



Nepal earthquakes appeal meta-synthesis

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Summary and recommendations

The two powerful earthquakes that struck Nepal in April and May 2015, the largest such events in over 80 years, killed nearly 9000 people and displaced a further 2.8 million across 31 districts¹. Hundreds of tremors have been felt since. Over 600,000 houses were destroyed and close to 300,000 partially damaged². Around 25,000 classrooms were damaged or destroyed, while for many the means of continuing their livelihoods (using seeds, tools, land, animals and water supply) were severely disrupted. The cost of the damage has been estimated at US\$7 billion, which is about one third of Nepal's GDP³.

The international humanitarian response was large. Within that, the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) mobilized £87 million of funding for its 13 members, who worked with partner NGOs to provide immediate relief needs, followed by a period of recovery and reconstruction. Shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH), livelihoods, education, health and protection were priority areas. Independent and internal evaluations of DEC members' relief and recovery efforts, along with agencies' own monitoring of achievements, point to a good job being done in difficult circumstances. In an online survey of DEC members and their partners undertaken for this study, 71% of respondents agreed that the response has contributed to a lasting recovery.

The recovery was complicated by Nepal's mountainous terrain, making many communities hard to reach and costly to help. The country has a violent past and has only recently emerged from constitutional turmoil. A months-long blockade from India of importing goods caused problems. After a quick start, government efforts stalled, and time was wasted trying to enact recovery plans.

The purpose of this study, a meta-synthesis of DEC members' and others' work⁴, is to learn lessons from the actions in Nepal for future disaster response, in Nepal and elsewhere. This study therefore is not an evaluation of members' activities⁵ - a number of these already exist, some of which are referred to in this report. Rather, it seeks to look at the overall work of DEC members within a larger context, and from that, to seek to identify lessons for future action.

This study attempts to address three questions. The first is the benefit of hindsight - would members have done anything differently, knowing what would have happened in the three and a half years following the earthquakes? The second is enacting commitments from the Grand Bargain⁶ - what could be done differently to improve aid? The third is existing recommendations that have been provided from already-completed evaluations - what are the main lessons to learn?

¹ Government of Nepal, 2015, p5

² See reference 1

³ See reference 1

⁴ The report is a meta-synthesis, taken here to mean a research approach 'that uses the qualitative findings reported in previous studies as building blocks for gaining a deeper understanding of particular phenomena'. Source: Deakin University, see https://www.deakin.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/681022/4-Josh_meta-analysis.pdf

⁵ To these ends this study does not use the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, etc.

⁶ The substantive commitment resulting from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. See: <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>

The benefit of hindsight - would members have done anything differently, knowing what would have happened in the three and a half years following the earthquakes?

As of August 2018, the independent data gathering Community Feedback Project (CFP)⁷ of people's experiences of the overall recovery effort reports that, 'Among 2580 respondents across 40 palikas, over three years after the earthquake, only six percent feel their family has completely recovered, with an additional 62 percent who feel their family has somewhat recovered'⁸. Key issues in relation to this statement are in order of importance: a lack of strong housing, lack of economic opportunities and debt.

Concerning inclusion, '31 percent of respondents feel that someone in their community is being excluded or discriminated against in earthquake recovery activities'⁹. The reasons given for this include political connections (75% prioritised this point), a lack of proper documentation (such as identity and land documents), and unregistered land. The Asia Foundation's April 2017 report noted that, concerning shelter, 'The marginalized - low caste, low income groups, widows and the disabled - and those who live in more remote areas are more likely to remain in shelters and have found it much harder to move home'¹⁰.

Households who do not own land find themselves being marginalised: 'in Makwanpur, Bagmati and Bakaiya gaunpalika, the issue of land ownership and documentation was raised. Participants expressed frustration with being unable to take part in the reconstruction process, or even take loans for livelihood or housing recovery because the land they have been living on for decades is not registered'¹¹.

Concerning shelter, as of August 2018, 'sixty eight percent of people interviewed feel their main reconstruction needs are being addressed'¹². Sixty percent of people surveyed report their rebuilt home is too small for their needs. Two years after the earthquakes, 28,000 - 3.6% of the total destroyed - had been rebuilt¹³, with this rising to 113,000 (14.7%) by the end of the third year¹⁴.

Regarding people's own perceptions of coping, 'thirty four percent feel their coping capacity has diminished since before the earthquake'¹⁵. Reasons include not living in a safe shelter (56%), having no savings (51%), debt with high interest rates (39%) and reduced livelihood options (37%).

Debt was identified by the August 2018 CFP as a major concern, and an impediment to recovery: 'The issue of indebtedness continues to grow, and presents itself across reconstruction, and livelihood recovery questions. Community members in focus groups expressed grave concerns about how to escape the debt trap they feel they are in'¹⁶. Most of those interviewed were borrowing money primarily from neighbours (38%) and family

⁷ Throughout the response, the Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project – also known as the Common Feedback Project (CFP) – regularly surveyed a sample of earthquake affected communities to gauge their experiences and levels of satisfaction of the overall response. They have to date published reports addressing perceptions concerning reconstruction, food security, livelihoods and protection. See <http://www.cfp.org.np/>

⁸ CFP, 2018, p25

⁹ CFP, 2018, p36

¹⁰ Asia Foundation, 2017, pv

¹¹ CFP, 2018, p36

¹² CFP, 2018, p10

¹³ Nepal Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Multi-Donor Trust Fund, 2017. See:

<https://www.nepalhousingreconstruction.org/nepal-earthquake-housing-reconstruction-program>

¹⁴ Bhusal Y, 2017

¹⁵ CFP, 2018, p2

¹⁶ CLP, 2018, p20

(31%), which the report notes, 'carry the highest interest rates, and are potentially the most damaging to the long-term economic recovery of earthquake affected communities'¹⁷.

There are a number of complex and interlinked reasons for this picture, some of which have been touched on at the beginning of this summary, and more of which are discussed in the report. This was also a particularly damaging disaster, and it will take many more years to recover, as other disasters elsewhere attest. This also does not mean that implementing agencies did a 'bad job' – the counterfactual of what would have happened had there been no intervention is impossible to say, other than that the situation would doubtless have been far worse. It is also a matter of record, as stated earlier, that the relief and recovery response by aid actors, the Government of Nepal and others was positive. That said, to borrow a phrase from innovation thinking, 'there is always a better way'¹⁸.

Given the above findings of the situation over three years after the earthquakes, the following observations can be made:

- **Building up household debt has become a problem.** As the CLF report stated, 'It is essential to ensure that the reconstruction and recovery programme does not make anyone worse off than they were before the earthquake'¹⁹. Activities such as identifying and linking affordable loans providers to communities, accompanied by clearer information (discussed further below) could be an option for future recovery operations
- **More effort on meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels by people themselves.** This is hardly a new observation, but one that needs to be reinforced time and again as an area for improvement. Many DEC members and their partners embraced and enacted participatory activities (as discussed throughout this report), but this can always go further. The overwhelming evidence of disaster recovery is that an effective role of agencies is to support people in efforts at their own recovery
- **Capacity building of people and agencies needs to take a greater central stage.** Many DEC members and their partners did this, through masonry trainings and other training activities (several of which are identified in this report). Capacity building addresses short term needs and also sows the seeds for longer term improvements in livelihoods, for instance by providing people with skills they can sell later on
- **More focus is needed on including the most marginalised.** While all DEC members and their partners sought to achieve this, too many people were 'left behind'. This points to the need for better efforts in targeting. As one independent monitoring report from September 2016 recommended, there is a need to 'pay more attention to the specific challenges of vulnerable groups This includes the need to develop a greater understanding of who is vulnerable in local areas and the factors preventing vulnerable groups from recovering'²⁰
- **Post-disaster housing and shelter recovery is a complex, difficult and long-term process.** The terrain, the Indian blockade, the materials delivery costs and the

¹⁷ CFP, 2018, p20

¹⁸ A phrase used by the Australian innovator Michael Crouch

¹⁹ CLF, 2018, p2

²⁰ Asia Foundation, 2016

delays associated with the setting up of the National Reconstruction Authority²¹ (NRA) were contributing factors. The majority of people after disaster usually get on and build themselves, which is something that international NGOs often do not sufficiently recognize or take account of in their respective shelter approaches²². Efforts therefore at prioritizing people's self-recovery, prioritizing supporting processes such as technical assistance in safe building, rather than providing finished buildings²³ and using cash where appropriate, are areas to explore further. As one 2017 report recommended, 'engage and develop community leaders, elected officials, and construction material vendors and producers as effective agents of the recovery'²⁴.

Enacting commitments from the Grand Bargain – what could be done differently to improve aid?

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the resulting Grand Bargain²⁵ committed many in the aid community to a series of reforms. The WHS was held knowing that humanitarian aid is in need of reform. As the Grand Bargain puts it, 'woefully under-resourced humanitarian response (has) to do much more far better²⁶'. The banning of international aid by the Indonesian authorities following August 2018's earthquake illustrates the point. This view has not been lost in the Nepal response - as one key informant reflected for this study, "Nepal may be one of the last times the aid caravan will charge in'. Another noted that, following the immediate relief period, 'the government did not want us there', a view that is backed up by the later difficulties of securing visas for international staff.

The Grand Bargain promotes, in effect, taking a developmentally-oriented approach in relief and recovery. Commitments in the Grand Bargain include: a 'participation revolution', include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives; increasing the use and coordination of cash-based programming; improving joint and impartial needs assessments; and enhancing engagement between humanitarian and development.

All DEC members and partners engaged in some or all of these areas to some degree (which is discussed and presented throughout this report). In the light of the response as it unfolded and activities undertaken, future areas for consideration would include:

- **Recognising that recovery takes many years.** To these ends, also recognising that relief and recovery operations (with a degree of justification are timebound), efforts at recovery in particular need to invest in outcomes and impact, possibly beyond immediate outputs. As noted earlier, good examples of this would be investments in training and livelihoods
- **Engaging development actors at the outset.** One key informant of a DEC member noted that their immediate relief team comprised development actors, which assisted in a longer-term recovery perspective being taken right at the outset

²¹ The NRA's formulation took many months

²² The State of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements 2018 report from the Global Shelter Cluster repeatedly makes this point. See: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/resources/library/state-humanitarian-shelter-and-settlements>

²³ While recognising the NRA's tying in of tranche payments into completed houses

²⁴ HRRP and CFP, 2017

²⁵ See https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf

²⁶ Grand Bargain, 2016, p2

- **Participatory approaches need to be central**, as discussed above. This would involve INGOs and their partners ceding more power to communities in decision making processes, which can be a challenge and may not fit the plans of agencies
- **A greater support and facilitating role, and less of a leadership role.** This plays out subtly and often unintentionally - for example cluster meetings dominated by expatriate personnel, with local NGOs relegated to a second-tier position. For this study, a number of key informants pointed to the productive relationship between DEC members and their partners; also the opportunities for capacity building of local NGOs, many of whom did not have experience of disasters at this scale, for future response²⁷. That said, the power relationship is unequal, and more effort needs to go into greater equity in resource transfer and decision-making, to build long-term capacity.

Existing recommendations that have been provided from already-completed evaluations - what are the main lessons to learn?

This study reviewed the recommendations of seven DEC Members reviews and evaluations²⁸, four DEC-related reports²⁹, two independent monitoring reports³⁰ and those of other organisations³¹. The combined recommendations can be seen in Annex One of this report. The recommendations inevitably range from those that are specific to operational improvement to 'higher level' recommendations. Focusing more on the latter, recommendations can be organised into the following:

- **More joined-up, focused interventions** - approach multi-sectorial interventions as a single approach rather than sectorial activities running in parallel, and avoid taking on large number of activities across multiple sectors
- **Improve communication with people** - be transparent with criteria and assessments adopted and provide communities with clear guidelines and results to reduce suspicion and perceived inequity
- **Collaborative data collection** to identify the most vulnerable, including more multi-sectoral and multi-actor assessment and response analysis. This is an issue referenced by the majority of agencies and a recommendation made by many independent reports
- **Communicate and build the capacity of local partners** - clearly outline and agree on roles, responsibilities, and expectations between local partners and INGOs in the early stages of a response
- **Protection needs to run through the entirety of all programmes**, not just in the early response. This should include training and capacity building around protection related issues for newly appointed government staff

²⁷ A review of the relationships between international NGOs and partner NGOs is provided in the 2016 report 'Opportunity knocks' undertaken by ActionAid, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, Oxfam and Tearfund. See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/opportunity-knocks-realising-potential-partnerships-nepal-earthquake-response>

²⁸ British Red Cross, Tearfund, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Plan International and World Vision

²⁹ The DEC/HC response review, the DEC's final report and two DEC funded learning initiatives – see references at the end of this report

³⁰ the CLF and Asia Foundation

³¹ Such as the HRRP

- **Expand the criteria and number of livelihood projects** - projects should extend beyond skill development by strengthening links and capacities of and between communities, government and financial institutions
- **Ensure community ownership and a gendered response** - establish a strong sense of community ownership of shared infrastructure projects to ensure greater sustainability. Ensure women's roles are genuine, equal and meaningful.

DEC members and their partner organisations were active in addressing and/or improving all of the above recommendations throughout the response³². For example concerning improving communication with people, extensive efforts were undertaken by DEC members and their partners to communicate with affected people in programme design and the prioritisation of activities (this is further discussed in this report). Livelihood programming was a major sectoral response, forming the second largest amount of grant allocation in Phase 2 recovery operations. Livelihood activities were varied, including training in vocational skills, business start-up support, provision of seeds and tools and cash grants – see the section on Livelihoods in this report for DEC member examples of activities and further discussion.

Protection and gender awareness also figured highly as a priority throughout activities, including in assessments, training and livelihood programming. Discussion of this and examples from DEC members can be found throughout this report, and in particular in the section on Inclusion. In relation to collaborative activities, DEC members coordinated among each other (and with other organisations including government, UN agencies and non-DEC international NGOs) and undertook some joint activities. This is further discussed in the section on coordination. Further examples of how members fared in the light of reviews and evaluations is given in the first part of this report.

Recommendations from this study

Based on the above discussion, and in light of the findings presented in this report, the following recommendations are made for the role of international NGOs for the next disaster.

