



eBulletin

MAR-APR 2024



Summary

This e-bulletin highlights DPNet's comprehensive efforts in advancing disaster preparedness, response, and resilience through a series of activities and discussions, each focusing on critical aspects such as humanitarian standards, climate change, and disaster risk reduction from March to April 2024. On March 11, 2024, DPNet facilitated a session on the localization of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and Sphere Standards within Nepal. This discussion not only highlighted the revisions made to the CHS but also provided a platform for sharing experiences and strategies for implementing these standards effectively at the local level.

Subsequently, on March 14, a virtual program was held to deliberate on the draft Climate Change Act. This gathering engaged stakeholders to provide feedback, aiming to refine and strengthen the draft legislation. This was a step in enhancing Nepal's legislative framework to better address the challenges posed by climate change. The momentum continued with DPNet's 15th General Assembly on March 15, convened in Kathmandu. This event was marked by deep discussions around disaster risk reduction and the pivotal role of early warning systems. The assembly was also significant for the election of a new executive committee in the leadership of Dr. Raju Thapa, ensuring continued leadership and dedication in the field of disaster management. The assembly further recognized various contributions to disaster risk reduction, awarding individuals and entities for their exceptional efforts.

Post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction were another major focus, with multiple programs discussing the ongoing challenges in these areas. These discussions highlighted the slow pace of reconstruction and the need for housing solutions tailored to the specific contexts of affected areas. Emphasis was placed on the importance of community involvement in rebuilding efforts, ensuring that reconstruction strategies are inclusive and effectively meet the needs of all stakeholders. Moreover, a discussion on March 5th stressed the importance of strengthening disaster communication through media. This program highlighted the media's critical role in disaster risk reduction, especially in light of the increasing impacts of heatwaves. Proactive and anticipatory actions were discussed as essential responses to forecasted heatwaves, emphasizing the need for timely and effective communication to mitigate potential impacts.

Additionally, insights from recent fire incidents were shared, with discussions emphasizing the urgent need for improved firefighting resources, better preparedness, and enhanced community engagement in fire management. This is particularly crucial for mitigating the adverse effects of fires on lives, assets, and the environment. Collectively, these activities and discussions reflect DPNet Nepal's ongoing commitment to enhancing disaster preparedness, response, and resilience across the nation. Through these engagements, DPNet continues to play a crucial role in shaping policies, enhancing community capacities, and fostering a culture of preparedness and proactive response to disasters in Nepal.

Discussion on Revised CHS and Sphere Standard Localization in Nepal



March 11, 2024 - DPNet Nepal organized a significant discussion session focusing on the CHS and Sphere Standard Localization in Nepal. Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, Chair of DPNet Nepal chaired the program, which was attended by distinguished guests such as Mr. Kedar Neupane, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal, and the representatives from stakeholder organizations with a long history of working in the humanitarian sector.

Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa thanked the participants for their valuable presence with a warm welcome to all and provided them with a brief introduction to the CHS and Sphere localization in Nepal, and highlighted DPNet Nepal being the Sphere focal point in Nepal with Dr. Thapa as the coordinator. He briefed the aim of the discussion to learn and share the experiences of sphere localization in Nepal, the revision of CHS and to seek ways forward for effective implementation of the revised CHS.

Dr. Raju Thapa, Vice Chair at DPNet Nepal shared his presentation and highlighted the significant steps made in the institutionalization and localization process of Sphere standards in Nepal. He

emphasized DPNet's key role as the Focal Point of Sphere Geneva in Nepal, facilitating coordination among 136 member organizations, including NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies. Under the leadership of DPNet Nepal, a dedicated unit undertook the translation of Sphere standards into Nepali and led the dissemination of companion standards.

Dr. Thapa added that, through collaborative efforts with stakeholders, including the central government, DPNet successfully advocated for the incorporation of Sphere standards into the training curriculum of all 753 local governments. He emphasized the tangible outcomes of the efforts, including the production of educational materials such as the Sphere Handbook and a comprehensive training manual. Sensitization programs at the provincial level, including the production of Sphere-themed drama and folk songs, further solidified understanding and acceptance of Sphere standards.

As a result of these initiatives, the representatives of all the 753 local levels in Nepal are now sensitized to Sphere standards, equipped with hard copy reference materials, and have a uniform understanding of minimum humanitarian standard. He commended the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders in achieving these milestones, signaling a significant step forward in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response in Nepal. He further highlighted the contribution to CHS revision made by DPNet Nepal as a sphere focal point of Sphere Geneva via the conduction of revision discussion sessions with Nepal stakeholders, and online discussion platforms to seek ideas to consider during the updated version of the CHS.

Mr. Ram Gurung, Technical advisor at DPNet Nepal provided an insightful overview of the revised Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) in 2024, a crucial framework for the humanitarian community. The CHS, initially introduced in 2014, has undergone significant revisions to enhance its effectiveness and relevance throughout evolving global challenges.

During the presentation, Mr. Gurung highlighted the fundamental role of the CHS in setting a core standard of accountability within the humanitarian sector. He emphasized its guidance in designing principled and high-quality assistance, ensuring alignment with the needs and rights of affected people and communities. He clarified that the revision process was driven by various factors, including shifts in the global context such as the climate emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, policy environment changes and lessons learned from past experiences necessitated updating the standard to address emerging realities effectively. The revision timeline outlined a thorough consultation process, spanning from May 2022 to December 2023. Stakeholders participated in multiple rounds of feedback

sessions, webinars, and workshops, culminating in the final draft of the updated CHS shared with stakeholders in December 2023.

Mr. Gurung outlined the key changes to the CHS in 2024. Firstly, there was a reinforced focus on placing people at the center of quality and accountability efforts. The structure of the standard was also simplified, with a streamlined format comprising nine commitments and supporting requirements. Moreover, efforts were made to ensure the accessibility of the standard to a broader range of organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian efforts.

Notable changes included the division of Commitment 3 into two distinct commitments, emphasizing local leadership and sustainability, and focusing on the consequences and risks of assistance for people and the environment. He further added that; The rollout of the updated CHS is announced for March 21, 2024, 16.00-17.00 CET with an event scheduled to take place online and in person in Geneva. This event aims to underscore the commitment to people-centered accountability and to facilitate broader engagement with stakeholders. The launch of the revised CHS aims to mark a significant milestone in the humanitarian community's ongoing efforts to advocate quality and accountability in aid delivery, reflecting the evolving needs and priorities of those affected by crises worldwide. The registration link for online participation is <https://regi.page/CHS24> and the registration for in-person attendance can be done via <https://www.icvanetwork.org/events/icva-2024-annual-conference/>.

He further noted that Western Nepal is forward in terms of awareness and standard program implementation. Therefore, programs should be designed for other parts of Nepal to achieve balance and uniformity with the country's overall development trajectory being based on the sphere standards.

