governments and donor organizations involved in the reconstruction effort. Donor countries have pledged \$4.4 billion in aid for the recovery bid during the conference. Of the total amount, the donors have pledged \$2.2 billion in grant while the remaining \$2.2 billion in loan.

The donors have expressed their priorities mainly on restoring public facilities, heritage sites and infrastructure development such as roads and bridges. Likewise, there have been pledges of support for economic reconstruction and skill training to the youths for reconstruction.



The donor conference held on 25th June, 2015.

It should be remembered that early stage of relief had criticisms related to transparency, management of resources and government efficiency. There have been shortcomings with regard to coordination from the relief organisations too. There is no doubt that the government should be in the driving seat coordinating all the works being carried out by NGOs and INGOs. The donors must advise the recipient I/NGOs to better coordinate with the government mechanism through introduction of conditions that supports the government's regulatory and monitoring mechanisms.

There have been doubts about the Government of Nepal's capacity on efficient and transparent utilisation of funds, to achieve the PDNA goals. The Development Cooperation Report unveiled by the government on 10 April 2015 revealed that expenditure of donors' aid budget was just 51% in three quarters of the fiscal year. Donors may help the

government not only in providing monetary support, but also in supporting with technical assistance and capacity building to spend money efficiently and effectively. This may help the government to build a credible governance culture in the future.

With absence of elected personnel in the local bodies, mainly the Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Development Committees (DDCs), there have been doubts about the credibility and accountability of the funds disbursed at that level. Likewise, the absence of locally elected leaders will be felt when there are potential conflicts over the disbursement of resources. As the reconstruction requires at least five years according to the government, it makes sense to hold local election as soon as possible to ensure credible reconstruction process at the VDC and district levels. The donors can help the government in conducting local elections with logistics support

¹ According to National Seismological Centre, <http://www.seismonepal.gov.np/>

and send observers to ensure credibility.

A high powered authority for post-earthquake reconstruction has been approved through ordinance under the prime minister to lead the task of reconstruction. The authority will have three objectives - rebuilding quake-ravaged infrastructures (or building entirely new), mobilization of resources needed for the task, and capacity enhancement of local institutions. This authority will require a robust institutional mechanism and dedication of an empowered team of officials. The donors can provide technical support to the authority to develop a robust mechanism towards efficient implementation and adequate accountability.

The reconstruction work requires exchange of good practices between the government and other development agencies including NGOs and INGOs. There have been criticisms about lack of proper coordination between donor agencies too. There were plenty of overlaps in terms of sectoral and geographical coverage. This is one area where donors should also ensure coordination and consistency. The government's Aid Management

Platform (AMP) though is expected to minimise such overlaps. Rather than donors implementing their separate country strategies, it is advisable for them to support the single strategy of Nepalese government for rebuilding.

There have been severe criticisms about highly paid consultants being imported by the donors and big relief organisations. The donors should emphasise the use of local knowledge and South-South experience. For example, the lessons of Pakistan from the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) could be instrumental in case of Nepal's reconstruction. The donors could help in bringing the good lessons from there through technical support.

There were criticisms during the relief phase that the earmarked aid money was mostly consumed by donors themselves by paying their high expensive experts, equipment, technologies, etc. leaving only some residual money for ultimate beneficiaries. It is advisable to refrain from putting conditions on expertise, equipment and technologies by the donors for which the aid money will be consumed. ■

- Achyut Luitel,

Director, Practical Action South Asia



Practical Action supporting temporary shelters for monsoon.

Role of AIESEC Nepal in Earthquake Recovery

It all started with a situation where in the biggest catastrophe had hit Nepal as a whole in form of 67th After-shake at 6 am on 29th April 2015 after the disastrous earthquake of 7.9 Richter scaled earthquake. The earthquake left Nepal killing more than 4500 people and leaving many more homeless and injured. This loss that this beautiful and small country has faced will take decades to recover fully and build back from scratch.

AIESEC being world's largest youth run not for profit organization present in 128 countries and territories. One of them being AIESEC Nepal which has been set up by AIESEC India in an attempt to develop Nepal at global level and develop leaders through its Internship opportunities. AIESEC Nepal didn't suffer any loss in form of lives but the major effect was on the finances and cash cows.

AIESEC Nepal in an attempt to aid earthquake recovery had stopped its operations for a month and went to help Nepal with all its force. Along with it, the global AIESEC Network helped AIESEC Nepal through supplying first aid kits, batteries, toys, blankets and sleeping bags. In order to aid Nepal in its recovery two projects were launched Project Jhunkiri and Build Nepal where in the AIESEC Network waived of the Administrative fees to get people to participate in the program.

Build Nepal is an initiative where in the volunteers from other AIESEC Entities are taking major part in which involves more ground work. ■

- Tanmay Parekh, Vice President,
Corporate Relations, AIESEC

Rebuilding Nepal: Ideas for Designers

25th April, 2015 a day of dread and remorse for those that have risen and survived the worst of nature's tantrums. As the clouds of dust settled and smoke from the innumerable piers reached out to the sky and beyond, realization hit that the fatalities increased, due to the blunders of all concerned. The beautiful settlements and village clusters and our beloved heritage sites, we overlooked the requirement to strengthen our habitats, temples and palaces, to withhold the rattling and shaking of Mother Nature at its worst.



A seemingly safe house in Dhadagaun, Kavre, where the walls have all cracked: stone walls in mud mortar (local earth is more of sand content).

In Kathmandu valley, the inner city-cores have been reduced to rubble; the majestic temples have kissed the ground. As we sit and speculate, the mistakes and overruling of technical details and absence of regular maintenance resounds in our ears. It is our own mistakes that have hit back. In the new buildings the avarice of rental space and cost cut in structural safety did the trick.

The plight of the villages all across the affected regions where all the houses have been reduced to rubble is unimaginable. The study of vernacular architecture, indigenous

technologies, community settlements etc. have been done to detail, but somehow we missed out on the use of technology to strengthen these structures to withstand the vagaries of nature, especially earthquakes, as we live right atop the fault line.