1. **Prioritise local ownership**, meaning supporting local efforts of government, NGOs and others, rather than providing ready-made solutions. Agencies with experience of other disasters bring extensive expertise, but must recognise that their role is a supporting one
2. **Contribute to a 'participation revolution'**, putting affected populations in the driving seat of their own recovery, noting that this may take longer and would require a different agency operating approach
3. In the appropriate circumstances, **the increased use of cash-based programming**, gives choice and strengthens markets
4. **Focus on processes and capacity**, rather than products and project-specific outputs. Using, building and supporting local capacity is the key to lasting recovery
5. **Ensure debt is not built up** by recovering communities. This requires being aware of the (intended or unintended) consequences of interventions, accompanied by clear information

³² Given that all these recommendations concern improving and/or scaling up ongoing activities

6. **Prioritise livelihoods, investing in people** and economic generation activities, to meet short term needs and help long term recovery
7. **Seek out and support the most vulnerable**, knowing that this may be hidden or not what it seems. Wherever possible use resources for targeted assistance and recognise protection is an ongoing process
8. **Use information gathering and its use as a process of local empowerment** (in collecting) to visualisation and sharing among implementing organisations
9. **More joined up, multi-sectoral and multi-agency approaches** - approach multi-sectorial interventions as a single approach rather than sectorial activities running in parallel. As part of this, continued efforts to improve coordination between organisation and actors is absolutely vital.

Acronyms

AIN	Association of International NGOs
BRC	British Red Cross
CAC	Community awareness centre
CBDRR	Community based disaster risk reduction
CDMC	Community disaster management committee
CDRC	Central Disaster Relief Committee
CDO	Chief District Officer
CFP	Community Feedback Project
CFW	Cash for work
CGI	Corrugated galvanised iron
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CIUD	Centre for integrated urban development
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CwC	Communicating with communities
CWG	Cash Working Group
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
DART	Disaster assistance response team
DCA	DanChurch Aid
DDRC	District Disaster Relief Committee
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DPNET	Disaster Preparedness Network Nepal
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DWCC	District WaSH Cluster Committee
DUDBC	Department of Urban Development and Building Construction
EMMA	Emergency Market Mapping Analysis
FACT	Field assessment coordination team
FGD	Focus group discussion
HAI	HelpAge International
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HLP	Housing, land and property rights
HRRP	Housing Reconstruction and Recovery Platform
ICGTF	Inter Cluster Gender Task Force
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
KI	Key informant
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
NEOC	National Emergency Operation Centre
NDRF	National disaster response framework
NFI	Non-food item
NPR	Nepali Rupee
NRA	National Reconstruction Authority
NRCS	Nepal Red Cross Society
NRRC	Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPA	Older people's association
PGVS	Poorvanchal Gramin Vikas Sansthan
PDM	Post distribution monitoring
PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
PTSD	Post traumatic stress disorder
SAG	Strategic advisory group
SCF	Save the Children
SRMH	Sexual reproductive and maternal health
SIMS	Surge information management support
TLCs	Temporary learning centres
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VDC	Village development committee
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WV	World Vision

Research approach

This study was undertaken between October to December 2018. Activities comprised:

- A desk top review of DEC members' programmes operating in Nepal during the response and recovery period. This included reviewing members' reports that had been provided to the DEC, including phase 1 and phase 2 plans, three, six and 12 months reports, and final reports
- A review of DEC-funded evaluations, comprising those of Plan, IRW, Christian Aid, Tearfund and British Red Cross
- A review of secondary data, including external evaluations, academic papers and reports from other agencies. The scope of the data gathering related to actions by agencies and the Government of Nepal in the earthquakes' response and recovery. Secondary data was found through online keyword searches (such as 'Nepal', 'earthquakes' 'emergency response' as well as sectoral and thematic terms (such as 'coordination' and 'cash'). Well known databases were reviewed, such as ReliefWeb and ALNAP, as well as specialist sites, such as those hosted by HRRP, respective Clusters, Asia Foundation and CFP. From an initial search some 54 reports and papers were reviewed. Quality was assessed according to authorship (a recognised institution/author) and, for field reports, a clearly described and adequate research method. A list of reports and papers eventually used in this study can be found in the references at the end of this report
- Key informant interviews with DEC personnel who were engaged in the response. Informants were identified from an initial list provided by DEC which was then added to by the review team, to include a small number of non-DEC organisations. Thirty-one people were contacted for interview. Of these 12 interviews were held. Interviews were by Skype and typically lasted between 40-60 minutes. Interview questions are included in Annexes. All interviewees were assured of anonymity
- An online survey using SurveyMonkey was sent to the same list of DEC members. There were 37 questions, all requiring a scaled response as well as the opportunity for more detailed comment. The survey was open for three weeks and a reminder email was sent for members to participate. DEC members were request to forward the survey onto partner organisations. The survey was anonymous. Nineteen surveys were completed. The survey questions and findings are in the annexes.

In December a half-day workshop was held with 20 personnel, 18 representatives from 11 DEC members³³ and two representatives from HRRP. All DEC members were invited and asked to invite their partners. A draft version of this report was sent in advance to members. The workshop comprised the following activities:

- Welcome and introductions
- Presentation of main report findings. The survey results were presented as a vehicle to elicit discussion and debate on key issues relating to this study, including shelter, the use of cash and coordination
- A Planning for Real³⁴ exercise to identify, prioritise and discuss recommendations, which were in response to the question: 'how can the response to the next disaster be better?' from an initial brainstorm of around 70 recommendations, 10 were

³³ Tearfund, Oxfam, Caritas, Islamic relief, Care, BRC, Plan, CRS, Save the Children, World Vision and ActionAid

³⁴ Planning for real is an established approach for arriving at decisions for action. This workshop used one exercise wherein consensus for action was quickly arrived at using non-verbal negotiation techniques. For more on Panning for Real see: <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G01376.pdf>

agreed and discussed. The recommendations resulting from this exercise can be seen in Annex four of this report.

A draft of the study was sent to DEC and DEC members in December for comments and review.

Limitations

This was primarily a desk-based exercise, and as a result primary data collection (such as visits to communities and meetings with Government of Nepal officials) did not take place. Key informant interviews were undertaken online, not face-to-face (which can hinder the opportunity for further probing of issues). All documentation reviewed was in English. Despite efforts from the study team, no local partner organisations attended the Kathmandu workshop. It is not known how many local partners completed the online survey.

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Cover photo: infrastructure reconstruction. Photo taken by David Sanderson.

The views expressed in this report, and any errors or omissions, remain those of the authors.

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Contents

	Page
Summary and recommendations	
Acronyms	
Research approach	
Acknowledgements	
The earthquakes and the operating context	2
DEC expenditure and members' evaluations	5
Sectors	8
Shelter	8
WaSH	11
Cash	12
Livelihoods	14
Approaches	15
Assessments	15
Coordination	17
Communicating with disaster affected communities	18
Inclusion	21
Annexes	
Annex one. Recommendations from reports and evaluations	
Annex two. Key informant interview questions	
Annex three. Online survey findings	
Annex four. Recommendations resulting from the Kathmandu workshop Planning for Real exercise	

The earthquakes and the operating context

The first earthquake, measuring at 7.8 Magnitude the largest since 1934, struck Nepal's Gorkha district on Saturday April 25, 2015. Just over two weeks later a second earthquake measuring 7.3 struck close to Mount Everest. Over 8790 people were killed and more than 22300 were injured.

The earthquakes struck a country already beset with deep-seated challenges. This includes a turbulent recent political history, with violence leading to some 13,000 deaths leading to a fractured and often-times ineffective central government. The country's vulnerability is also worsened by poverty. Around one quarter of Nepalis live beneath the poverty line³⁵. Between 750,000-900,000 Nepalese are thought to have been pushed further into poverty as a result of the disaster³⁶.

Corruption is also a challenge. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2017 ranks Nepal at 122 out of 180 countries³⁷. Nepal has been ranked as the third most corrupt country in South East Asia³⁸. Corruption, among other things, leads to weaker services, poorer-quality public buildings and an overall greater susceptibility to disaster³⁹. Nepal is also a mountainous terrain, leading to remote and difficult to access communities. Finally, a Monsoon period from June to October regularly leads to floods and landslides. The first earthquake occurred just two months before the Monsoon season began. In July 2018, severe flooding caused by monsoon rains further impeded the recovery process, causing major landslides, blocking off rural areas and displacing thousands.

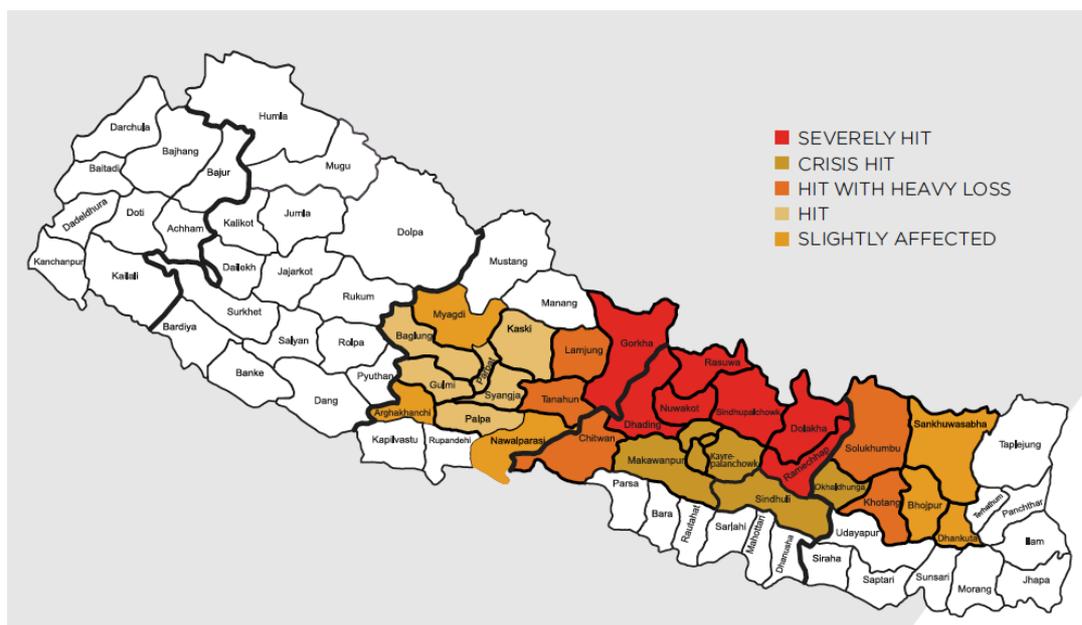


Figure 1. Earthquakes-affected districts, Nepal. Source: HRRP and CFP, 2017, p10

In addition to the challenges noted above, a number of additional factors made for a complex operating environment for DEC members and others involved in the response. These include the following:

³⁵ <https://borgenproject.org/ten-facts-about-poverty-in-nepal/>

³⁶ UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Disaster Report, 2017 cited in NRRP and CFP, 2017

³⁷ <https://www.transparency.org/country/NPL>

³⁸ <https://borgenproject.org/ten-facts-about-poverty-in-nepal/>

³⁹ See for example <https://www.nature.com/articles/469153a>

- The time taken for the Government of Nepal's (GoN) National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to become operational. The NRA was intended to coordinate and lead the reconstruction. After the first earthquake, the NRA was set up under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. This however was dissolved after 60 days, and was not reconstituted for eight months. In the three years of its operation it has had five different chief executive officers⁴⁰
- Concerning the first few weeks of the response, Oxfam's evaluation reports that, 'Although the earthquake was not as large as had been planned for, government was often considered to be slow to start its response. After five to six weeks central government was thought by some to have become very obstructive through the imposition of restrictive customs controls and other bureaucratic hurdles'⁴¹. As one key informant stated for this study, 'too many and conflicting requirements from the government side were the key obstacles'
- The border blockade with India of levying import taxes that lasted several months, leading to fuel shortages and the prevention of relief supplies crossing from India into Nepal⁴²
- Most INGOs could not directly implement beyond the initial emergency phase and were obliged by the Government to work through national and local NGOs
- Changes in staff and bureaucracy. As one review relating to cash-transfer programming and long-term recovery noted, 'Rapid turnover of officials, and a culture that does not emphasise detailed forward planning, hinder the development of workable frameworks in the absence of a national strategic approach and the institutions to deliver it'⁴³
- A clampdown on international staff visas. Shortly after the disaster there was a large influx of international people: One Nepali newspaper reported around 42,000 foreign visas were issued after the earthquake up to early July⁴⁴. However by December 2016 the renewal of international visas was proving difficult. One key informant stated that because of this, key expert personnel could not be brought into the country, which led to project funds being diverted to other activities
- Shortage of skilled labour: this issue, particularly for projects relation to shelter, schools rebuilding and WaSH was reflected in a number of DEC programme reports. While many projects sought to provide training and skill development as well as cash-based incentives for labour, there continued to be a labour shortage which ultimately led to a slower recovery process
- Shortage of technical support: similar to reported shortages of skilled labour, many programmes reported challenges due to shortages of technical support. Several projects supporting the NRA's reconstruction efforts reported that there was a shortage of government approved engineers who were authorised to sign off of the housing and school rebuilds. The shortage of technical skill professionals was also noted in many WaSH projects, one in particular which resulted in large scale water supply unit project being abandoned in preference for a smaller scale project due to the lack of local technical capacity.

Other issues include pre-earthquake disaster risk reduction. Nepal is well known for being prone to natural hazards, including earthquakes, landslides and floods. A number of organisations had been aware of an impending earthquake – and the damage it might cause – if one were to strike the Kathmandu Valley. An initiative underway in Nepal since

⁴⁰ Kainee D, 2018

⁴¹ Luff R, 2017, p6

⁴² See for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/02/nepal-government-criticised-blocking-earthquake-aid-remote-areas>

⁴³ ODI, 2016, p5

⁴⁴ Cited in Luff R, 2017

2009 is the the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC), which comprises government, donors, development banks and aid agencies. The NRRC has four flagship programmes, including Flagship Two regarding Emergency Preparedness and Response and Flagship Four concerning Community Based Disaster Risk Management.

Despite such efforts, a view widely reported by key informants was that Nepal was ill-prepared for this disaster. Such a view is shared by the former United Nations Resident Representative in Nepal, Robert Piper, who, two years before the earthquake noted that the key problem is the lack of political interest within government to unite to address seriously the threat of disaster: 'the real game-changer will only come about when risk reduction measures align with governance reforms. And when "duty of care" enters the political lexicon of the country concerned⁴⁵.

A further issue relates to a relative omission of addressing urban needs. The UN flash appeal stated, 'The first priority of the response is to reach the worst affected and those in the farthest affected mountainous areas before the monsoons cause further damage and cut off access. ... Because of the urgency of delivering soon ... and given the limitations on the size, weight, and types of cargo that can be handled, the first focus will be on providing essential supplies to help these vulnerable populations through the rains. Typically these would include tarps, tools, blankets, food, water tablets, and other essential NFIs'.

