

Challenges for Reconstruction: A Case Study from 2015 Gorkha, Nepal Earthquake

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Abstract : The Gorkha Nepal earthquake of moment magnitude (Mw) 7.8 hit the central region of Nepal on April 25, 2015; with the epicenter about 77 km northwest of Kathmandu Valley. This paper aims to explore challenges of reconstruction in the rural earthquake-stricken areas of Nepal. The Gorkha earthquake on April 25, 2015, has significantly affected the livelihood of people and overall economy in Nepal, causing severe damage and destruction in central Nepal including nation's capital. A larger part of the earthquake affected area is difficult to access with rugged terrain and scattered settlements, which posed unique challenges and efforts on a massive scale reconstruction and rehabilitation. 800 thousand buildings were affected leaving 8 million people homeless. Challenge of reconstruction of optimum 800 thousand houses is arduous for Nepal in the background of its turmoil political scenario and weak governance. With significant actors involved in the reconstruction process, no appreciable relief has reached to the ground, which is reflected over the frustration of affected people. The 2015 Gorkha earthquake is one of most devastating disasters in the modern history of Nepal. Best of our knowledge, there is no comprehensive study on reconstruction after disasters in modern Nepal, which integrates the necessary information to deal with challenges and opportunities of reconstructions. The study was conducted using qualitative content analysis method. Thirty engineers and ten social mobilizers working for reconstruction and more than hundreds local social workers, local party leaders, and earthquake victims were selected arbitrarily. Information was collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, focus group discussions, and field notes, with no previous assumption. Author also reviewed literature and document reviews covering academic and practitioner studies on challenges of reconstruction after earthquake in developing countries such as 2001 Gujarat earthquake, 2005 Kashmir earthquake, 2003 Bam earthquake and 2010 Haiti earthquake; which have very similar building typologies, economic, political, geographical, and geological conditions with Nepal. Secondary data was collected from reports, action plans, and reflection papers of governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, private sector businesses, and the online news. This study concludes that inaccessibility, absence of local government, weak governance, weak infrastructures, lack of preparedness, knowledge gap and manpower shortage, etc. are the key challenges of the reconstruction after 2015 earthquake in Nepal. After scrutinizing different challenges and issues, study counsels that good governance, integrated information, addressing technical issues, public participation along with short term and long term strategies to tackle with technical issues are some crucial factors for timely and quality reconstruction in context of Nepal. Sample collected for this study is relatively small sample size and may not be fully representative of the stakeholders involved in reconstruction. However, the key findings of this study are ones that need to be recognized by academics, governments, and implementation agencies, and considered in the implementation of post-disaster reconstruction program in developing countries.

Keywords : Gorkha earthquake, reconstruction, challenges, policy

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