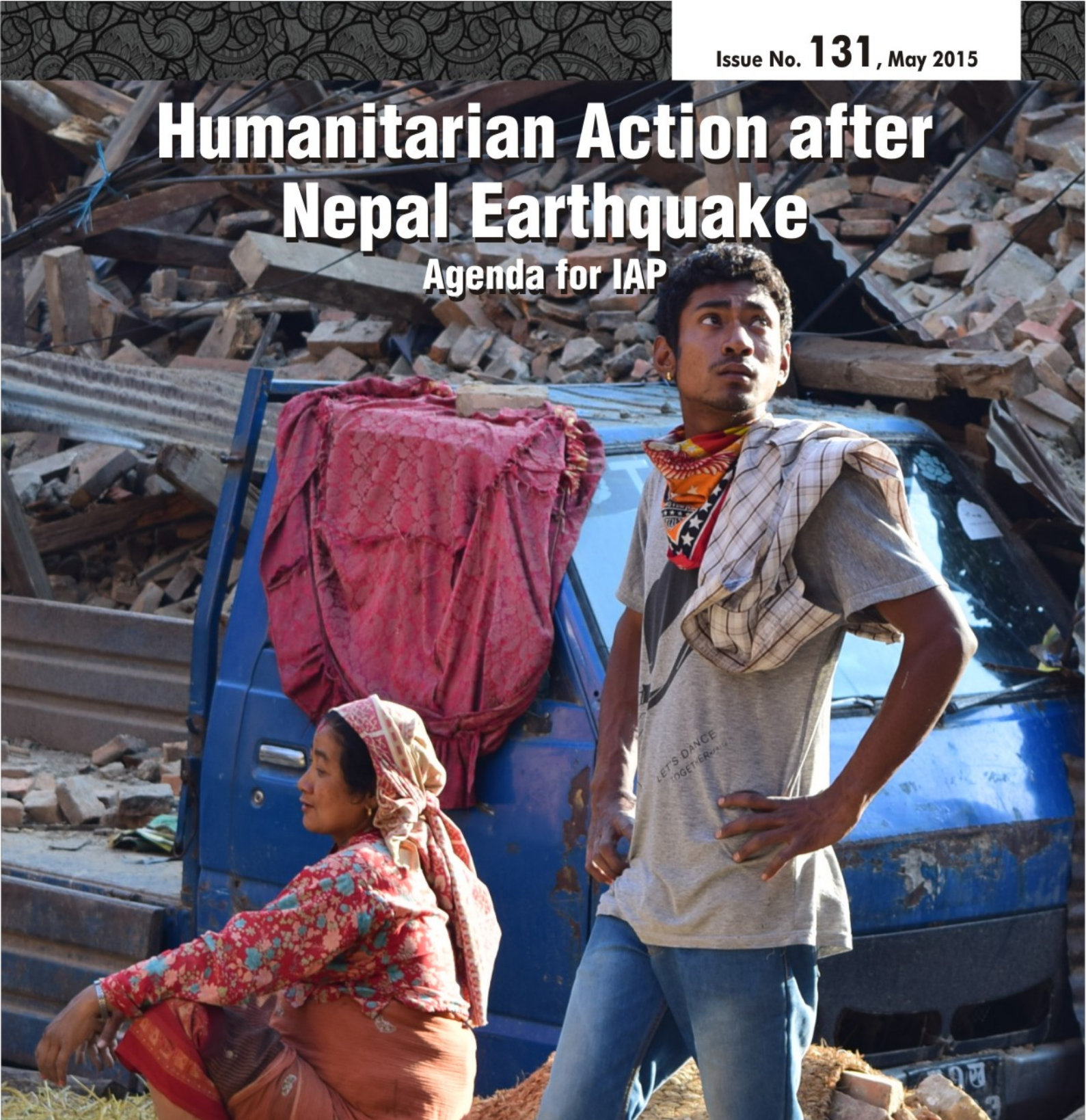


Humanitarian Action after Nepal Earthquake

Agenda for IAP



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The Nepal Earthquake of 25th April, 2015 has been one of the most devastating catastrophes in the history of the small Himalayan nation. The loss in terms of human and economic costs has been exponential. Moreover, this disaster has undone all the development progress hitherto achieved. The response from the world community has been swift but the sheer scale of the damage caused has thrown open a lot of humanitarian challenges. Concerted planning and action is required to overcome these challenges.

This issue of Southasiadisasters.net focuses on the theme of 'Humanitarian Action after the Nepal Earthquake: Agenda for IAP'. The ISDR Asia Partnership (IAP) is committed to effective implementation of the SFDRR in Asia Pacific region and the Nepal earthquake represents significant challenges to this. As South Asia grapples with yet another disaster, the humanitarian community needs to draw important lessons for an effective response and recovery.

This issue of Southasiadisasters.net captures these important lessons. It is a must read for all who wish to explore the opportunities SFDRR offers in making Nepal recovery robust and sustainable. ■

- Kshitij Gupta

INTRODUCTION

Earthquake in Nepal: Beyond Loss and Damage

Nepal was struck by a devastating magnitude of 7.8 earthquake on April 25, 2015. According to the National Emergency Operation Center, the death toll from the devastating earthquake stands at 7,250 and the number of people injured is 14, 222 (Mullen J. and Shelbayah S. 2015)¹. The earthquake is considered Nepal's worst since a 1934 tremor that killed nearly 17,000 people across both India and Nepal; UN estimates over 8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, about a quarter of the country's population (T.V. Padma 2015)². Apart from Nepal the earthquake jolted parts of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India and Pakistan.

The international response has been swift but is proving to be overwhelming and difficult to manage for a small country such as Nepal, which is amongst world's poorest and least developed countries. Countries such as US, UK and Australia have pledged \$10 million, \$7.6 million and \$3.9 million respectively; Nepal will also receive \$15 million support from the United Nations, which is trying to coordinate international efforts to maximize aid effectiveness (Ian Bremmer 2015)³. Officials with Western governments and aid organizations have reported piling up of relief supplies at the airport and warehouses

because of bureaucratic interference that insist standard customs inspections and other procedures, even in an emergency (Gardiner H. 2015)⁴.

