

Peoples Caravan on Reconstruction and Recovery



Acknowledgement

This report **“Peoples Caravan on Reconstruction and Recovery”** reflects the situation and issues of earthquake affected communities. We thank Dr. Padma Prasad Khatiwada who rigorously worked to provide insight and expertise to develop this report.

We thank different federations, networks and alliances, media, NGOs, advocates, CSO activists for their support and solidarity in the campaign. Further, our sincere gratitude goes to the survivors of the earthquake who supported in the campaign to make it a huge success.

We like to appreciate the support of the district chapters of all the federations for leading the caravan in the districts. We are indebted to the support of Jyapu Samaj Yala for their collaboration and support for the caravan at National level.

We are thankful to OXFAM Nepal for their financial support and would also like to show our gratitude to Media Advocacy Campaign (MAC) team for their continuous support throughout the campaign. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Ms. Geeta Pandey from HAMI for her intensive work throughout the caravan.

We are grateful to HAMI initiators, for their continuous support and coordination during the overall advocacy process of HAMI campaign.

Thank you

Min Bahadur Shahi
Convener, HAMI
January, 2017

Preamble

We have a concern over the government's campaign on reconstruction aftermath damage and loss due to the 25 April devastating earthquake occurred in Nepal, particularly on the issues related to affected communities' economic, social and cultural diversities and the questions of social justice connected to them. We are concerned about social justice and economic, social and cultural rights in the multicultural landscape of quake affected areas constituted by a diverse population. We realise the need of strengthening the voice of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) across Nepal for generating efforts to ensure the rights of the affected people and communities based on the principle of humanitarian accountability, and by complying with the international instruments on human rights and humanitarian laws. We believe in channelizing funds for Nepal's reconstruction based on and as mandated by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), Bussan Outcome Document, policies framed for sustainable development goals (SDGs), as well as Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA).

We, more than 1,000 participants of the national caravan from different parts of the earthquake affected districts, Rasuwa, Dhading, Nuwakot, Dolakha, and Sindhupalchowk and the civic organisations attending as a solidarity including the local communities from different corners of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, the left ones in the list of the government's beneficiaries, the left ones after once included in the list, the affected ones staying the temporary shelters, the affected ones without legal documents, the affected ones with complaint letters would like to declare and call upon on the following among the workers of relief agencies, NGOs, members of Legislature Parliament and local politicians.

Summon and Declaration

1. We are seriously concerned about the democratic participation of individuals

and communities in the reconstruction of earthquake affected regions. We draw the conclusion that the pace of reconstruction is very slow. Thus, we urge the government to use the local resources and materials, particularly use the optimum level of local knowledge and skills, in reconstruction process, preserving the culture, habit and practice and creating the conducive environment for speedy reconstruction.

2. We civil society organizations have stressed from the very beginning the need for an establishment of powerful National Reconstruction Authority. However, the current National Reconstructions Authority (NRA) is a weak entity under the domination of bureaucracy. With the politicization of NRA, there are frequent changes of CEO with the change of government. We, therefore, call for a powerful Reconstruction Authority to carry out the reconstruction, reaching to the victims and their families. We have a concern that the NRA failed to work as a coordinating institution.

Policies and Programmes

3. We reiterate the responsibility of the government to protect and promote the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the citizens and thus call upon the government to ensure that the reconstruction policies and programmes, the planning and the processes should be inclusive and human rights friendly. We appeal the government for including youth in the reconstruction who are compelled to seek the foreign labour.
4. We request the government to nullify the existing discriminatory laws and policies through special measures in view of the participation in the reconstruction policies and programmes for Dalit, Women, Children, Youth, Adolescents, Landless, Tenants, Persons with Disability, Third Gender and Sexual Minorities.



5. We are committed for the continue monitoring of the reconstruction based on the principle of 'Continual Improvement' with regards to the humanitarian and developmental activities carried out by the government and the international communities.

Support to the Affected

6. We have a concern that the budget allocated by the government to be spent on reconstruction should ensure the rights of the affected communities. We urge the government to involve the affected community in the process of ensuring transparency and accountability.
7. We appeal the government to ease the supply of the timber, subsidy on the taxation in the land registration, loan with cheap interest, drinking water, toilet, and sanitation as per the commitments made through PDNA, budget speech and other various documents.
8. We urge the government to bring out the scientific land use policies at a time the first instalment of NRs 50,000 has not been properly utilised or distributed to the affected households due to the continuous crack of the land, landslides, and floods. We urge the government to rehabilitate and resettle the affected households who lost their houses and lands due to the landslides and floods.

Participation

9. The earthquake has aggravated the lives of the indigenous nationalities, Dalits, landless, single women, poor and small farmers. The government should give special priority to ensure participation of these communities while formulating policies related to forest and others.

Reconstruction: An Opportunity

10. We urge the government and express our commitments to build back better the heritages, towers and historic monuments
11. We urge the government and the political parties to approve the Disaster Management Bill tabled in the parliament by ensuring the meaningful participation of the civic organizations.
12. We call on the government, political parties and all other stakeholders to hold the election of local level and carry out the reconstruction work through the elected representatives and implement the new constitution.