Three of the 14 affected districts were in towns and cities, with the PDNA reporting that 25% damage had been in urban areas. However, urban response has largely been overlooked. Oxfam's evaluation states that among OCHA and other agencies, 'the view very quickly formed by the HCT and large donors was that this was a rural shelter disaster and efforts should be directed accordingly⁴⁶'. One report notes that, 'In urban areas, renters whose rental accommodation was damaged or destroyed by the earthquake, are a potentially very vulnerable group that there is little information on, especially as they are outside of the reconstruction grant programme⁴⁷'.

Research for this study appears to confirm this omission. As one key informant stated, urban areas 'got camps, relief items and cash, and there it stopped'. Another said that they did not work in urban areas as these were 'comfortable'. A third key informant stated, 'urban people have been left out just because they look better'. In the online survey of DEC members and their partners undertaken for this study, in response to the statement 'Sufficient attention was given to affected urban areas', no one strongly agreed, 17% agreed, while 58.8% remained neutral and 23.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

⁴⁵ Piper R, 2013, A perfect storm of earthquake and poor governance could cripple Nepal. The Guardian. Available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/12/perfect-stormearthquake-cripple-nepal

⁴⁶ Luff R, 2017, p7

⁴⁷ HRRP and CFP, 2017, p27

DEC expenditure and members' evaluations

Two days after the first earthquake, the DEC mobilized its Nepal Earthquake Appeal⁴⁸ to provide funds for 13 of its member agencies, eleven of which already had a presence in Nepal. The DEC raised £87 million⁴⁹. DEC funds were organised into two phases: phase 1, an immediate relief phase (April to September 2015); and phase 2, a second recovery and reconstruction phase, from October 2015 to April 2018.

Figure 2 below summarises the DEC members' phase 1 expenditure and numbers of people assisted in key sectors.

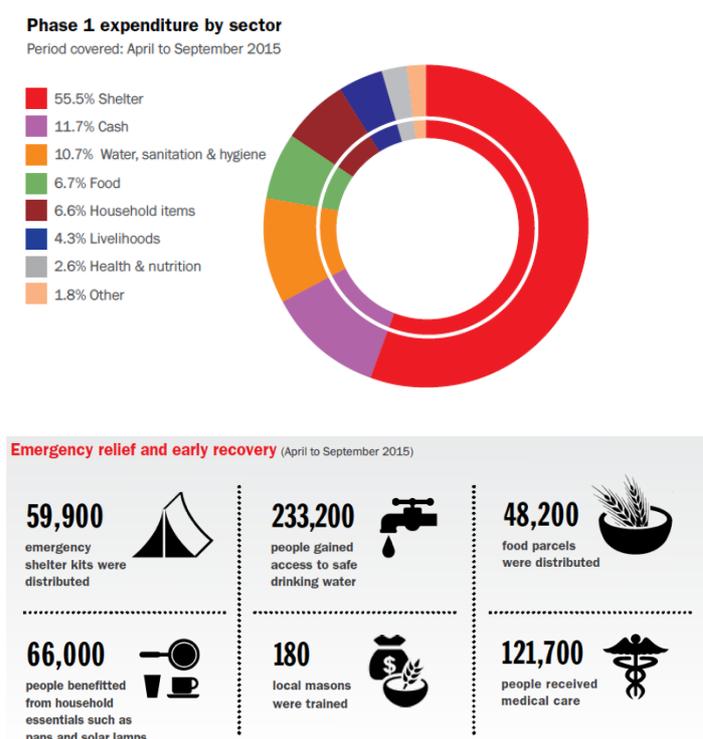


Figure 2. Phase 1 expenditure by sector and numbers of people assisted by key sectors. Source: DEC, 2018, pages 2 and 4

The above figure 2 summarises phase 1 expenditure by sector. Largest of these for both phases was shelter. In phase 1 DEC members distributed 59,900 emergency shelter kits including tarpaulins and ground sheets (shelter being the primary identified need). Cash, the second largest expenditure, was provided to some 90,000 households.

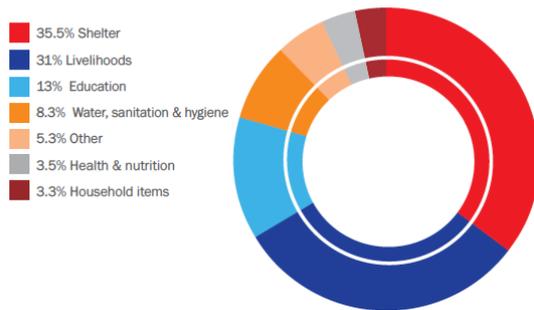
Figure 3 below summarises the DEC members' phase 2 expenditure and numbers of people assisted in key sectors.

⁴⁸ See: <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/nepal-earthquake-appeal>

⁴⁹ DEC, 2018

Phase 2 expenditure by sector

Period covered: October 2015 to April 2018



Recovery and reconstruction (October 2015 to April 2018)

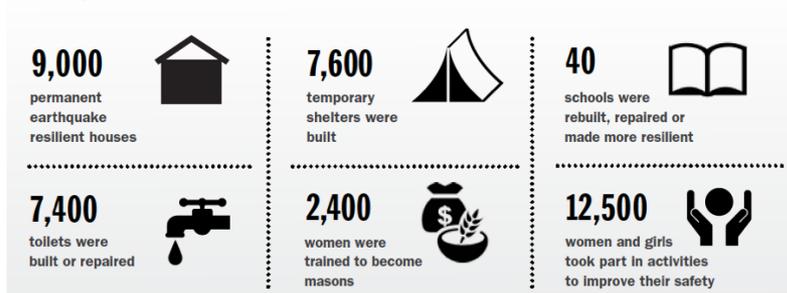


Figure 3. Phase 2 expenditure by sector and numbers of people assisted by key sectors. Source: DEC, 2018, pages 2 and 4

Phase 2 emphasised recovery and reconstruction. For shelter this included, among other things, engaging with the GoN's programme of tranches to assist the building of permanent shelters. Thirty-one percent of expenditure in phase 2 concerned livelihoods, including in rural areas the provision of seeds, tools and livestock and the use of small grants to support businesses. Other activities by member agencies included the rebuilding of schools, the rebuilding or repair of water systems, training and protection-related activities (see relevant sections of this report for a further discussion of these themes).

A summary of expenditure and overview of the DEC members' work can be seen in the report '2015 Nepal earthquake appeal final report. DEC, London'⁵⁰.

Findings from members' evaluations

A number of DEC members have undertaken evaluations. These include the following.

'Final evaluation: Nepal earthquake recovery programme of the BRC' by Key Aid consulting, June 2018⁵¹. The evaluation of the work of BRC and its partner the Nepal Red Cross was positive. For example:

- the interventions were relevant to community needs. In terms of targeting, 'implementers focused on the most affected areas, the socio-economic status, where there were gaps in coverage, but also had to consider government and NRCS priorities. As nearly 90% of the selected wards were those considered to be the most affected, overall the selection of wards appears to have been appropriate'

⁵⁰ available at: https://www.dec.org.uk/sites/default/files/PDFS/dec_nepal_final_report_lr_singles.pdf

⁵¹ available at: <http://www.keyaidconsulting.com/portfolio/final-evaluation-of-the-nepal-earthquake-recovery-programme/>

- unintended effects included, 'women's empowerment, increased financial inclusion, and strengthening the local economy'. A negative unintended effect concerning community tensions in relation to targeting
- the inclusion of communities in decision-making processes, from assessment to implementation. Examples include designing sectoral activities. Communities and local stakeholders 'were involved in deciding where and how to carry out activities, and who met the targeting criteria during the implementation phase'.

'Nepal Earthquake Response Programme Mid-term review' by Progress Inc, February 2018, for Christian Aid. The review found that the programme 'was executed very efficiently and ...that (Christian Aid) delivers (a) value for money programme'. Key findings are:

- the review stated that 'the programme is an exemplary case of efficiency in achieving the outputs within the stipulated deadlines. All the targeted activities have been achieved within the timeframe without delays'
- the building of disaster resilient housing, combined with training masons, 'was found to be effective in increasing capacity and skill development of local communities'
- concerning where initiatives might have been better, the evaluation found that complaints mechanisms were not utilised, and that infrastructure maintenance was insufficiently considered, for example the non-establishment of Village Maintenance Groups, which 'did not ensure sustainability of infrastructure and systems continuing to serve its objectives after the funding and support ceases'.

'Plan International DEC-funded response to the Nepal earthquakes, 2015 independent evaluation final report 2018' by Proaction Alliance⁵². This evaluation found that overall the response had been positive, with some aspects however that were insufficiently addressed. The evaluation's overall scoring of Plan's work (0-5, where 5 is high and 0 low) found high (4) impact and relevance, medium (3) timeliness, effectiveness and efficiency, and low (2) sustainability. Findings include:

- a high level of satisfaction among most beneficiaries in the post-distribution monitoring of winterisation materials
- 'this was a well-planned project overall, responding to the needs of some of the most vulnerable people. Most targets will be reached – some are already exceeded'
- through this project, some water user groups are now registered at the Ward administrative level, giving them further recognition and legitimacy
- WaSH-related hygiene training 'has been greatly appreciated: from household surveys, 60% of people spoken with felt that there was "some improvement" in their sanitation standards today, compared with before the start of this project'
- there has been a successful community-based outreach programme with Female community health volunteers.

The evaluation identified several negative outcomes, which include:

- people involved in livelihood programmes and receiving livestock found inconsistencies in what they received, in particular funds, where 'some was apparently retained by the implementing partner for transportation'
- follow-up support to those with livestock has been at times 'erratic and inadequate', particularly in relation to insurance

⁵² available at: <https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-nepal-earthquake-evaluation-report-042018pdf/download?token=-NBMke1T>

- individual livelihood business plans did not always materialise, with limited help from Plan's implementing partner.

'Tearfund Nepal earthquake response mid-term external evaluation, December 2016', by Robert Schofield, Srijana Nepal and Madhu Thapa⁵³. This evaluation found that 'Broadly speaking, the evaluation found that the programme has promoted recovery, is increasing resilience and in due course should have a positive impact'. A scoring (0-5, where 5 is high and 0 low) concluded a high score (4) for effectiveness, coordination, coherence and efficiency, and medium (3) for impact, and sustainability and connectedness. Positive elements included seeds variety and quality; also efforts to improve water quality.

'Islamic Relief Worldwide independent evaluation of Nepal earthquake response' by Abhijit Bhattacharjee, April 2017. IRW had not worked in Nepal before the earthquake, and partnered with Lutheran World federation (LWF) in its response. The evaluation of IRW's work was positive, in particular noting:

- The identification vulnerable communities and women-headed households
- For shelters in remote rural areas, providing material assistance instead of cash was 'highly appropriate', given the high costs of materials transportation
- Coverage was 'optimal'
- Beneficiary feedback on housing quality was high
- Good adherence to CHS criteria.

Sectors

This section presents and discusses some of the key sectoral responses undertaken by DEC members and others. Sectors discussed are shelter, WaSH, cash⁵⁴ and livelihoods, which accounted for 82.2% of phase 1 DEC funding and 74.8% of phase 2 DEC funding respectively.

Shelter

Shelter needs as noted earlier were in the immediate response considered as the main priority⁵⁵. There were a number of challenges to shelter recovery (which are also applicable to other sectoral responses), which include the following:

- A difficult terrain with large numbers of remote communities, leading to high transportation costs of materials, and the time taken by engineers and others to provide technical support
- With monsoon⁵⁶ and winter coming after then, there was a critical need for households to be dry and warm
- The 2015 blockade meant that INGOs had to coordinate extensively to ensure continual supply chain and field implementation. As a result, for example, Oxfam's

⁵³ available at https://learn.tearfund.org/~media/files/tilz/impact_and_evaluation/tearfund-dec-nepal-earthquake-response-final-report-with-annexes-11-jan-2017.pdf?la=en

⁵⁴ Recognising that cash is not formally a sector in the cluster sense - cash's inclusion in this section results from its importance in the response

⁵⁵ There is a lot of information on post-disaster shelter reconstruction in Nepal. A key repository is the Housing Reconstruction and Recovery Platform – Nepal (HRRP), which is at: <http://hrrpnepal.org/>.

⁵⁶ Although the monsoon rains mainly affect the Terai region. This required some negotiation with NGOs and donors as, given the earthquake focus, there was a tendency to overlook the annual disaster of the monsoon

- supply of CGI sheets from India were stuck at the border for two months⁵⁷
- A number of households lost their land altogether due to land shifting
- The NRA's delay in providing guidance and support (as noted above), combined with policy shifts, slowed down progress
- One review points out that in many villages, working-age men are not present, having left to work elsewhere. As the review states, 'The shortage of working age men in earthquake-affected areas makes finding labour for reconstruction efforts an enormous task in itself⁵⁸'.

In the first few months after the earthquakes 83% of the affected households (635,950 households) received CGI or the cash equivalent, including government distributions, while 396,928 households received a household kit and/or blankets⁵⁹. Two years after the earthquakes, 28,000 - 3.6% of the total destroyed - had been rebuilt⁶⁰, with this rising to 113,000 by the end of the third year⁶¹. Therefore, on the third anniversary of the disaster, over 85% of affected households were not in completed housing, although widespread building by people themselves is underway.

The GoN provided grants for rebuilding via the NRA. The NRA's reconstruction grants comprised payments according to three construction phases: eligibility, verification and enrolment (NPR 50,000), completion of foundation up to plinth level (NPR 150,000) and completion of roof (NPR 100,000). This was an upgrade on the initial support of NPR 200,000 for the affected households and NPR 200,000, increased to NPR 300,000 to the most vulnerable households.

A 2017 report from HRRP and CFP⁶² attributes challenges of shelter recovery to three primary factors:

- (Mis)information: access to correct, up to date, and timely information is an essential component of the owner driven housing programme to complement the GoN's financial assistance to households
- Inclusion: meaningful engagement of vulnerable, women, marginalised and poor in the reconstruction process. Also geography – the more remote (and more likely to be an ethnic minority) the less the assistance
- Physical inputs: including labour, materials and finance.

Other issues include shortage of materials: the 2018 CFP survey found 54% of people reported shortage of construction material as their primary reason for the rebuild not being completed. As of November 2018, 306,000 households had received the third tranche, 515,000 the second tranche and 725,000 the first tranche⁶³.

