

Regional Earthquake Recovery Dialogue for Building Back Better



Government of Nepal



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Organized by

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,
SAARC Disaster Management Centre and
National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) along with SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) and the National Planning Commission (NPC), Government of Nepal organised a regional recovery dialogue for building back better after the earthquake in Nepal on 26 April 2015. The dialogue aimed for providing a road map for the recovery process after the Nepal earthquake. Disaster management experts from various organisations across the region participated in the dialogue to share their experience and best practices followed in the region after major earthquakes. Their valuable contributions, in terms of the practices followed for disaster recovery, were eye-opening and will be of great value in the reconstruction process of Nepal.

This report summarises the exchanges and outcomes from the dialogue, and also captures additional case studies from the region that were referred to, but not shared in the workshop. The report is divided in four chapters. Chapter 1 presents the lessons from Asia-Pacific for Nepal's earthquake recovery. Chapter 2 includes case studies of various earthquakes in the Asia-Pacific region. Chapter 3 includes deliberations carried out in the dialogue workshop. Chapter 4 provides a way forward for building back better in Nepal.

The summary of the outcomes encompasses the following:

- Recovery is a time-consuming process.
- Sustainability is a fundamental principle for building back better.
- Institutional arrangements need to be collaborative and incrementally evolve.
- Keep people at the centre, and focus on processes.
- Technical approaches should be detailed and context specific.
- Capacity building is a must for long term self-reliance.
- Quality and accountability are keys to a successful reconstruction programme.

A number of specific steps to be taken in the near future as a way forward are as follows:

1. A detailed risk profile study of the affected areas needs to be carried out. The technical support through APDIM and the technical assistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be very useful. A team of international experts may be formed, who along with counterparts in the national research and technical institutions can use the latest technology for the preparation of this risk profile.
2. Retrofitting of cultural monuments and heritage settlements is a critical need in Nepal, which requires highly sensitive technical approaches. The Islamic Republic of Iran's experience and expertise will be very valuable in this relation, and appropriate knowledge transfer mechanisms can be established for this.
3. The need for trained engineers and masons is immense in Nepal, in view of the large number of houses and other buildings to be constructed. The technical content as has evolved in Sikkim, including mason training material in Nepali language, will be a very useful starting point for Nepal in its recovery. The Sikkim Government's offer of exchange or alternatively cross-border visits and knowledge exchange is very valuable and will be of great benefit to Nepal. Sikkim also has a similar terrain, culture, language and set of issues to Nepal, making such an exchange very valuable.

4. Accountability and transparency are very important in large scale reconstruction programmes, and Nepal is very serious about establishing state-of-the-art systems for this purpose. Sikkim's experience of online real-time monitoring of housing reconstruction is very relevant in this context.
5. It was also seen from various cases that process documentation is extremely important in a reconstruction programme. The inputs of Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS), right from the early stages of needs assessment in Nepal, has been very valuable. Documentation may not seem important to many right now, but will be a very useful asset in the future when details of the experience may be forgotten. Process documentation needs to be taken up in earnest.
6. Regional networking emerges as a very important step to be taken, and MoUs can be signed among various institutions for this to be effective. The SAARC Disaster Management Centre may help in putting together such an institutional arrangement for networking to emerge as a means for a more effective reconstruction programme in Nepal.
7. First-hand experience of a number of relevant cases will be of great use to the Nepali agencies responsible for reconstruction. Exchange or cross-border visits to affected areas of the Islamic Republic of Iran, India, Pakistan and other countries that have carried out reconstruction programmes will be useful. A clear and objective oriented programme may be evolved for this, based on Nepal's specific needs.
8. Sectoral policy dialogues will be needed in Nepal; particularly on housing, education and health. Bihar's school safety campaign, as described in the workshop, emerged as a specific experience that could be beneficial in the Nepal context. In coming months, an engagement may be worked out for sharing knowledge from this and other such experiences.
9. ESCAP's position as a key knowledge hub in the region has been very valuable and instrumental in the organisation of this workshop. Such dialogues need to continue to support the very complex reconstruction programme being taken up by Nepal.