Monitoring Reconstruction: The CSO Perspective

Humanitarian Accountability Monitoring Initiative (HAMI), the convergence of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working with the right holders (women, children, indigenous nationalities, Dalit, youth, senior citizens, and persons with disability, LGBTIs/MSM, and other marginalized and excluded groups) has obtained civil society mandate in monitoring the humanitarian accountability in the aftermath of 2015's devastating earthquakes. The convergence, as a loose network of the CSOs with a firm belief that future generation will increase their capacity enough to combat disasters, monitors the attempts and progresses made in overcoming disasters including earthquake, flood and landslide among others. It particularly scans activities of government, international donors, non-government organizations and private sectors. HAMI has played a significant role in policy advocacy based on evidence-based information and data generated through collective fact-finding and monitoring efforts.

Major Concern: Justice and Dignity

HAMI has a concern about social justice and dignity of the disaster-affected communities, particularly their entitlements on economic, social and cultural rights in the multicultural landscape of quake-affected areas constituted by a diverse population. Realizing the need of the strengthened voice of the CSOs complying with the principles of humanitarian accountability as enshrined in the international instruments on human rights and humanitarian laws, HAMI has demanded the government to channelize fund for post-earthquake reconstruction in accordance with Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), Bussan Outcome Document, policies framed for sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA).

As a part of holding authorities accountable while dealing with the disasters HAMI has been able to coordinate with the federations and alliances

of Nepalese CSOs. By holding series of dialogue, interaction, public hearing with the stakeholders it has been established as firebrand campaigner for victims. On 24 June 2015, it organized a CSO forum. Similarly, a dialogue entitled "Civic-political dialogue on Reconstruction was organized in first week of September 2015. A Conference was organized on 25 April of 2016 in Barpak, the epicenter of 2015's devastating earthquake. Apart from these dozens of public hearings, interactions, press-meets, appeal for urgent actions and initiatives were taken which are reflected in its over half a dozen publications. HAMI is stressing for democratic participation of people in disaster recovery process, use local resources and indigenous knowledge, respect to local culture, customs and needs of local people, inclusiveness. It has also been advocating for human rights friendly policies, reformulating policy related to landless people, displaced and women, single women, people with disability and sexual minorities.

Principle of Continual Improvement: Abided by All

Reiterating the government to abide by the 'principle of continual improvement', which is directly adhered to the humanitarian accountability, HAMI has been expressing its serious concern over sluggish post-earthquake reconstruction. It has urged the authorities to speed up post-earthquake reconstruction works even by replacing laws and policies or formulate new ones. HAMI has also urged international donors, NGOs and private sectors to implement law and policy related to monetary and non-monetary support for the sake of the affected communities. Attending the functions organized by the HAMI, CSOs have asked the government to create an enabling environment for them so that they can monitor post-disaster situations and ensure whether affected communities' needs are met. In this respect, the government should guarantee optimum utilization of available financial resources and adopt "Zero Tolerance to Corruption" policy. Furthermore, transparency and accountability should be fully ensured while

implementing post-earthquake reconstruction works. The government should focus its activities on reinstating the sustainable livelihood in the affected areas, thereby promoting self-reliant economy, ensuring food security and self-employment. HAMI has repeatedly asked the government and international agencies to encourage the affected people get involved in productive sectors and revive supply chain system. HAMI has also urged the government to enact Land Use Act that provisions scientific land zoning without further delay. Reorganizations of settlements and urban development plans especially for those landless people due to various reasons are required through geological studies across the country. It has recommended that the Government should amend land acquisition act as soon as possible, which is prerequisite for reconstruction works.

Peoples Caravan: Demanding Justice

HAMI organized People's Caravan in the most quake-affected districts of Nepal to disseminate messages of rebuilding quake resilient houses and closely monitor the post earthquake reconstruction works.

The key objective of People's Caravan was to draw government's attention towards apathy of quake victims and put all concerned stakeholders under pressure to expedite reconstruction works, formulate pro-people friendly policies. Specifically, the caravan initiatives were organized in the district level at first and then in the national aimed to identify affected communities' issues regarding post-earthquake reconstruction. The issues collected through these processions further aimed to present the peoples' issues on reconstruction from district to national level authorities (NRA, NPC, MOHA, MOFALD and respective district administration offices as well as DDCs).

Quake victims mainly landless, internally displaced, helpless, CSOs, NGOs, different

federations, alliances, networks and media actively participated in the caravans organized in severely quake-hit districts..The caravans initially began in districts of Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Sindhupalchok, Gorkha, Dolakha in November and December, 2016. It was finally organized Kathmandu valley on 4 January 2017.

The Caravans truly represented demands of affected communities. Their problems range from equitable justice to recognition of locals as quake victims. For example, obtaining NRs 50,000 by an affected household in the remote Gorkha and an urban household in Khokana cannot be a fair decision of the government. The government is trying to govern diverse communities with the single policy. Similarly, a house destroyed by earthquake inside Mangal Bazaar of Lalitpur can be accessed only when other five undamaged houses are destroyed. This has put many quake-affected households of inner cities in a fix. That's why reconstruction works have not began in core cities despite getting Rs 50000 as first tranche of housing reconstruction aid. People are equally concerned over whether transparency and accountability will be compromised while implementing post-earthquake reconstruction. They are also equally worried over their rights and dignity.

By observing areas of affected communities HAMI in collaboration with Jyapu Samaj organised the National Caravan in Saugal Tole, one of the most affected urban areas of Lalitpur. Samaj, a convergence of historic cultural communities of Newar in Lalitpur has prepared over 40 maps of quake-destroyed areas.