After Mr. Gurung's presentation Dr. Thapa came up with interesting Nepali idiomatic expressions to summarize the revised CHS; "My participation, my rights" represents the 1st criterion presenting the need for humanitarian response to be relevant and appropriate, "Dies today, receives medicine tomorrow"; this idiom attempts to emphasize the importance of the 2nd criterion of the CHS that the humanitarian response should be timely and effective. Similarly, the idiom "Prepare to kill a lion even if you're chasing a wolf" brings to light the 3rd criterion that underscores the role of humanitarian response in strengthening local capacities and avoiding negative effects. The idiom "To be on the same wavelength" in the context of CHS depicts the importance of the 4th criterion that internalized the significance of communication, participation, and feedback during humanitarian actions. "Beneficiaries' feedback is as valuable as a schoolbook" is the idiomatic representation of the 5th criterion which means that complaints on humanitarian efforts should always be welcomed and

addressed for effective humanitarian practice. “Everyone wants coordination, but no one wants to be coordinated; understand the importance of coordination” depicting the essence of the 6th criterion that highlights the importance of effective coordination. The idiomatic expression “One unwilling to learn ages in youth” highlights the 7th criterion which focuses on the need for continuous learning and application of the learning into practice. “Smile with your teeth when words fail; a crucial trait for any employee”; this idiom explains the 8th criterion which concentrates on staff competency, and the idiom “A small hole sinks a ship; accountability is for one’s own good” presents the 9th criterion of the CHS which emphasizes the importance of beneficiaries’ accountability.

Open Floor Discussion:

Mr. Bishnu Timalsina, DiMANN emphasized the need for distinction between responsibility and accountability, concerning whether both terms convey similar meanings or not in humanitarian response.

Mr. Shyam Sundar Jnavaly, NDRC provided a clear overview of the difference between responsibility and accountability and added that accountability is a broader term that depicts the act of being answerable for the responsibility one exhibits. He articulated a vision where, during the process of organization registration and renewal, the SWC should take the lead to evaluate the organizations that commit to following Sphere and CHS principles and further emphasized the need to make the revised CHS disability inclusive and friendly for effective localization practice. Mr. Jnavaly further recommended a national level initiation on behalf of the global launch of CHS revision as an effort to internalize the change made in the humanitarian standards to enhance better practices.

Mr. Ganesh K. Jimee, NSET emphasized that at the local level, there is a misconception that only humanitarian organizations are required to adhere to the standards and guidelines during humanitarian crises. It is crucial for all local entities, including government, semi-government, and non-governmental organizations, to be aware that these standards must be followed by everyone. For Sphere and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), there is a pressing need for national-level localization provisions.

Ms. Amika Rajthala, DJN highlighted the importance of coordinating and collaborating with the media sector as it is a strong platform to disseminate information and raise awareness of the context and importance of Sphere and CHS in disaster management.

Mr. Navin Dahal, a Freelancer shared his experience of working in the humanitarian sector during the Pariwartan project of UNIOM worked on the localization of the humanitarian standards and

emphasized the need for ensuring the progressive localization process keeping the importance the local differences such as language, and context.

Dr. Gaurav Devkota, WHO highlighted the need for a separate legal entity to look after the evaluation and quality assurance of the humanitarian actors and implementation of the sphere standards. He further advocated for the need for quality outcomes rather than being focused only on activity.

Ms. Dev Kumari Parajuli, NDWA mentioned that after the aftermath of the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, the concept of inclusion has rapidly gained attention. However, the practical implementation of inclusion is still progressing slowly. There is a need to follow a need-based approach rather than a blanket approach, especially in the case of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Kedar Neupane, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal summarized the session highlighting the need for dynamic efforts in the dissemination of information and awareness regarding Sphere and its standards in Nepal. He raised a concern regarding the flexibility to modify the sphere standards in the local context and highlighted the need to seek context-based adoption of the CHS in Nepal considering its geographical, cultural, and individual diversity focusing on inclusive practice. He further emphasized the need to balance the demand and supply and suggested piloting to understand the local-level needs considering barriers and gaps to localize and sensitize at the ground level. In addition, he also recommended preparing a synopsis of the handbook rather than distributing bulky books as an effective means to ensure information reach.

Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, Chair at DPNet Nepal and Session Chair concluded the discussion by highlighting the efforts made by DPNet in translating and disseminating the sphere handbook in Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar. He summarized the session by underlining the need for an inclusive approach to sphere standard dissemination and localization and the need to seek ways to adopt the standards being region-specific and context-based for better outcomes.

Virtual Discussion on Draft Climate Change Bill



DPNet organized a virtual discussion program on March 14th to solicit feedback on the draft Climate Change Act introduced by the Nepal Law Commission. The event saw the participation of 71 stakeholders, including civil society organizations and climate change experts. The program was

chaired by Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, Chairperson of DPNet, who emphasized the importance of the draft Climate Change Bill. He highlighted the ongoing virtual discussion on DPNet's webpage to collect further feedback on the draft act and encouraged participants to contribute their written feedback.

Dr. Raju Thapa, Vice Chair of DPNet, detailed the provisions of the draft bill, which was formulated in response to the Supreme Court's directive to the government for the introduction of a Climate Change Act. Dr. Thapa outlined the establishment of a Climate Change Authority and a National Council on Climate Change, chaired by the Prime Minister, which aim to bring out Nepal's efforts in climate change mitigation, adaptation, and finance.

The draft act proposes a comprehensive framework for climate change governance in Nepal, including the innovative concept of a Climate Budget for targeted climate action, the setting and trading of carbon targets, and the establishment of a Climate Change Fund to support sustainable development. It emphasizes the need for a holistic approach that incorporates social, gender, and environmental justice to protect the rights and livelihoods of vulnerable communities.

However, the open floor discussion raised several concerns and suggestions for refining the draft act. Some participants questioned the necessity of creating new institutions like the Climate Change Council and Authority, suggesting instead to amend the existing Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act, 2017, to include climate change responsibilities. Concerns were also raised about the practicality of the proposed council's large membership and the Prime Minister's involvement, suggesting a more streamlined structure could improve efficiency. Other suggestions included revising the CEO's qualifications, ensuring inclusive representation from the federal structure, and clarifying the roles of NGOs in implementing climate change plans.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa assured that DPNet would document the discussion and feedback received through the virtual platform and provide collective feedback to the Nepal Law

Commission. He thanked all participants for their active participation and contributions towards shaping Nepal's climate change policy.

DPNet Nepal Hosts 15th General Assembly

On March 15, 2024, DPNet held its 15th General Assembly at the Alpha House in Baneshwor,



Kathmandu. The event was chaired by Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, DPNet Chairperson, and Mr. Anil Pokhrel, Executive Director, Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority (NDRRMA) served as the chief guest of the program. The program was honored by the presence of officials from the government such as Mr. Dhruva Khadka, Joint Secretary, Mr. Rishi Raj Acharya, Joint Secretary, Ms. Ranjana Rai, Section officer at Disaster Study Risk Reduction and Recovery Section, MoHA, Mr. Chandra Prakash Gharti, Mayor Bheri municipality along with DRR experts such as Dr. Bishal Nath Upreti and representatives from various organizations working on DRR.

The opening session was followed by the welcome speech of Dr. Raju Thapa and award distribution for the recognition of outstanding contributions in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal. The Nepal Disaster Management Distinguished Award received by Mr. Mr. Chandra Prakash Gharti, Nepal Disaster Management Life Saver Award by Ms. Rama Gautam and Nepal Disaster Management Technology Award was received by Prof. Dr. Bishal Nath Upreti.

Mr. Kailash Rijal, General Secretary, DPNet acknowledged that various disasters affect people differently, given the varying contexts and levels of impact and emphasized the importance of

addressing vulnerability and shifting the focus towards managing risk financing and transfer keeping in consideration the interrelation between disaster and climatic hazards.

