



COMMUNITY RECOVERY PLAN



7/1/2015

How to move forward?

After the devastating earthquakes of April 25, and May 12, lives of thousands of people across Nepal changed for the worse. Our field areas in Solukhumbu and Khotang are no exception. We conducted discussion with community members in all the 7 VDCs that we work in, to collect information that would help us plan a long term community recovery plan. This report summarizes the findings of those discussions in brief.

Community Recovery Plan

REPORT FROM THE FIELD

1. HOUSE DAMAGE

In our working areas, significant number of houses have been damaged by the Earthquake. Looking at the data of Solukhumbu, of all the people that were present in our community meetings (1165 total), 32% have to completely rebuild their houses while 46% will have to do repairing work. That shows that only a meager 22% houses were left more or less intact by the quake. In Khotang, about 26% of all the participants (1337) that we met will have to rebuild their houses and around 40% will have to do repair work.

Majority of the participants have said that the economic resources for repairing/rebuilding will be their own household income-which includes selling of assets, land, livestock and farm products. After that, borrowing loans and expecting Government relief money was another option. Many have also said that they will help each other out (*parma*). In areas like Gudel and Chheskam, people have said that they will wait for the tourist season to work as porters in trekking routes. Also a common response in every area is that they expect the Government, and other relief organizations to show up and help to some extent in the rebuilding process.

For now, many of the community members with damaged homes are living in temporary shelter as they want to start work on houses only after the monsoon ends.

2. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

A. SCHOOLS

Most schools in our working areas have been damaged by the earthquake. In Solukhumbu, 18 out of 21 schools have been damaged in the three VDCs-Sotang, Chheskam and Gudel. In Khotang, 18 out of 24 schools have been damaged in the four VDCs-Rakha, Sungdel, Maheswori and Dipsung. A few dZi supported school buildings have also been damaged. But those were the ones that dZi built before adopting earthquake resistant retrofitting technology. Among our retrofitted schools, only one has suffered slight damage. After inspecting the damage, our Engineer reports that this was caused due to slight moving of the soil in foundation, and also because the building was attached to another older building which was not retrofitted.

B. DRINKING WATER

Drinking water systems have been affected in most of the VDCs. In Sotang and Sungdel VDC, all the 9 wards have significant damage to drinking water. In Rakha, 7 wards reports of damage. In Chheskam and Maheswori, there has been damage to drinking water in 6 wards. In Dipsung, 5 wards have been affected by damage to drinking water. Gudel has been relatively lucky in this manner as only one community scheme, and one system that provided for a school was damaged. The common problems are damages to reserve tank, intake structure and pipeline rupture. Another major problem has been that in some areas there is reduction and drying up of water sources, while new water sources have sprouted up in other places increasing the fear of landslides. While some of the community members have already taken some initiative to repair their

drinking water, in many places nothing has been done so far. For some places, the water scarcity problem was already bad and after the earthquake the situation has become worse.

C. COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

Just like the schools, many community buildings have also suffered significant damages by the earthquake. This includes community buildings of our Community Development Group (CDG) constructed under our project, Ama Samuha Buildings, local cultural centers and religious places. Temples, Gumba, Bhumethan (prayer site of Kirat Rai community) have been reported damaged partially or heavily from many VDCs.

D. ELECTRICITY AND OTHER STRUCTURES

Among the 7 VDCs where we work, 5 have their own local Micro Hydro Power Scheme. Among them, the power houses and canals in Sungdel, and Rakha were heavily damaged by the earthquake where as those in Chheskam, Sotang and Dipsung has minor damage. But mostly electricity flow has been uninterrupted in all the VDCs. The under-construction system of Gudel suffered damage - as the freshly dug canal in Chachalung section was buried by falling debris.

Local watermill and diesel mills have also suffered damage in most of the VDCs. But since most of them are privately owned a detailed inventory has not been prepared. In many areas where we had our Toilet Project or where it is ongoing, many toilets have also been damaged.