The National Building Code of Nepal enforced since 1994 remained largely unenforced. Municipalities which are responsible to issue building permits in Nepal have not done enough to incorporate the building code into their permit processes. '...initial assessments seem to indicate that a majority of buildings that were destroyed were either built prior to the formulation and implementation of the safe building code, or did not adhere to it, said Ramraj Narasimhan, a Disaster Risk Reduction expert with UNDP' (UNDP 2015)⁵. A vast majority, up to 80 percent of buildings in Nepal are owner built and constructed by masons not formally trained (UNDP 2015)⁶.

According to the US Geological Survey, the economic losses could be as high as \$10bn and the cost of rebuilding is \$5bn (which is equivalent to 20 percent of Nepal's GDP)⁷. Thus, the economic losses in Nepal may have a major negative impact on its GDP without effective and efficient use of international support and assistance. With unemployment of over 40 percent, agriculture support more than 70% of the population and more than a third

1 Mullen J. and Shelbayah S. 2015. CNN. Police: 101-year-old man rescued one week after Nepal quake. May 3, 2015. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/03/asia/nepal-earthquake/>

2 T.V. Padma 2015. Himalayas could be hit by more powerful quakes in coming decades, warn scientists. April 30, 2015. <http://www.thethirdpole.net/himalayas-could-be-hit-by-more-powerful-quakes-soon-warn-scientists/>

3 Ian Bremmer 2015. These Are the 5 Facts That Explain Nepal's Devastating Earthquake. May 1, 2015 <http://time.com/3843436/these-are-the-5-facts-that-explain-nepals-devastating-earthquake/>

4 Gardiner H. 2015. The New York Times. Nepal's Bureaucracy Is Blamed as Earthquake Relief Supplies Pile Up., MAY 3, 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/04/world/asia/nepals-bureaucracy-is-blamed-as-quake-relief-supplies-pile-up.html?_r=0

5 UNDP 2015. Building Safety to Prevent Loss of Life. May 1, 2015. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/2015/05/01/building-safely-to-prevent-the-loss-of-life.html>

6 *ibid.*



The damaged Basantpur square (Kathmandu) after the earthquake.

of GDP where remittances contribute up to 22% to 25% percent of GDP and tourism 8.6% of the economy (Bohara A. K. 2015)⁸.

Never before has an earthquake opened up so many cracks on so much ground as the recent earthquake in the Himalayas has.

The first crack is in our perception of disasters in South Asia. We have assumed that disasters are occurrences that stay confined to national boundaries; and neglected to register the boundary-scoring nature of natural disasters. Floods, earthquakes, droughts, and cyclones are trans-boundary phenomena that require the joint efforts of neighbouring nations if they are to respond to their vulnerable citizens effectively. The Koshi River floods between Nepal and India should have taught us that lesson. Yet regional approaches to risk reduction, including South-South cooperation remain weak across South Asia. International aid community and national governments from South

Asia as well as their associations such SAARC or platform such as the Asian Ministerial Conference should have better prepared to handle trans-boundary response to disaster such as this.

A recent paper raises many relevant questions about role of SAARC that developed a Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management and Disaster Prevention in 2005 and established a number of SAARC centers, including the SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness (SDMC). The paper has noted, 'SAARC DMC, on its own merits, has never been considered a particularly effective institution... any cautious hopes about what it could achieve seem to have been replaced by widespread cynicism about its ostensibly non-existent influence' (White S. 2015)⁹. Further it revealed that not a single DRM government official interviewed was able to comment on any SDMC activities that had provided critical support to their national capacity building effort; neither international

stakeholders were able to describe much of what the Center does to support national capacities. This require critical review of revamping the whole disaster management arrangements within the SAARC region and not only the structure and working arrangements of SDMC.

At the same time SMC has been led by eminent experts such as Dr. Dhar Chakrabarti; Dr. Saten; and Dr. Santosh Kumar, who have developed regional frameworks; MoUs; capacity building programme; publications; research; and policy dialogues of importance to South Asia. And in this light SDMC offers great opportunity to reduce risks in South Asia.

The second crack is in our understanding of the magnitude of loss and damage. Scientific community has already warned about a series of more fatal extreme geological events such as earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis; causal factor is seen by a growing body of scientists as further proof that climate change can affect the underlying structure of

⁷ Aljazeera 2015. The economic impact of Nepal's earthquake. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2015/05/economic-impact-nepal-earthquake-150501120857758.html>

⁸ Bohara A. K. 2015. Nepal earthquake deals severe hit to culture, economy but may spark more regional cooperation. May 02, 2015. <http://scroll.in/article/724590/nepal-earthquake-deals-severe-hit-to-culture-economy-but-may-spark-more-regional-cooperation>

⁹ White S. 2015. A critical disconnect: The role of SAARC in building the disaster risk management capacities of South Asian countries. May 5, 2015. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/05/0505-saarc-disaster-capacity-south-asia-nepal-white?rssid=energy+and+environment>

the Earth (Renton A. 2015)¹⁰. This earthquake is only a small glimpse into the kind of damage and loss a future earthquake can cause across a wide swath of towns and villages in Nepal, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. Our response to this earthquake therefore cannot just be about addressing the current loss and damage, but an effort towards preparing and preventing future loss and damage.

The third crack reveals our indecision towards modes of recovery. The Gujarat model of recovery is widely considered as one of the best examples in South Asia. If that is so, how rapidly will India be able to use it in the borderlands of Nepal? Will it be to Nepal's advantage? China has a faster and more accurate track record of both response and recovery; will that be a more attractive model for Nepal to follow? Nepal is a strategic ally to both, India and China. China being the biggest foreign investor as of 2014 and India being much closer linguistically and culturally relative to China are likely to play a critical role in Nepal's recovery as Nepal's 6,000 rivers will be important to meet energy needs of both the countries in coming years Ian (Bremmer 2015)¹¹.