The cottages with walls of random rubble in mud mortar plastered clean with red earth, bright colored windows and well manicured straw roofs, rectangular well placed dwellings have always been a site for sore eyes. Alas, it all crumbled to the ground, almost all on the first day

and those remaining joined in after the major shake on 12th May.

The construction of monsoon safe shelters along with the village masons, to analyze how they actually built, was a breakthrough to the mistakes which had a cumulative effect to magnify the destruction.

The fast construction without any line and level, no breaking of vertical joints, no ties, the erratic filling in of the inner core with small pieces of stone and mud mortar packing, disregarding the small voids, with concentration only on the line of the



The outer layer of stones are thrown off.



Reduced to rubble...a once thriving village of the Hayu's (pallaquin bearers)

external row of stones possibly resulted in a structurally weak wall. It withstood storms and hails but was unable to bear the stress created by the rattling and vigorous shaking, whereby the walls were left with major cracks, gaping holes, mostly with the outer or inner layer collapsing as the loose stones inside rattled away within the two outer layers. The mortar was reduced to

■ UNSOUND CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES HAVE EXACERBATED THE DAMAGE IN NEPAL.
■ THERE IS AN URGENT NEED TO ADOPT TRADITIONAL EARTHQUAKE RESISTANT TECHNIQUES.

dust, the clay tiles on the roof jumped helter-skelter and the stones just piled up alongside. No construction waste as compared to urban areas, but we could have minimized the damage had we all given it a thought, as we all knew that a large quake was already overdue.

Points to Ponder:

- Horizontal and vertical ties at regular intervals, is a must: with available local materials such as bamboo or wood in place of steel reinforcement as used in the urban areas.
- Good compaction and full consideration of line and level with breaking of vertical joints in cases of stone masonry in the villages should not be

overlooked. Mud mortar even surkhi seems to have failed, we have to find a solution.

- Half brick walls without horizontal ties are a complete no-no. We need to opt for an alternative to bricks which are lighter and easier to construct.
- The design of a comfortable and wide staircase with easy access to open space will not only increase safety but will add on to the rental value of the spaces accessed too.
- This is not to deter architects from designing aesthetically iconic buildings as long as the details of structural safety are taken care of. ■

– Anju Malla Pradhan,
Freelance Architect, Nepal

AGENDA FOR DONORS' CONFERENCE

Rebuilding Nepal: What Donors Must Know

When disaster strikes, people want to help. It is a human response. Support is sent from all over the world in the form of money or in kind donations, as well as expertise and voluntary labour. The response is rapid as the immediate need is great, and on completion the houses and toilets that have been built are counted and photographed as tangible evidence of a successful project.

But numbers should not be the only measure of success. The following questions must also be asked when evaluating post-disaster reconstruction projects in Nepal:

- Do the buildings provide not only for the people's immediate shelter and health needs, but also their long-term family and livelihood needs, and their need to build resilience for the future?
- Does the rebuilding process include the people in its planning

and implementation? Does it respect, utilize and enhance local knowledge and skills?

- Do the buildings respond well to the local context (environmentally, economically and socially)? Are the houses suited to the local climate and topography? Do they allow people to rebuild with what they have at hand and can afford (including salvaged materials)? Are local land tenure arrangements respected and the links between people and their land maintained?
- Does the rebuilding respect the cultural heritage of the people and recognize its contribution to the community's identity and sense of place? Does it respect local building traditions, including the use of local materials and traditional techniques for mitigating the

risks from earthquake and other hazards, knowledge that has been developed and tested over generations?

- Are there maintenance strategies in place to facilitate the ongoing care of the buildings?

It must be recognized that recovery is a long-term process and that building resilience requires the active engagement of communities throughout all phases of the process. When donors focus only on the provision of finished products, they can circumvent this process and disempower communities. When communities are not involved in developing the solutions implemented, they often disassociate from them and fail to see them as their own.

The use of imported technologies and materials can have substantial

impacts on local communities as it fails to recognize local knowledge and expertise, and in doing so, devalues it in the eyes of the local community. It can also fail to utilize local skills, severely impacting the livelihoods of artisans. In addition, it can critically alter the significant character, identity and sense of place that the traditional architecture imparts to the built environment of Nepalese cities and towns and the cultural landscape of Nepal's rural areas.

The Gorkha Earthquake caused many of Nepal's traditional masonry, mud and timber buildings to collapse. But many others survived, and these can be used to teach valuable lessons for rebuilding. Investigation of the damage by expert members of UNESCO's International Council on Monuments and Sites-International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness (ICOMOS-ICORP) has highlighted the value of traditional earthquake resistant construction technologies incorporated into the surviving buildings. Key elements, which include the use of timber ring beams and large stones to brace building corners and bond walls together, are consistent with Nepal's



Traditional housing in a mountain village near Dhulikhel, Nepal.

National Building Code (1994). However, these were found to be missing from many of the collapsed buildings. Lack of maintenance, resulting in deterioration of building elements, was also identified as a contributing factor to building failure.

For donors to Nepal's rebuilding, although numbers of buildings completed may be important, what is most important is building resilient

communities for the future. This involves capacity building and inclusion of local expertise, knowledge and skills, and respect for Nepal's social, cultural, economic and environmental context. ■

– **Catherine Forbes**, Built Heritage Advisor, GML Heritage (Australia)
Expert member, ICOMOS-ICORP (UNESCO's International Council on Monuments and Sites – International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness)

DEMANDS CHARTER

Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Humanitarian Response

We, women's groups/organisations from Nepal offer our sincerest condolences on the tragedy that has unfolded as a result of the two earthquakes on 25 April and 12 May 2015. We are deeply saddened by the loss of life and the extensive damage suffered and concerned for the welfare of those displaced and hurt. We stand ready to extend our support to the people of Nepal.

Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC Nepal), SAATHI, Feminist Dalit Organisation, JAGRAN Nepal, Forum for Women Law & Development (FWLD), Women for Human Rights, Single Women Group (WHR), Beyond Beijing Committee, Media Advocacy Group (MAG), Sancharika Samuha and Home Net South Asia.

Humanitarian assistance should be gender sensitive and address women's specific practical and strategic needs. Understanding gender differences, inequalities and capacities will improve the effectiveness of our humanitarian response and we must work together to promote and achieve gender equality – this is a shared responsibility of all humanitarian actors.