A concern lies in entrenching poverty through rebuild grant restrictions. The CFP's 2018 survey found that 60% of people surveyed report their rebuilt home is too small for their needs. Of this 60%, the majority report resorting to a smaller house in order to obtain the government grant and having nowhere else to live. This study as well as similar feedback from DEC partner NGOs highlights that a significant number of beneficiaries are not having their shelter needs met due to restrictions on grants. Only 35% of CFP respondents have

⁵⁷ Luff R, 2017, p15

⁵⁸ Global Shelter Cluster, 2018, p111

⁵⁹ Shelter Cluster Nepal factsheet, November 2015, see:

https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/factsheet_0.pdf

⁶⁰ Nepal Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Multi-Donor Trust Fund, 2017

⁶¹ Bhusal, 2017

⁶² HRRP and CFP, 2017

⁶³ HRRP Bulletin, 12 November 2018

taken the NRA rebuild loan, with the majority borrowing from neighbours, family and cooperatives all of which attract a high level of interest. The report highlighted that 'people feel that they are in a debt trap as they are compelled to borrow from multiple sources, like banks, cooperatives and neighbours at very high interest rates in order to reconstruct their new house. As they don't have any good source of income, they think it will take many years to pay back those loans'⁶⁴. By placing unrealistic restrictions and deadlines on residents for grant eligibility, people are resorting to entering into economic situations that will likely result in high levels of debt for extended periods of time further perpetuating their poverty and vulnerability.

The change in the household package amount from NPR 200,000 to NPR 300,000 meant that many agencies had to go back to their donors for additional sums, while smaller agencies had to opt for scaling down activities, which risked causing community discord. Since geographic allocations had already been made, any changes had to go through multiple departments and authorities for ratification and agreement before it become institutional knowledge. This meant that some gaps continued to remain for a long time.

The CFP's 2018 survey reported that '68% of people interviewed feel their main reconstruction needs are being addressed'⁶⁵. It also found that 74% of respondents 'report feeling satisfied with the reconstruction support they have received. Among those who are not satisfied, the insufficient value of the tranches to reconstruct, the lengthy delays in receipt of tranches and the complicated nature of the process are the top reasons for dissatisfaction'⁶⁶. In terms of what needs to be addressed, the CFP found that 84% say their top unmet reconstruction need is money, with 53% saying construction materials. Other issues include building materials, skilled labour, and information on reconstruction policies. As noted earlier in this report, debt is now a considerable issue.

A number of DEC members and their partners engaged in different activities around immediate shelter response and long-term recovery. Concerning the former this included the distribution of shelter kits, tarpaulins and ground sheets and cash. Longer term recovery measures included demonstration housing using local materials, training of masons and carpenters, block making, cash grants, technical assistance and advocacy.

Christian Aid's shelter responses included building prototype housing and training masons and carpenters. Christian Aid notes, 'The learnings and skills obtained from Christian Aid were transferred to other masons who were not a part of the training, which helped to address the high demand for skilled masons'. IRW completed 151 permanent earthquake-resilient houses to highly vulnerable households in one remote village of Rasuwa district. CRS provided housing and shelter kits in Gorkha. Oxfam's Shelter focused on community capacity building, establishing information centres, masonry trainings, technical assistance, information dissemination on safe building construction and the production of alternative construction materials.

HAI provided transitional Shelter for 460 Households in Sindhupalchowk and Nuwakot Districts. HAI reported that a consequence of the Indian blockade of goods meant that shelter kits distribution to communities was delayed. ActionAid with its partner organisation LRF organized a campaign to protect and claim land for shelter, also to support women's rights to land and property and policy dialogues on land and shelter. CRS with its partners CRS/SSICDC trained 634 masons using a curriculum approved by the Department of Urban Development and Building Reconstruction (DUDBC). It also provided information on safe construction and built 27 demonstration shelters together with latrine facilities. BRC

⁶⁴ CFP, 2018

⁶⁵ CFP, 2018, p14

⁶⁶ CFP, 2018, p17

completed carpentry training across three districts with 128 participants in total. The Nepal Red Cross (with the support of the Red Cross Movement, including BRC) built 7000 houses. Save the Children provided masonry training and built 983 core shelters with latrines.

In post-disaster recovery, the provision of shelter is usually complex and fraught with difficulty. The following points are therefore worth noting. The first is that the experience from other disasters, and of the Nepal earthquakes, is that the majority of people rebuild housing themselves, often with little if any external humanitarian help. One estimate puts it as high as four-fifths of households⁶⁷. A second point is that interest in shelter can suffer from a fixation on building as fast as possible houses and temporary shelters - a metric of success that propels aid agencies to quickly try to build temporary or permanent housing. This leads to considerable resources being expended on transporting material and engaging in building structures within the tight timeframes that donors allow. The reality however is that reconstruction takes time, and could very well likely be speeded up if some of the sums being spent on reconstruction were prioritised instead on supporting people's processes of recovery. To achieve this, activities would need to focus more on providing valuable funds to support the activities of the many (as many DEC members and their partners did), rather than providing the finished product to the few. This is hardly a new idea – owner-driven reconstruction has been a feature for at least 15 years in humanitarian response, and indeed has been adopted within Nepal. Where investments have been made in processes, for example in providing quality training for masons, carpenters and other skilled trades, this is very likely to have both short term and long-term benefits, in not only providing better housing, but also providing income sources through selling of skills⁶⁸.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH)

A number of DEC members integrated WaSH projects into their programming, focusing on child friendly WaSH within schools, or the installation, reconnection or repair of drinking water supplies (DWS). WaSH continues to be a primary area of need across Nepal's earthquake effected regions. Limited intervention from the GoN, the complex nature of WaSH, delays in shelter rebuild, severe flooding during the monsoon season, and financial and technical limitations to large scale WaSH schemes have all contributed to the continuing deficits in the recovery process. The Post Disaster Recovery Framework (PDRF) indicates ongoing unmet needs of repair and reconstruction of drinking water systems in the 14 most affected districts. As of June 2017, of the 4,115 damaged DWS, 2,142 have been repaired or reconstructed or have resources allocated, leaving 1,973 yet to addressed⁶⁹.

DEC members programmes that focused on WaSH have indicated successful outcomes for the community. Adopting a holistic response, Tearfund combined WaSH education and awareness programmes, safety action plans, testing of various water points, and technical assistance to construct and rebuild water and sanitation systems. Delays relating to shelter reconstruction caused a slowdown in the building of toilets for around 500 households. Various versions of community WaSH schemes have been implemented. BRC noted, 'Feedback from FGDs suggests there is a noticeable improvement in the hygiene of children, whilst the time required to collect water has been reduced from over an hour to just 10-15 minutes per day in some cases'⁷⁰. IRW established a network of WaSH volunteers and entrepreneurs who provided health and sanitation training and promotion across their communities.

⁶⁷ Global Shelter Cluster, 2018, p20

⁶⁸ The training up of skilled people was a recommendation from the 2015 DEC/HC Nepal Emergency Response Review. See Sanderson et al, 2015

⁶⁹ Care, 2018, End of Programme Report

⁷⁰ BRC, 2018, End of Programme Report

In addition to DWS installation, Care worked with communities to ensure the sanitation and hygiene needs of those most vulnerable were met across Gorkha and Dhading districts. This included supporting the sanitation facilities of those in IDP camps, providing NFI kits for women and girls following FGDs, and initiating creative hygiene promotion through street drama, door to door visits and training. A number of members implemented child friendly WaSH initiatives in schools. This included child and disability friendly latrines, child-sized taps and basins, installation of dustbins, and WaSH education directed at students, teachers, and parents. A survey conducted by CRS following their hygiene education projects found that 'over 60% of the children improved their understanding and practice of hygiene. 94% of the surveyed children were able to demonstrate proper handwashing at the end of the project (compared to 37% at the beginning) and 83% were able to name measures how to prevent themselves from hygiene-related diseases (compared to 15% at the beginning)'⁷¹.

DEC members and other organisations faced a number of challenges. The limited amount provided to residents through the GoN rebuild grant often fails to meet the associated cost of household sanitation requirements. One key informant indicated that if there was greater government buy-in to the recovery of WaSH, communities would have potentially placed greater trust in the government's rebuilding processes.

One organisation reported challenges supporting IDPs in Dhading district due to local government impeding agencies from providing sanitation facilities. Also, despite being identified as appropriate for several communities, large scale water supply systems were often not feasible due to local partners capacity to implement, the risk of government delays for approval and procurement of already limited materials. As a result, smaller scale systems were restored, albeit not meeting the wider need.

Cash

Cash-transfer programmes (CTPs) allow households more choice and for implementing agencies reduce transaction and logistical costs. The 2015 DEC/HC response review noted that 'Cash programming has been central to much of the response, reflecting the continued rapid uptake of this form of assistance in other recent large-scale disasters'⁷². An estimated 10% of the international response in the first six months used cash transfers⁷³.

A number of issues and challenges relate to cash programming in Nepal⁷⁴. A 2016 study by ODI noted that 'given the logistical challenges of transporting relief items into remote, mountainous areas, cash worked as functioning markets existed in the majority of affected areas'⁷⁵. The report also noted various hurdles in Nepal included low government will, low capacity and weak financial infrastructure. A third point was 'the lack of a national policy on cash transfers, and delegation of authority to district administrators meant that cash responses were slower to scale up in some districts due to concerns around misuse of funds or potential to fuel conflict between different groups in the community'⁷⁶.

⁷¹ CRS, 2018, End of Programme Report

⁷² Sanderson et al, 2015, p11

⁷³ Willitts-King B and Bryant J, 2016, p5

⁷⁴ A useful summary of the cash response is provided in Barnaby Willitts-King and John Bryant (2016) Scaling up humanitarian cash transfers in Nepal. ODI working paper no 503. ODI, London. Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11284.pdf>

⁷⁵ Willitts-King B and Bryant J, 2016, p5

⁷⁶ Willitts-King B and Bryant J, 2016, p5

Despite this, by November 2015 the Nepal Cash Coordinating Group (CCG) reported that more than US\$30 million in cash grants had been distributed by over 35 international agencies⁷⁷. Of this, US\$12 million of unconditional cash grants were distributed to 200 village development committees, covering an estimated 500,000 people. Cash was used widely by DEC members, the GoN and others, such as UNICEF. Cash for work (CFW) programmes were also in place. Government guidance on CFW was issued early by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). CFW programmes for the most part focused on the reconstruction of public infrastructure, such as roads and pathways (although CFW was also used for instance to pay masons to rebuild houses).

Conditional cash grants were also used, and were tied to particular sectors. For example, the three reconstruction tranches provided by the GoN per household were intended for house reconstruction, and a further NPR 50,000 cash grant for particularly vulnerable households. Cash was also used to promote combined sectoral approaches⁷⁸. In the survey of DEC members and partners undertaken for this study, 71% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'Cash based programming was effective'. In response to the statement 'The amount of cash-based programming could have been more', 76% strongly agreed or agreed. DEC members engaged widely in cash-based programming. In phase one, cash was the second largest expenditure for DEC members. Cash was provided to some 90,000 households. IRW provided cash grants for labour cost totaling a maximum of NPR 372,000 (£2,862) per household, which 'appears to have been received well by people'⁷⁹.

HAI provided an unconditional cash grant of NPR7,500 to older people and was one of the first to distribute cash. They undertook two forms of cash distribution: one via Prabhu Bank, and a second of direct cash in envelopes. HAI reports that, while the bank option was safer with lower risk, it was also slower than direct distribution. Christian Aid provided cash grants to start-up businesses, especially poultry and goat farming, and cash for work programmes to rebuild community infrastructure such as foot trails and village roads. Christian Aid provided both cash transfers as well training (for example to farmers) to beneficiaries and connected them to local government institutions/bodies for further technical support. Plan International implemented cash for work schemes such as road repair and provided cash grants to women to set up businesses.

Tearfund distributed cash in the first 12 months to cash to 1,047 households. It implemented a Cash for Shelter programme and provided cash for toilet construction. Care provided cash of NPR 10,000 for the formation of ward WaSH coordination committee, supported 206 households with cash of NPR 1300 each to build smokeless stoves, cash for work to rehabilitate drinking water systems. Concern trained masons who were then employed in cash for work to build infrastructure. Save the Children provided unconditional cash transfers shortly after the first earthquake.

BRC with Nepal Red Cross provided winterisation cash grants and provided livelihoods cash grants. BRC's independent evaluation found a number of positive benefits of CTP:

- The scale of the use of cash by the Nepal Red Cross Society was influential in demonstrating to the GoN that such an approach was feasible and beneficial: 'overall, the programme appears to have contributed to the overall increasingly conducive environment for cash grants in Nepal'⁸⁰
- For women, earning an income built self-esteem and confidence

⁷⁷ Nepal cash coordination group, May-November 2015

⁷⁸ See for example, the Global WASH and Shelter Cluster Joint Advocacy Paper, 'Increasing Sectoral Cash Transfer and Market Based Programming Capacity'

⁷⁹ Bhattacharjee A, 2017, p21

⁸⁰ Key Consulting, 2018, p43

- The provision of livelihoods cash grants helped beneficiaries sign up for banks accounts, thus increasing the financial inclusion of the targeted vulnerable groups
- Contributing to the local economy through buying local goods and hiring local labour.

Livelihoods

Livelihoods-based programming was undertaken by a number of DEC members and their partners. Phase 1 DEC expenditure was 4.3%, which grew to 31% in phase 2, reflecting a push towards longer term recovery. Livelihood activities typically included purchasing items such as seeds and tools, and livestock support (purchasing animals to replace those lost and associated costs, such as shelter) and cash-based programming (discussed above). A significant feature of much livelihood programming was training, which is further discussed below.

In the survey of DEC members undertaken for this study, in response to the statement, 'Overall, livelihoods programming was appropriate', only 44% agreed while 31% disagreed. A comment from a key informant was that, 'Still there is need for more income generating program to sustain secure income of affected families'. Reasons for this survey result were discussed in the DEC members' workshop held in Kathmandu to discuss this report. Reasons given for the high percentage of respondents who disagreed included that enacting livelihood programming was complex, in particular that 'demand is huge and varied' and that 'in every household there are different needs'. A further reason cited was that livelihoods programming 'has a long-term trajectory – it's not over yet, it's longer', ie that the outcomes of livelihoods approaches, such as increased household incomes or better crops take years to be seen. A third reason given was the context of chronic poverty and unemployment, meaning that livelihoods before the earthquakes were already precarious.

With DEC members adopting a community-led approach which sought to achieve long-term impacts, there are extensive examples of skill development and training programs across areas such as shelter, WaSH, livelihoods and business development, DRR, resilience and women's empowerment.

Several key informants highlighted the challenges associated with implementing training and skill development in the early stages of recovery, with beneficiaries seeking tangible goods to support their recovery and rebuild. One key informant noted that by combining in-kind goods at the beginning of the response such as seeds and farming tools, and then redefining the project to focus on on-the job one day training and eventually to longer term skill development programmes facilitated by retired local agricultural professionals, they were successfully able to support communities to develop longer term recovery plans. This informant also commented on the reduction in youth migration when training and skill development was provided.