Dr. Raju Thapa, Vice-Chair, DPNet highlighted essence of EWS in DRR giving an example of the Android mechanism that provide alerts 20 seconds before earthquake occurs, which was also observed during the Jajarkot earthquake. He presented the major achievements of the last Executive Committee that worked from Kartik 25, 2078, to Chaitra 1, 2080 under the leadership of Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa. He provided a detailed overview of the activities conducted including 19 partnership agreements, the addition of 46 new member organizations, the formation of 4 DPNet Provincial Committees, celebration of National and International days, coordination for Meaningful Participation of Nepal in APMCDRR, Australia and facilitation for the establishment of NPDRR at NDRRMA. He further highlighted the inputs made in the 16th Periodic Plan from DRR and CCA Perspective and documentation of 127 total events. Additionally, he mentioned the regular publication of e-bulletins and dissemination of situation analysis reports of recent Bajhang and Jajarkot earthquake among a large number of stakeholders. He also gave a brief overview of DPNet's Online Resource Center, and the VDRR platforms for knowledge management.

Mr. Kedar Neupane, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal and DPNet Advisor expressed gratitude to the entire DPNet team. In light of the recent earthquakes, he commended the team for their efforts in facilitating coordination during the crisis. He stressed the importance of prioritizing reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, as well as enhancing the preparedness process.

Prof. Dr. Bishal Nath Uprety, President, NCDM shared that he has been there since DPNet's initiation and highlighted that it has become much more organized throughout the years. He pointed out the changing nature of disasters in Nepal, with increased intensity and unpredictable snowball effects leading to multiple disasters and emphasized the urgent need for Early Warning System in Nepal.

Mr. Chandra Prakash Gharti, Mayor Bheri municipality expressed gratitude for receiving award and commended the efforts made by DPNet and CSOs during the recent Jajarkot earthquake and shared his experience of prompt rescue within 24 hours. He further emphasized the need for multi-hazard reconstruction considering WASH and other humanitarian aspects, and concluded his remarks wishing for the successful tenure of the upcoming new executive committee.

Ms. Rama Gautam, NRCS Rukum Paschim shared her experience during the Jajarkot earthquake and the pathetic situation of households and families. She further highlighted the search, rescue and relief

scenario there and stressed on the need to review one door policy to enhance effective disaster management.

Mr. Umesh Dhakal, NRCS shared the relationship between NRCS and DPNet and the coordinated efforts made in disaster, and expressed his best regards to the upcoming executive committee.

Mr. Arjun Bhattarai, General Secretary, NGO Federation Nepal extended a warm welcome to the upcoming Executive Committee and proceeded to highlight the importance of collaboration and contribution to DRR efforts. He emphasized the need for preparedness to effectively tackle challenges in the future highlighting the crucial link between CC and disasters, emphasizing the integration of these aspects into DRR strategies. This collaboration, he noted, should involve not only academia and scientists but also all individuals becoming aware and proactive. Mr. Bhattarai highlighted the active involvement of CSOs and other stakeholders in these efforts, emphasizing that by working together, diverse expertise and resources can be leveraged to enhance the collective response to disasters. He expressed readiness to collaborate and offer assistance in any way possible to achieve the shared goal of building resilient communities and mitigating disaster impacts.

Ms. Ranjana Rai, Section officer, MOHA congratulated DPNet for its 15th AGM and for being on the process of electing new executive committee and highlighted that MOHA is ever ready to coordinate and work together in enhancing DRR.

The chief guest of the program, Mr. Anil Pokhrel, NDRRMA reflected the journey of DPNet in disaster and highlighted how it has been continuously making efforts to coordinate effective DRM in coordination with concerned stakeholders. Stressing the need for DPNet in further coordination and networking he brought to light how the concept of reconstruction and rehabilitation started and stated the progress throughout the 28 years of journey. Mr. Pokhrel expressed gratitude towards the achievements of the last executive committee and wished the upcoming executive committee of DPNet for a successful tenure ahead.

Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, DPNet Chair welcomed all the new member organizations and acknowledged the valuable presence of all the participants in making this AGM successful. He expressed appreciation towards all the speakers for their recommendations for a resilient disaster management practice. Mr. Thapa expressed his heartfelt gratitude towards DPNet and reflected his journey serving as a Chair for two consecutive tenures and proceeded towards congratulating the upcoming new executive committee and wishing his best for the successful tenure.

After the inauguration ceremony, Final Session was conducted as a part of AGM. The AGM passed progress report, future plan, and budget and unanimously elected the following Executive Committee:

1. Dr. Raju Thapa - President
2. Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa - Immediate Past President
3. Ms. Shakti Gurung - Vice President
4. Mr. Suraj Gautam - General Secretary
5. Mr. Harshaman Maharjan - Vice General Secretary
6. Mr. Keshab Datta Bhatta - Treasurer

Members:

7. Mr. Jaganath Prasad Kurmi
8. Mr. Dharma Lal Rokaya
9. Dr. Suresh Chaudhary
10. Mr. Santosh Neupane
11. Ms. Amika Rajthala

Additionally, as per the statute of DPNet following members becomes Ex-officio members of the DPNet Executive Committee:

12. Sher Bahadur Basnet (Sudurpaschim)
13. Hira Singh Thapa (Karnali)
14. Dharm Raj Ghimire (Lumbini)
15. Hari Bandhu Aryal (Gandaki)
16. Kamal Kumar Bishwakarma (Bagmati)
17. Nagdev Yadav (Madhesh)

Similarly, according to the DPNet Statute, there is a provision to nominate two members from INGO for the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee meeting on March 16th, nominated following two members;

18. Mr. Rabin Dahal
19. Mr. Sabin Adhikar

NDRRMA Welcomes DPNet's New Executive Committee



On March 18th, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) hosted a program to extend a warm welcome to the newly elected committee led by Dr. Raju Thapa of the Disaster Preparedness Network Nepal (DPNet), following the successful conclusion of its 15th General Assembly. The event was attended by notable figures like Executive Chief of NDRRMA Anil Pokhrel, Joint Secretary Bharat Mani Pandey, Rameshwor Marahatta, Dhurva Bahadur Khadka, and Rishi Raj Acharya, alongside other undersecretaries and staff from NDRRMA. From DPNet, Dr. Raju Thapa as President, Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa as Immediate Past President, Ms. Shakti Gurung as Vice President, Mr. Suraj Gautam as General Secretary, and Mr. Harshaman Maharjan as Vice General Secretary and other executive committee members Mr. Dharma Lal Rokaya, Mr. Santosh Neupane, Ms. Amika Rajthala, Mr. Hira Singh Thapa, Nagdev Yadav, Mr. Rabin Dahal, Mr. Sabin Adhikari attended the program.

During the program, Executive Chief of NDRRMA emphasized the need for DPNet to bridge the gap between civil society and government agencies, acting as a watchdog to provide essential feedback and suggestions for improvement. Chief Executive expressed his willingness to cooperate with the new committee in mitigating risks and managing disasters, citing his familiarity with many team members and expressing confidence in Dr. Thapa's leadership abilities to bring about meaningful changes, particularly in disaster management coordination and networking.

DPNet Immediate Past President, Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, highlighted DPNet's efforts in introducing disaster management acts and advocated against the idea of new climate change councils and authorities for similar activities, emphasizing the need for efficiency and cost-effectiveness in such endeavors. He praised the present DPNet committee for its dynamic composition and shared commitment to innovation and impact.