Women's Representation and Leadership

Humanitarian coordination should enable a formal, meaningful consultative forum with women's groups/networks to ensure a gender lens in the assessment, planning, prioritization, coordination, development and implementation of policies and programs.

Recovery, relief and re-habilitation efforts must reflect the voices of women and the vital leadership role women can play in shaping priorities for relief and reconstruction.

Deploy women into technical and decision making roles and ensure all humanitarian responders consult with and involve women's civil society groups and women of all ages, including those hard to reach (female headed households) or at risk such as women with disabilities/older women.

Food Security, Shelter and Sustainable Livelihoods

Needs assessments must consult with women and men of all ages, disaggregate data by sex and age and explicitly address the capacities and needs of women and girls, as well as men and boys in protection and service delivery.

Ensure equal access to food security and shelter for women by involving women in the design and distribution of food and water and sanitation programmes, including women and

their families in the rural areas and in camp situations.

Ensure women are represented in any decision making and consultation forum and women are provided with livelihoods and income generation opportunities, based on direct consultation with them to ensure activities are tailored to their needs, circumstances, and capacities.

Provide immediate financial support to local women's groups including women's civil society groups who are already working with local affected people and have the local knowledge and resources necessary to rapidly identify and meet the priority needs of all members of the community.

Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls

Take immediate action to prevent all forms of gender based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, which rapidly increase in the aftermath of a disaster. Take special actions to protect adolescent girls who are at the highest risk of GBV.

Review institutional, regulatory/policy and legal frameworks to ensure their responsiveness to women's issues.

Provide refresher and new courses at village and neighborhood level to train women in health services, including health-education, child-delivery and mother-child health-care.

Special Programmes for Women

Establish a women's fund for women-specific programmes (prioritizing issues for women with disabilities including access) and ensuring a formal role for women's organizations in the management and disbursement of such a fund.

Address women and adolescence girls' specific needs related with sexual and reproductive health (for instance hygiene and sanitary items required during menstruation, and postpartum period including items such as toilet chair, wheel chair, urine bag etc.) to address the specific needs of women with disability and elderly women.

Systematic and institutional coordination with women's groups is critical at all stages of the relief and reconstruction efforts including in deliberations on resource mobilization with development partners.

Develop and issue gender sensitive guidelines for the relief and recovery phase.

The Government needs to carry out a gender needs assessment based and draw on the gender-disaggregated data of internally displaced people to guide its decision making process and strategy of redistribution.

Women need to be considered equitably under the welfare and social protection programmes and share in goods and services being distributed by Government, Development Partners and CSOs .

Ensure a proactive role for women's organizations in monitoring the impact of relief and recovery programmes.

Ensure women have access to relevant, consistent and timely information to make informed decisions. ■

– Chandni Joshi, Enforcer,
Home Net South Asia



Photo: AIDMI.

Nepal Earthquake: Lessons for Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)

The young and rising Himalayan mountains are unusually vulnerable to geo-hazards. The geological vocabulary about these lofty mountains is full of terms about destructions and related forces and processes: "Faults strains, crushed rocks and crusts" "collision zone", "tectonic turmoils" and "ruggedly youthful and landslips" are some such examples. No wonder, people in Nepal, Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) and other Himalayan countries and states have to live with ever-present threat of earthquakes. The other day, my old time ecology student, Subrat Sharma of G. B Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Almora, shared an interesting piece of data on the history of earthquakes of over 6 magnitude. Though accounting for only four percent of the geographical area of India, the IHR has suffered from more than 50% of total earthquakes of more than 6 magnitude since 1800 A.D. Apart from highlighting the vulnerability of IHR to earthquakes, the data stresses that the Gangetic Plains are also considerably unsafe, and given that there live 13-14 times more people than in IHR, the risk involved in terms of loss of life and damage to economy is huge.

Experts argue that the earthquakes greater than the Nepal's could strike

any time as strain keeps on building up in several parts of Himalayas and around it. The death of 9000 persons in Nepal earthquakes is a huge tragedy, but it could have been still greater had it occurred in night time. The experiences of Chili earthquake of similar magnitude indicated that human mortality can be brought down to a much lower level, even below 1000 by taking necessary measures. After all, an earthquake does not kill humans directly, it is the damage to human engineering structures which kills people. The state must decide to take responsibility to prevent and reduce the risk associated with earthquakes. All restoration processes in Nepal need to give due value to improving disaster risk governance, and greater investment in disaster abatement and maintaining earthquake-proof standards.

Lauding the ability of proud people of Nepal to endure suffering is not enough; governments need to think about acting on priorities for action so that loss of life and economic disruptions in disasters could be minimized. Governments must realize that investment in the following is likely to pay: (i) preventive measures, (ii) risk reduction, (iii) preparedness, (iv) risk communication, (v) advance

planning, (vi) improving understanding about earthquakes form, (vii) developing collaborative research by involving experts not only from Himalayan countries and states, but also from all such vulnerable regions of the world.

It may be pointed out that Nepal had made some advance preparation with the support of international organizations. Some of the early initiatives in this direction started about two decades ago. Many new buildings had followed building codes meant for the earthquake risk reduction; several civil society organizations had improved people's awareness; and in certain areas open spaces for taking shelter had been identified. Somehow, things have remained dismal on this front as far as IHR is concerned. In fact, IHR can get several tips from the experiences of Nepal earthquake and restoration processes which are under way. Planning for reducing the risk of earthquake has several benefits. For example, by creating open spaces for people leaving their homes due to tremors for shelter could improve air of urban areas and provide place for children to play. By using bamboos in building safe house, we can improve the income of marginal people.

While taking actions to reduce earthquake risks, there is need for including several related issues, such as landslides that earthquakes induce and migration that they can trigger. Incorporating earthquake disasters in development can go a long way in finding solutions. ■

– Prof S. P. Singh,

Central Himalayan Environment Association (CHEA), Nainital

- THE RECENT EARTHQUAKES IN NEPAL OFFER MANY LESSONS FOR THE INDIAN HIMALAYAN REGION (IHR).
- GIVES THE HIGH POPULATION DENSITY OF THE IHR, A SIMILAR EARTHQUAKE THERE CAN BE FAR MORE DEVASTATING.
- IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR IHR TO DRAW THE LESSONS FROM THE NEPAL QUAKES AND SUITABLY INVEST IN PREVENTIVE AND PREPAREDNESS MEASURES.