A range of livelihood-based programmes were undertaken. ActionAid held 22 capacity building sessions, which included account keeping, institutional and business development and livelihood management. Nineteen micro-enterprise and business development trainings sessions were also facilitated⁸¹. Plan engaged with young women, determining their needs through a series of FGDs. These identified a need for business develop and skills training including livestock rearing, tailoring, selling groceries and vegetables. Through a combination of training sessions that considered the needs of women with children, gift in kind and cash, the project supported 528 women to start small businesses. An additional project provided earthquake resilient housing construction training to 580 masons, including

⁸¹ ActionAid, 2018, End of Programme Report

190 women. A female mason beneficiary reported that 'I can now earn between 500 and 1000 rupees per day'⁸².

ActionAid ensured the participation of the community in its implementation, especially in infrastructural reconstruction which in turn created job opportunities in the communities. Community members were provided technical training in masonry, wiring and electrical installation, which should provide trainees with better future employment opportunities. Working to ensure the older population were supported to maintain skill development and livelihood opportunities, HAI engaged 2,203 people across two districts in small scale income generation activities, of which 1,296 were successful able to start a small business⁸³. IRW's livelihoods programme sought to diversify and build resilience for both agricultural and non-agricultural based livelihoods. Training in mass production of vegetable and cash crops for 30 beneficiaries, and occupational business training such as hairdressing, plumbing and mobile repair for 22 beneficiaries, 17 of which are now fully engaged in employment⁸⁴.

The independent evaluation of Christian Aid's activities concluded that its livelihood interventions 'have shown positive results in increasing the livelihood options available to communities. There are reported cases of increased income after the support, which in turn was utilized in household and education expenses⁸⁵'. Tearfund facilitated the formation of almost 30 farmers groups. Training provided to these groups included climate change adaptation, use of bio-fertilisers, vegetable and seed production, cattle shed management, goat husbandry and commercial agriculture production and marketing. Several of these farmers groups have successfully registered with the District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) and now receive direct support. Tearfund also provided training in 'key humanitarian considerations' to 33 partner staff, developing their skills in case study writing, photography, monitoring and evaluation techniques, and management skills. They also supported 34 government engineers to develop training of trainers skills in earthquake resistant rural homes⁸⁶. Several programmes focused on providing carpentry training, particularly to those most vulnerable including single female households and those from lower caste groups.

Approaches

Assessments

In accordance with their respective mandates, DEC members and their partners sought to prioritise vulnerable and marginalised communities. There was recognition of the importance of meeting differing needs of community members in particular ethnic minorities, smallholder, tenant farmers, older people, people with disabilities and children⁸⁷. There was overall a strong focus on working with older people, pregnant women, lactating mothers, female or male solo parents, female-headed households, women or girls at risk of exploitation and abuse, child mothers, unaccompanied children, separated child, persons or children with disabilities and those with mental ill-health.

⁸² Plan International, 2018, End of Programme Report

⁸³ Age International, 2018, End of Programme Report

⁸⁴ IRW, 2018, End of Programme Report

⁸⁵ Progress Inc, 2018

⁸⁶ Tearfund, 2018, End of Programme Report

⁸⁷ ActionAid, programme report

Generally there was also a strong thrust among responding agencies to involve marginalised communities into response and recovery actions. This included Dalits and indigenous groups. The inclusion of these groups was not always easy and the time taken sometimes led to delays, friction within communities and also called for orientation and sensitization for field teams and project partners.

The health and protection cluster ensured wide-spread information diffusion. A special focus on children was possible with the presence and entry of specialized child and youth focused aid partners. In the light of the number of schools damaged or destroyed, a number of agencies set up temporary learning centres (TLC). Time was spent by agencies to ensure particularly vulnerable groups were included in the government approved list for receiving support. Many queries were generated from the community regarding individual household eligibility, with follow up consultations and detailed community mapping to produce an overall picture of need allowing different agencies to determine how best to respond.

In the survey undertaken for this study of DEC members and their partners, 44% of respondents agreed that 'the most vulnerable were prioritised in the response', while 33% were neutral and 6% strongly disagreed. In explanation of this point, one key informant stated, 'All agencies made efforts to reach the most vulnerable, however, there was tremendous pressure from different sections, particularly from communities for a blanket approach.'

DEC members and their partners undertook assessments to identify the most vulnerable and identify needs and capacities. Some assessments were sectoral and were undertaken by single agencies, while others were multisectoral. In this regard, the evaluation of BRC's work recommended multisectoral assessments (and subsequent activities): 'Envision multi-sectoral intervention as a single approach as opposed to parallel sectoral activities ... identify cross-sectoral linkages from the beginning, consider joint risk identification, and share challenges and lessons learned across sectors'⁸⁸.

The use of sex and age disaggregation data was widespread although in varying degrees of accuracy and detail. The data collected included beneficiary age, gender, ethnicity, main income source, amount of land owned, livestock assets and household assets. DEC members reported that the disaggregated data has contributed to more robust inclusion practices, including adding a stronger measure of monitoring under each vulnerability criteria, such as targeting single women.

DEC members and their partners undertook a number and range of assessments, according to their areas of focus. CRS conducted rapid needs assessments in a number of districts. In addition CRS undertook a market assessment in Gorkha to understand labour market dynamics and a protection needs assessments. Activities included key informant interviews and informal focus groups. In phase 2 CRS undertook a survey of high-school drop-out rates, in particular girls, in order to identify reasons, which included human trafficking, child labour and the loss of care-takers. IRW and their partner Lutheran World Federation (LWF) carried out a three-day joint assessment in Rasuwa district. Activities included interviews with community members and visual inspection/observations by the monitoring team.

In phase 2 HAI undertook a multi-sectoral assessment incorporating livelihood, disaster, inclusion and health components to explore needs and issues of older people. Tearfund undertook initial rapid needs assessments in early May 2015 in five wards in Makwanpur District and undertook more detailed assessments concerning shelter, WaSH and markets.

⁸⁸ Key consulting, 2018

Tearfund undertook a comprehensive household needs assessment in Makawanpur District to identifying vulnerable persons. In its cash-for-shelter programme, Tearfund used inclusion criteria which included damage, family composition and socio-economic characteristics. The criteria were agreed by the District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC), Local Disaster Management Committee (LDMC) and the District Shelter Cluster.

World Vision conducted a rapid needs assessment across seven districts, and which included key informant interviews with community leaders and households. Men, women and children in community groups were met with. Concern and its partners undertook an initial rapid needs assessment.

Coordination

Initial coordination efforts were swift. The DEC/HC response review noted that, 'Within central government the Central Disaster Relief Committee (CDRC) met two hours after the earthquake with support from the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC). At district level, clusters were activated quickly and early efficiency was achieved through geographical divisions between relief agencies, agreed with the DDRCs and implemented in collaboration with VDCs and ward level citizen forums. Clarity on geographical divisions was intended to ensure extensive coverage of affected areas and to prevent duplication and gaps'⁸⁹. One of the early achievements of coordinated action was the multi-sectoral minimum expenditure basket calculated by the Cash Working Group, which aimed to meet immediate needs. Within this, cluster coordination worked well for those who participated in them. In the survey of DEC members and their partners undertaken for this study, in response to the statement 'The clusters were the best places to coordinate', 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

Participating DEC members at the Kathmandu noted that, concerning shelter coordination, the HRRP proved to be a good platform for coordination at the national and local levels, and provided an effective link between operational agencies and the NRA. As one key informant noted, 'HRRP was the platform that made the (shelter) coordination effective and possible'.

The effectiveness of coordination early on doubtless benefitted from earlier preparedness efforts such the formation of the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC), leading to the development of the Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan in line with the GoN's National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (NSDRM)⁹⁰.

While the first phase was seen as a good coordinated action, the recovery period witnessed less coordination. Reasons cited for this at the workshop included a stronger push on competitive actions to seek funding from donors and staff turnover, wherein the leaving of emergency personnel and the incoming of new staff led to reduced links. The scaling down of cluster operations after a few months in districts left the DDRCs struggling to provide consistent leadership and frontline coordination. The weak policy environment, low staff capacity and continual changes meant that the field operations suffered and were delayed significantly (at times by months). Also, a few (non-DEC member) agencies did not inform district coordinating groups about their planned actions, which weakened efforts to ensure coverage of hard to access areas, as well as to accessible areas.

The development of the Post Disaster Recovery Framework (PDRF) in May 2016 however provided a fresh momentum. Due to insufficient information on government records, and

⁸⁹ Sanderson et al, 2015, p8

⁹⁰ The NRRC prioritised five flagship areas covering (1) school and hospital safety, (2) emergency preparedness and response, (3) flood management in the Koshi river basin, (4) community-based disaster risk management, and (5) policy and institutional support for disaster risk management

discrepancies in beneficiary names, the final verification of individuals on official government lists for cash and CGI distributions proved difficult. After six months the DDCs took over from the DDRCs, which led to a drop in the effectiveness of providing approvals and decision making at district level. The gains made in decentralisation were lost with the districts acting as individual units, with numerous tweaks in the policy framework creating stress on agencies implementing actions across districts. The lack of cohesive uniformity led to delays and unwanted cost overruns. This led to a changed system on the ground with the coordination environment in districts being fragile and vulnerable. As a result INGOs, including DEC members, coordinated more among themselves to ensure that the work continued. Agencies such as World Vision, Plan, Oxfam and Christian Aid became District Lead Support Agencies (DLSAs) supporting the DDRCs, providing updates of planning and implementation actions.

Across DEC members the perception of INGO and GoN relations was strong: in the survey of DEC members and partners undertaken for this study, 94% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'DEC members' actions supported the government's response'. However in response to the statement 'Local organisations were sufficiently included in cluster coordination', less than half (47%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 24% disagreed and 29% were neutral. As one key informant stated, '(the) cluster system is not adequately localized and there is very limited space for local organizations in cluster coordination'. This, unfortunately, is a common finding in evaluations of humanitarian response and an issue that has as of yet not been sufficiently resolved.

Different coordination platforms, such as that set up between Act Alliance members, also ensured that coordination between agencies continued over time. An informal group of DEC members also evolved and led to some good coordination efforts, such as the organising of a learning event. The Association of INGOs' regular working-group meetings contributed towards mutual learning. DEC members encouraged field implementing partners to maintain and share information about project activities with appropriate local level authorities, cluster leads, ministries and UN agencies. Other examples included the creation of working groups and committees to liaise with the GoN on a range of issues, such as reconstruction policies and the registration and entry of expatriate staff.

The participation and sharing of DEC members in the various cluster and subgroups was a major strength for the response action including the early recovery, food security, protection, education and shelter clusters. To these ends, the creation of informal platforms for sharing information was very helpful. It is important to recognize this for future emergencies as it allows for continual information sharing for rapid and long-term solutions. This also aids in learning from each other in a very collaborative manner thereby leading to more informed and joined-up humanitarian response actions.

Communicating with disaster affected communities

DEC members, their partners and other organisations went to considerable efforts to communicate effectively with affected people, with some degrees of success. Failure to communicate adequately with affected communities can lead to misplaced and wasted aid recovery efforts. For example, HRRP and CFP's 2017 report attributed the slowness of shelter recovery to (mis)information, stating, 'access to correct, up to date, and timely information is an essential component of the owner driven housing programme to complement the GoN's financial assistance to households'⁹¹. The report went on to state that 'a lack of information, confusion, misunderstandings, and rumours all contribute to gaps

⁹¹ HRRP and CFP, 2017, Introduction

in reconstruction programming and result in delays, waste of resources and worst: unsafe construction⁹².

There is also some evidence that a significant proportion of affected communities may have little faith their voices are heard. The CFP's 2018 survey found that, 'Across 2580 respondents in 40 palikas ... 33 percent have not provided feedback because they do not feel that anyone would listen to, or care about, what they have to say'⁹³. This finding is echoed by one key informant interviewed for this study, who stated that 'they (international NGOs) were not accountable to communities or government, particularly in how resources were used, allocated, concentrated, reported, etc. More transparency please', while another stated, 'There are some organisations who followed the principles of accountability to a greater extent whilst some even disregarded a basic minimum requirement'.

Recognising the importance of the issue, DEC members and their partners were active in communicating with disaster affected communities. ActionAid worked with communities to develop 26 disaster management plans and 26 'local disaster risk management plans', with training also provided to local social mobilizers. ActionAid also implemented participatory review and reflection processes throughout the project management cycle (assessments, planning, management and monitoring and evaluation). World Vision worked with volunteers to promote hygiene messages to communities in Sindhuli, Sindhupalchowk and the Kathmandu Valley. A total of 443 community volunteers received training to conduct community mobilization on WASH messages afterwards.

The independent evaluation of BRC states that, 'During the response analysis, communities and local stakeholders were involved in designing activities across all sectors, such as influencing the targeting criteria. Lastly, communities and local stakeholders were involved in deciding where and how to carry out activities, and who met the targeting criteria during the implementation phase'⁹⁴. A number of DEC members spent time and resources developing the operating standards of local partners as well as orient, train and continually support local field staff, many of whom had not worked in a disaster setting before. This meant that the humanitarian and development sector's state of play in Nepal was considerably strengthened, for example in experiencing the global standards of operational management. This investment has hopefully strengthened Nepal's NGO sector for future disasters.

DEC members and partners sought to address community grievances, suggestions and demands⁹⁵. Locally recruited teams sought to ensure a fair sense of ownership for the actions and the voices of the affected to be heard. The phases following the relief phase were more directed to localized needs and a reflection of the consultative mode of programming. These efforts were complimented by capacity building trainings, sensitization workshops and information about complaint and feedback mechanisms in the local geography to the communities and teams respectively. Christian Aid worked with new partners in addition to their older associated agencies providing training and capacity building support on core areas of humanitarian assistance, finance management and logistics. This took time. One report noted that, 'It took time for implementing partners (i.e. the national actors) to adapt to the emergency context, having largely worked in development activities prior to the earthquake. In particular, adapting their policies and procedures to be compatible for emergency context was a challenge. Most of the implementing partners also had multiple projects, with multiple donor agencies, a fact that

⁹² HRRP and CFP, 2017, p14

⁹³ CLA, 2018, p40

⁹⁴ Key consulting, 2018, px

⁹⁵ In accordance with Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) one and two

agency respondents felt prevented the systematic building up of partner capacity. The heavy workloads and time constraints experienced by all actors during the crisis meant that action points and learning were not always followed up on⁹⁶.