Dr. Raju Thapa proposed several initiatives, including the celebration of NDRRMA Day and the compilation and publication of best practices and lessons learned to preserve historical records. He suggested amendments to disaster assessment guidelines and to align with Nepal's evolving federal structure and improve clarity and simplicity. He also suggested to amend the existing relief standard. Additionally, he called for the establishment of Provincial Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction in all provinces and requested the commencement of preparatory programs for the upcoming Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) in Manila. Dr. Thapa reassured NDRRMA of DPNet's dedication to these tasks and offered full support for their implementation. He emphasized DPNet's readiness to assist NDRRMA whenever required, demonstrating a strong commitment to collaborative efforts in disaster risk reduction and management. Finally, Chief Executive thanked all and closed the program

Post-Earthquake Discussion Program at Jajarkot District



DPNet in support of Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH) has conducted discussion program with the relevant stakeholders in Jajarkot District on 23rd March, 2024. This discussion revealed the challenges and complexities surrounding the construction of temporary shelters, highlighting the slow pace of reconstruction and the various factors at play that hinder the community's efforts to rebuild. One of the primary

concerns voiced was the approach taken by local governments in declaring houses as collapsed, regardless of their actual condition. This overstatement, fueled by a combination of greed and inadequate verification processes, resulted in an inflated count of beneficiaries, surpassing the actual number of houses in the district. Initially, the government's leniency in distributing the first installment of NPR 25,000 to all claimants, without rigorous validation, transitioned to a more rigid requirement for dismantling houses according to the Temporary House Reconstruction Procedure. This change now

requires proof of dismantled houses, additional documentation for those claiming separation while residing under a single roof, and compliance with procedural conditions, which many find difficult and unfeasible.

The bottleneck in the disbursement process became evident when the NDRRMA allocated funds to the District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC), which were to be facilitated by the Local Disaster Management Committees (LDMC) for allocation. The imposition of strict conditions has led to hesitation among LDMCs to claim these funds from the DDMC, resulting in a deadlock with half a billion rupees unclaimed for the second installment. The discussion revealed that, apart from Bheri Municipality, which validated damages before recommending beneficiaries, other municipalities indiscriminately marked houses as fully damaged without proper assessment. This discrepancy has created a deadlock, preventing beneficiaries from claiming the second installment due to the absence of verifiable evidence about their houses' conditions. Consequently, locals have been queuing up at government offices, seeking documentation to substantiate their claims for further support.

Participants have also pointed out the one-size-fits-all approach of the current Temporary Shelter Grant Procedure, which overlooks the diversity in family sizes and the impracticality of a uniform grant amount to construct shelters that meet varying family needs. This approach has particularly disadvantaged larger families, who struggle with inadequate shelter space, and those with partially damaged houses who are reluctant to dismantle their homes due to the insufficient grant amount compared to their houses' value and utility.

The lack of community consultation in the development of the Temporary Shelter Grant Procedure was another issue raised. Many locals traditionally incorporate cowsheds into their housing structures, a practice disregarded in the current procedure, which mandates the complete dismantling of houses. This oversight not only disrupts livelihoods but also poses a significant challenge with the approaching rainy season, highlighting the need to expedite the shelter construction process. To address these challenges, meeting participant proposed several measures: revising the Temporary Shelter Procedure to allow for the retention of ground floors for cattle, simplifying the documentation process for the second installment claim, and providing support for those unable to dismantle their houses. They emphasized prioritizing vulnerable populations for shelter construction before the monsoon and called for improvements in banking services within the affected areas to facilitate smoother transaction processes for earthquake victims.

The discussion program also discussed on the obstacles faced by the community people in their recovery and rebuilding efforts post-earthquake. The insights highlight the imperative need to revisit and revise existing procedures, ensuring community consultation in policy formulation and enhancing coordination among government levels to ensure a more effective, empathetic, and equitable disaster management and reconstruction strategy. In addition to the construction challenges, the discussion also shed light on the living conditions within the temporary shelters. Many of these shelters, hastily constructed with materials like zinc sheets, offer little comfort or protection from extreme temperatures, making them practically uninhabitable. Participants raised the need for a revised shelter construction procedure that considers the geological and environmental realities of their local context, ensuring that new structures are both safe and conducive to their way of life.

The plight of vulnerable groups, particularly the elderly and injured, who are unable to undertake the physical task of dismantling their homes, was also discussed. The community called for the mobilization of security forces or local government intervention to assist these helpless individuals, highlighting the need for a more compassionate approach to disaster recovery that takes into account the capacities and limitations of all affected persons. Furthermore, the discussion touched on broader issues such as the unequal concentration of humanitarian aid in easily accessible areas, leaving remote and inaccessible regions neglected. The need for strategic planning to address potential logistical challenges in future disasters, such as warehousing for relief supplies and ensuring road access, was emphasized.

Political influences and inflated beneficiary numbers due to vested interests have complicated the distribution of aid, illustrating the need for transparent and equitable relief efforts. Additionally, considerations such as land fissures, spring water disruptions, and the registration of injured individuals for allowances were identified as critical areas requiring attention in the ongoing recovery process. This in-depth conversation with the relevant stakeholders of Jajarkot District not only highlighted the immediate challenges faced in the wake of the Jajarkot earthquake but also highlighted the complex interplay of social, political, and environmental factors that influence disaster recovery efforts. The community's insights offer valuable guidance for revising current strategies and policies to ensure a more inclusive, effective, and sustainable approach to rebuilding and resilience.

Post-Earthquake Discussion at West Rukum

DPNet in support of Welt Hunger Hilfe conducted a discussion program in West Rukum on March 25th, 2024. Most of the participants raise the concern about delay in second installment grant distribution. The provision of the first installment for temporary shelter construction, worth Rs. 25,000, initiated a wave of hope. However, the anticipation of a smooth process for receiving the second installment delayed due to the strict provision set on temporary



shelter grant procedure, which ask beneficiaries to provide documents like land ownership certificates and other necessary documents. The District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) sits on Rs. 500 million, unclaimed by municipalities, leaving those who had borrowed money at high interest rates to complete their houses in a debt trap.

The earthquake disrupted the routine of seasonal migration for livelihood, a common practice for the residents who traveled to India and other urban parts of Nepal. This disruption has not only severed a vital source of income but also intensified food scarcity and malnutrition issues within the community. Compounding these economic woes is the surge in locally brewed alcohol consumption, which has become a significant problem, escalating incidents of domestic violence. The cramped living conditions in temporary shelters have no escape room for women from abusive situations, highlighting an urgent need for humanitarian partners to prioritize protective measures.

Furthermore, the narrow confines of temporary shelters have led to an increase in fire accidents. Traditional indoor kitchens have been replaced by makeshift outdoor cooking spaces, closely situated to flammable materials. Another emerging threat is the rise in snake bites, attributed to warmer climates and a lack of a snake bite treatment center in the district. The fear of snake bites has traumatized the community, especially children, and led to drastic measures such as setting forest fires in a misguided attempt to eliminate snakes. Administrative and procedural delays have compounded the reconstruction efforts. The need for a streamlined process is evident as over a thousand files remain unopened at the Musikot Municipality office. In some cases, the choice of roof color mandated by municipal authorities has also become a point of contention, reflecting the micro-level challenges affecting the rebuilding process.