Government's policies and programmes on reconstruction do not work when they are prepared without visiting affected areas. Evidences have proved that the government's reconstruction initiatives do not adhere to principles of equality and inclusivity. That's why HAMI firmly believes ownership and sustainability of post-earthquake reconstruction can be ensured only when the communities lead such works.

The Process

Caravans were conducted in six districts: Rasuwa, Gorkha, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha and Dhading. For this, HAMI core committee members and assigned district representatives from local organizations approached to lead the caravans in the districts. A separate action plan was made to make the caravan a success. HAMI members and the local organizers made confirmation of the participation of local communities including landless, people living in the camp, families excluded from beneficiaries' list. They coordinated with district stakeholders/ NGOs/ Media/CSOs/ government representatives and confirmed their participation. Coordination was also made with the federations and alliances including National Alliance for Human Rights and Social Justice Nepal (Human Right Alliance) NEFIN district councils, NGO Federation Nepal, Federation of Nepalese Journalists, Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) CSRC/ National Land Rights Forum, National Network of Community Disaster Management Committee (NCDMC) district chapters. All the organizers devoted their painstaking efforts for context and issue based preparation of placards and banner HAMI, OXFAM and the local organizations. The HAMI members and the main local organizers prepared reports of the whole proceedings in the respective districts.

The caravans took place on the respective district headquarters in presence of affected communities from and around the parts of the districts. The caravans began from bazaar areas of the district headquarters so that these events could attract the attention of the stakeholders regarding reconstruction. The caravans converted into mass meeting, where the affected communities expressed their concerns. Leaders of political parties, government representatives, and civil society expressed their commitment to speed up post-earthquake reconstruction works. Thus, the caravans themselves appeared as an effort for synergy making to boost up reconstruction rather than pointing our fingers against each other for delay in the rebuilding quake ravaged infrastructures. The forums were

created especially to gather different sectors stakeholders together, hear from each other, learn and set future strategies for collaboration for the cause of Nepal's reconstruction.

Voice of Affected Communities

Both the quake-affected household and speakers of Caravan raised the major issues concerning reconstruction of infrastructures in the district. Key issues raised by them are summarized as follows:

Incomplete survey: The government conducted housing survey is incomplete. Many genuine victims are not included in the beneficiaries' list. The government is not hearing their plea. Households listed in beneficiaries' list have not been able to reconstruct their quake destroyed houses mainly because of blue print, house land inside road extension projects. Such problems are rampant in Rasuwa and Sindhupalchowk districts.

Road expansion, additional problems: The government's decisions to expand roads and subsequent ban on sell and buy of land (15-metre of each side) along highways has appeared as yet another problem for the affected households in rebuilding houses. Many of the locals who own only the small piece of the land along highways, are planning to rebuild houses. They are sure to turn landless if government grabs their land. Further, the government has not yet announced compensation for land while their damaged houses are already at sorry state.

The ID Card: Even as quake victim cards were distributed immediately after earthquake there is a huge discrepancy in distributing immediate relief. For example Rs 7,000 was distributed in Rasuwa while 15,000 in other districts. Many locals still complain of depriving from aid. In Rasuwa, over 1500 complaints have been registered demanding victim's ID card. Most of households were displaced from their original settlement and they have registered complaints through their respective VDCs to the authority, however, has not responded to their queries. At the

public hearings and caravan, these households say they have now lost hope of getting the announced housing reconstruction aid.

Disputes with technicians: The technicians deployed by the government for assessing infrastructures damaged in the earthquakes have not been able to keep all the details. Consequently, many affected families have not been listed as beneficiaries. Some families, who lost everything in earthquake including house and family members, were also not included in beneficiaries' list. Earthquake victims, who received Rs 50,000 as first installment of housing reconstruction tranche, have been demanding to release the second installment to resume housing reconstruction.

According to the affected families, the government has approved 17 types of housing designs. The locals of Rasuwa, Gorkha and Sindhupalchowk, however, are not happy with the designs arguing that the design is not practical for them. They said designs do not suit in the district particularly in the high and steep hills of Rasuwa. Locals and technicians are at odd over the designs. The technicians want to enforce government-approved designs while affected

communities don't want to accept them. The communities say they need the house for at least five people. They are building houses with simple doors and windows having traditional ventilation to maintain airflow inside the house. "But the technicians do not understand our realities", said one of the earthquake victims of Rasuwa.

The land issue: Many affected families are not listed into beneficiaries' list since they lack officially registered list. "The lands we own belong to guthi, birta, or are ailani and tenant in nature. Although land dispute settling process is heard in the center, this has not been materialized here so far" complained earthquake victims.

Prem Nath Agasthi, a local land rights activist and earthquake victim in Rasuwa said, "The government announced eradication of Birta in 2016 BS but the same announcement is affecting us. We do not have land in our own name. We want to ask the government when you fulfill our right to get relief meant for earthquake victims". Premal Tamang of Naya Shakti Kendra says many people are facing problem of landlessness in the district.

Caravan in Rasuwa

According to the Population and Housing Census of 2011, the total households in Rasuwa were 9,741. The number of quake-affected household in the district, however, stands at 11,958, according to the record provided by the District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC). More than 50 thousands locals have been directly affected in the earthquake in the district. As many as 661 locals were dead, 134 disappeared and 981 injured in the earthquake.