Community Resilience Plan Nepal



Photo: AIDMI: Balaki village

The recent earthquakes in Nepal have led to large scale death, destruction and deprivation. As entire communities grapple with the loss of life, livelihood the hard earned development outcomes of Nepal have been undone. The onus is now on the powers that be to devise institutional measures that build the resilience of communities. Community resilience may be defined as the capacity to:¹

- anticipate, minimize and absorb potential stresses or destructive forces through adaptation or resistance
- manage or maintain certain basic functions and structures during disastrous events

- recover or 'bounce back' after an event

Community resilience can be achieved through a community based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) approach. To aid the organizations and agencies working in the space of CBDRR, Flagship 4 along with the support of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) along with several other organizations have come up with 9 minimum characteristics of a disaster resilient community. The following are the minimum 9 characteristics of disaster resilient communities:²

1. Organisational base at Village Development Committee

(VDC) / ward and community level

A functional organizational base at VDC / ward and community level for the implementation and sustainability of disaster risk reduction (DRR), which addresses the issues of protection, social inclusion (including gender balance), community ownership and participation and follows DRR initiatives.

2. Access to DRR information

Coordination mechanisms and partnerships to enable access to DRR information involving local, district and national level government structures, civil

1 Characteristics of a Disaster Resilient Community, A Guidance Note, John Twigg, November 2009, <http://community.eldis.org/.59e907ee/Characteristics2EDITION.pdf>

2 Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium- Flagship 4, Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction, <http://flagship4.nrrc.org.np/minimum-characteristics>

- society organizations, private sector and vulnerable groups, including linkages with key institutions such as schools and hospitals.
3. **Multi-hazard risk and capacity assessments**
Ongoing, systematic, participatory, multi-hazard risk and capacity assessments which enable the monitoring and evaluation of DRR at VDC and community level and which link into district and national monitoring and evaluation systems.
 4. **Community preparedness / response teams**
This involves community teams that are trained and equipped to provide hazard warning and evacuation information, light search and rescue and basic first aid.
 5. **Disaster Risk Reduction / Management plan at Village Development Committee / municipality level**
A plan at the local level which meets the Flagship 4 minimum requirements listed and is regularly updated, implemented and tested.
 6. **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Funds**
Funds accessible to communities for priority disaster risk reduction activities which are available at VDC / ward level and/or through community resource mobilization efforts.
 7. **Access to community-managed resources**
Access to community-managed resources such as human and materials at VDC / ward levels for DRR initiatives.
 8. **Local level risk / vulnerability reduction measures**
VDC / ward level initiatives on identification, prioritization and application of local level risk / vulnerability reduction measures.
 9. **Community based early warning systems**
Inclusive, community based early warning systems that are integrated with VDC / ward, district, regional and national early warning systems.
- The importance of community has gained traction after the Nepal crisis. Thus, in planning for resilient communities; governments, donors or other humanitarian actors need to invest in and support all the aforementioned characteristics. Even sectoral players who focus partially on these characteristics need to ensure total geographical coverage for maximum effectiveness. ■ - AIDMI Team

RESCUE TECHNOLOGY

FINDER Search and Rescue Technology Helped Save Lives in Nepal

A new search-and-rescue technology, FINDER (Finding Individuals for Disaster and Emergency Response), helped rescue for men trapped beneath the rubble for days in the hard-hit village of Chautara after Nepal's devastating earthquake. Following the April 25 earthquake in Nepal, two prototype FINDER devices were deployed to support search and rescue teams. The suitcase-sized device uses microwave-radar technology to detect heartbeats of victims trapped in wreckage.



Finder was developed in partnership by DHS and NASA Technology Helps Save Lives in Nepal Earthquake Disaster. Source: <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/images/earth/earthquake/20150507/findera20130925.jpg> the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate and the National Aeronautics and Administration's jet Propulsion Laboratory.

FINDER has previously demonstrated capabilities of detect people buried under up to 30 feet of rubble, hidden behind 20 feet of solid concrete, and from a distant of 100 feet in open spaces. A new "locator" feature has since been added to not only provide search and rescue responders with confirmation of a heartbeat, but also the approximate location of trapped individuals within about five feet, depending on the type of rubble.

The FINDER technology has now transitioned to the commercial market, making the devices available to search and rescue teams around the world. Two commercial partners have been licensed to manufacture the device, R4 Inc. of Eatontown, N.J. and Spec Ops Group Inc. of Sarasota, Fla. (Source: <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news>) ■

Women to Women Relief

The earthquake of 25th April, 2015 has been dubbed as the worst disaster to strike Nepal in over 80 years. The staggering loss of life and property has pushed the Nepalese people into poverty and deprivation. Various humanitarian actors have been involved in providing succour and relief. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is one such organization which undertook relief and rehabilitation activities in the earthquake affected areas of Nepal. The members of SEWA had a special affinity to the victims in Nepal as they too had suffered the same fate in 2001 after the Gujarat earthquake. The experience of recovering from the effects of an earthquake, gave the members of SEWA a unique advantage to understand the fears and needs of the affected population in Nepal. To show solidarity with the victims, SEWA's team lived among the victims for 22 days and worked to alleviate their suffering. The following are experiences of some members of the SEWA team which worked in Nepal:



After the earthquake, our team from SEWA spent 22 days in three to four different earthquake affected regions such as Lalitpur, Fatehpur, Moolpan and Panoti.

Our team leveraged the experience of working in the aftermath of the 2001 Gujarat Earthquake. SEWA partnered with a regional social business organization called SABAH. SABAH or the SAARC Business Association of Home Based Workers had a community resource centre (CRC) which was partially damaged in the earthquake. The SEWA team toured

these affected areas to gather as much information as possible. We then partnered with SABAH to build temporary work sheds made of tarpaulin sheets and bamboo. We also worked to drive the fear of earthquake out of the psyches of the affected people. We also helped in clearing the debris from partially damaged houses. But perhaps the most rewarding experience was the feeling of community and togetherness with which the members of SABAH and SEWA used to work to help the affected rural women.