The situation is further complicated by the expectation of monsoon, which poses a threat to the already vulnerable temporary shelters. The opinion of beneficiaries on the inflated count of affected individuals, the challenges in coordinating efforts between the Chief District Officer (CDO) and DDMC members, and frequent changes in local government staff have all contributed to a sluggish reconstruction pace. Moreover, the one-door policy, intended to streamline aid distribution, has faced criticism for its inefficiency. Humanitarian efforts have concentrated in accessible areas, leaving those in remote locations underserved. The use of social security allowances, delays due to the appointment of Chief Administration Officers (CAO), and the identification of the most vulnerable households for support highlight the issues troubling the recovery process. The political influence on the inflation of beneficiary numbers, geological challenges like land fissure due to earthquake in construction, and the disruption of spring water sources, add layers to the already complex situation.

The community's resilience is tested further by the loss of livelihoods, agricultural products, and the erasure of traditional practices. The support from NGOs and INGOs, while helpful, has not fully addressed the spectrum of needs, including child malnutrition, the management of orphan children, and the adherence to minimum humanitarian standards in reconstruction efforts. The reliance on round stones and mud for building, without engineering input, has raised concerns about the future earthquake resilience of new structures.

Reflecting on these observations and interactions, it's clear that the path to recovery in West Rukum is fraught with challenges that extend beyond the physical rebuilding of homes. The deep-seated issues of debt, disrupted livelihoods, increased domestic violence, and administrative hurdles paint a complex picture of post-disaster recovery. As the community braces for the monsoon season, the urgency for coordinated, comprehensive, and compassionate responses from all stakeholders – government bodies, humanitarian partners, and the community itself – has never been more critical. The journey towards rebuilding West Rukum after the earthquake is not just about reconstructing homes but restoring the fabric of the community and ensuring resilience against future calamities.

Discussion Program on Strengthening Disaster Communication through Media and Information Sharing on Heat Wave

On April 5th, 2024, DPNet organized a significant discussion program titled "Strengthening Disaster Communication through Media and Information Sharing on Heatwave." This program was conducted in a hybrid format with financial and technical support from the Start Fund Network- FOREWARN and the Institute of Himalayan Risk Reduction (IHRR). Dr. Raju Thapa, Chair of DPNet, chaired the program, which was attended by distinguished guests including Mr. Kedar Neupane, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal, Mr. Prakash Adhikari from National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), Dr. Samir Adhikari from the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), Mr. Govind Kumar Jha from the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM), Mr. Niroj Sapkota from Start Fund Nepal, as well as representatives from stakeholder organizations and members of the media.



The program was facilitated by Mr. Suraj Gautam, General Secretary of DPNet, with opening remarks delivered by Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, Immediate Past President of DPNet Nepal. Mr. Thapa expressed gratitude to the participants for their presence and extended a warm welcome to all. Emphasizing the significance of media in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) efforts he outlined the aim of the discussion, which was to exchange experiences and insights on the impact of seasonal changes, particularly as summer progresses, on the community.

Mr. Kedar Neupane, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal and DPNet Advisor, conveyed his affinity for the media, highlighting its crucial role as a bridge between service providers and receivers. He emphasizes that the media should not only highlight the limitations of institutions but also acknowledge and praise their positive actions. Mr. Neupane shared a childhood story about how

during the summer season, rising temperatures would prompt automatic school closures and even leading students to study under trees in the mornings to minimize the effects of heat.

Dr. Raju Thapa, Vice Chair at DPNet Nepal shared his presentation and highlighted the importance of coordination among all the stakeholders. Dr. Thapa emphasized the effort of DPNet in the preparations and publication of earthquake situation analysis reports daily and monthly basis during the time of Bajhang and Jajarkot Earthquakes. He emphasized the context of the media's role in DRR, and even acknowledged that we have provided less space to the media, which has to be highly realized. He explained that DPNet serves as the secretariat of NPDRR, which comprises nine thematic groups including UN and donor organizations, NGOs, media, academia, research institutes, INGOs, affected communities, government, semi-government, and private sectors. Among these, the media group plays a crucial role in facilitating coordination among national and international stakeholders. Media's significance lies in situation evaluation and timely dissemination of information following disaster events. From the data of Nepal Media Association 2022, he noted that 90% of people have access to social media, while only 5% fully trust its content. Similarly, 49% have access to television, but only 35% trust its contents. He also shared insights into Nepal's seismic positionality in terms of earthquakes. He illustrated that we are in the hyperactive seismic activity zone. In the western part of Nepal, there exists a seismic gap of around 500 years. In an earthquake measuring approximately 6.4 on the Richter scale, 74,000 households were vulnerable to be affected. However, in the case of an 8.0 magnitude earthquake, the impact would be 251 times greater. Therefore, planning for the western part of Nepal should be based on this understanding. Past experiences indicates that the effects of earthquakes seem to be more influenced by human-made structures rather than solely by natural causes and geographical position. In Bagmati province, based on different scenarios; 58000 can be hampered in worst case was even shared by Dr. Thapa citing Durham and NSET research.

He also discussed the traditional use of round stones in house construction and posed a critical question: "Are we prepared for future dangers?" Additionally, he emphasized the various types of housing structures prevalent in Nepal, not only within the Kathmandu Valley but also outside, such as the *Ghantauke houses*. Dr. Thapa highlighted the dangers posed by the Karnali roadway, pointing out that while Nepal tends to express gratitude and joy when roads are constructed, but the risks associated with these pathways often go uncalculated and unrecognized. He also emphasized the significance of forestation and plantation initiatives. He acknowledged the cases of road accidents which is in increasing trend these days. He also shed light on other unaddressed issues in Nepal, such as transformers on pedestrian paths, electricity poles within the black-pitch roads, and low-level bridges above rivers. He urged for greater coverage of disaster-related issues and emphasized the need to raise

awareness within the community and even commended media houses for establishing disaster beats, which play a crucial role. He advocated for the implementation of disaster beats in all media houses to effectively inform and educate the public.

Nirbesh Kumar Nepal, General Secretary, DRRM Platform, in his presentation, emphasized the pivotal role played by DRRM in connecting the public with various organizations and disseminating vital information during disasters. This is achieved through channels such as emergency alerts, public education campaigns, and media, which facilitates coordination among stakeholders. Given our vulnerability to disasters, addressing and writing about disaster-related issues is imperative. Mr. Nepal highlighted the media's role as a bridge between the public and various organizations, including the government. As the media operates around the clock and the Right to Information is constitutionally mandated, it holds significant importance. Its responsibilities include providing timely and accurate news, raising awareness, implementing alert systems, and educating the public. Moreover, the media facilitates crisis communication by delivering accurate information effectively and contributes to increasing international donations and resource mobilization. There's a need to establish disaster beats within media structures to monitor and network information effectively. Beyond advocating for accountability and addressing public issues, the media also provides mental and social comfort to individuals during challenging times. Mr. Nepal highlighted the importance of discussing how to move forward in tackling these challenges. The impact of the media is evident in providing instantaneous, trusted information, aiding decision-making, and addressing public health concerns. He also highlighted the importance of fostering closer linkages with disaster-mitigation communities and advocating for technological information exchange mechanisms.