The fourth crack throws light on the issue of financial exclusion. Financial exclusion not only pushes back development and economic growth, but we have seen that it also pushes back recovery. South Asian governments and financial institutions have done little to bring banking and financial services to their vulnerable citizens. Transporting food and water play an essential role in recovery; but that role is limited. Access to money to rebuild livelihoods has a far greater potential to build financial capacities. It is too early to suggest who is planning

what to bring advantages of well-established micro-finance systems to the victims of Nepal. However, it is clear that micro-finance has to be linked with both physical reconstruction as well as livelihoods promotion and risk transfer approaches.

Nepal faces a path in two directions. One direction is to rebuild, develop, and push economic growth along our current path. The second direction is to rebuild and develop with "clean", "green", and sustainable technology that shows awareness of climate change. The second path seems wiser and more promising, but is it the path we have the courage to follow? The second path will help mitigate impacts of major trans-border disasters such as earthquake and floods.

'There have been no elections at the district, village or municipal level for nearly 20 years, and the committees in charge of local councils are not organized enough to deal with the difficult task of coordinating emergency assistance' (Ian Bremmer 2015)¹². A review and overhaul of local district disaster management plans across the country, but especially of earthquake hotspots is long overdue. A third party review of the plans of key districts is overdue. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has a method called The Stocktaking for National Adaptation Planning (SNAP) that can combine disaster preparedness and climate risk aversion in development plans.

Looking ahead, there are several measures that can be taken, and insisted on by the state and by citizens, towards disaster preparedness.

First, there is an obvious and urgent need to conduct safety audits of

schools; safety audits of hospitals; and to lay down safe building practices for all new schools and hospitals.

Second, mock drills matter. This is not the last earthquake. Regular, monitored, and systematic mock drills across small town and villages in the region need to be conducted at the earliest possible time. This will enable us to detect weaknesses and gaps in the system.

Third, business and industry must become more involved in building a safer and more sustainable Nepal. Agriculture, transport, and urban development are some key areas where new, people-friendly and environment-friendly practices are needed--a challenge that the business community can take up.

I witnessed the aftermath of Japan's Kobe earthquake a year after it took place in 1995, and was invited a few months ago to review its recovery efforts. I was invited to review recovery efforts. What a remarkable recovery Kobe and the surrounding area have made in the last 20 years! A robust and sustainable recovery is possible only if we are able to look beyond the immediate loss and damage, and turn disaster recovery into an opportunity for sustainable development.

Nepal has unique opportunity for building back better lives and livelihoods including 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. ■ **- Mihir R. Bhatt**

10 Renton A. 2015. More fatal earthquakes to come, warn geologists. April 28, 2015. <http://europe.newsweek.com/nepal-earthquake-could-have-been-manmade-disaster-climate-change-brings-326017>

11 Ian Bremmer 2015. These Are the 5 Facts That Explain Nepal's Devastating Earthquake. May 1, 2015 <http://time.com/3843436/these-are-the-5-facts-that-explain-nepals-devastating-earthquake>

12 *ibid.*

Nepal Earthquake: Challenges to be Addressed

It's been a month since the Himalayan nation of Nepal was rattled by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake. Dubbed as the worst earthquake in the past 80 years, the devastation caused by this catastrophe has been unprecedented in both human and economic costs. As of May 25 2015, the number of casualties has risen to 8,658 while the number of injured has reached 21,150.¹ As Nepal's infrastructure has been laid to waste, the U.S. Geological Survey has estimated the economic losses arising out of the earthquake to be US \$10 billion and the cost of rebuilding to be US \$ 5 billion. The response of the world community to this humanitarian crisis has been apt but given the overwhelming scale of the devastation caused, there are still many challenging areas that need to

be addressed to engender an effective response and recovery.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) has come out with its situation report # 18 about the Nepal Earthquake. This report highlights the following key needs and challenges (segregated by clusters) in humanitarian response efforts in Nepal:

I. Camp Coordination and Camp Management

According to the needs assessment done for 88,400 displaced people using the displacement tracking matrix (DTM), shelter, installation of drainage systems and food have emerged as the most urgent needs of the displaced people.

II. Early Recovery

- Five VDCs in Dhading District (Laapa, Tipling, Setuu, Ruhi and Gaun) are still inaccessible by road; 90 per cent of the buildings are destroyed and 10 per cent are damaged in these VDCs.
- Support for early recovery activities including debris removal were requested by authorities. In Chautara (Sinduphalchowk), the market area is high priority for debris clearance and demolition along with residential areas across the district.
- In Gorkha District, immediate removal of rubble and debris of residential buildings in Barpak and Laprak VDCs.

1 UNHCR 2015, Sources: OCHA, UNDAC, UNRCO (Nepal), Government of Nepal, MapboxNepal:2015 Earthquakes



Damaged houses at Sudal village in Bhaktapur district, Nepal.

III. Education

- According to the Department of Education, a total of 32,145 classrooms were destroyed and 15,352 damaged in 42 districts. Education needs continue to increase as additional data from the districts becomes available.
- The Cluster estimates 999,000 children aged 3 to 18 years of age will be unable to return to their classrooms when classes resume on 31 May. Thousands more will need support to access education services.

IV. Food Security

While 1.67 million people from 267 village development committees (VDCs) have received food rations, there are pressing needs from the food security cluster. They are:

- Preliminary assessment findings in six districts indicate the most urgent needs for the summer cropping season are seeds and fertilizers, followed by irrigation, tools and technical support, and the most urgent needs for livestock are shelter and feed, followed by medicine, vaccination and water supply.
- Wheat and barley need to be provided in time for the winter cropping season that starts in October.

V. Health

It is estimated that more than 103,000 people have been treated since the earthquake struck. However, there are many urgent needs of the health cluster. They are noted below:

- As per Government's figures, 402 health facilities were destroyed and 683 damaged. Most of the damaged facilities are primary health care centres, village health posts and birthing centres.

- Out of 351 health facilities providing Emergency Obstetric Maternal and Neonatal Care services, 112 (or 32 per cent) were destroyed and 144 are damaged in the 14 districts.