The earthquake badly damaged Langtang Tourist Destination Centre. Landslides triggered by earthquake ravaged human settlements developed in Rasuwagadhi, Haku, Dandagaun, Thulo Gaun. Consequently, a huge number of local dwellers have still been either displaced or are compelled to live in the risky zone. Particularly, the displaced families from Haku and Dandagaun are still taking shelter under temporary shelter even after 19 months since devastating April earthquake. Dozens of hydropower plants have been damaged in the earthquake.

The People's Caravan on Reconstruction and Recovery took place in Dhunche, the district headquarters of Rasuwa, December 17 December 2016. HAMI, Oxfam, Human Rights Alliance district branch in Rasuwa and District Land Reform Forum were main organizers of the caravan in the district. Earthquake victims mainly landless people, internally displaced adults, women, youth from various communities attended the caravan. Civic-society federations, local CSOs, media, local political party leaders, government officials, a huge mass (around 200) marched the bazaar area of Dhunche before converging into a mass meeting in Dhunche.



Displaced families in problem: Some families displaced in earthquake are still living under the temporary camps. No one has given priority to their resettlement although they are suffering the most. *Mendo Tamang of Haku VDC -3, Rasuwa said, "We have no land. Since we are displaced in earthquake and there is no land registered in our own name we are now taking shelter in the public land. Many say this place is not safe and we are suggested to return to there for settlement. Where should we build new house? How to go for making an agreement when we do not have land registration certificate?"*

The affected families say they are deprived of getting almost all rights: food, locality, shelter, clothes, health, education and employment after the earthquake destroyed their properties. Still, the government is not listening to them. *Purna Bahadur Ghale, a victim taking shelter at Betrawati camp of Rasuwa said, "Women and children are facing the most problems. There is no proper health care and educating children is very hard. We have are living here in a rented land and owners are refusing to extend contract. Where shall we go now?"*

Where to go?

Many locals raised questions regarding government's involvement in reconstruction.

Tara Budhathoki and Sita Shrestha of Listi VDC, Sindhupalchowk shared that most settlements of the VDCs are in risk in aftermath of earthquake. Since landslide is posing a serious threat to human settlements locals want to move to safer places. But they are clueless about destination.

Inadequate housing reconstruction aid:

The government has announced to provide Rs. 300000 to each household rendered homeless in the earthquake. The government announced aid for housing reconstruction is not adequate mainly for those victims, who lost everything in the devastation. Inflation has devaluated the monetary support. Both the cost and transportation of construction materials has increased significantly. The quake affected households are to take subsidized loan but they are unaware about banking procedures required to get loan.

Some victims have already started to rebuild houses on their own while others have started the work even taking loan from bank. It is not yet clear whether these families would get government announced housing reconstruction aid. They have also no idea on how to get aid even if the government has a policy to provide the aid for such households.

Do houses with repairing get government aid? It is not yet clear whether victims who repaired quake-destroyed houses on their own would get government fund. Further, local are in a great confusion about agencies authorized to decide whether houses are repaired houses are earthquake resilient.

Landslide Risk: Locals of Kerauja, Gorkha are compelled to live in risky zone despite knowing that their settlements are at high risk of landslide. They have no other alternative but to continue to stay in the landslide-areas. They are passing really a miserable life. Government's promise to relocate locals from high-risk zone has not been implemented.

Suk Bahadur Gurung, a local of Kerauja, affected twice after earthquake. Gurug, who had been initially affected by the earthquake, is now displaced after his land was swept away by landslides. "Over 460 households which had been completely damaged in earthquake are now internally displaced," Gurung said adding, "But the government has not taken any step to relocate us."

Several people like Gurung raised their issues and handed over it to the CDOs by documenting demands in these districts. The caravan was

concluded in Kathmandu on January 17, two days after the 19th Earthquake Safety Day. After the completion of caravan consolidated demands were handed over to the government.

Children compelled to resume study in open space: School reconstruction has not yet started in almost all quake-affected districts. Consequently, the children are compelled to resume study under open sky.

Children left school due to lack of building: Mangal Sherpa, Bal Samrachan Samiti, Sindhupalchowk, had a question for District education office. He raised the issue that 30 children were compelled to leave school in the absence of school building. When he raised this issue no one was able to resolve problem.

Deteriorating security situation for senior citizens, women and children: Women and children have been facing most problem because they have to live in displaced situation. Consequently, cases of women violence are increasing. Since the health institutions have not been reconstructed, particularly, the senior citizens, the sick, children, pregnant women and the persons with disability under temporary shelter during winter and rainy season.



Caravan in Gorkha

Post-earthquake reconstruction could not begin in Gorkha, the epicenter of the devastating earthquake. The affected communities could not get immediate relief meant for earthquake victims in a proper way. More than 16000 households have registered complaints stating that they are not included in aid list. Of the total 58000 households beneficiaries, 52000 have made an agreement with the government for first lot of housing reconstruction aid. Of them, more than 1100 have not been able to build house because they don't know where and how to build the new house. The problem of landlessness is also acute in the district. Since the land is not in their name, the house is also not theirs. In this situation, the land/house owner, who does not stay there becomes richer not the real affected families. Those obtaining NPR 50,000 do not get genuine advice of the technicians. The technicians do not maintain uniformity in explaining technical matters in house reconstruction. Those who have already started building new house have been waiting for the second installment.