In conclusion, equal access to crisis information, technological utilization, journalist training, and collaborative efforts are essential in reducing the risks of natural and human induced hazards and serving the global community effectively. He stressed the need to move beyond the common coverage of political or economic issues and normalize the inclusion of other forms of news on the front lines. While the media is considered the fourth pillar of the nation, this might not always be practically felt, particularly before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Disaster journalism in Nepal plays a significant role in disaster management and reduction efforts. Developing a common online portal could ensure uniformity and facilitate the establishment of a central body for information dissemination. He addressed that it is crucial to leverage technology appropriately and ensure fair distribution of information, along with timely scheduling of training and capacity-building initiatives.

Mr. Hari Bahadur Thapa, DRRM emphasized the need to create contextual content on DRR. He pointed out the absence of a roster of experts and highlighted the consequences of unmanaged development, which often result in destruction. Additionally, he raised concerns about the economic scarcity faced by the media industry, stating that this issue also deserves priority attention.

Govinda Kumar Jha, Meteorologist, DHM, provides a brief information about DHM and give an insight about the role of DHM as to safeguard lives and properties from hydro-meteorological disasters by fulfilling various objectives. These include contributing to the global exchange of meteorological data, issuing forecasts for public safety, mountaineering expeditions, civil aviation, and agriculture. Additionally, the organization conducts specialized studies to support policy-making and advance meteorological sciences in the region. It also seeks to foster relationships with both national and international organizations in the field of meteorology. Mr. Jha even illustrated the present activities performed by DHM as seasonal outlook, weekly weather outlook, 3-days weather forecast, 24-hour public weather forecast, urban city forecast, high altitude mountain forecast, fog forecast, and aviation weather forecast. He provided details from which the daily forecast can be tracked as from the official website of DHM, direct phone call at 01-4113191, Facebook page, twitter, email, and AMHS Aviation. Media including FM, TV, and online media. He describes heat wave as a weather phenomenon when an abnormal temperature rises in a period more than the normal maximum temperatures that occur during the summer season. He highlighted that in 2023, a record-breaking heat wave affected 12 cities in Nepal. In his presentation, the map indicates red areas signify intense heat, which can be monitored through updates on the DHM website every 1-1 hour. Mr. Jha elaborates that heat waves in Nepal mainly occur from April to June, sometimes extending into July, with May and June being the peak months. Prediction is based on synoptic analysis and consensus from various numerical prediction models like WRF, GFS, and GEFS. Different categories of heat days are identified based on maximum temperature percentiles, ranging from hot days to extreme heat days, with consecutive occurrences defining the severity level. Notable records include Dhangadhi's all-time extreme temperature of 46.4°C on June 5th, 1995, and Nepalgunj's 45°C on June 16th, 1995. Additionally, his overviews the health implications of heat waves and emphasized the importance of emergency preparedness. Plans are underway to create emergency kits containing essential items such as water bottles, umbrellas, and hats to mitigate dehydration and other health issues. Additionally, the discussion covered the Special Weather Bulletin and various heat wave terminologies aimed at enhancing understanding and preparedness.

Mr. Dharam Upreti, Thematic lead, Practical Action, highlighted the increasing impact of climate change, evident in rising temperatures and changing sea levels. The temperature has risen by 1.2

degrees Celsius since the 18th century, largely due to the greenhouse effect. WHO and Indian meteorological data indicate that a heat wave is a condition that occurs if the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 °C or more for the Plains and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions. He shared an incident where temperatures consistently remained above normal from April to June, and a similar trend was expected for July to September. Mr. Uprety even provided a descriptive highlight on the measures which can be taken to avoid heat exposure and stay cool during hot weather. He recommended wearing lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting cotton clothing and covering the head with a cloth, hat, or umbrella. Prevent dehydration by drinking sufficient water, even if you don't feel thirsty, and consider homemade drinks like lassi, lemon water, or buttermilk to stay hydrated. Avoid high-protein and stale foods, as well as alcohol, tea, coffee, and carbonated drinks, which can dehydrate the body. He even urged for ensuring that the animals have shade and access to plenty of water, to keep the houses cool by using curtains, shutters, or sunshades and opening windows at night. He also outlined a way forward, suggesting the implementation of Early Warning Systems to provide advance notice of heatwaves, enabling people to stay hydrated and avoid excessive activity. Establishing Public Cooling Centers would provide shelter for those unable to cool their homes adequately. Urban Design strategies, including green spaces and reflective surfaces, can mitigate the urban heat island effect. Using heat-resistant building materials and proper insulation can maintain cooler indoor temperatures. Long-term mitigation efforts should focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions through renewable energy and sustainable practices. Water conservation measures are essential for combating drought conditions exacerbated by heat waves. Additionally, protecting ecosystems through conservation and reforestation can help regulate temperatures and mitigate the impacts of heat waves. He acknowledged that the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should be prepared for heat wave-prone areas in Nepal, emphasizing the need for precautions to be taken during both daytime and nighttime warm temperatures.

Mr. Niraj Sapkota, Technical Specialist at Start Fund Nepal – FOREWARN, provided an overview of Start Fund Nepal, emphasizing its role in swiftly financing underfunded crises and proactively addressing imminent ones, thereby filling crucial gaps in humanitarian funding. The organization boasts 19 alert systems, 17 activations, and has aided 15,224 individuals, dispersing a total of \$2.3 million across Nepal's seven provinces. Start Fund Nepal operates through localized, anticipatory, and rapid actions, focusing on timely forecasting and enhancing anticipatory measures to prepare for foreseeable crises. He provided a brief introduction to the Purwanuman Chautari, stating that it is the second session on heat waves following the first session on *sheet lahar*. Mr. Sapkota highlighted activities for anticipating heatwaves, including forming Technical Anticipatory Action Groups,

engaging stakeholders, and issuing timely alerts. Plans involve actions before, during, and after heatwaves, prioritizing vulnerable communities and institutions like schools. He addressed that toolkits is prepared along with IHRR and CARE which also need ongoing validation. Attention is given to addressing the observed rise in heatwave occurrences, with interventions spanning from food distribution to awareness campaigns and infrastructure enhancements. He even shared that post-heatwave, there is a focus on reflective feedback and learning exchanges to bolster resilience, alongside ongoing data collection through platforms like Google Forms for advocacy and resource mobilization.

Ms. Kamala Panthi, Media Coordinator, NPDRR, mentioned that the media group was established three years ago and has since grown significantly. She emphasized that structural man-made hazards appear to be more hazardous than natural ones. Ms. Panthi elaborated on the vital role of media and urged for media sensitization to occur regularly.

Mr. Prakash Adhikari, Under Secretary, NDRRMA, expressed gratitude for organizing such an important program on disaster management. He emphasized the significance of all stakeholders working together to address disaster issues. While acknowledging the existence of various guidelines and policies on disaster management, Mr. Adhikari questioned whether these guidelines were equally effective during the post-disaster period. He commended the media for their tireless efforts in disseminating information and expressed hope for their continued support in the future. Highlighting the significant role of human negligence in causing destruction, he noted that approximately 80% of disasters are human induced. He additionally added that community-based awareness and preparedness play significant roles on mitigating and combating the issue of disaster together.

