

A Detailed Study on Poverty and Vulnerability in Four Earthquake Affected Districts: Gorkha, Dhading, Nuwakot and Rasuwa

Background

Nepal is among the list of least developed countries with a low income economy, ranking 144th of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2016¹. It continues to struggle with high level of poverty and food insecurity; facing several hurdles in ensuring human development for all. With struck of 7.8 magnitude Earthquake on 25 April 2015 and strong aftershock of 7.3 magnitude on 26 April continue to threaten the lives of thousands of people and further damage buildings and development infrastructure.

According to Post Disaster Need Assessment, over 8 million people were affected in 39 of Nepal's 75 districts. Over 5.4 million people live in the 14 most critically hit districts. The death tolls reached about 9,000 with over 22,000 people severely injured. Around 450,000 houses have been completely destroyed. Up to 90 per cent of health facilities in rural areas were damaged. The whole physical damage accounted more than one third of National GDP. The country suffered with lowered GDP growth by over 1.5 per cent from an estimated 4.6 per cent in a no earthquake scenario in FY 2015-16.² The economic impact was further compounded by subsequent blockade at the Nepal/India border preventing the flow of goods including fuel, which further delayed in recovery effort initiated by the Government and other agencies. Despite these losses, the country has to make steady progress; with the government making a commitment to graduate the nation from least developed status by 2022.

In order to expedite reconstruction efforts and bring back development process on track, Nepal has made some efforts. With the aim to tackle earthquake consequences and build back the nation, Nepal approached several countries and pledged for significant fund. Nepal has established National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) for overall coordination and lead reconstruction process with six years Post Disaster Recovery Framework Plan (PDRF) (2016-2021). It has also prepared National Reconstruction Act, 2072; Sector Plans and Financial Projections working document 2016; National Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Policy, 2072; earthquake affected private home reconstruction grant distribution working procedure, 2017, etc. Among the international partners, Department for International Development (DFID) is supporting the Government of Nepal to deliver the PDRF through partnering at the central and district level to assist detailed planning for reconstruction investments, to directly finance priority reconstruction works, ensuring that the poor and vulnerable are included in the reconstruction effort, and by supporting coordination and capacity building.

The program also aims to support 220,000 people living below the poverty line within the targeted districts (Dhading, Gorkha, Nuwakot, and Rasuwa). The major components of the programme are investment in strategic public and community infrastructure, and economic

¹ Human Development Report 2016, Human Development for Everyone, UNDP, 2016

² White Paper on the Current Economic Situation and Immediate way Forward, Ministry of Finance, 2015

recovery activities. This involves the immediate creation of skills and employment for poor people, and has a longer-term ambition of catalysing improvements that deliver increased economic opportunity for the poor.

Prior to execution of project activities, it is necessary to identify vulnerable people, their location in particular and explore different factors of exclusion and possible solutions. Previous baseline studies and impact assessment conducted by humanitarian agencies have already enlisted different section of population in vulnerable state.³ Several studies have suggested that the earthquake has affected women who are more vulnerable than men due to their limited access to resources, information and decision-making and increased exposure to gender-based violence (NPC, 2015). Dalits in general, were identified as highly vulnerable due to existing discrimination, inequality and exclusion. People under lower caste, low income and disability are having lack of access to earthquake relief funds with people waiting to receive the reconstruction grant from the government to construct their houses.

However, it is not yet clear that who are the most vulnerable from earthquake, where they live, who are already left behind and possibly at risk to be left behind. It is necessary to explore trajectories of sources of exclusion so that program can be reframed in such a way that it delivers a transformative impact for poor people. In this context, *“A Detailed Study on the Detailed Poverty and Vulnerability in Four Earthquake affected Districts: Gorkha, Dhading, Nuwakot and Rauswa”* aims to present facts and insights from earthquake-affected districts and identify the poorest, most vulnerable, and excludable such that they are not left behind. This study of Poverty and Vulnerability will support for better design and implementation of DFID’s six years (2016 -2021) Post-Earthquake Programme.

While adopting a ‘leave no one behind’ lens to post-earthquake reconstruction in Nepal, it is imperative to segregate “winners” and “losers” of development interventions and make sure that those who are often left behind, are instead brought in, engaged, and derive greater benefit from development and humanitarian programmes. The DFID’s goal can only be achieved by guaranteeing that reconstruction effort reaches the lives of the most vulnerable and excluded members of earthquake affected communities, wherever they are. However, the answer to the question ‘who is being left behind?’ is difficult to answer and is different in different contexts. Moreover, some groups will be better able than others to access the benefits of recovery and reconstruction efforts. Further, some groups have special needs and requirements that will not be met through the dominant modes of delivering reconstruction support. Additional and distinct activities will therefore be required to meet the specific needs of the most vulnerable households and individuals in the focus districts.

It is hence, the proposed study is initiated to deepen the mapping and analysis of poverty, vulnerability, exclusion and gender relations in the specific context of the four target districts of

³Nepal Community Feed Back report. Issue: Reconstruction (2016).
<http://www.cfp.org.np/uploads/documents/cfp-reconstruction-perceptions-april-2016.pdf>

reconstruction programme. The research's insights, learning and recommendations as a strategic document is hence expected to add value in verifying and/or evidence-based redesigning some components of programme if necessary. It will also unearth the better understanding associated to contemporary discourses, opportunities and challenges circling the reconstruction issues in Nepal.

Objective of Study

- To develop series of district maps identifying the poor, vulnerable and excluded communities and analyse the relationship between them and inter-districts/Village Council comparison.
- To identify the sources and process of exclusion and which groups are at risk of being left behind by the reconstruction effort in frame of current and planned modalities of assistance and why.
- To explore possible option on how gender (esp. single women and girls) participation and inclusion can be ensured in and benefit from reconstruction activities.

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