In order to draw attention towards delay in post-earthquake reconstruction, the civic organizations in this district assembled in the district headquarter for the People's Caravan held in coordination with HAMI. Oxfam had provided financial support for the caravan. Gorkha branches of Human Rights Alliance, FNJ, NGO Federation, Nepalese Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB), Network of Community Disaster Management Committee (NCDMC), Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN) and National Land Rights Forum were main organization of the caravan in the district.

Along with affected communities leaders of the local political parties, government officials, local organizations and media attended the caravan. Almost all speakers raised problem faced by locals residing in Kerauja of the district. The locals in Kerauja have been facing problem of landslide after the earthquake. The caravan became remarkable mainly after the earthquake victims taking shelter under temporary shelters, landless people, victims deprived of getting aid despite loss in the earthquake attended the function. They marched the Gorkha Bazaar with placards and banner demanding justice and timely reconstruction. The rally began from Chinese Dhara of the Gorkha Bazaar and the procession of nearly 500 people converted into a mass meeting at Harmatari Chowk.



Pic: Prerena Marisini, Oxfam



Caravan in Sindupalchok

Sindhupalchowk is one of the most earthquake-affected districts. According to details provided by Sindhupalchowk DDRC 3570 died, 1435 were injured and 66388 private houses were damaged in the earthquake. Apart from this 710 government office buildings were collapsed. Earlier, Jure landslide had caused a huge loss to human lives and properties. In the aftermath of landslide Bhotekoshi flood swept away 100s of houses, lives and properties of the local communities. As a result, thousands of locals affected in disasters are taking shelter under temporary shelters. Some of them are facing serious problem due to the loss of family members. Many of their family members' whereabouts is still unknown, dead or alive.

Like other districts Sidhupalchowk has witnessed sluggish reconstruction. Most laws and policies introduced in Singha Durbar do not match with ground realities of this district. Landless locals have no access to the government policies. They are genuine affected households, but neither the land they are cultivating nor the house they are settling is in their ownership. The official record of the Sindhupalchowk shows that 354 families are landless, 11148 families own Guthi land, 7590 families are in tenant situation without recognition, that is, they cultivate other people's land but are not recognized as tenants. Similarly, 8989 families are the tenants. The land owned by 217 families is still registered as Birta, which was officially abolished long back. In this way, a total of 28298 (42.5%) households out of 66635 households (CBS, 2012) do not have their own land and house in this district and thus have no direct access to the government's relief, reconstruction and recovery programme as a response to the earthquake.

The People's Caravan in Sindhupalchowk was organized on 26 January 2017. Gramin Mahila Srijanshil Pariwar coordinated the caravan and local organisers including District land Reform Forum were named local organizer. The rally with the affected communities and families along with the local political party leaders, media and civil society (around 500 people) rounded the Chautara bazaar demanding justice in relief distribution and accelerating reconstruction. Supported by Oxfam Nepal and implemented by HAMI campaign, the caravan converted into mass meeting at Tundikhel.

Government apathy: The affected communities and stakeholders expressed their dissatisfaction over sluggish reconstruction process even after nearly two years of the earthquake. The government's inaction in identifying suitable land for quake victims residing in high-risk zones has further complicated surviving of the victims. Some highland areas are named unsuitable for the human settlement. Government bid to expand road without consulting locals has also complicated the housing reconstruction in the some districts. Many earthquake victims in Chautara, Barabise and Tatopani of Sindhupalchowk district say government's announcement to expand roads without consulting them has affected building houses along roadsides.

Who is to blame?

The government distributed NPR 50,000 as first tranche of housing reconstruct aid to victims at a time when country was celebrating its major festivals--Dashain, Tihar, Chhat and Losar among others. The poor families marred by the devastating earthquake and its consecutive aftershocks had hardly seen such a big amount of money in their life. On the other hand, many of them were not sure where to build their new houses as the previous settlements were banned to use for the rebuilding. The affected ones with nearby road extension areas could not approve their housing designs as the technicians were themselves not sure who is to permit for building new houses. Thus, poverty stricken communities took housing reconstruction grant and celebrated festivals.

How long to be a tenant?

Alaichi Adhikari, a earthquake victim of Sindhupalchok expressed her agonies of being perpetually victims due to unregistered tenancy. Her family neither got 50000 as first tranche of housing reconstruction aid nor the land her family is cultivating since more than 100 years has been registered in her name. Several affected communities complained of not having safer place to build the house because of bureaucratic hassle. The government has not allowed the victims to rebuild houses in previous settlement

while new place is yet to be fixed. That's why first installment of housing reconstruction provided by government remains unused. Some of the poverty stricken families have spent it to celebrate festivals.

Unheard voice of Bhotekoshi flood victim:

Bhotekoshi flood swept away houses of Pahal Bahadur Ghatani, a local of Tatopani and Araniko highway connecting Kathmandu with China. Government and organizations supported to very few people.

Government delayed: Bhakta Bahadur Shrestha, ex-member of District Disaster Reduction Committee ex-member, asked a question, "Why government delayed support to affected areas? Will government be able to construct the earthquake resilient houses as wishes? He further complained of overlooking reconstruction of religious sites. By raising these questions he tried to draw government attention for timely completion of reconstruction projects.