VI. Logistics

- As of 26 May, normal customs regulations will be reinstated. The regulations and procedures surrounding duty exemptions are strict and will also apply to humanitarian organizations that have prior agreements with Government. Some flights carrying relief items have recently been denied landing permission since certain items (e.g. tools for road repairs) were not on the list of approved humanitarian goods.
- A number of organizations have reported problems with police escorts directing their trucks arriving from India to the Nepal Transit Warehouse Corporation, causing delays and issues for consignees to retrieve their cargo.

VII. Nutrition

- There is a need to provide therapeutic feeding to approximately 10,000 children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) to protect their lives in the coming six months.
- It has been challenging to reach and mobilize communities in some VDCs due to damaged or blocked roads.

VIII. Protection

- It has been reported that nearly 300 children have lost one or both parents in the earthquake.
- There is a continued need to provide psychosocial support to affected people and provide training on gender-based violence (GBV) to psychosocial counselors.

IX. Shelter

- As of 25 May (14:30, UTC+5:45), a total of 500,717 houses were reported destroyed and 296,190 houses damaged.
- The Cluster recommends that two tarpaulins are provided to each household to ensure suitable coverage. The current distribution equates to 31 per cent of the cluster target.

X. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- The Cluster is targeting 1.2 million people with emergency water interventions, 1.1 million people with hygiene interventions including hygiene kit and hand washing with soap and around 304,000 people with gender friendly sanitation facilities out of an initial estimated 4.2 million people.
- Limited capacity of the partners and difficult road conditions continues to constrain delivery of WASH supplies and services. There is a need to assess local community capacity to cope to improve sanitation access.
- Limited funding has impacted the capacity of the partners to plan and deliver relief as well as early recovery activities.

The above mentioned needs and challenges can also be viewed as recommendations for government and humanitarian agencies to work towards a more robust humanitarian response in Nepal. The earthquake in Nepal has killed, maimed and displaced people with abandon. Addressing the challenges in humanitarian response is imperative to put the Nepal back on the road to recovery after this gargantuan human tragedy. ■

- AIDMI Team

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Office of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal
www.unocha.org/nepal
www.un.org.np

AIDMI's Relief Activities Post Nepal Earthquake

On 25th April, 2015 an earthquake of 7.8 magnitude struck the Himalayan nation of Nepal. The earthquake has claimed more than 8000 lives and has left many injured and homeless. The intensity of the earthquake was so strong that tremors were felt across entire India including major cities in the northern region like Delhi, Patna, Lucknow Kolkata, etc.

In the aftermath of the deadly earthquake, an immediate response to help the affected people was needed. AIDMI's response to this earthquake was swift, and a team reached Kathmandu on 28th April. The decisions were taken promptly, and with the assistance of our partner Integrated Development Society (IDS) in Nepal, areas were selected for relief material distribution. The areas were selected on the basis of urgent needs and request from Nepal Govt. representatives in the form of District Development Committee (DDC) and Village Development Committee (VDC). Through initial assessments, it was agreed upon that people are in immediate need of assistance in the form of food items, blankets, first aid medicines, and most importantly Tarpaulin sheets.

Resources were mobilized and the relief materials were procured from India and got delivered to



Relief distribution at Sudal village.

Kathmandu with the next 72 hours. Relief kits were prepared based on the different needs of people in different areas. The basic kit contained tarpaulin sheet, blanket, food items, hygiene kit, first aid, and a small torch to support a family of 5 upto 10 days.

The relief material distributed by AIDMI contained the following items: Tarpaulin Sheets, Blankets, Food Kit, and Medical & Hygiene Kit.

Nepal's biggest strength is its people's willingness to overcome the challenges with their own efforts.

Way Ahead

The relief distribution work was carried out successfully in coordination with the Village Development Committee Officials to ensure the proper management of process. The first phase of relief distribution is over now, and we are looking forward towards the next phase, which will primarily focus on providing temporary shelters to the affected households. The temporary shelters will be strategically designed to support the affected household during upcoming monsoon season. The shelter is expected to be used for a period of 6 months upto 2 years depending on the needs of community. These shelters will be economically sustainable in the long run and the materials used will be local with traditional techniques. Furthermore the designing of permanent shelters will be taken up and conceptualized using locally available materials, sustainable approach and contextualizing the design with local environment. ■

- Aditya Jain

Sr. No.	Location	District	No. of Households Covered
1.	Bhumlichowk VDC	Gorkha district	503
2.	Sudal VDC	Bhaktapur district	210
3.	Sankhu Village	Kathmandu district	100*
4.	Pangratar VDC	Sindhupal Chowk district	200
	Total		1013

*women home based workers

Nepal Earthquake and its impact on Heritage Sites

The rich history and culture of Nepal are preserved in the form of many heritage sites. Scattered all over the country, these heritage sites play a vital role in promoting tourism, which accounts for a great portion of Nepal's overall GDP. Architectural marvels like the Durbar Squares or Royal Enclosures situated at Bhaktapur, Patan (Lalitpur) and Kathmandu (Basantpur) draw tourists from all over the world. These sites have given an iconic identity to Nepal's heritage by attracting the interest of tourists, historians and conservationists alike. All these three sites along with the famous Pashupatinath temple and several other temple complexes fall under seven heritage sites that constitute the entire Kathmandu Valley Cultural Heritage Site.

During the earthquake on 25th April 2015, all these heritage sites were

severely damaged. The places which always used to be flooded with international tourists and local travellers, are now crowded with relief and rescue agencies. Many structures have been completely destroyed, leaving behind mounds of dust and dirt. Many of these heritage buildings are standing, but have developed large cracks and sustained irreparable damage which will have to be assessed to get a precise measure of the extent of the damage. The Kathmandu Valley was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in the year 1979, and several follow-ups were done to improve on minor points. These sites underwent extensive beautification and upgradation of services to keep it up with UNESCO guidelines. But, seeing the present condition, one is bound to ask- was the external touch up totally ignorant of structural strengthening?