Concerning challenges, several organisations reported that traditional feedback mechanisms of complaint boxes did not work due to low literacy levels and cultural practice of providing feedback. Similarly, there were reports of inconsistencies regarding programme advertisements, with many failing to recognise the diversity of language across Nepal and some reportedly written in English. The use of more image-based advertisement, audio options including radio and community announcement, and information sessions led by local community members would provide a greater opportunity for community members to be made aware and kept up to date with what is occurring.

A number of agencies used information boards along with orientation sessions and awareness generation programmes to present proposed activities, the support DEC members will provide and avenues through which people can provide their feedback - such as face-to-face meetings, hotlines, community meetings, FGDs, suggestion boxes and the use of social media - to promote and proactively create avenues for two-way communication.

A number of DEC members including Save the Children, Action Aid, HAI and Oxfam⁹⁷ used toll-free numbers and helplines to connect to the disaster affected communities. However, a number of members reported that the complaints were very low, which begets the question of approach and methodology. Some members received critical feedback on the time taken to respond to complaints. Informal complaints procedures however are important and should be recognised. Christian Aid's evaluation of complaints mechanisms concluded that, 'Some members of the community were aware of the formal complaints mechanism, but it should be noted that no complaints were reported through this mechanism. For simple feedback and queries, community members preferred to use informal modes of communication with representatives of the partner staff and social mobilizers present. Although the evaluation found evidence that grievances were shared in this way, the cases reported through informal mechanisms were not formally documented'⁹⁸.

The independent evaluation of BRC concerning cash distribution and complaints mechanisms found that, 'The lengthy process of handling complaints, redesigning the beneficiary lists and clarifying the selection criteria caused the first cash instalment to occur later than planned. Of the 86% of calls to the hotline from May-October 2017 in Kathmandu, 16% of them were about the timeliness of receiving the cash grants'⁹⁹.

The Nepal response also shows that the pathways to ensure communication diffusion needs meaningful and sustained dialogue with affected communities. The use of social media, street theatres, mass youth and child-centric campaigns are a pointer in this direction.

Digital data gathering solutions have gained momentum and added value to the actions on information flows. The use of mobile based apps have been reported across members with good results of real time reporting and survey possibilities. Christian Aid¹⁰⁰ used the data collection app KoBo Toolbox¹⁰¹ on handheld mobile devices for beneficiaries verification in

⁹⁶ CLI joint learning report, p20

⁹⁷ Phase 02- 12 months plan of DEC Agencies

⁹⁸ Christian Aid evaluation, p7

⁹⁹ Key Consulting, 2018, p131

¹⁰⁰ DEC phase 02 report - Christian Aid

¹⁰¹ See <https://www.kobotoolbox.org/>

phase 1, and progressively for all assessment actions through the response programme.

Other examples include other (non-DEC) entities and organisations - Act Alliance and Partners used the Akvo Application¹⁰² while UN, IOM, Shelter Cluster, Spanish Red Cross¹⁰³ and Reach Initiative used Open Data Kit¹⁰⁴ for the near real time data collection. The use of social media and open source mapping platforms was also widely used, for example Kathmandu living lab's quakemap.org¹⁰⁵. Mobile data coverage in Nepal is reasonably good and the high usage of mobile phones were a definite advantage for the INGOs to train field teams to handle these apps. Mobile mapping allowed for faster data collection, analysis and better visual presentation possibilities. The advantage of geo-tagging provided an enhanced level of accuracy and added vulnerability and remoteness values to the facts.

The use of the 'Parma' systems¹⁰⁶ in remote communities was also useful for effectively engaging existing culturally cohesive forms of community work, which was particularly helpful in promoting the construction of permanent houses. The examples from Rasuwa's recovery by DEC members include IRW¹⁰⁷ where communities supported each other through unskilled labour and reciprocal labour during cultivation times; also where construction processes were altered to accommodate the cultural and religious festivals. Such approaches show that listening to communities and having faith sensitivity is an important aspect of implementing a localised response.

Inclusion

DEC members used a number of approaches to address inclusion challenges. BRC in partnership with Nepal Red Cross introduced the Red Card System, a vulnerability-based criterion aimed at prioritising vulnerable beneficiaries including elderly, single women, youth, PWD and Dalit and other minority groups. The programme reported a high engagement of marginalised groups with '63.3% and 61.6% of beneficiaries of both instalments of CCSS'¹⁰⁸. Several programmes that integrated school rebuilding and WaSH focused on creating child and disability friendly response, including lower hand washing stations, child focused WaSH education programmes, child friendly toilets, disability access via ramps to school yards and bathrooms, and levelled out play areas. ActionAid supported the creation and mobilisation of 110 adolescent groups. HAI established 66 'older persons associations' across six districts that engaged in the recovery process through consultation and coordination on areas including livelihoods, shelter, DRR and protection. Through these groups, organisations were able to identify areas of vulnerability, need and community strengths.

DEC members' skill development and adult education programmes targeted those identified as most vulnerable. These training programmes not only provided the skills for individuals to rebuild their own home but to also access higher paid employment than they would traditionally be eligible for. Programmes of this nature have a significant impact on breaking down social and cultural barriers to inclusion and help to redefine the capabilities of those most marginalised.

¹⁰² <https://rsr.akvo.org/en/project/3072/>

¹⁰³ <https://opendatakita3b1.kxcdn.com/uploads/default/original/2X/b/b6025bd4139f8d960effba2d631c57700574bb00.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ See <https://opendatakit.org/>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.kathmandulivinglabs.org/projects/quakemaporg>

¹⁰⁶ In Nepal, the Parma System is a social practice of performing or receiving labour or services within the community. The practice of Parma allows villagers to exchange labour for labour in times of need. See <https://usaidnepal.exposure.co/parma-system-helping-rebuild-bigu-faster-and-safer>

¹⁰⁷ IRW, phase 2a final report

¹⁰⁸ Key Consulting, 2018

Concerning challenges, currently, common practice assumes that by engaging with community leaders, elders and people in position of authority that due diligence has been done. However, as one key informant noted that when discussing the outcome of a community led programme, the feedback from residents was that they were not always consulted, due to community 'gatekeepers'. As the informant stated, 'We run a risk of isolating and missing the valuable input of the more marginalised members if we only seek out the views of those in positions of power'. A number of members whose programmes focused on shelter, specifically supporting residents accessing the NRA build back grant scheme, reported significant inclusion challenges for beneficiaries. Access issues included challenges with citizenship certification for low caste community members, issues with land tenure for single women households, complex applicant processes that were often unachievable for people with a disability or literacy issues and reports of unaffected residents in positions of power accessing funds.

More marginalised people may still be omitted from adequate support. An evaluation conducted by the International Dalit Solidarity Network found that 'Eighty per cent of Dalits surveyed reporting feeling that there had been wilful negligence in providing relief and support to their communities. Sixty-five per cent also said they had been unable to access rescue services and shelter on time'¹⁰⁹. This view was borne out by a number of key informants, who indicated that despite significant efforts to provide inclusive programming, certain attempts failed and those most vulnerable continued to be at risk.

Inclusion of women and gender-based violence (GBV)

More women and girls died than men and boys in the earthquakes¹¹⁰. This is mainly attributed to the women's domestic roles occurring inside buildings that collapsed. In addition to loss of life, women experienced adverse social, cultural, and economic impacts following the earthquakes. These challenges would often be compounded for women who were single or widowed, pregnant or with young children, from a certain caste, illiterate, and/or with a disability.

According to CLF's 2018 survey, '78% percent of respondents think that men and women are equally engaged in the reconstruction and recovery process'¹¹¹. On initial consideration this indicates a fairly positive response for female inclusion in the reconstruction and recovery process. However on further questioning and examination a different picture emerges. While the focus groups identified almost equal engagement, the type of engagement varies markedly. Men were engaged to provide skill, higher paid labour, whereas women tended to participate in lower skill employment that yields a lower wage. In addition, women continued to contribute to the majority of unpaid care and household duties¹¹².

In the survey undertaken for this study, in response to the statement 'Women in affected communities were prominent in decision making within the response, 47% agreed (none strongly agreed). 47% remained neutral and 5.9% strongly disagreed. Key informants in relation to this finding stated, '(women) were part of the response but not the key decision maker', and, 'Women's participation was strongly encouraged and practiced but not in all cases they might have been decision-maker'.

¹⁰⁹ International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2015

¹¹⁰ UN Women, 2016

¹¹¹ CFP, 2018, p38

¹¹² CFP, 2018

The engagement and inclusion of women in the reconstruction process should not be underrepresented. For many DEC members there are examples of female skill and development training that should be celebrated. For example, the BRC found that ‘Another area of the programme that empowered women was the mason trainings. Although the activity did not initially intentionally target women, the trainings appear to have increased their economic and social status and allowed them to earn an equal wage as male masons’¹¹³.

The nature of women’s role in reconstruction and recovery was frequently approached with a gendered lens that did not seek to empower and include women in all aspects of the process. The HRRP and CFP’s 2017 report found that, ‘Women consistently report not having been meaningfully engaged in the reconstruction process, or treated as agents of the recovery. This has played out in various ways at all stages of the recovery and reconstruction. From the beginning of the enrolment process when women’s names were not listed for bank accounts making them unable to access the reconstruction grant, to a persistent gap in targeting them with reconstruction information in a way that meets their communication needs’¹¹⁴.

Receiving NRA reconstruction grants has been challenging for those without official citizenship certificates, land ownership certificates, Red Cards, and bank accounts. In order to be eligible for the NRA reconstruction grant, heads of households must be able to provide all of the above, a challenge which has disproportionately impacted women. The outcome for many women who are unable to access the NRA grant is to continue living in unsafe, and unsuitable temporary shelter or take high interest loans from family and community members. With the amount of funding depleting, the fate of these vulnerable people now hangs precariously on their inclusion onto certified lists.

Living in temporary shelters can expose women to insecure and unsafe conditions, increasing their risk of sexual violence, trafficking, domestic violence, and privacy and security issues¹¹⁵. In May 2015, UN Women, as part of the Inter Cluster Gender Task Force (ICGTF) in Nepal estimated that ‘approximately 40,000 women were thought to be at immediate risk of sexual and gender-based violence’¹¹⁶. Various DEC members’ focus groups highlighted the need for safe spaces for women, providing social, legal, and economic support following a time of crisis. Programmes identified included the need for counselling, financial support programmes including cash grants to help with livelihood projects, and legal advice and education around GBV^{117 118}.

The earthquakes saw substantial damage to community and private water sources. The burden and risk of reduced access to water often falls on women. In addition to walking long distances for water which is time consuming and often unsafe, women are less likely to maintain adequate hygiene when faced with limited access to water, particularly during the menstrual cycle due to limited privacy. Additionally, in an effort to reserve collected water, women reduce their intake, often leading to increased dehydration and an increased risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs). A baseline and end-of-project survey from Plan International found that prior to installing community water sources the average daily consumption of water was 127 litres. This however increased to 248 litres once tanks were installed in close proximity¹¹⁹. Easy access to water ensures great safety for women, better health outcomes, and increased productivity in other areas of life due to time saved. For many communities

¹¹³ BRC evaluation, p43

¹¹⁴ HRRP and CFP, 2017, p21

¹¹⁵ UN office for DRR, 2018

¹¹⁶ UN Women, 2015

¹¹⁷ ActionAid, 2018, End of Programme Report

¹¹⁸ HAI, 2018, End of Programme Report

¹¹⁹ Plan International, 2018, End of Programme Report

that has yet to have adequate water systems repaired or reinstalled, these challenges continue to be faced by women daily.

All DEC members adopted a gendered lens in their programmes, placing consideration on the safety, wellbeing and risk faced by women following the disaster. Some have placed a more specific focus on the inclusion of women in their projects, identifying them as key actors, empowering them to drive change and advocate for better outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities. For example ActionAid reported that all groups, committees and networks had at least 50% female participation¹²⁰. ActionAid established 'women friendly spaces' to provide women with an opportunity to meet together, reporting that 'The success of the WFSs has resulted in the continuation post recovery and discussions with local government on ways to integrate the model into governments protection mechanisms¹²¹'. Christian Aid worked to ensure women were involved in the decision-making processes for a water supply scheme in Dhading. Four women (out of nine members) held decision-making roles. In addition, in a compressed stabilised earth block entrepreneur group in Gorkha, four out seven members are women with the group being led by a woman. World Vision undertook field visits, randomly selected female beneficiaries to collect feedback, and ensure they were aware of the community feedback mechanisms channels.

CRS engaged female technical assistants as a way to increase women's feeling of support and interest in the reconstruction process, after identifying more than 45% of requests for door-to-door technical assistance were coming from women. IRW provided on the job mason training to women (having found that no women were trained in the immediate relief phase of their programme). IRW also constructed 10 bathing cubicles for women and adolescent girls to bathe privately. Care constructed 32 sets of latrines in Dhading district with an attached bathing space to allow women to bathe with privacy.

Future recovery response should consider the multitude of challenges faced by women in the context of disaster as well as within the general cultural and social constraints of their society. Early integration of humanitarian response and development process would ensure that women are included in the early stage of response and empowered in the longer process of recovery. Engaging with women through existing community organisations and groups immediately after the disaster to advocate and advise on their rights needs to be improved, including land access for female headed households, legal options for those who experience violence and the risk of exploitation and abuse. While NGOs may not have significant input into the bureaucratic systems implemented across governments, by providing women with the knowledge and support of their rights early on may assist in faster access to services and financial support, ensuring a faster recovery process, subsequently reduce the risk of exploitation and violence.

The programmes that engaged women in skill training of typically male industries produced positive results, not only producing high rebuild rates, but may also have contributed to the breakdown of gender stereotypes and the empowerment of women. A research report produced by HRRP concerning women in construction concluded that, 'the reconstruction has provided an opportunity for many women in terms of employment, training, and increased confidence'¹²². It also concluded however that, 'many women also face discrimination in the reconstruction, indicating that concrete and consolidated effort is required to ensure effective engagement of women'¹²³.

¹²⁰ ActionAid, 2018, End of Programme Report

¹²¹ ActionAid, 2018, End of Programme Report

¹²² HRRP, 2018, p4

¹²³ HRRP, 2018, p4

In the online survey of members and partners, when asked to respond to the statement 'Gender-based violence (GBV) was sufficiently addressed', only 47% - less than half - agreed, while 35% remained neutral. One key informant, speaking about their respective organisation, stated, 'Different intervention was designed and implement by the organization to address GBV. The key intervention were awareness program, temporary safe house for survivors and referral and case management services. Such intervention somehow helped to reduce cases of GBV and provide justice for the survivors. However lasting changes for their recovery and rehabilitation of GBV survivors is still challenges'.

Annexes

Annex one. Recommendations from reports and evaluations

The following recommendations have been assembled from the following reports.