No money, no employment: Many of the affected communities said that they lost sources of major income such as cattle, agriculture land to farm and thus turned unemployed. They do not have appropriate land to rebuild the houses and original place is unsuitable to build.

Psychological effect: Some of the affected persons were found with acute psychological problem. They lost everything in the earthquake. ***"We are psychologically very weak," said one of the adult participants attending the caravan. He said food grains, cattle, goats and other livestock, crop failure, land moisture drying up after the earthquake has added mental problem to move ahead.***

Huge loss of infrastructure: The stakeholders addressing the caravan said that Nuwakot was severely hit by the earthquake. About 95 percent of infrastructures were completely damaged. This has forced many people to live in the temporary shelters even today. Most school buildings were damaged in the earthquake and children are compelled to resume their studies in the temporary shelter.

Uncomfortable shelters: The affected communities participating in the caravan explained that their temporary shelters were uncomfortable to live. Zink made shelters become very hot during the summer cold in

winter season. The victims cannot sleep in the night. Especially, quake-affected women said they are facing the most problem because shelters lack private space to change their cloths and other basic facilities.

Caravan in Nuwakot

Nuwakot is also badly affected by the devastating earthquake. The massive and unrecoverable disaster occurred over all the 61 VDCs and Bidur municipality of the district. The DDRC record shows that 75462 households were found initially. Out of them, 65759 were listed as beneficiaries, 11189 households had filled up the complaint forms. Of them, 7533 households were added in the beneficiary list. In this district, about 1029 people were dead and 2382 injured. Many houses have been damaged and cattle and pets have got death and injured. Almost all the school buildings, VDC office buildings, service centers of agriculture, livestock, forestry, health and many other infrastructures have been collapsed. Even after the span of 19 months, the victimized families are compelled to stay in the temporary settlements. These settlements are to face disturbances in the water and electricity supply, telephone and mobile networks.

The People's Caravan in this district took place on December 27 2016. The main local organizer was district branch of Human Rights Alliance as supported by HAMI with technical and financial support from Oxfam Nepal. The branches of local federations and CSOs: Human Rights Alliance, NGO Federation, NEFIN, Land Reform Forum, Bandichudi Mahila Sahakari, KCDC, Bar Association Samudayik Atma Nirbhar Kendra, Kisan Sangh, Kardson and concerned government officials, political parties' local leaders along with the huge mass of affected communities (around 600 people) had taken part in this caravan.



Government buildings, private houses damaged

Most of the government office buildings including District Administration Office, district hospital, health posts, and sub-health post were damaged and those agencies were facing challenges to serve people. Reconstruction of these lost buildings is yet to begin.

Worries about historic buildings and cultural assets: The affected communities expressed their worries about delay in rebuilding cultural heritage, religious places, government buildings and their own houses. Earthquake victims attending the caravan added that

they want to build their houses using technicians so that these houses could remain unaffected in the earthquake. Locals, however, are worried after seeing no such experts in their localities.

Food Storage

Caravan participants also mentioned that the earthquake had caused a great impact on food security and livelihood. They were worried about the storage of the food grains, which were almost ready to store at this season (beginning winter now).

Caravan in Dolakha

In Dolakha, a total of 178 people were dead, 663 injured, and as many as 13 disappeared whose whereabouts with current situation is still unknown. Similarly, the district witnessed a huge loss of animals. According to the available data, 4784 animals were dead in this district. Loss of food grains was also serious as revealed by the fact that 477,303 muriof food grains was estimated to be lost during the earthquake. The total value of loss is estimated as nearly 40 billion in this district (CDPS, 2015). Hundreds of men have been turned disable due to the devastating earthquake. Their current situation is almost unknown to the government agencies as the reconstruction work has not been scaling up. The summer passed by in miseries for the victims of the earthquake in 2015, the winter passed by in the same manner. The whole 2016 passed by in a same manner for these victims in the zinc roofs with needs of proper shelter, food, schools for children and so on. Mainly the women, children, senior citizens have been affected. The temporary shelters are filled up with the problems of many kinds.



Taking this scenario, the civil societies of Dolakha also took a decision to organise a caravan in the district headquarters Charikot where the affected communities could express their pains, sorrows and agonies among the responsible government agencies, political parties and the concerned stakeholders. The caravan took place on December 21 2016 as coordinated by HAMI and supported by Oxfam Nepal. The local organisers were Human Rights Awareness and Development Centre (HURADEC) along with the district branches of Human Rights Alliance, NGO Federation, FECOFUN, DNF, Nepal Bar Association and FNJ among others. Around 500 people including mainly the affected communities from different parts of the district as well as the media, political parties and government officials and civil society activists took part in the caravan. Chief Guest of the mass meeting converted after the huge procession with placards and banner organised in Satdobato of Charikot was Aananda Prasad Pokharel, former Minister for Tourism and Member of Parliament (MP).



Lack of coordination

After the caravan the civil society groups reached the CDO Office to submit the memorandum. The response from the government officials said that they do not have coordination with the line agencies, mainly the agencies among the four implementing ministries:

- Ministry of Urban Development
- Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation

The participants of the caravan also mentioned that government agencies lack coordination skill to respond to disaster and expedite post-earthquake reconstruction in an effective manner.