Ever since the 1934 Nepal-Bihar earthquake, scientists have predicted about a massive earthquake to hit the Himalayan region of Nepal again. This prophecy was grimly fulfilled by the Earthquake on 25th April. Historical documents show that an earthquake had previously hit Nepal in the year 1934, and during that time also, there was massive damage to heritage sites. So most of the heritage structures we see today are completely or partially rebuilt. This brings us to another serious question- Why was there ignorance of seismic preparedness during reconstruction of such valuable heritage monuments, and did the authorities completely turn blind to the possibility of another such event? Now we exactly know what such a mistake can do. Assessments are in process to estimate the scale of damage, but to be sure it is going to be a long list of lost heritage. Not only the heritage

1 Langenbach R., 2010, 'Earthquake Resistant Traditional Construction' is Not an Oxymoron'



Damaged heritage site at Bhaktapur Darbar square .

sites, but the settlements of Bhaktapur and Patan have also incurred massive damage. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the socio-economic fabric of the country has been unravelled and its cultural identity jeopardised in the face of mass migrations from the towns to villages. Most importantly, people are scared to return to their homes, which are broken, tilted or gone out of plumb.

Nepal is again on the verge of large scale reconstruction and rehabilitation post the earthquake. This time the approach should be made considering all the shortcomings of the previous reconstruction efforts.

It will require a careful approach to reconstruct, preserving the cultural identity, and to introduce elements

for seismic resistance. These elements should be such that don't interfere with the integrity of the structure, at the same time are able to keep the structure prepared for any such future event. Every challenge represents an opportunity, this earthquake has offered a lot of lessons, we should imbibe them to prevent any further loss of Nepal's culture and heritage. ■ - Aditya Jain

NEW DIMENSIONS IN DRR

Disaster Research: The Quest for the New Normal

Unlike the slow grinding travails of a drought, earthquakes have the diabolical quality of total surprise. These sudden tectonic heaves though often times anticipated cannot be predicted. We live, as the 'anticipatory science' of the seismologist tell us, on the taut skin of the earth, which is prone to being torn, crumpled or wrinkled by unhurried and powerful subterranean forces.

What can disaster research possibly do when nature, in this case, calls all the shots? For the most part, the science of anticipation can ably inform policies for technological readiness, social recovery and emergency triage. But as a collection of essays edited in 1983 by Kenneth Hewitt (*Interpretations of Calamities*) were able to convincingly suggest, nature's blind acts can be even more fatally amplified by culture. Put differently, hazards, calamities and disasters are not exclusively natural phenomena but are thickly inflected and mediated by culture.

Given that all societies are intimately wrapped up in their natural worlds, the entire spectrum of cause and effect in a disaster event cannot be neatly untangled. In the case of the 'Great Nepal earthquake' of 2015, for example, many deaths resulted as much from faulty construction and the politics of corruption as they were brought on by trembling mountains

and a rattling earth. A history of vulnerability and the turning contexts of social power, hence, are as vital to understanding the many plot lines of destruction in the Kathmandu valley as much as we need to grasp the impacts of unremitting seismic activity.

But now that we know that nature and culture can be unequal partners in a disaster story, what do we make of the field of disaster studies? Should we be exploring the fatal tango between a blind nature and an avaricious culture? Is disaster studies only to unpack long term social vulnerabilities in which nature unexpectedly delivers an irrational swipe? Or should disaster studies essentially be about the technical details involving preparedness and emergency response? Alternatively, should it be all the above plus the many twisted and curved accounts about rehabilitation, recovery and the return to the old normal?

Bluntly put, are we at a point when assembling a disaster studies narrative is akin to rehearsing a familiar plot of an old movie but with different actors in changed locales. Are we repeating ourselves ad infinitum when it comes to explaining disaster stories, whether it be floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and droughts? Have we, in a strange way, ended up exhausting

the element of academic and research surprise in disaster studies?

Not necessarily. Especially if we choose to once again take a less travelled road. Naomi Klein's strikingly titled *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) leads the study of disaster into the treacherous swamps of politics and power. The Shock Doctrine compellingly draws links between the devastations of hurricane Katrina, Milton Friedman's *laissez-faire* economics, the Chicago boys of Pinochet's brutal dictatorship, the US led invasions of Iraq, the IMF's 'stabilization programmes', the World Bank's 'structural adjustments' and the monstrous smack of the giant tsunami of December 26 2004, that wreaked havoc across coasts in South and South East Asia. At heart, Klein is telling us that the disaster-event can now provide the desirous blank slate for the making of a neo-liberal world.

Herein possibly lies a fresh turn for disaster studies: the quest to understand the struggle for the new normal. Will the debris and desultory remains be swept aside by sustainable development, meaningful justice and participatory democracy or further inundated by the icy waters of the neo-liberal normal. ■

- Rohan D'Souza,

Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Japan

Nepal Earthquake: Top Thirteen "Not to Do's"

Nepal saw a devastating earthquake of 7.8 Richter scale on 25 April 2015. The country was hit by other two powerful aftershocks measuring 6.6 Richter scale on April 26, and 6.8 Richter scale on 12 May. A total of 270 aftershocks over 4 Richter scale were recorded in a period of a month, according to National Seismological Centre (NSC). Over 20,000 tremors including mild ones were felt in this period. These altogether affected over 40 districts, while 14 districts¹ experienced the worst impact of the earthquake.

According to Nepal Police, until 25 May, a month after the devastating earthquake, altogether 8,673 people lost their lives, while 21,944 were injured with 4,877 still in different hospitals. Likewise, a total of 470,991 houses recorded to have sustained partial and complete damage in the quake, while Kathmandu Valley alone saw 67,188 damaged houses. Hundreds of temples and monuments of historical importance including the ones enlisted in the World Heritage Sites also sustained significant damages; while the historical tower, Dharahara, has been reduced to rubble.

According to the Home Ministry, more than 4,000 military personnel and medics from 34 different countries were mobilized in the search, rescue and relief operation in support of Nepal Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police including representatives of several organisations and volunteers following the tragic earthquake.