Final evaluation: Nepal earthquake recovery programme of the BRC' by Key Aid consulting, June 2018

- Situation analysis recommendation: ensure a timely comprehensive desegregated situation analysis that will systematically feed into response design (for BRC and NRCS). Conduct the MSA and RoA at the start of the programme, and ensure the needs of different groups' as desegregated to help inform tailoring activities.
- Response analysis recommendation: envision multi-sectoral intervention as a single approach as opposed to parallel sectoral activities (for BRC and NRCS). Jointly conduct the RoA across sectors it identify cross-sectoral linkages from the beginning, consider joint risk identification, and share challenges and lessons learned across sectors. Also consider focusing on fewer outputs/activities rather than spreading too thinly.
- Recommendation: ensure that programming is inclusive of all the different groups (for BRC and NRCS). This can inform not only which activities are the most appropriate for which audience, but also inform the selection criteria. Also consider providing UCGs directly to beneficiaries who are unable to undertake income generating activities themselves.
- Implementation recommendation: draw clear targeting criteria and methodologies from the situation analysis and make sure it is communicated clearly and transparently across recipients and non-recipients (for BRC and NRCS, communication specifically for NRCS). Use the MSA to further nuance the traditional 'vulnerable groups' and consider blanket targeting not as the go to option but only for specific activities such as messaging. Ensure committees charged with selecting beneficiaries have proper representation
- Recommendation: strengthen operational processes (for NRCS). Strengthen supply and finance processes by considering developing standing agreements with service providers and updating existing manuals/policies to reflect the potential scale of future responses and the use of new modalities (i.e. CTP)
- Monitoring recommendation: make sure monitoring allows for determining whether the response is reaching its target and is used to make programmatic decisions (for BRC and NRCS). Use the new MIS system to collect and analyse data on the programme's reach to the targeted vulnerable groups. Analysing this kind of data can be used to ensure the programme is reaching the right beneficiaries, and allow implementers to alter their programming as needed.
- Recommendation: set targets for outcome indicators (for BRC and NRCS). Having targets will help the PMEAL team quantitatively determine whether outcomes are being achieved.
- Sustainability recommendation: programme implementers should make sure to foster the appropriate linkages between community, committees and local government entities, and also ensure the roles and responsibilities of each are understood (for NRCS). During the transition volunteers and programme implementers should keep the community abreast of how the government's restructuring affects where they need to go for further information or support. In addition, clarifying each actor's role and responsibility after the BRC/NRCS programme ends will help to ensure the programme has not created unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved.

- Recommendation: consider the retention of staff and volunteers as a key factor for sustainability (for BRC and NRCS). Having been part of the ERO should be an important criteria for being selected as part of future programme team. Future NRCS and potential BRC programmes could also use the same community volunteers to keep them engaged.
- Recommendation: ensure guidance developed during this programme is documented to help foster institutional memory (for BRC and NRCS). In particular, lessons about how to tailor specific activities (PASSA, CfW, WASH infrastructure, etc.) to the urban context and what risks to consider should be consolidated and documented to assist future urban programming.
- CTP recommendation: further encourage NRCS to be at the forefront of CTP in country (for BRC). Continue efforts to advocate for CTP in new sectors and support “champions” of CTP in NRCS. Empower NRCS to take a leadership role in cash advocacy and coordination, for 7 instance by disseminating the cash-related SOP and guidance from this programme with the broader humanitarian community in country

‘Nepal Earthquake Response Programme Mid-term review’ by Progress Inc, February 2018, for Christian Aid

- A multi-tier approach of selecting beneficiaries can be adopted to meet the expectations of the all the vulnerable community people. The overarching criteria can be “the most vulnerable”; those without the economic status and capacity to bounce back from the disaster. Additional criteria alongside this can be single women, women, disabled, marginalized ethnic groups etc.
- Livelihood support should include building transformative capacities of the beneficiaries by strengthening links between communities, governmental bodies, and financial institutions.
- A complaints mechanism should be institutionalised and informal case handlings should be clearly documented. This would increase project transparency and ensure flexibility in adapting to beneficiaries’ preferences and feedback.
- Where resources are available, mason training programs should include unskilled labour and women- only trainings to build larger work forces that will help to bridge the gaps in masonry capacity within communities. It is important that CAID contributes to transforming gender stereotypes that define “women’s work’ and “men’s work”. In this context, eliminating the criteria for selection of beneficiaries such as being semi-skilled for qualifying for masonry and carpentry training would provide opportunities for women to opt in to non-traditional work.
- Sustainability of the supported infrastructure needs further strengthening. In addition to the support provided in building infrastructures, there needs to be a stronger focus on ensuring beneficiaries develop a sense of ownership over the infrastructure. Responsibilities for maintenance and repair should be clearly designated, and the infrastructure should be handed over to the community with a clearly defined exit plan. Formation of Village Maintenance Groups (VMG) and operation funds need to be in place to ensure a lasting sense of ownership among the community, leading to stronger sustainability

‘Plan International DEC-funded response to the Nepal earthquakes, 2015 independent evaluation final report 2018’ by Proaction Alliance

- Greater consistency and improved information sharing need to be practised across the project. Some community members expressed their displeasure over the selection process for certain forms of support provided. This seems especially to be the case in relation to livelihood support. Some people who received goats, for

example, were given different amounts of financial support, the reasons explained to them being that additional charges, such as transportation, had to be discounted. The content and amounts of these packages are, however, clearly described in project documents yet the responsible implementing partner applies different systems in different communities – without explanation. Greater consistency is therefore required across the project in this respect.

- Conduct more regular on-site monitoring of implementing partner staff, to include consultations with beneficiaries. In line with the above recommendation, and comments shared again with the evaluation team, Plan International Nepal should increase its monitoring of its partners work, including how often partners are convening community consultations and how they are responding to feedback. This should include roles covered by Project Supervisors, Field Staff and Social Mobilisers, in particular. This is particularly important to provide timely support to beneficiaries acquiring new livelihood skills and underpins future sustainability.
- Plan must ensure that Rights and Protection issues are adequately and consistently covered throughout projects like this, from emergency response to recovery and phase out. Though not a specific focus of this evaluation, it is believed that children's rights and protection issues were at the forefront of the emergency response. Evidence from Phase 2, however, suggests a significant tailing off of this support as seen both in the absence, or non-use, of complaints boxes, a lack of knowledge of alternative feedback mechanisms and findings from the quantitative household surveys.
- Prior to phase out, Plan International Nepal should organise a capacity building event on Child Protection for newly appointed government structures. Under the newly established Gaunpalika and Ward levels, Child Protection is unlikely to be given immediate prominence. Some of Plan International Nepal's partners, such as HURADEC know, however, that there are still serious concerns about children's rights and protection issues in some earthquake-affected communities in Dolakha. Without insight and guidance from Plan International Nepal, progress made thus far might easily lose traction as newly appointed representatives in local government offices are likely to be – and consequently remain – unaware of these needs and how to address them. This concern was raised by many institutions.
- Extreme caution needs to be exercised in matching beneficiary selection with distribution. While guidance was established to inform the selection of beneficiaries for different types of support, the criteria for final selection needs to be clear to everyone and respected by those in charge of eventual distributions.
- Plan Nepal's local partners need to ensure that all field staff are aware of the support that is destined for beneficiaries, and be ready and willing to respond to concerns expressed by beneficiaries. Field staff, including social mobilisers, of Plan's implementing partners – in particular ECARDS – need to be more visible amongst communities, especially those receiving new forms of livelihood support. Constant attention is required in this respect to overcome staff turnover and ensure open lines of communication are maintained. While not necessarily serving as technical experts, staff need to know who to contact in search of assistance for specific issues such as veterinary support or livestock insurance.
- Prior to hand over, Plan International Nepal should organise a training event on Disaster Risk Management for newly established structures at the Gaunpalika and Ward levels¹². Plan, with its strong community focus, is in an ideal position to provide a short training event on disaster risk management to newly appointed government officials. This could be undertaken at the same time as it phases out its support, informs new authorities on what has happened through the development of the LDRMPs and explores how resources might be mobilised to continue support for these plans.

- Greater clarity is required for community members to understand the status of their local/Ward level disaster preparedness plan. A significant number of people who contributed to this evaluation's findings are not involved in, nor aware of, local disaster preparedness or management plans. While recognising and appreciating that changes to the government's administration, together with some continuing uncertainties in personnel/posts, might have added to this confusion, maximum effort needs to be made in the remaining time in Phase 2B to try and get future clarity and direction on this, with clearly understandable information being provided to communities

**'Tearfund Nepal earthquake response mid-term external evaluation, December 2016',
by Robert Schofield, Srijana Nepal and Madhu Thapa**

- a common beneficiary selection approach should be developed across Partners, with closer attention paid (by MRC-N & RADO in particular) to involving the community in developing clear criteria on who is eligible for programmes, communicating this carefully to the wider community as well as involving the WCF and LDMC and ensuring that Community Mobilisers are fully engaged in the selection process.
- the RADO handwashing station design should be reviewed and more careful consideration given to the siting of handwashing facilities in future. RADO should consider returning to Bageshwori Secondary School to install a more conventional tippy tap design next to the latrine block.
- vocational training should continue and be reinforced, being careful to select the right participants and the right vocations, bearing in mind the particular needs and opportunities in each community.
- RADO should reinforce their quality control systems and processes.
- KAP Surveys should be routinely conducted for all training events and ideally several months after the training, in order to capture evidence of the impact of trainings
- Community Mobilisers should be based within the communities they are serving in order to be most useful.
- the focus of Phase 2b should be on the most affected and difficult to access wards, such as Agra Ward 7 and Tistung Ward.
- Tearfund should structure expectations with Partners about the end date of the programme as soon as practical in order that Partners can plan accordingly.
- the primary relationship holder between Tearfund and the Partner should be made clear to Partners.
- the monitoring framework should be agreed at the outset of a new programme and rolled out across all Managers and Partners.

**'Islamic Relief Worldwide independent evaluation of Nepal earthquake response' by
Abhijit Bhattacharjee, April 2017**

- The project needs to speed up toilet construction for individual houses to ensure that each household has a toilet when houses are handed over to owners
- Sanitation and hygiene education components of WASH need attention in future
- The project needs to document lessons from shelter construction and, working with the Red Cross, undertake advocacy with the GoN, NGOs and donors.
- Going into the future, shelter will need to be prioritised by agencies, despite the challenges in implementation. Creative ways and options to encourage people to build safer and earthquake-resilient houses through conditional cash subsidies and incentives, backed by good monitoring, will be needed.

- Water and sanitation will need stronger focus in the next phase, should IRW be able to mobilise resources.
- Conduct systemic research on mechanisms for borrowing by aspiring migrants and leakages in the remittance system to estimate household economy loss, and design appropriate response which may involve advocacy, development of inclusive financial /microenterprise system and awareness creation.

‘Nepal earthquake emergency response review’ (2015) DEC and HC, London and Ottawa by David Sanderson, Andrea Rodericks, Nabina Shrestha N and Ben Ramalingam B

- For the recovery, identify and address the needs of those excluded so far from the response, such as unreached VDCs and wards, those missed off registers, urban renters and the most marginalised in communities, and develop strategies to listen and respond to needs prioritised by people
- Get ready for the next disaster: apply the NRRC Nine Minimum Characteristics of a Resilient Community to recovery activities
- Capitalise on the ‘recovery window’ to advocate for the passing of a world- leading Disaster Management Act that prioritises equity, inclusion and gender equality, and which stipulates dedicated local level government funds for emergency preparedness
- In cash distributions, be mindful of equity within communities and co-ordinate amounts and distribution modalities between agencies. Proactively facilitate learning and sharing to establish an evidence-base of what works
- Build the right housing based on listening to people’s realities: support traditional building practices that use existing approaches and materials, adhering to seismic standards
- Invest in both safer rebuilding and future livelihoods by training women and men carpenters, plumbers, masons and others using recognised certified schemes such as CTEVT
- Ensure an INGO collective voice in representing common issues to government and other stakeholders, making use of established networks such as AIN
- To contribute better to national and local NGO capacity, recovery plans must be jointly developed with NGO partners, wherein these partners have an equal stake in strategy, direction and sign off
- Work collaboratively to improve two-way communication with communities to counter rumour, maintain clear and consistent messaging and to share feedback and analysis useful to agencies, co-ordinating bodies and government. To ensure INGOs are listening to people, monitor and report on how programmes have adapted as a result of community feedback
- To improve efficiency and effectiveness, invest in significantly improving communication between agencies, within clusters and to government making use of available and emerging digital tools.

‘Clearing away the Rubble: Moving beyond blockages to reconstructions process’ (HRRP and CFP) 2017

- Invest in face-to-face communication methods to better communicate complex concepts, such as the grant process and the associated technical requirements, and support vulnerable and marginalised families. This will involve scaling up the presence of field staff, particularly social mobilisers.
- Engage and develop community leaders, elected officials, and construction material vendors and producers as effective agents of the recovery. In particular, women

need to be supported to take on this role so that they can bring other women into the process

- Scaling up the coverage and quality of the core socio-technical assistance package is an urgent and critical task, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised households.
- Bring women into the reconstruction process in a meaningful way. This means treating them as full agents of the recovery, targeting them with information, engaging them in training and enabling them to take reconstruction into their own hands. With more women than men in rural areas, properly engaging women is the only way to improve the pace and the quality of the reconstruction process.
- Where masons trainings are provided, equal opportunity needs to be given to female participants through single gender trainings.
- Consider language and literacy skills. Information needs to be available in these languages, particularly through trained local social mobilisers and community leaders.
- Displaced and landless households require special, long term support throughout their reconstruction process.
- Further research and documentation of the cost of reconstruction is needed. E.g. what impact does the distance of the house from the road have? How are material and labour
- costs increasing or decreasing over time? What impact is inflation having
- Reconstruction in urban areas needs renewed focus and support. As urbanisation continues to increase in Nepal, it is important that urban reconstruction has adequate support and direction to support the longer-term urban development planning and Disaster Risk Resilience efforts.
- Develop compliance requirements and inspection formats for additional building materials and typologies, e.g. hollow concrete blocks, timber frame with infill, and traditional architecture.

Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project

- It is essential to ensure that the reconstruction and recovery programme does not make anyone worse off than they were before the earthquake.
- It is time to abolish the deadlines.
- The issue of access to reasonable needs to be taken up seriously by all partners to the reconstruction and recovery process.