Affected communities still in shelter:

Even after the elapse of 19 months, the affected communities are in shelter. The government's status of presence in the hard hit area looks like a joke. Small farmers have now lost everything except the zinc roofed or tented shelter. Many of them had land without registration now unsuitable to build new house or cultivate. In

this way, they have been further victimized. Government authorities deny them to enlist as beneficiary. They cannot build their own houses.

Priority to helpless victims: Measures for ensuring priority for the landless, senior citizens, rural small farmers, persons with disability, women and children need to be sorted out in every reconstruction effort.

Urban problems: The affected households in the urban areas of Charikot expressed their concern over delay in approving housing design. The local municipalities are assigned to approve housing design. **One of quake affected victim said, "The government has maintained a double standard, that is, it says it gives reliefs and subsidies in building the new house, but the municipality authority charges on approving house designs. It takes money from the affected communities under different headings"**. It seems as if the NRA is not a government agency in the policies and programmes of the other government agencies. Distributing housing reconstruction aid through banking system is also very slow.

No change in behavior: Senior citizens, single women and persons with disability said they do not get their social security allowances through banking systems. Commercial banks did not change any policies and programmes during crisis in the country.

Guthi and unregistered land the major problem: The affected communities of the

Bhedpu VDC have been cultivating land for the centuries. The land is still under Bhimeshwor Guthi. After the local authorities denied to sign housing grant agreement with them citing lack of land they are in a great dilemma on how to move ahead especially in the aftermath of devastating earthquake. The land is not registered in their name. This has deprived them of getting government's housing reconstruction aid being

Caravan in Dhading

According to the DDRC database, total households affected in Dhading are 84948. Of them, 717 were dead, 1335 injured and 2 were missing. Of the total households affected, 72872 were completely damaged, 2399 partially damaged and 2249 with normal effect. Like in other districts, the affected communities in this district have not obtained the assistance by the government as per the commitment made. Although the agreement with the affected ones for the NRs 300,000 has begun, there are complaints of the affected households not being in the list of the beneficiary. Some of the affected ones do not have the land registration certificate; those obtaining Rs. 50,000 have not obtained the technical assistance by the technicians.

In view of the above situations, the People's Caravan in Dhading was organised in its district headquarters Dhading Besi on January 10 2017. Coordinated by HAMI, the local organisers were Prayas Nepal, Focus Nepal and Action Nepal. The partnership was made with the Oxfam Nepal. About 500 people including mainly the affected communities who came from different corners of the district came to the street for procession and demonstration with placards and banner. The rally began from Puchhar Bazaar of Dhadingbesi and converted into an assembly at Covered hall. The duty bearers' office heads, political party leaders, and civil society leaders were present in the assembly. The affected communities put-forth their issues of reconstruction and the party leaders and the government officials had responded. Radio Dhading, Radio Bihani, and Radio Rajmarg had live broadcast the whole programme.





provided to earthquake victims. The affected communities of this VDC have demanded the government to provide land registration certificate in their names at the earliest and ensure their safe stay. They have also demanded to provide land ownership certificate in the name of both males and females.

Difficulties in obtaining identity card

Despite losing everything in earthquake some households are still struggling to get earthquake victim ID card, the document required to get government announced aid and other schemes meant for the victims. Over 2100 families have complained of not getting ID card in Dolakha district alone. They were denied to get identity card even after they were largely affected in the earthquake. Most of the victims denied from getting ID card have no idea on how to obtain card in the context of local authorities already completing ID card distribution process.

Migration Impact

Quake victims in Dolakha raised the situation of the women whose male members are in abroad in course of employment are facing more problems as compared to other households. Due to the lack of male presence, some of our formal as well as traditional structural policies and laws do not recognize females as the household head. The government officials refuse to sign housing reconstruction aid contract with the female members. Thousands of the households have been deprived of aid agreement in the absence of male. On the other hand, women are also victimized because of violence, caste and gender-based discriminations.

In almost all the quake-affected areas, numbers of households in 2011 were found far less than the number of damage claimed houses in 2015. Question can be raised here, “Do the people have intention for seeking undue advantage?” The affected communities responded as “families in rural areas do not live together; however, the nature is joint family because they do not have legal property share system. Those willing not to live together got permission from the seniors to make a separate house wherever they have land and thus family couples began to build house and live their without completing legal process. But the government categorizes victims for those who have land registration certificate and have houses in their names. In the village, there is no system for housing design.” So whoever builds houses is remained in the senior members of the households.” Thus, victims have been those who are separate from the houses, but are not legally separated. While listing their names, it seems that the number of households increased unnaturally. “There can be some bad intention too”, responded the participants gathered in Lalitpur caravan.

Archeological structure: Major destructions in urban sectors are accounted to archeological structures. Most temples around Patan Durbar Square, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur are destroyed. The rural areas people such as in Nuwakot are worried overdelay in reconstructing local archeological site and quality construction. They want to keep houses made of mud and stone intact by adopting new technologies for preserving local identity of these houses.

Concerns of houses with concrete/pillar system: Quake victims are worried following a rumor that houses with concrete structure do not get relief. They believe government categorizes such households rich. "I had built a house spending more than NRs 100,000 which was damaged in the earthquake; but I am not eligible to get government announced aid," said an earthquake of Khokana while participating the caravan.

".. but a family with damaged straw-mud house received 15000", said another frustrated house owner from Lalitpur district. After all there was damage even for a rich person; "Is the government only for poor?" Quake-affected victims raised similar questions in many district during the caravan.