Dr. Samir Adhikari, Under Secretary, MoHP, highlighted the adverse health effects of heat waves. He mentioned that even a slight increase in temperature can lead to a fourfold increase in effect. Conditions like dengue are greatly influenced by humidity and temperature fluctuations. Heatwaves contribute to the rise of foodborne and waterborne diseases, and eye problems, and exacerbate chronic health issues such as kidney, heart, and respiratory ailments. Mr. Adhikari emphasized that normally we have mentality that heatwaves are commonly associated with communicable diseases, but they also significantly impact chronic diseases which is usually less awarded of. Dr. Adhikari stressed the importance of addressing new challenges promptly, especially in remote areas. He emphasized the need for immediate action to prevent health issues, citing alarming statistics such as 4% of children doesn't get any form of vaccines, and daily occurrences of suicide which is 19 per day and 8-9 accidents on daily basis. He stressed on how could we able to combat this issue from the angle of disaster. He even praised media on creating disaster beats which can be effective for prevention efforts in DRR.

However, challenges like limited access to information and uncertainty about audience reach remain. Dr. Adhikari emphasized the importance of proactive measures, including psychosocial support, to address emerging issues effectively. Collaboration and strong community engagement were highlighted as crucial in facing these challenges. He also highlighted the need of information dissemination by the use of local language, accessible to right information at the right time, diagnosis of the channel which is appropriate to that specific community to enhance the information gathering. He also emphasized the importance of ensuring that disseminating information for awareness, such as stating that the western part of Nepal is more prone to earthquakes, might indirectly create psychological risks for the public due to fear of disasters.

Question Answers Session:

Mr. Nischal Sedhai, Human Development and Community Services, shared that the Disaster journalism and advocacy lack the issue of forest fire.

Mr. Surendra Pandey, Chairperson, DRRM, shared that the lifeline communication systematization can be done for heat wave and cold wave.

Mr. Govinda Luitel, Setopati, requested to use the local terms for the better understanding.

Mr. Kedar Neupane, Advisor, DPNet, enhanced the need of practical forecasting system in daily life. He urged that the forecast system should be accessible to 3 crore population through the different medium like television and FM radio.

Mr. Suraj Gautam, General Secretary, DPNet Nepal, provided insights into the impact of heat wave, especially as summer advances, on communities. He stressed the crucial role of media in DRR and emphasized the necessity for sensitizing media personnel and DRR journalists, as well as promoting proactive disaster reporting. Furthermore, he highlighted challenges such as limited access to information and the importance of proactive community engagement. He also highlighted the significance of disseminating information in local languages and selecting appropriate channels for effective information gathering.

Closing Remarks:

In his closing remarks, Dr. Raju Thapa expressed gratitude to all participants, both in person and via the Zoom platform, for their valuable time. He assured collaboration with the DRRM media group in the future and thanked Start Fund Nepal for their interventions in anticipatory action, especially considering the current context of the heatwave.

Discussion Program on Insights from Gorkha and Jajarkot Earthquakes and Cost-Effective Housing Solution



On April 18, 2024, DPNet Nepal organized an event on Discussion Program on Insights from Gorkha and Jajarkot Earthquakes and Cost-Effective Housing Solution on the Technical and financial support of Habitat for Humanity, at the Alfa House, Baneshwor, Kathmandu. The event was chaired by Dr. Raju Thapa, DPNet Chairperson. The program was honored by the presence of officials from the government such as Dr. Dijan Bhattarai, National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority (NDRRMA), Mr. Santosh Kumar Khatri from the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA), and representatives from various organizations working on DRR.

Mr. Keshab Dutta Bhatta, Treasurer, DPNet Nepal, facilitated the program and shared the objective of the program as the program aims to assess lessons from the Gorkha and Jajarkot earthquakes, improve disaster preparedness, and discuss affordable housing solutions to minimize earthquake impacts in vulnerable areas. It seeks to foster collaboration among stakeholders, including experts and policymakers, to share knowledge and enhance earthquake resilience. Additionally, it aims to explore sustainable methods for rebuilding communities and infrastructure post-earthquake, while also identifying challenges and opportunities in implementing effective risk reduction measures and housing solutions in Nepal.

Mr. Surya Narayan Shrestha, NSET shared his presentation and highlighted key lessons from the Gorkha Earthquake recovery process. He emphasized the importance of governance and the need of clearly defined roles for institutions. He also mentioned that out of the total anticipated government expenses in Jajarkot, estimated at 70 billion, housing costs represented 80% of this amount. Combining

private and government expenses, the total sum reaches 120 billion. However, by utilizing retrofit technology, it could potentially be accomplished at 80 Arab.

He emphasized that by integrating technology with even round stone construction methods, we can achieve resilient buildings. Retrofitting stone houses with technology is feasible. He highlighted the misconception among the general population that stone houses should be demolished and replaced with new ones, emphasizing the need to raise awareness about the benefits of retrofit technology. Mr. Shrestha also emphasized that we often overlook medium-scale earthquakes and only focus on large-scale ones, even though medium-scale earthquakes can also cause significant destruction. Since 2015, the country has shifted to an owner-driven approach to reconstruction. Now, with the country operating under a federal system, there are concerns about how to plan effectively within this governance structure and how to proceed in the future. He also highlighted another important perspective: while we calculate the amount the government provides post-disaster; the crucial question is whether Nepal can sustain these expenses. He stressed the need for a targeted approach rather than a flat one.

Dr. Raju Thapa, Chairperson, DPNet Nepal in his presentation, shared interesting facts about the Jajarkot earthquake. He discussed a progress involving an Android function within the Google system that utilized mobile phone GPS to detect seismic activity to disseminate earthquake early warning message from seconds to minute. Dr. Thapa also highlighted the swift deployment of security measures during the Jajarkot incident. He pointed out the challenge that arises when the Prime Minister and lots of VIP visits disaster-prone areas, as the Chief District Officer (CDO) and security sectors becomes preoccupied with welcoming and managing for VIPs. Dr. Thapa further shared details about the Jajarkot earthquake, noting the prompt restoration electricity and communication system. Regarding Jajarkot earthquake recovery, he shared that first installment of grant has been provided efficiently, but the distribution of the second installment has been delayed due to specific criteria that people need to fulfill. This bottleneck created a situation where no one got second installment to build temporary shelter even after five months of earthquake. Additionally, Dr. Thapa provided field updates from Jajarkot, highlighting the situation of loan applications after receiving the first installment, as people hope to receive the second installment. The condition for receiving the second installment was that the house destroyed by the earthquake must be demolished. Dr. Thapa pointed out that development agencies offer assistance for building houses along with WASH facilities, whereas the Nepal government only assists in house construction. This disparity in the system leads the public to choose the option provided by development organizations over that of the government in some cases, however, many people who have chosen development partners has not got any support.

Dr. Thapa also emphasized the situation in Jajarkot, noting that incidents of women violence, school dropouts, and child labor appear to be increasing compared to previous periods. The issue of snake bites, attributed to climate change, is exacerbated by the lack of snakebite treatment centers. To mitigate snakebite incidents, people are setting up fires to kill snake in forest. He also raised concern about land fissure due to earthquake. He shared that the equal assistance provided to both small and large families, suggesting that assistance should be based on family size. There is a collective struggle to obtain accurate data, necessitating the development of a simplified, aggregated data tracking form by government agencies like NDRRMA. There is confusion surrounding the One Door Policy, highlighting the need for a clear definition of this concept which was also been highlighted by Dr. Thapa. He even emphasized the necessity of comprehensive disaster response guidelines and long-term preparedness strategies to rebuild resilient communities and prevent future disasters. He also highlighted the reality that when humanitarian partners visit earthquake-prone areas post-disaster, they often stay and focus their visits on urban and core areas, neglecting rural areas. He discussed the sensitive issue of children whose parents have died during a disaster event, emphasizing the need for proper care and responsible guardianship. Lastly Dr. Thapa emphasized on the need for urgent actions to be prepared for the approaching monsoon season, fortify shelters, and address earthquake-induced cracks.