ACRONYMS

APDIM	Asia and Pacific Centre for Disaster Information Management
BAKOSURTANAL	National Coordinating Agency for Surveys and Mapping
BSDMA	Bihar State Disaster Management Authority
CFW	Cash for Work
CSAP	Core Shelter Assistance Project
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ERRA	Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
FRC	Federal Relief Commission
GSDMA	Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority
HFIR	Housing Foundation of Islamic Republic of Iran
HPC	High Powered Committee
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICNR	International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRP	International Recovery Platform
ITBP	Indo-Tibetan Border Police
LGUs	Local Government Units
NAR	National Authority for Reconstruction
NCREE	National Center for Research on Earthquake Engineering
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NDRF	National Disaster Response Force
NDRRMC	National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council
NFI	Non Food Items
NGOs	Non Government Organisations
NIDM	National Institute of Disaster Management
NPC	National Planning Commission
ODR	Owner Driven Reconstruction
PHIVOLCS	Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology
PMUs	Project Management Units
RFL	Restoration of Family Links
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDMC	SAARC Disaster Management Centre
SEEDS	Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society
SFP	Supplementary Feeding Program
SSDMA	Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
USGS	United States Geological Survey

Chapter 1

LESSONS FROM ASIA PACIFIC FOR NEPAL'S EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY

1. Recovery is a time consuming process

Recovery carried out after a major disaster is a time consuming process, involving a large number of stakeholders. One of the biggest challenges is that of coordination.

Early recovery is seen as an interim process. Temporary shelters are built with the intention that these will be a stopgap arrangement, but other than two countries (Japan and Mozambique), these have invariably been found to turn into permanent houses.

The agencies responding for early recovery work in a very different mode as compared to the development agencies, and the gap in transition eventually leaves affected communities in the lurch.

2. Sustainability is a fundamental principle for building back better

Recovery is about development, and building back better is about sustainable development. This is specific in terms of not recreating a risk that existed earlier, and not creating any new risks.

The larger picture needs to be seen, with the various dimensions and activities ranging from plans to the implementation of various programmes coming together seamlessly.

Sikkim took the pathway of making a safe and sustainable recovery process, strengthening the position taken by the State regarding the environment, whereby Sikkim is a fully organic state.

3. Institutional arrangements need to be collaborative and incrementally evolve

Experience also shows that one national reconstruction authority cannot execute work at all levels, and thus appropriate authorities need to be established at province, district and local levels.

Pakistan established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) after the 2005 earthquake, and is now looking back and reviewing how to merge the two authorities – ERRA and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), which was established two years after ERRA.

In Pakistan's case, the Act provides powers to the NDMA to call upon the agency to respond. The authority cannot be challenged. The Act should be with a long term vision, and not merely focus on the reconstruction in the context of one disaster event. The Act has also given leverage to the NDMA to have a disaster response force. Fixing of responsibility of various stakeholders in detail is also something the Act needs to do.

In many examples the evolution of authorities has been such that the Project Management Units (PMUs) got converted into societies, and finally into authorities. Clarity is needed in terms of whether future disaster response will be the responsibility of the authority or the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Ground level recovery is a long drawn process. In nations that face recurrent disasters, the operating procedures are generally in place but are not sufficient to manage a very large scale reconstruction programme. It is best in these situations to build upon what is already present, rather than bringing in an entirely new system that may have worked in another context.

There is great value in establishing collaborative processes, bringing together diverse knowledge and experiences otherwise not available locally. In the process, your own institutions can be built and strengthened in the long run.

A National Institute of Disaster Management or a similar institution will be of use for Nepal to build long term and large scale capacity for disaster recovery and risk reduction. Towards this, initial international networking will be of great use, and memorandums of understanding with technical and academic institutions need to be undertaken, rather than establishing new capacities for all aspects. In the process, existing capacity and knowledge within institutions in Nepal and the region must be tapped into.

4. Keep people at the centre, and focus on processes

People's participation is a key element requiring attention whilst setting up mechanisms, as the community is the primary stakeholder in the entire process.

Chile was studied in 2010 and two main lessons emerged for the successes in building up risk reduction capacity:

- Safe construction
- Public information and education

An owner-driven approach within the reconstruction process is a very sound principle. Owners, however, have very complex and diverse mindsets. Community level consolidation, and the role to be played by community leaders is crucial and needs to be put in place in the early days.

Mobilisation, incentivisation and convergence of packages, for example of livelihoods and house construction, can be of use. Pakistan constructed 11 centres in the affected areas that acted as hubs for this purpose.

Iran has rebuilt over 1.3 million houses, and the process has involved the learning from past experience. Besides the physical aspects of reconstruction; social, economic and environmental aspects require significant attention right from the beginning. This needs to be engrained in the process from visioning to the creation of action plans.

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