Although Practical Action is not a relief organisation, it was necessary to get engaged when the country was crawling through the hardest period of modern times. Practical Action immediately mobilised funds to initiate necessary response and

recovery works. We decided to focus ourselves in Gorkha and Dhading districts due to our long engagement with people in these districts and coordinated with District Emergency Operation Centre (DEOC) and District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) of both the districts.

There are a lot of lessons to be learned from this earthquake. Being vigilant of initiatives and the works of the government, relief organisations, media and social networks and our own working experiences, I have come up with following thoughts.

1. A designated National Authority to handle disasters like the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in India would have better managed and coordinated disaster management including the rescue and relief. Due to multiple roles across the ministries and departments, the coordination aspect in Nepal had noticeable shortcomings. Countries prone to disasters should have a dedicated disaster management authority to be better prepared and manage similar situations, and disaster management as a whole.
2. Almost 17 years have elapsed since the last local elections were held in 1997. The five-year term of the elected body expired in 2002 but the government failed to hold local elections thereafter owing to violence and other political problems. Had there been local bodies, the rescue and relief operations would have been better coordinated. There were many instances of overlapping and lack of statistics that resulted powerful communities getting repeated reliefs, while the needy ones failing to get relief even once.
3. There has been no uniformity of approach and relief package across the relief organisations too. The World Food Programme (WFP) is under severe criticism by media and National Human Rights Commission for distributing poor quality rice while many relief organisations provided unusable clothing items. This created severe criticism of relief organisations including the Red Cross Society.
4. In many villages, food was available since the houses did not fully collapse. Shelter was the main issue as the houses were damaged and unsafe to live in. Many relief organisations had shortcomings in addressing people's needs.
5. All relief organisations distributed tarpaulins for shelters. However, distributing tarps is an adhoc measure - the tarps having limited durability in view of the soon approaching monsoon. This shortcoming was realised by some organisations and instead, they decided to supply corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) sheets. The CGI sheets are useful for building temporary shelters with bamboo and wood available in villages, and can be reused once the affected people are able to build a permanent house.
6. People developed a dependency syndrome. They were wasting their time queueing up for relief materials although that was not an absolute necessity for many of them. Rather they were expected to be in the maize fields for weeding to ensure food security for the winter.
7. Inappropriate construction practices have been one of the main reasons for the destruction of houses. Often in the villages, the common practice of constructing

¹ Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Gorkha, Dhading, Makawanpur, Sindhuli, Rasuwa, Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga, Kavre and Nuwakot.

- house is by using random rubble masonry with mud mortar which is highly vulnerable in case of earthquakes, even of moderate magnitude. There is dire need of developing resilient construction technology and practices.
8. Because of massive quakes and aftershocks, numerous cracks are formed across the hills making them highly vulnerable towards landslides. The recent big landslide in Baisari of Myagdi which blocked Kaligandaki River for 16 hours even before the monsoon was an alarm to take protective measures well on time.
 9. Media should act responsibly during such hard and trying times. The irresponsible act of some Indian media triggered the hash tag # Go Back Indian Media and it became a rapidly popular trend across twitter. Likewise, the local media provided space to astrologers which demoralised people's confidence to get back home.

10. It was widely accepted that "Drop, Cover, and Hold On (DCH)" is the appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes. However, this concept does not work in case of failing of structures. Most of the dead bodies were found in DCH position under the tables. Massive awareness is required to identify the best location a person should try to occupy during an earthquake.
11. There was strong indication to the government that a devastating earthquake in Nepal was already overdue following the 1934 earthquake. But this signal was not seriously respected to reflect in preparedness activities. The preparedness works were limited to celebration of earthquake days. As a result, the protection measures for the cultural, historical and government infrastructure were overlooked.
12. The government asked to channelise the relief works through government system

using one door system. However, this was not possible and also was not an appropriate mechanism given the bureaucratic process of the government that takes time and undermines the urgency of the relief works on the ground. There is still a need to discuss and draw lessons on how the relief works can be expedited in the quickest possible manner to reach the most needed ones at the time of such large disasters by mobilising all stakeholders and individuals

13. The government asked the rescue teams coming from India, China and from other countries to leave as soon as the rescue operation was thought to be over. But in fact by extending the stay, they could have also been mobilised to deliver relief materials to the remote areas since they came with helicopters that help reaching out to the remote communities. ■

- **Achyut Luitel**, Regional Director, Practical Action South Asia

Achievements of SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC)

The SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) was set up in October 2006 at the premises of National Institute of Disaster Management in New Delhi. The Centre has the mandate to serve eight Member Countries of South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – by providing policy advice and facilitating capacity building services including strategic learning, research, training, system development and exchange of information for effective disaster risk reduction and management in South Asia. In the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake, SDMC is a key stakeholder in ensuring a robust recovery as its previous achievements place it in a unique position to help the disaster affected communities of the country. The following is a list of SDMC's

achievements over the past nine years:

1. One of the most unique initiatives of SDMC are its capacity building programs which include conducting regional training programs on GIS, drought management and water conservation, school safety, river erosion and embankment, earthquake resistant structures etc.
2. Helped in identifying the priorities for South Asia in post-2015 framework for DRR.
3. Helped in the establishment of South Asian Disaster Knowledge Network and South Asia Digital Vulnerability Atlas.
4. Robust knowledge management practices through regularly updated web portals; daily and weekly disaster news uploaded on website and publications.
5. Has launched compilation of urban risk management practice and has followed up with a

strategy to address urban risk and also launched 'Making Cities Resilient' campaign.

6. Set up the Natural Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism (NDRRM). The SDMC had organized an Expert Group Meeting comprising of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Focal Points on disaster management in January 2009 in New Delhi to discuss the detailed modalities for setting up the NDRRM in SDMC.
7. Sharing of Data Products from Earth Observation Satellites for DRR in South Asia.
8. Various strategies developed to facilitate adaptation to climate change through technology transfer, finance and investment, education and awareness, management of Impact and Risks due to climate change, etc. ■

- **AIDMI Team**

Emergency Response and Relief Work in Nepal: Reaching the Last



Photo: ActionAid.

