Learning lessons from the 2015 Nepal Earthquake Disaster

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The 2014 Nepal Earthquake Disaster

~ 8,700 people died

At least 22,000 injured

More than 500,000 homes destroyed

279,000 homes damaged

2.8 million people affected, more than a third of whom are children
One year after the disaster

• National workshop with various Nepali stakeholders involved in the response to the earthquake.
• Organised by PHASE Nepal, the University of Sheffield, & Manmohan Institute of Health Sciences.
• 135 participants
  – Ministry of Health, local and national government, the armed forces, NGOs, education and health practitioners, academics, and the community.
• 7 focus groups on:
  – water, sanitation and hygiene, hospital services, health and nutrition, education, shelter, policy and community.
An opportunity to reflect on experiences and capture learn lessons from the disaster.
What’s unique:
Attendees were Nepalis as we sought a local perspective
INGOs are likely to have different aims, expectations, and perspectives.
Key themes

• **Logistics** and supply chain challenges
• **Leadership** and coordination difficulties
• A ‘**disconnect**’ between disaster management policy and responses
• Impacts of the **Media**
• **Cultural beliefs** on population attitudes and behaviour
• Need
  – **community involvement** at all stages of disaster response and preparedness
  – to develop **local leadership** capabilities
  – and strengthen **community resilience**.
Logistical challenges, ‘Last mile’ issues, Diversion of aid, Rural vs. Urban
Some key themes:

Leadership
Coordination of aid
The role of schools
Impact of the media / public communication
“At the end of the day (disaster risk reduction) will only be successful if they (the community) own it ... When knowledge is transferred to them, then coping capacity has been enhanced, coping capacity strengthened.”

UN agency manager
“The activities that we do at the lower level will have an effect at the lower level. But unless we influence the policy (level) there will be very little of what we can (achieve) at the community level...”

UN manager
“(The system) is fragmented, not coordinated, not a clearly defined technical area or administrative roles of any institutions. So this is (the cause of) some of the confusion and the gaps which we are facing ... (There is) fragmentation at the working level, policy level and institutional level, and a blurring of the administrative and the technical sectors.”

Government official
Cultural Beliefs

“The mind-set of our whole planning system and perception towards disaster is that it is natural, God-given. Whatever will happen is because of bad deeds that our ancestors did in the past or our mistakes in the present life ... 

We have to change the people's perception, to think about disaster risk issues because if you think it is God's will, then people will wait for God to act and they won’t make any preparations.”

NGO Manager
How do we build community resilience and reduce population vulnerability?
Making use of assets and local resources

- Local civil society
- Local volunteers
- Nursing and medical colleges
- Diaspora
- Social media
“(The organisations) always try to learn from each disaster. But the problem is the next disaster becomes a brand new disaster. It seems like ... we (have to re-learn) every time and I am very surprised that we haven't any system that starts working from day one. That is the problem.”

UN Manager
Key recommendations

• Finding time and opportunity to reflect on and identify lessons from disaster response; learning culture

• Need for a Nepal-centric approach

• Greater community engagement and devolution of decision-making

• Developing local leadership
Our full article is published here:


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