- **Savitaben Patel**, C.E.O. SEWA
Trade Facilitation Centre, Saraspur, Ahmedabad

After the earthquake, we enquired about opening of a Child Care Centre (Bal Seva Kendra). The areas we visited, we did not find a single child care centre. This was also the reason why children had to suffer a lot hardship. In Lalitpur, we held a meeting with eight mothers on the importance of a child care centre. The most challenging task was to inspire women to join the sewing livelihood activities of affected SABAH members after the earthquake.

- **Suryaba V. Jadeja**, Member,
Mahila Vikas Bal Mandal, Surendranagar

In the earthquake ravaged villages of Nepal, we witnessed that houses as high as four storeys had been levelled to the ground. We motivated and trained 100 women so that they might get their kids linked to the child care centre. The most important initiatives taken by us during our 22 day stay was helping



the affected communities cope with the psychological fear of earthquakes and help them undertake livelihood activities.

- **Gauriben B. Darji**, Member,
B.D.M.S.A, Radhanpur

Since the rural women of Nepal had never witnessed a disaster of such great proportions, they were naturally overwhelmed. We tried to help these women to cope with their fear. We impressed upon them the importance of carrying on with their livelihood activities lest their families slide into extreme poverty. Through SABAH's support we got most of these women successfully linked to sewing related livelihood activities.

- **Lakshmiben Mohanbhai Vankar**, Member, BDMSA, Patan

It was for the second time in my life that I witnessed the destruction of a massive earthquake. The first time was during the Gujarat earthquake of 2001. In both these cases, the problems faced by the victims were similar. The rubble of damaged houses, the deep fear of aftershocks and the general air of despondency among the victims were all too obvious. The large number of deaths in the area, also gave rise to superstitious beliefs of ghosts and spirits lurking in the ruins of damaged structures. We educated the women of these areas to help them overcome these fears and tried to get them involved in livelihood activities.

- **Anitaben H. Parmar**,
Member, SEWA, Surendranagar



Nepal Quakes: World Vision India's Response

World Vision is an international humanitarian organisation, well-renowned for its expertise in development and emergency relief efforts across nearly 100 countries. The devastating Nepal quakes prompted a response from World Vision International, with World Vision India providing active support. World Vision India deployed staff members for different aspects of the disaster response, from logistics to emergency communications.

World Vision India staff was among the first to hit the ground following the tragedy on April 25, 2015. 35505 affected people were reached through World Vision's Emergency response, in multiple locations including Gorkha, Lamjung, Sindhuli districts, Sindhupalchowk and Kathmandu valley (Kathmandu, Bakhtapur, Lalitpur districts). Since the organisation mainly focuses on children, much of the relief work has been done for making safe and secure environments for children to thrive. 1085 children have benefited from 15



child friendly spaces. These are spaces for children to come together and play and have fun, as children are usually ignored during times of emergency. It plays a key role in providing psychosocial support to the young ones of the affected communities, helping them forget the trauma and loss.

Relief material distribution is also a key aspect of the work World Vision does. 4645 GI sheets, 8805 tarpaulins, 3616 blankets, 2434 mosquito nets, 1730 household items, 1803 hygiene kits and 671 buckets were distributed. Food was distributed for 864 families, keeping in mind the nutritional requirements for adults and children.



"I reached Nepal on April 26th, the very next day following the quake. When I reached Kathmandu late in the night, there was fear in the air. Many people were roaming the streets at 3:00 AM, because of the fear of after quakes. My job was primarily getting information out of the affected areas, in the form of stories and pictures," says Sam Theodore, Emergency Communications, World Vision India. The work for communicators like Sam was extremely draining and tiresome in ways more than one. The stories and images were depressing, and there

- AFTER NEPAL EARTHQUAKES, WORLD VISION UNDERLOOK RELIEF WORK.
- TILL NOW, 4645 GI SHEETS, 8805 TARPAULINS, 3616 BLANKETS, 2434 MOSQUITO NETS, 1730 HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, 1803 HYGIENE KITS AND 671 BUCKETS & FOOD FOR 864 FAMILIES HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED.

was little to cheer. "I distinctly remember watching a woman's dead body being carefully dug out of the debris by rescue personnel. As more mud was being removed, I could see a man's hand around her, in a final embrace during those final moments. The scene haunted me for days. I wondered how I could ever do justice to the victims through my work at times," he says.

Work still continues, as the scale of damage is extensive, and the demands are growing. The country has been reeling from aftershocks, with a gigantic tremor on May 12th. Congestion in airports, extensive damage to infrastructure and lack of access to many affected areas severely hamper relief efforts. Looking ahead, World Vision India looks to be actively involved in the recovery and rehabilitation processes that are already on. The objective, as Dr Jayakumar Christian, National Director and CEO, World Vision India says, is to leave the communities in a better shape than they were in prior to the disaster - enabling them to "bounce back better." The focus of all these efforts is ultimately the children of Nepal, a small country that has been overwhelmed by the biggest tragedy that it has suffered in over eight decades. ■

- Teresa Sahaya and
Impuri Ngayawon, World Vision India

HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Coordination as Humanitarian Action in Nepal

Coordination is often seen as an activity to guide or direct humanitarian action. But in Nepal earthquake recovery AIDMI team found that coordination itself can be, and is, an outcome of humanitarian action. In fact, this way of thinking about coordination helps take better decisions; avoid dark side of top-down democracy in humanitarian action; understand the demands of globalised capitalism on humanitarian donations; and act on our overly complex humanitarian world. Coordination is not an instrument, but also the essence of humanitarian action. Once this shift is made new doors and windows open to start including not only left out individuals and groups, but also ideas of ecology, growth, and democracy in humanitarian action. Such coordination can expand the humanitarian space; help make more fair trade-offs; and throw light on humanitarian dilemmas. Perhaps time has come to look at coordination, not as we know, but as we have not known it.