Action Aid (AA) started working in Nepal in 1982 and supports Local Rights Programmes (LRP) in 21 Districts. The LRPs have usually been organized in a defined geographical area of varying size and scale. Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) defines all Action Aid Nepal (AAN) work. AAN core commitment is to work with people living in poverty and exclusion, particularly women. It builds and strengthens the agency of women and the people living in poverty, which drives the rights and justice work from local to global level. AAN has built alliances with Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC) which works in over 50 districts of Nepal, Education Network Nepal (ENN) which works in 40, and *Mahila Adhikar Manch* (MAM) which works in 24 Districts.

In the aftermath of the earthquake which took place on April 25th 2015, we joined forces with these networks and launched its emergency Response and Recovery programme in Kavre, Sindupalchowk, Ruseswa, Dholkaha, Kathmandu Valley and Makwanpura. As on 8th May 2015,

Action Aid has been able to reach out to 48,520 affected persons. Immediate relief items provided by our organisation included food items, hygiene kits, mattresses, tarpaulin sheets and nutritional food to pregnant and breast-feeding mothers. But our work is not restricted to this.

Action Aid's approach and response to emergencies such as the Nepal Earthquake

1. **Human Right base approach in Disaster Response:** AAN believes that poverty is a violation of human rights. The underlying cause of poverty exacerbates people's vulnerability and their ability to cope with shocks and hazards. In emergencies, it is people living in poverty and exclusion who suffer the most. With its long years of experience with the people living in poverty in the EQ affected areas AAN could identify the vulnerable people who urgently need the support and by day three, it could reach out to 2500 the most vulnerable women, girls, boys

and men with emergency support like food and dignity kits in Kathmandu Valley.

2. **Putting the disaster Affected communities and the women at the centre of Response:** The disaster response was led by the women in Sidhupalchowk, Kavre, Kathmandu valley and Ruswa. The women Rights organisations - *Mahila Adhikar Manch* led the rapid assessment, identified the vulnerable families and organized the relief distribution in their wards. The strength of the AAN Emergency response is to organize a quick response with quality and quantity. It is because of alliance of local organisations, AAN could target the most needy areas and reach out the most vulnerable families with life saving emergency support.
3. **Accountability to the affected Communities:** In the life cycle of Emergency Response and Recovery Programme - from Rapid assessment to the Monitoring and evaluation of the project, the Accountability to the Affected Population is deeply embedded. The fundamental of the emergency Response and recovery Programme is the participation of the affected communities in the decision making process. It is widely believe and accepted by many that the during the relief phase the participation of the communities is not possible as the communities are overwhelmed by loss of life and properties. This is myth and it is challenged when we see in Babar VDCs in Dholkha in Panga and Kokhana in Kathmandu valley

that most of the affected communities are organizing the immediate support like food and shelter, rescuing the persons and arranging the basic medical care long before external support came in. This strength and the resilience of the communities is recognised by AAN and from the day one of the emergency response, it has instituted the transparency and accountability system like women led rapid assessment, proactive disclosure on relief through transparency board, complaint mechanism and women led distribution of relief.

- 4. Building Local Partnership:** AAN recognises the strength, capacity, knowledge of the local partners like Women Rights Group, Land Rights Movement

and other CSO organisations, who have been actively pursuing the Human Rights and Justice Agenda at local and global level. In the Emergency Response and Recovery Programmes, AAN joined forces with them not only to build up urgent relief distribution system but also mobilizes public opinion on relief for long term reconstructions, where the process will be accountable to the affected communities and it will be owner driven, not top down and donor driven. AAN have learnt these lessons from the good practices from Gujarat EQ and Tsunami Reconstructions and deeply aware of the limitations in global response in Haiti EQ.

As the immediate relief will soon transit into recovery phase, AAN would build up on this experience to advocate for more participatory, accountable and transparent recovery and reconstruction plans that takes into account the local knowledge in harmony with advanced scientific information. For example, the Earthquake recovery process is going to witness massive reconstructions of shelters, public buildings like schools and Health centers. AAN is facilitating the process of building a platform of experts and community leaders and women to jointly explore the idea of Earthquake proof, sustainable housing and co-create the prototypes for adaptation in different geographical context of Nepal. ■

- **Amar Nayak,**

Senior Member, Action Aid Emergency Response Team and **Parvati Tampi,** Consultant, Action Aid India

PREPAREDNESS

Dhaka Prepared for Earthquake that Damaged Kathmandu

According to the seismic hazard maps of Asia, Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to the risks posed by earthquakes. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) has provided the latest hazard maps of Bangladesh, where Chittagong division and Sylhet division have been highlighted as being located in high risk zone. This is perturbing news for Bangladesh because if an earthquake of similar intensity to that of recent Nepal quake were to hit densely-populated Bangladesh, it would cause much more damage and deaths. Moreover, there appears to be a clear lack of drills, both to create popular awareness on how to react when an earthquake strikes and also among agencies on how to go about after the earthquake has struck.

The Dhaka Community Hospital Trust (DCH Trust) is a trust-owned

private, non-profit making and self financed organization providing health care for low-income underprivileged people. Besides basic health care services, this organization is also working for disaster management, arsenic mitigation, safe water supply and community based development programs. DCH Trust has established a functional and professional collaboration with several reputed national and international organizations and academic institutions and has been able to mobilize human and material resources for a challenging program. Some of the collaborating institutions are Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) Harvard University, Oregon State University-USA, Boston Children Hospital-USA, Asia Pacific Alliance (A-PAD), Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Network (ADRRN), Mercy

Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Jadavpur University, India, South Australia University-Australia, CRC CARE-Australia and UNDP-Bangladesh.

The DCH Trust has worked to mitigate the suffering of affected people during extreme events like flood, cyclone and tidal bores, tornado and famine. DCH Trust has also worked on earthquake in Pakistan in 2005. DCH has a wide experience of working in disaster risk reduction and management both nationally and internationally. DCH Trust successfully responded to the 2007 Cyclone Sidr by providing health, shelter, safe water and Sanitation support to the affected people. A trained emergency health care team of DCH participated to help the affected people of Rana Plaza and provide emergency health care



Nepal Earthquake Affected Village in Karve District.

services for Disaster Risk Reduction and also provide food, safe water and medicine etc.