Caravan in Lalitpur

The caravan in the national level was organised on 17 January 2017. Entitled, "Reconstruction aftermath the Earthquake: The Rights of the Affected Communities", representatives of the affected communities from the most affected districts were present in the event. Organised by HAMI, the chief guest was Ananda Pokharel, MP and former Minister. MPs Janardan Dhakal from Rasuwa, Chandra Majarjan from Lalipur and Parbat Gurung from Dolakha had responded the assembly after hearing the voices of the affected communities. Earlier huge mass rally initiated from the premises of Lalipur Sub-metropolitan City rounded the street of Pulchowk, Krishna Galli, Patan Dhoka, Mangal Bazaar, Durbar Square and converted into the assembly at Saugal Tole. Organised by main coordination with the HAMI and the local community organization Jyapu Samaj, the main organisers were the federations of the civil society (Human Rights Alliance, NGO Federation, DNF, FEDWASN, FECOFUN, NFIWUAN, AFFON).

The earthquake survivors expressed concerns regarding building code issued by government and problem in urban areas. Holding of land is very lesser than that of recently proclaimed minimum land standard. While discussing with them such as in urban areas of Bhaktapur, it is found that they want their home built rather than getting the monetary support directly because the monetary support provided to them would not be enough to rebuild their home.

As suggested, reconstruction/rehabilitation is a challenging issue since it covers socio-cultural, demographic, economic and psychological dimensions. It may thus be relevant to further explore this issue for plausible hypothesis. The stakeholders suggested that reconstruction should be based on community need and for this the government must create conducive environment for reconstruction of personal houses.

The dilemma in urban areas/municipalities was clearly visible regarding following standard norms for construction/reconstruction. The matter of irony is that the government buildings are not to pass their structural designs by Municipality, and they [government officials] follow their consultants, however, not all consultants are found earthquake sensitive.

Further issues of reconstruction as suggested in the Caravan are:

- Linkage of housing designs with socio-cultural aspects and tourism to promote sustained livelihoods.
- Relationships between reconstruction and socio-cultural diversity.
- How to involve grassroots affected people in collective reconstruction action meaningfully i.e. planning, implementation and monitoring phases of reconstruction.

Periphery areas survivors nearby the urban centers expressed more destruction in their localities. The reasons for this are that people migrated to urban areas after economic prosperity investment in structures were in urban and developed areas. Remaining structures in rim areas were already weak and fell down in earthquake.



People are facing multiple problems. “Earthquake has made the influential/rich people even richer and poor suffered a lot in all fronts,” said a local in Rasuwa.

Even as government adopted one door system to avoid duplication and ensure justice to all while distributing relief to the victims, the quake survivors in Lalitpur expressed frustration with the government stating that many genuine are deprived of getting relief and reconstruction grant. For example those households, who enjoy well public contact, received relief while other helpless people could not get the state announced facilities.

Land use policies: The stakeholders have raised the issues of appropriate land users’ policies. The displaced families of Sushpakshamawati of Dolakha and various similar places of Sindhupalchowk, Gorkha, Dhading, Rasuwa and Nuwakot are displaced. They are in helpless situation even today as the government has not been able to appropriate formulate land use policies for them. Many places of quake-affected districts have turned unsuitable to continue settlements, but the alternative lands for the resettlements have not been yet identified for

the displaced communities. Most displaced victims are compelled to continue their hardship under the risk of landslides and floods.

Supply of timbers: Housing reconstruction requires huge quantity of timber. However, the government has not been able to make a practical decision in providing timber for rebuilding private and government buildings. The existing laws are silent over timber production required for the reconstruction works. In the absence of clear legal provision there is also chance of misusing timber meant for reconstruction causing deforestation. The news timber supply policy should give first priority to the needs of the single women, persons with disability, senior citizens and the most affected families.

Good governance and corruption: Civil society activists have also pointed out the need of ensuring good governance while making housing reconstruction aid agreement with the affected families. It has been identified that affected families with similar categories have been treated differently on ground of favoritism, nepotism, caste, sex and creed. Some of the government agencies reached a particular places only to distribute relief supports. Some of the INGOs and some NGOs vividly showed their biasness

in distributing support materials to the affected families. It was visible that some individual get aid while others victims with similar status did not enjoyed the state provided facilities because of biasness. By observing quake-affected districts it was felt that humanity is dying. Complaints of nepotism, misuse of resources and corruption were reported in almost all districts.

Lack of technicians

Almost all the stakeholders attending the caravans held in quake-affected districts said that the technicians deputed by the government have not reached to rural VDCs of the country. According to them, the engineers are confined in the district headquarters and nearby villages. Like usual practice of government officials and politicians focusing in district headquarter technicians deputed for the reconstruction works are confined within district headquarters.

Technical evaluation and release of support: Since the technicians have not reached to the rural areas, earthquake victims are compelled to make the houses with their own conscience instead of making earthquake resilient houses. Locals do not know which agency is responsible to evaluate whether their houses are earthquake resilient. They are also unaware about how to obtain the second tranche of housing reconstruction grant.

The greatest success of the caravans was successful to raise voices of earthquake-affected people. Unheard voices of victims were shared among the victims and presented to local authorities and central government. The sluggish reconstruction process was exposed in the national and international level after people's caravan in quake-affected districts.



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