3. PSYCHO-SOCIAL EFFECTS

A. SCHOOL

Many parents are afraid to send their children to school. There is more fear when school is farther away from home and for the schools whose buildings have been damaged. Parents also expressed that they would feel more relaxed, if the school was running classes in Temporary Learning Centers instead of inside the same damaged buildings. Specially, kids from lower classes are afraid to sit indoors even when the buildings are relatively undamaged. The fear to go to school increased after the second earthquake as a few kids got hurt during the ensuing commotion. Fear has been added in places like Mamerku and Sungdel where major trails have been damaged by cracks and small landslides.

B. COMMUNITY

Community members expressed that they have suffered different types of mental stress due to the constant aftershocks. Many communities have asked us to come up with trainings, counseling or similar programs that would help them deal with this trauma. Children and elderly have been slightly more affected by the disaster. In Sotang, Rewant Rai from ward 6 needs has not recovered from his mental shock, and the family worries that his condition might not return back to normal for a long time. Although, such severity of shock in other kids haven't been reported still there is a lot of fear which, according to a Government official, may trigger increased school dropout rates.

4. REBUILDING AND RECOVERY

From the discussions, it is clear that the community have placed a large amount of expectations on the Government and various other organizations in supporting the recovery and rebuilding process. On being asked how they will go about recovery, all the groups were unanimous in their expectation that Government/organization would show up to help in one or the other way. But till now, there has only been scant presence of the Government. Except for dZi and our local partners, hardly any other organization has reached out here and it is unlikely that they will show up in the future.

The community members accept that they might not have the required financial and technical resources to take up the rebuilding of the damage properties. But they are willing to contribute in whatever way they can- collecting local materials, contributing labor, helping each other out in building personal homes etc. Many community members have also already worked together to make temporary shelters out of tarps and bamboos for damaged schools like in Rakha and Gudel. The community members agree that one of the best ways to recover is to rebuild back the damaged public infrastructure and work together as a team. Learning about earthquake safe technology and building new houses based on that technology is another step to recovery. Building personal homes, and private structure using safe technology would give mental peace to everyone and that would also help to reduce mental anxiety. So, teaching retrofitting technology to local masons before initiating any building activities is essential at this stage. Community members also express that conducting awareness raising programs on earthquake and other natural disasters, learning about emergency response in such situation and other such informative programs are essential part of community recovery. There are also some areas in which particular households need more support than what is currently extended by dZi and the Government-particularly food support and temporary relocation to a safer area.

All the CDGs are willing to contribute labor if dZi takes up rebuilding of public infrastructure. A few groups have mentioned that they would appreciate it if the labor contribution time was reduced for a few years as they will also have to give time to rebuilding their homes. But there are also groups which say that they are willing to give even more percentage of local contribution as that is the least they could do in helping the recovery of their community. The community members are specially ready to contribute their time and effort to rebuild schools, and have requested us many times to support in rebuilding schools.

5. AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

dZi runs a comprehensive farmer centered agriculture program in 5 of the 7 VDCs. There was a possibility that our farmer members might not be able to contribute as much time to the program as before due to the earthquake, but the discussions conducted show that farmers are ready to give as much time as before. In many cases they actually want to be more involved in the agriculture program as they say that "now the need for agriculture program has increased even more". The people want to grow food fast, and grow food that are more nutritious, are less labor intensive and which they can sell in market to generate some income. There are also plenty of other community members who were not involved in our program before but who wants to be part of it now. There has been recommendation that our trainings be shorter and more hands-on in the coming days.

There is no immediate risk of food scarcity due to the damage of Earthquake in any of these areas but there is a real possibility that it will happen in a few months. Reasons are - i. since farming activity was paused for some time the harvest and planting cycle for major crops like paddy, potato and maize have been disturbed which might result in lower yield ii. in places like Gudel, new and very infectious pests like "Fauji Kira" have

been seen which has already caused huge loss to crops iii. There have been fissures, cracks and landslides in many agricultural land which might result in lower household crop production iv. In many house, seeds and other food items have been buried with the debris which might result again in lower agriculture production and food shortage after a few months.

The community members expect subsidy of 50% or more for another year from us in seeds, plants and agricultural implements. They are also looking forward to ready availability of many types of seeds through dZi or our local partners. In some places, the community members also want help with their small scale irrigation systems which have been damaged by the quake.

The community members also expect the related district agencies like District Agriculture Office to step in/support in this dire situation. Some of the groups have actually forwarded their problems/demands to district Development Office and VDC office.