DCHT, SEEDS and NSET have jointly organized a training workshop on "Campaign on Increasing Awareness and Capacity Building of Factory Workers for Disaster Management" on 27 February 2014 at Dhaka Community Hospital Trust. DCH Trust has also created a center on DRR named "**Centre for Environment and Occupational Safety**". Under this center, DCHT will organize training for industrial workers, owners and other related person for disaster risk reduction and also provide awareness program for their Occupational Health and Environment health safety.

Nepal Earthquake 2015: DCH Trust Response

After a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck the Central and Western Regions of Nepal, aftershocks continue to affect the daily lives of people. Many people continue to sleep outdoors. Over the past few days, the number of deaths as well the number of injured have consistently risen.

DCH Trust is providing medical support with free medicine through

mobile hospital in the earthquake affected areas. We have registered with Nepal Government list of response team as well as with Humanitarian ID and UN. DCH Trust Medical Team has orthopedic professor, senior consultant and medical staff to work in village level to provide surgical, plaster and medicine support. Also DCH Trust public health and water sanitation experts are working to improve water quality at the sources in affected areas. About 95% households are now close to being completely homeless. Although incredibly resilient, they need help to make sure they are able to survive through the monsoon.

DCH Team is providing hygiene kits and training to villagers regarding Hand Wash to prevent the spread of epidemics. All the villagers depend on common mountain springs and diarrhea may spread out in the affected villages, the areas with an ongoing risk of epidemic disease.

Villagers urgently requested to supply tents and hygiene kits in their area. DCH Trust has been counseling villagers to return to their normal life as well as providing water purification tablet for safe water. At least the next 3 months medical support will be needed in the affected

areas. Though DCH Trust resources are very limited, yet it is still trying to established rural health center in affected areas to improve health facilities of villagers in near future.

Bangladesh really not prepared for earthquake

In Bangladesh, we are still at an elementary stage when it comes to handling earthquakes. We are not ready to handle a major earthquake. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been working for long with the government and other agencies on Bangladesh's preparedness to face earthquakes and issues related to it.

According to a 2009 UNDP study, the 120 km² Dhaka City Corporation's population was more than 7.2 million then—an average of 61,000 people per km². It found that the number of buildings in the capital was then around 325,000 and half of them were at least 30 years old. Forty percent of the buildings were 'risky' and 35 percent were 'fair', read the report. These statistics indicate the possible extent of damage if a major earthquake hits the city. And the only government agency that would respond is the Fire Service and Civil Defense, which are pretty much vulnerable themselves. Out of the 13 fire stations in Dhaka and its outskirts, 11 of them are housed in buildings, which might collapse during a major earthquake. Moreover, there's a lack of necessary manpower and other equipment. The rapid growth of Dhaka's population has forced haphazard & unplanned development and speedy construction of new buildings in any and every available space. Due to this, the capital city is now in a serious threat of upcoming massive disasters like an earthquake. ■

- **Md. Golam Mostofa,**

Director, Project & Research Member, Central Co-Ordination Committee, Dhaka Community Hospital Trust, Bangladesh

UNOCHA: South Asian Voices Shape Future Humanitarian Action



"The powerful earthquake that hit Nepal on 25 April 2015 is a painful reminder of the region's vulnerability to devastating disasters. Lessons from this tragedy will be used through the World Humanitarian Summit South and Central Asia regional consultation to improve future humanitarian action." (Image Credit: OCHA. Nepal, April 2015)

The global humanitarian aid system is undergoing close scrutiny to seek ways to improve on its delivery to people affected by conflict and disasters. Listening to the actors, traditional and non-traditional is part of the process that will culminate in the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul in 2016. Tajikistan is preparing to host the South and Central Asia World Humanitarian Summit regional consultation which takes place at the end of July 2015.

Under leadership of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the summit will set out a future agenda to make humanitarian action more effective, inclusive, accountable, and overall, a better fit for a changing world.

To be a success, WHS must represent perspectives and experiences from around the world. The UNOCHA has steered eight regional consultations with a wide range of stakeholders: academia, affected people, national governments, humanitarian organizations, community responders, private sector and others. The regional consultation in Dushanbe, Tajikistan is the last in the series of consultations leading up to WHS in Istanbul. The regional consultations have the

ambitious goal of developing a concrete set of recommendations for the WHS. The aim is to move beyond the rhetoric of stronger collaboration and develop actionable, specific goals and targets that will set in motion a process of real transformation.

The South and Central Asia region covers an enormous geographical area, ranging from the Arctic regions of Northern Russia to the tropical islands of the Maldives. South Asia is home to well over one fifth of the world's population, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. Comparatively, Central Asia is one of the world's least populated regions. This juxtaposition makes the consultation process both complex and interesting as shared issues and contrasting needs are explored.

A number of preparatory consultations and meetings in each country of the region are taking place between now and 28 July when the regional consultation in Tajikistan takes place. This allows for a wider engagement of key organisations at local, sub-national, national and regional levels. The outcomes of this preparatory stage will form the basis

of the regional consultation meeting in Dushanbe.

India provides a great example of the changing nature of the humanitarian system and there are many lessons and best practices to be shared. From effectively coordinating disaster response to ensuring proper disaster preparedness levels -India has firmly established itself as a new leader in South-South cooperation. The country also faces challenges in maintaining the legitimacy of national disaster management organizations. These are the opportunities and challenges that make these WHS discussions very timely.

Transforming the humanitarian system is an ambitious goal and the WHS is only the beginning of this process. To find out more or to participate in the preparatory consultation process please e-mail the UNOCHA project officer on wellard@un.org. ■

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AIDMI SUPPORTING RELIEF ACTIVITIES IN NEPAL



Unloading & sorting of material at Fisling before distribution.



Distribution in Bhumli Chowk VDC.



A family in temporary shelter at Sudal village.



Small boy removing debris in Bhaktapur town.

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