Independent Impacts and Recovery Monitoring Phase 3: Sep 3016 Synthesis Report. The Asia Foundation and UK Aid

- Communicate information on government cash grant procedures more quickly and clearly to local government offices and citizens. Local stakeholders, who are close to affected communities, should be utilized more for sharing information.
- Collect information on challenges related to accessing the grants after agreements have been signed, and on the number of people who have yet to withdraw the grant from bank accounts.
- Technical assistance during reconstruction needs to be more widely available.
- Strengthen coordination mechanisms and information flows between the NRA and government line ministries in Kathmandu, districts headquarters, and the local level. Roles and responsibilities of different bodies need to be more clearly defined.
- Develop plans for the clear transfer of responsibilities related to reconstruction and recovery work to new local bodies after local body restructuring.

- Improve the quality of shelters for the medium- term and prioritize programs to mitigate the consequences of staying in temporary shelter (targeted health support and medicine, temporary water and sanitation facilities, women's security).
- Complete assessments to determine whether people can return to and rebuild on land deemed to be at risk. Clearly communicate the findings of such assessments to local stakeholders and affected households.
- Generate policy for supporting the permanent resettlement of displaced households unable to return to their land.
- Expand soft loan programs, strengthen communication about them, and ensure they reach those in remote areas and marginalized groups.
- Ensure better awareness of government low interest loans in particular and make these more widely available. Central-level loan policies may need to be revised to ensure better access for those in need of credit.
- Strengthen communication channels for local communities to express their needs.
- Track long-term psychosocial impacts of the earthquakes and their implications for recovery and expand psychosocial support for earth- quake-affected communities.
- Continue to provide livelihood support to help generate incomes for poor households, especially for farmers.
- Pay more attention to the specific challenges of vulnerable groups to facilitate special assistance that enhances their ability to recover. This includes the need to develop a greater under- standing of who is vulnerable in local areas and the factors preventing vulnerable groups from recovering.
- Targeted aid should be context-sensitive; this means local communities need to be informed of and involved in the development and implementation of targeted aid programs to avoid conflict.

Annex two. Key informant interview questions

DEC Nepal earthquakes meta-synthesis key informant interview questions

The purpose of the meta synthesis is to learn lessons for the next disaster response.

All answers are treated in confidence and answers will not attributed to the interviewees.

1. Overall how effective was the response?
2. Did you see or were involved in any particular innovations? Pleased describe
3. Overall, what worked and what didn't work?
4. To what extent did the views of crisis-affected people guide programme design and implementation? Examples?
5. Overall, how efficient has the response been (eg use of resources)?
6. How effective were coordination mechanisms, such as Clusters, and other coordination platforms or informal groups?
7. How did the response contribute to long term recovery? Any examples?
8. How well was gender-based violence (GBV) and vulnerability addressed?
9. How well did DEC members' actions support the government's response? What could have been better?
10. How well did DEC members work with local actors, eg civil society, private sector, army?
11. How did the general operating environment affect agency operations (eg government, weather)? Any examples?
12. In hindsight, what should the response have done differently?
13. Anything we have missed you would like to tell us about?

Annex three. Online survey findings

Nineteen online surveys were completed. All respondents were from DEC organisations and partners organisations.

- 1. Overall, the response of international NGOs and their partners was effective**
26% Strongly agree, 58% Agree, 0% Neutral, 11% Disagree, 5% Strongly Disagree

“emergency response was more effective than recovery response. Emergency response missed urban affected communities, areas and issues”

“In different evaluation surveys, Beneficiaries expressed that the quality of distributed items were as much as they expected.”

- 2. The terrain was a major obstacle to the response**
32% Strongly Agree, 42% Agree, 11% Neutral, 16% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“it was a factor to consider in designing the response and optimising resources. If you consider it an obstacle it tends to show predetermined response activities”

“I would say too many and conflicting requirements from the government side were the key obstacles. Apart from that, some geo political issues also should be considered as a major obstacle”

“More than the terrain, the damage and devastation worsened/impacted mobility.”

- 3. The government was supportive of I/NGO operations**
11% Strongly Agree, 42% Agree, 42% Neutral, 5% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“supportive of emergency response, less supportive of post emergency.”

“Government bodies supported I/NGO operations but unclear policies and regulation on response has hampered reconstruction and recovery activities”

- 4. Coordination between operational organisations was effective**
5% Strongly Agree, 53% Agree, 32% neutral, 5% Disagree, 5% Strongly Disagree

“coordination was effective in the emergency, less effective in the recovery. There was zero transparency on resources available and how they were deployed. Is coordination only planning and reporting activities or also coordinating the resources available to optimise their deployment across all the areas of need”

“HRRP, was the platform that made the coordination effective and possible.”

- 5. The most vulnerable were prioritised in the response**
17% Strongly Agree, 44% Agree, 33% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 6% Strong disagree

“most affected were prioritised, whether most in need or not - urban poor, renters etc not prioritised.”

“All agencies made efforts to reach the most vulnerable, however, there was tremendous pressure from different sections, particularly from communities for a blanket approach. Agencies made a conscious choice to overlook inclusion error (5%-8%)”

“people in labor work and migrated families were left out due to criteria set by the government for targeting as well as political influence at local level.”

6. There was a high degree of innovation in the response

5% Strongly Agree, 47% Agree, 26% Neutral, 11% Disagree, 11% Strongly Disagree

“fetish of innovation over effectiveness or relevance. many organisations might think they were innovating, but I didn't see anything that hasn't been done before. increased scale of cash, but not new cash. a number of failed attempts at innovation, 3D printing, other technologies, marketed as innovation but if they failed do they still count?”

“I am not sure that there could be innovation as organization followed set standard of their response to disaster affected”

“Could have been better through improved coordination among agencies - experience sharing and lessons learnt.”

7. The response has contributed to a lasting recovery

12% Strongly Agree, 59% Agree, 24% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“the scale of the disaster meant there are unrealistic expectations of 'resilience', rather than recognising this is a catastrophe that will take a decade to recover from”

“Yes the response definitely set the tone for a faster and lasting recovery. It certainly contributed in saving and preserving lives.”

8. Crisis-affected people guided programme design and implementation

12% Strongly Agree, 53% Agree, 24% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“to the extent that they had cash for shelter and cash for reconstruction, they had greater control over decisions. but is that the same as guiding programme design and implementation? that assumes programmes are defined at local level?”

“I noticed the organization did its effort some how to include affected people through adopting different participatory approach for planning and review of response program. However, mostly the organization has set package to deliver for target population.”

“Rapid assessments and baseline surveys were conducted with meaningful participation of local community people and long term program were developed and launching.”

“Almost all were NGO/UN/Donor guided programmes!”

9. Gender-based violence (GBV) was sufficiently addressed

6% Strongly Agree, 47% Agree, 35% Neutral, 12% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“Different intervention was designed and implement by the organization to address GBV. The key intervention were awareness program, temporary safe house for survivors and referral and case management services. Such intervention some how helped to reduce cases of GBV and provide justice for the survivors. However lasting changes for their recovery and rehabilitation of GBV survivors is still challenges.”

10. The relationship between international NGOs and their partners was effective

24% Strongly Agree, 65% Agree, 6% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“Still need to invest for building humanitarian capacity of local partners”

“International NGOs and their partner collectively implemented response program. Joint sharing and consultation in implementation was highly observed. There is also effective communication and mutual trust among the partners Basically the role of partner was to work at front line and deliver the service where as INGOs usually provide back-stopping and monitoring support. The partner had raised some issues that the INGOs keep most resources with them whereas partner had limited mandate to spend. Also the partners were not adequately consulted during design phase.”

11. DEC members' actions supported the government's response

47% Strongly Agree, 47% Agree, 6% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“DEC members' implemented many physical and non-physical reconstruction and recovery works.”

12. DEC members and their partners worked well with local actors

35% Strongly Agree, 59% Agree, 0% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“DEC member and their partner completely followed coordination mechanism set by the government at local level. The target population were identified as well action plan was determined with due consultation of local actors such as village development committees, ward citizen forums and users' committee.”

13. Where relevant, programmes used local knowledge

24% Strongly Agree, 59% Agree, 12%Neutral, 0% Disagree, 6%Strongly Disagree

“Programs somehow used local knowledge particularly for construction of earthquake resilient private houses. It utilized local masons and provide management responsibility to local users committee to construct WASH, Shelter and livelihood infrastructures. With this, program used some set standard as prescribed by expert as well as guideline of the government.”

14. Overall, the response from DEC members and their partners was good value for money

41%Strongly Agree, 41% Agree, 12% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“very uneven, some organisations were good value. some were extremely wasteful.”
“I have noticed that the all planed actions were achieved with-in stipulated time-frame. The investment done by the program was successful to achieve its intended results. The beneficiary households expressed their stratification towards quality of program actions.”

15. The clusters were the best places to coordinate

47% Strongly Agree, 35% Agree, 18% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0%Strongly Disagree

“only as long as they existed. shelter ran away too quickly to a messy transition. Recovery coordination was not effective in the cluster without any support from the lead agency”
“Initial stage , it offered the key platform, however, later other platform proved to be more effective, i.e HRRP , donors' partners coordination platform etc”

16. Local organisations were sufficiently included in cluster coordination

18% Strongly Agree, 29% Agree, 29% Neutral, 24% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“Cluster system is not adequately localized and there is very limited space for local organizations in cluster coordination.”

17. Overall, the shelter response was appropriate

24% Strongly Agree, 47% Agree, 18% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“Yes, the shelter response as appropriate at most. The program supported to affected households to construct their own house adopting build back better technique. The program also helped to develop trained masons those adequately contribute to build their own houses adopting earthquake resilient techniques as well as help to utilize housing grants from the government.”

18. Overall, protection was a high priority in the response

18% Strongly Disagree, 59% agree, 18% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“Narrowly defined, and missing constituencies. needs to be more than 'disaster affected' more sophisticated interpretation for future, particularly to accompany large cash support programmes.”

19. Overall, livelihoods programming was appropriate

13% Strongly Agree, 44% Agree, 13% Neutral, 31% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“Still there is need for more income generating program to sustain secure income of affected families.”

20. Clusters could have been more effective

13% Strongly Agree, 63% Agree, 25% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“longer timing for such a large disaster, better handover to the NRA, better transfer of documentation, better training of local staff for future disasters, etc”

21. Sufficient attention was given to affected urban areas

0% Strongly Agree, 18% Agree, 59% Neutral, 12% Disagree, 12% Strongly Disagree

“I am not sure as I noticed that most of response program was focused on rural part of the affected districts. Some of government program was there in urban part too and grant of government was distributed flatly to all affected population irrespective of their residence of living.”

22. Coordination between sectors was effective

0% Strongly Agree, 41% Agree, 41% Neutral, 18% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

23. Cash based programming was effective

18% Strongly Agree, 53%% Agree, 29% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“please note the government was the biggest implementor and NGOs need to think about their role in relation to that. including protection roles to promote information, support those missing out on assistance etc.,”

24. The amount of cash-based programming could have been more

12% Strongly Agree, 65% Agree, 18% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“Not sure, my opinion cash based support was adequate. However it need to expand to cover more households”

“Based on HHs’ needs”

25. Local NGOs were sufficiently engaged in the response

29% Strongly Agree, 59% Agree, 12% Neutral, 0% Disagree ,0% Strongly Disagree

“Yes, Local NGOs acted at front line to deliver all response that include implement the program and coordinating with local stakeholders and community members.”

26. Women in affected communities were prominent in decision making within the response

0% Strongly Agree, 47% agree, 47% neutral, 6% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“They were part of the response but not the key decision maker”

“Women's participation was strongly encouraged and practiced but not in all cases they might have been decision-maker.”

27. Sexual exploitation and abuse of disaster-affected communities took place

0% Strongly Agree, 6% Agree, 53% neutral, 29% disagree, 12% Strongly Disagree

“I agree to some extent, the cases were emerging out, but I am not sure whether there is any research done on it by protection cluster.”

28. Local people were provided the skills and training necessary to build back better

29% Strongly Agree, 53% Agree, 18% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“Yes, local masons were included in training to build earthquake resilient house construction where skill of build back better were adequately provided. Training graduates were further mobilized and engaged in building private housing construction applying build back better technique.”

“For shelter construction”

29. WASH (water, sanitation ad health) needs were sufficiently addressed

5% Strongly Agree, 41% Agree, 29% Neutral, 24% Disagree, 0% Strongly disagree

“Addressed to large extent. But should have done more.”

30. The rights of children were upheld

6% Strongly Agree, 44% Agree, 38% Neutral, 13% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

31. Psychosocial support was adequately addressed

6% Strongly Agree, 24% Agree, 59% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“community coping mechanisms and cultural considerations could have been supported more”

“At initial stage, it was addressed, but later stage I am not sure”

32. The recovery took longer than it should have

24% Strongly Agree, 41% Agree, 12% Neutral, 18% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

33. International NGOs were sufficiently accountable to local communities

12% Strongly Agree, 59% Agree, 18% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“they were not accountable to communities or government, particularly in how resources were used, allocated, concentrated, reported, etc. more transparency please.”

“It varied among INGOs. However, efforts were made following CHS standard”

“There are some organisations who followed the principles of accountability to a greater extent whilst some even disregarded a basic minimum requirement.”

34. Project duplication was at times unhelpful

6% Strongly Agree, 29% Agree, 59% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

“not a big issue in a huge disaster, more important were the gaps and the lack of efforts to address them”

35. Local NGOs were sufficiently accountable to local communities

18% Strongly Agree, 59% agree, 6% Neutral, 18% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

36. The conditions were so complex that the response was the best that could have been hoped for

12% Strongly Agree, 41% Agree, 35% Neutral, 6% Disagree, 6% Strongly Disagree

“I think you have to give more credit to the government for what they managed to achieve considering the complexity and scale. NGOs did quite well in the emergency, but could have done better. the main credit needs to go also to affected communities who built shelters themselves, quickly and well. complexity should acknowledge the fuel crisis et”

37. Nepal is ready for the next earthquake

0% Strongly Agree, 41% agree, 35% neutral, 18% disagree, 6% strongly disagree

“Capacities have been enhanced. But not to cope / manage another disaster of this magnitude”

“The structures are stronger, the communities are prepared for future disasters, government is taking steps to make communities disaster resilient, however the amount of these works doesn't seem sufficient.”

Annex four. Recommendations resulting from the Kathmandu workshop Planning for Real exercise

1. Community led process as a non-negotiable
2. Youth and their alliances have done well in responding. Their engagement can be strengthened for better response
3. Increased cash-based programming
4. More investment in local institution building
5. Better coordination among agencies – needs assessment, technical (sectoral), information sharing
6. Response to be integrated into development programming – ‘better response starts from preparedness’
7. Pre-positioning of response mechanisms to reduce loss (coordination, items, capacity)
8. Ensure debt is not built up by recovering communities
9. Multi-year funding, leading to continuity, and better emergency to recovery operations
10. Work with local government more and introduce policy through them

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