Several items came up clear about coordination. Often individuals asked how much coordination was costing their organizations? Next often asked question was if coordination will increase in the future? It was also asked if coordination has reduced costs over the past years? And how can we say so? More generally, what continues to drive coordination when it does take place?

Governance of coordination is not easy. It has many challenges at many levels. The "insider" "outsider" coordination is a challenge to governance, so is the use of mobile technology as soon as power is restored. Coordination can encourage creativity as well as kill it

if not governed in a suitable enabling manner. And relatively less is discussed on this aspect of coordination governance in World Humanitarian Summit preparations. There is an additional challenge of taking up climate change issues in coordination governance. Not much is done on this so far.

From coordinating information to knowledge is an area of importance more in urban areas as well as on challenges of employment and work after a disaster. Use of insurance and its needs is an area that falls in this section.

Costs and benefits of coordination are not well known. Cost in South Asia do not include cost of local authorities or local NGO's time. Similarly, the cost of adding adaptation measures with humanitarian action related coordination is not known. Some costs can be seen as benefits too. The cost of coordination to national government is not often estimated or accounted for in international humanitarian action. Locations also cost more or less in a high altitude or in a valley or in coastal areas. So location specific costs are not cost accounted for.

Accountability of coordination activity in humanitarian action remains unclear. Who to be accountable to? When? And what is the impact of not being accountable in coordinations? Are there ground breaking ideas around the accountability of coordination that are not discussed? What are the recent insights from users of coordination? Who will invest in such insights to try them? Where will talent come from to take these insights on coordination and accountability ahead? ■

- AIDMI Team

Livelihood Recovery Agenda for Nepal

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck on 25 April 2015 and subsequent aftershocks and landslides killed more than 8,600 people, damaged hundreds of thousands of buildings. They also destroyed food stocks, livestock and swept away farmland. Weakness in the agriculture, industry, and services sectors could push Nepal's economic growth down to 3.8% this fiscal year and potentially lower if supply disruptions continue.

Initial assessments indicated that affected communities lost significant livelihood assets such as small irrigation structures, existing renewable energy sources, community feeder roads and trails, seed stores, market centres and cooperative offices.

According to UNOCHA, an estimated 1.4 million people are in need of food assistance and the impact on agriculture-based livelihoods is high. The next planting season starts in June, by which time farmers have to transplant rice to avoid food insecurity. About 236,000 people need immediate livelihood support for agricultural inputs (including rice and vegetable seeds). This is aggravated by the large loss of livestock. The 12

May earthquake also damaged additional food storage facilities reducing already limited stocks. Malnutrition rates in certain areas of Nepal are among the highest in the world.

In the particular circumstances of Nepal at the present time, there are opportunities and situations where the provision of emergency multi-purpose cash should be identified as an effective and efficient modality of livelihood recovery. This can inject cash in the market and give options to the survivors to decide how and one what to spend money. Unrestricted and unconditional cash transfers can provide households with the ability to meet their basic daily needs as and when they arise. It is proven that cash transfer plays crucial role in restoring micro livelihoods at household and community level.

There is an opportunity to incorporate resilience into the livelihood agenda in Nepal. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are entering the final stages of negotiations and contain references of the need to strengthen resilience to reduce poverty and discrimination, improve urban environments, and

adapt to climate change. But with negotiations still ongoing and the political interests of governments guiding these negotiations unclear, there remains the threat that this will be deleted or weakened. The civil society and NGOs should play an active role in advocacy for better inclusion of SDGs in post-earthquake and long term livelihoods plan of Nepal.

In meeting the agricultural needs of communities, interventions should be phased and designed appropriately to support and promote resilient livelihood recovery. This implies to not only focus on the effects of this earthquake but rather have a comprehensive approach to reduce the vulnerability of households to other more frequent hazards, such as landslides, floods, droughts, pests and diseases. Particular priority should be given to the needs of women, marginalized caste groups and elderly headed households.

The disaster is an opportunity to reduce burden on agriculture and livestock for livelihoods. The off-farm livelihoods has ample potential to generate employment for the semi-literate and illiterate urban and rural masses. A big number people have various skills due to its open border with India, the skills they have developed should be utilized for promoting off-farm and farm based livelihoods. This is an opportunity to reduce caste and gender based discriminations through promoting pro marginalised group and gendered livelihoods. ■

- Kuldeep Sagar,
GOAL, South Sudan

- THE DISASTER IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE BURDEN ON AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK FOR LIVELIHOODS.
- THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS SHOULD PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ADVOCACY FOR BETTER INCLUSION OF SDGS IN POST-EARTHQUAKE AND LONG TERM LIVELIHOODS PLAN OF NEPAL.
- UNRESTRICTED AND UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS CAN PROVIDE HOUSEHOLDS WITH THE ABILITY TO MEET THEIR BASIC DAILY NEEDS AS AND WHEN THEY ARISE.

Research Agenda for Nepal: A Country Recovering from a Mega Disaster

The 2015-2030 Sendai framework preambles envisages that disaster risk management is imperative for achieving sustainable development. Before the 25th April earthquake struck, Nepal was striving to achieve economic growth and poverty reduction while abiding by the principles of sustainable development as outlined in its Sustainable Development Agenda for Nepal 2017. The earthquake that struck on 25th April 2015 has brought the current development trajectory to a grinding halt. Following this disaster, the pressure to quickly reinstate normal services, repair damage, and rebuild has been intense. The immediate response of government and non-government sectors, including international development aid agencies has been to focus efforts towards providing disaster relief: search and rescue, food supply and temporary shelter. The pathway to long term recovery is obscured, so far lacking clear policy guidelines, financial resources, and effective coalition between state and non-state stakeholders. This disaster may provide a window of opportunity to, not just achieve recovery but, improve the social,

economic and political landscape. In this context, managing the transition from relief to recovery could serve the dual purpose of targeting sustainability goals. To achieve this, research is needed on how to improve risk governance, post disaster long term recovery, and preparedness for future disasters.

The Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR) 2015 indicates that global disaster risk is on an increasing trend despite many years of global efforts. Disaster mortality remains high with an average of 65000 deaths per year since the start of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) in 1990. Similarly, according to the Munich Re report in 2013; economic losses have grown steadily since 1990, reaching an estimated annual average loss of US\$200 billion. The distribution of disaster risk is uneven across regions and between countries in the world. When a disaster affects an already vulnerable population like in Nepal the resulting vulnerability may be heightened as a result of migration and displacement. Such countries have a limited ability to buffer and absorb

disaster loss and implement an effective recovery, due to inherent vulnerability of population and assets, a resource scarcity and fragile governance.

As a good starting point for a research agenda, understanding disaster risk and vulnerability is vital. There is only limited research on how the vulnerability changes and manifest during the relief to recovery transition. Disaster recovery represents the least explored aspect of emergency management in both communities of researchers and practitioners. The current disaster scenario in Nepal presents an opportunity for conducting research on effective recovery. The outcomes of such research could serve as a tool for formulating an integrated policy framework that provides practitioners with guidance on how to utilise the readily available tools for improving the disaster recovery outcomes. ■

– **Mina Adhikari, Raj Prasanna, David Johnston**, Joint Centre for Disaster Research, and **Sam McColl**, Institute of Agriculture & Environment, Massey University, New Zealand;



Photo: AIDMI. Kyarakth village

Evidence Aid Response to the Nepal Earthquake

Following the two devastating earthquakes that struck Nepal on 25 April and 12 May, Evidence Aid is playing its part in the humanitarian response. Evidence Aid is providing much needed knowledge support to health and other humanitarian workers in Nepal and through our key partners in the region and in international agencies such as the United Nations and World Health Organisation, Evidence Aid is providing evidence-based resources to help focus relief efforts.

On 25 April, within an hour of the news of the earthquake hitting the airwaves in Ireland (Mike Clarke, Evidence Aid Founder) and South Africa (where Claire Allen, Evidence Aid Knowledge Manager was for the 19th World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine), Evidence Aid had emailed all the contributors to Cochrane based in Nepal, started to contact key agencies and partners, and initiated a series of social media and internet communication strategies. This drew attention to the resources that were already available on the Evidence Aid website, and started to gather information on where to focus our efforts.

On Monday, 27 April, new pages went live on the Evidence Aid website, to provide free access to key systematic reviews and other resources, particularly relevant to earthquakes. Since then, we have been adding to these pages and to our key resources, ensuring that they are brought to the attention of humanitarian workers and organisations. We have been working through our partners in national and international agencies to get the knowledge to the response teams who are already in the region or are on their way there. We have also used social networks such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to



bring our resources to the attention of those who might need them, or who can share them with responders.

We now know that more than 8000 people died following the first earthquake, and more than 17,000 have been injured – those numbers will, no doubt, climb after the second earthquake. Some remote areas of Nepal are still waiting for assistance and when that assistance arrives, we hope that Evidence Aid is helping to ensure that it does more good than harm. Although all humanitarian responses to an emergency such as the earthquake are well-intentioned, bitter experience shows that some responses are ineffective and some are harmful. Health and other humanitarian workers need to be able to tell the good from the bad, and Evidence Aid helps them to do so. It helps people distinguish what works from what doesn't work, and to avoid what might be harmful.

The information is available free from the Evidence Aid website. It covers injuries, mental health and water-borne diseases; as well many other health topics relevant to the recovery of the tens of thousands of

people affected by the earthquakes; we also have additional information on landslides, which has been reported as a direct consequence of the earthquake. Whether someone's got a computer or a smartphone, they can get the knowledge. It shows, for instance, that although you're usually as safe washing a wound with tap water as with expensive sterile saline; if clean, drinkable water is precious after a disaster, there are better uses for it. It's obvious, really, but chaos can get in the way of clear thinking. As another example, if you're worried about post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD among the survivors, the evidence shows that a type of psychological counselling known as brief de-briefing is probably useless, if not harmful.

Evidence-based decision making in humanitarian situations is as important as at any other time. People in disasters and humanitarian crises have the same rights to high quality evidence as those being treated in more routine settings. Systematic reviews are vital if patients are to receive care based on the best possible information. ■

– Claire Allen and
Mike Clarke, Evidence Aid

Demands for Rehabilitation

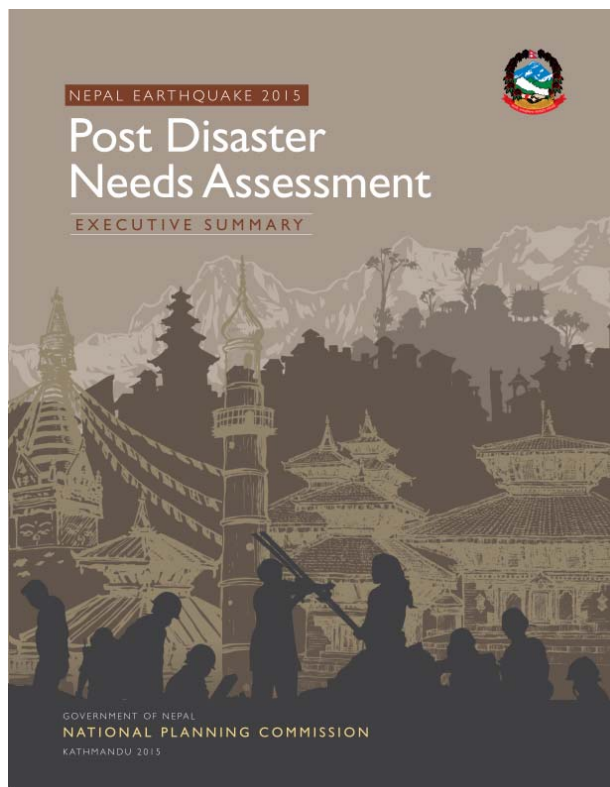
The rehabilitation process after the Nepal earthquake needs to incorporate the rights of *Dalits* in the following manner:

- Formation of task force and Initiate the process to map / enumerate the losses occurred to Affected Dalit population of following criteria
 - a) Damage and Loss of Mud houses / Concrete houses in Dalit Locations
 - b) Loss of Public Utilities Infrastructure
 - c) Loss of Livelihood
 - d) Any future possible loss (Land slide, Damaged buildings etc)
- Representation of Dalit communities in designing, executing and procurement of Rehabilitation measures. (National – VDC level).
- Involve community people and NGOs especially of Dalits and indigenous peoples in all efforts of rehabilitation and reconstructions
- Initiate multi- stake holder dialogue with the authorities including the central and district administration, NGOs, media and international aid agencies.
- Provision of Concrete earthquake resistant houses to all the Dalit families who have lost their houses in Earthquake in time bound manner in safer locations.
- Allocating common grazing lands and agriculture land to the affected Dalit population.
- Priority should be give for Immediate restoration of the entire public infrastructure in affected Dalit Locations (Schools, health, public buildings etc).
- Sustainable livelihood support of Rs 5,00,000 to the families of deceased persons
- Family pension of Rs 20,000 per month to the family of deceased persons
- Creation of Community Shelters resistant to earthquakes in the affected Dalit locations for their future safety during any disasters.
- All the loans pertaining to affected Dalits families should waive off.
- Interest free loan to all the affected Dalit families without any mortgage
- Immediate Creation of National Level Task force to review the current actions towards disaster risk reduction.
- Proper accessibility to public infrastructure facilities is needed for the better sustainability of the communities living in Earthquake Prone Areas
- There should be proper representation of Dalits in District and National level task force towards disaster risk reduction.
- There should be proper grievance mechanism in place to ensure proper rehabilitation of disaster affected Dalit Communities
- Regularization of small farmers living in earthquake prone areas should be done to ensure direct access of compensation in case of loss of crops and further livelihood.
- Formation of village level rescue team "*Apna Bachao Apne Haanth*" (We safety in our hands) for Proper evacuation and rescue services during any future mishaps.
- Priority should be given on education, water and civil supplies procurement process to save the communities in dire needs.
- Ensuring proper access to public buildings i.e Schools, Colleges, Shelter and Others places for timely and safe evacuation for Dalits.
- The housing construction and allotment should be done with a time bound action plan with adequate budget allocations at disposal.
- Government should shift all the Dalit families living in fragile locations to safer locations.
- There should be a separate cell at vulnerable districts to see any cases of Discrimination on the name Caste and Religion during Rehabilitation
- The government should appoint a committee to look into the matter to investigate the reasons as to why Dalits were most badly affected in the earthquake; why there was a delay in providing relief and rehabilitation to the Dalits and thereby, recommend measures to address and prevent caste based exclusion in earthquake management in future. ■

- **Rajesh Kumar Singh**, Project Coordinator, National Dalit Watch-National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, New Delhi

Financial Requirements for Recovery

According to the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)¹ report of the Government of Nepal, the country will require substantial financial assistance from outside to meet the recovery costs, estimated to be at least NPR 669 billion or US\$ 6.7 billion. To finance the rehabilitation and reconstruction, the government has set up a National Reconstruction Fund of NPR 200 billion, to which it has already committed NPR 20 billion. The report has stated that the government's revenue growth has slowed down in the short term, as a result of disrupted business activities. In terms of macro-economic effects, annual economic growth in FY 2014-2015 is expected to be the lowest in eight years, at 3 percent (basic prices); the earthquakes suppressed an earlier project on 4.6 percent by over 1.5 points. In addition, the slack in aggregate demand coming from the private sector and the costs to rehabilitate and reconstruct public goods such as schools, hospitals, heritage monuments, roads, energy projects, and water supply systems, among others, will exert substantial pressure on public finances as will announced subsidies to private home owners. ■



Priorities for DRR and Building Back Better (BBB) in Nepal

Since limited priority and resources were given to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) prior to the earthquake, the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)¹ report of Government of Nepal has suggested the following short-term and medium to long-term improvements in the DRR system in Nepal on urgent basis.

Short-term priorities:

- Reconstruction of damaged DRR assets and improvements on BBB principle;
- Measures to improve preparedness, response, relief and logistics systems;
- Measures to strengthen information and communication capacities for relief, response and recovery; and
- Measures to enhance multi-hazard risk monitoring, vulnerability assessment, risk information dissemination and awareness.

Medium to long term priorities:

- Improvements in legal and institutional arrangements;
- Measures to mainstream DRR into the developmental sector, particularly housing, private and public infrastructure, social sectors (health and education), and livelihood; and
- Measures to improve integration of climate change adaptation and DRR.

The government has also planned to develop a seismic policy and set up a network for seismic monitoring throughout the country, and promote seismological research. The policy will include the revision of building codes, development of building by-laws for all municipal areas, application of Mandatory Rule of Thumb (MRT) in rural areas, and development of risk-sensitive land use plans for all the municipalities of the country. The government will also support early warning and preparedness measures and support strengthening and retrofitting of schools and hospitals that are critical to risk reduction in Nepal, including measures to mainstream DRR and strengthen disaster risk governance. ■

- AIDMI Team

1 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PDNA_Executive_Summary_new.pdf

Round Table Meeting on Nepal Earthquake 2015: From Relief to Recovery

On July 14, 2015 Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Nepal, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC) and All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) co-convened a round table meeting on "Nepal Earthquake 2015: From Relief to Recovery" in Kathmandu, Nepal. A total of 23 participants representing government, international organizations and national organisations and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) practitioners from Nepal and India joined the round table meeting.

The stated objectives of the round table meeting were to:

- To discuss the lessons learnt during the instant relief distribution phase; and
- To collate the views of experts to plan recovery strategy for building back better.

Dr. Govind Nepal, Member of National Planning Commission



opened the round table meeting. Dr. Nepal emphasized on **formulation of policy guidelines** on shelter reconstruction and Disaster Risk Reduction planning at community, district as well as national level. He mentioned that efforts are to be planned and put to **enhance community resilience**.

A Round Table meeting focused on **innovative implementation** of

recovery projects. It also collated the views of experts to plan the community recovery, which should term as **Sustainable Recovery**. It was also recommended to make best use of technology in reconstruction. **Capacity enhancement of various stakeholders** on Disaster Risk Reduction was also recommended as a way forward. ■

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