Dr. Jib Raj Pokhrel, Advisor DPNet Nepal, in his presentation discussed the design and construction of houses following the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake. He emphasized that Nepal's primary issue is its inefficient utilization of abundant local resources. Dr. Pokhrel highlighted the importance of maintaining temperatures in temporary shelter as most of such shelter made by zinc sheet which is hot in summer and cold in winter. He shared that he just completed temporary house in Jajarkot using locally available resources. He emphasized the importance of bamboo due to its diverse properties suitable for structural purposes and durability. In the context of Nepal, there was a traditional practice of dipping bamboo in water as a pretreatment before construction, but nowadays, it can be treated with a borax chemical solution for similar purposes. Mud plastering and plastic are also utilized for temporary housing solutions. In his newly constructed shelter during the experimental assessment, temperatures were recorded on regular basis which recorded at least 10-degree temperature differ than outside, which makes people to make comfortable to live inside house.

Mr. Abhishek Shrestha, Engineer, Habitat for Humanity, in his presentation gave a brief introduction to Habitat for Humanity Nepal and emphasized the role of the organization in disaster management. Mr. Shrestha shared the global data which entails that conventional construction material has 22.7% contribution in global carbon emission. Bamboo has been used in Nepal for a long time as a primary

construction material, often in combination with other materials in hybrid forms. Mr. Shrestha also discussed the properties of bamboo, noting that it can be utilized for construction purposes for 3-5 years old bamboo. It serves as an effective substitute for timber, being carbon-negative, lightweight, and flexible, although its strength may vary. He talked about bamboo being a safe, affordable, and sustainable housing solution, particularly vital for supporting marginalized families and disaster-affected communities. Bamboo construction is widely adopted in Nepal, with over half of households in the Eastern Terai using bamboo for their walls. He emphasized on the fact that, beyond temporary shelters, the organization has lead the design and implementation of improved bamboo house models across the country, from rural low-income residences to upscale resorts and community centers. He overviewed that numerous research studies have been conducted on bamboo, including laboratory tests. In the past year alone, over 350 tests on two species of bamboo have been conducted at Pulchowk Engineering Campus. Despite criticisms of bamboo shelters, it is noted that traditional mud-plastered bamboo houses require re-plastering every 5-10 years, incurring additional expenses. As an alternative, constructing bamboo houses with minimal use of cement offers a viable option.

He also attempted to highlight the challenges that persist due to an informal and non-regulated bamboo construction market, including concerns over bamboo quality and safety standards. Also challenge with bamboo is the absence of a grading system, which makes it difficult to assess the extent of cracks and determine whether they are suitable for housing purposes. To address these issues, efforts are underway to establish a National Bamboo Guideline, develop the bamboo market system, engage the private sector, expand bamboo research, and foster collaboration with academia. He also highlighted that these initiatives aim to enhance bamboo construction's safety, reliability, and performance while promoting its broader adoption as a sustainable housing solution in Nepal.

Q&A session

1. **Mr. Ram Prasad Bhandari, Advisor, DPNet Nepal**, emphasized the effectiveness of an owner-community-driven approach to housing in Nepali context. He highlighted Nepal's traditional culture of self-help but noted that in developed countries with strong governments, community-driven initiatives may not be as successful. Mr. Bhandari also emphasized the importance of prioritizing school reconstruction within such forums. Despite Nepal's adoption of a fancy and sophisticated school building system, the issue arises as many schools are now merging due to declining student numbers. While this may benefit related stakeholders, it will also increase the public burden.

2. **Mr. Rabin Dahal, Executive Committee Member, DPNet Nepal**, expressed his interest in whether the integrated settlement practices applied after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal have succeeded, and suggested conducting research on this matter. He also raised the question of how to convince people about the importance of retrofitting. Additionally, Mr. Dahal highlighted the issue of inflated number of beneficiaries in Jajarkot earthquake being created to collect assistance funds and need to discuss strategies to address this. In Bajhang, efforts have been made to discourage the Chaupadi system, but now the huts used for Chaupadi are being utilized as temporary shelters. He also brought attention to the availability of bamboo for construction purposes.
3. **Ms. Rekha Shrestha, R&R Engineering Construction**, highlighted that significant lessons have been learned since the 2015 earthquake. Although the building code was formulated in 1994, many people are unaware of its existence. She emphasized the importance of raising awareness at the local level and beyond, especially by communicating in local languages. Ms. Shrestha stressed the necessity of providing training to technical professionals and communities, enabling them to construct houses according to established standards
4. **Mr. Shyam Sundar Jnavaly, Advisor, DPNet Nepal**, highlighted the tendency where we often discuss the importance of good and sturdy construction, but in reality, we tend to lean towards methods that are easy and cheap. We have learned valuable lessons from all the earthquakes experienced so far, emphasizing the urgent need to formulate a strategy to apply this learning effectively. Another important concern raised by Mr. Jnavaly was the exclusive focus on cost effective building methods, which may be suitable for marginalized and low-income groups. However, for families capable of affording proper quality and making a good investment, what could be the way forward? He emphasized that the use of technology and science must be focused.
5. **Ms. Chadani Hamal, Reporter, Gorkhapatra**, shared her experience of participating in such discussion programs and noted the differences in concepts. She emphasized that what could be the way out for working with both bamboo and stone for proper housing construction.
6. **Santa Neupane, FECOFUN** inquired about the list of organizations working during the 2015 earthquake. She also highlighted the positive aspects of earthquakes, such as increased accessibility for locals to open bank accounts to get government support, people returning to villages, and emphasizing the importance of agriculture. Additionally, she raised a query regarding identifying the bamboo species suitable for construction, and the importance of widespread awareness among the people.

7. **Bhuwan KC, a media person**, emphasized the importance of addressing issues at both the policy and field levels. He urged that immediate intervention should be taken in places where policy problems are evident. Mr. KC shared the lack of proper planning before implementing and emphasized the need for clear and well-defined planning processes with specified timeframes.

Remarks by Dr. Dijan Bhattarai, NDRRMA

He expressed gratitude to the DPNet Nepal team for organizing and inviting everyone to this important discussion session. He highlighted that we all face diverse challenges while addressing various issues. He appreciated presenters for bringing out cost effective and comfortable housing solution which will be beneficial for the reconstruction process of Jajarkot earthquake. He shared that we have been continuously bother by various disaster events so we need to think about risk transfer if not government is not in the position to bear the cost of disaster events. Dr. Bhattarai also emphasized the necessity for robust collaboration among stakeholders, including the three tiers of government.

Remarks by Mr. Kedar Neupane, Advisor, DPNet Nepal

He emphasized the importance of promoting indigenous technology for reconstruction and stressed whether or not the government can afford the expenses. Mr. Neupane focused that the role of a community-based approach to reconstruction might be effective.

Remarks by Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, Immediate Past President, DPNet Nepal

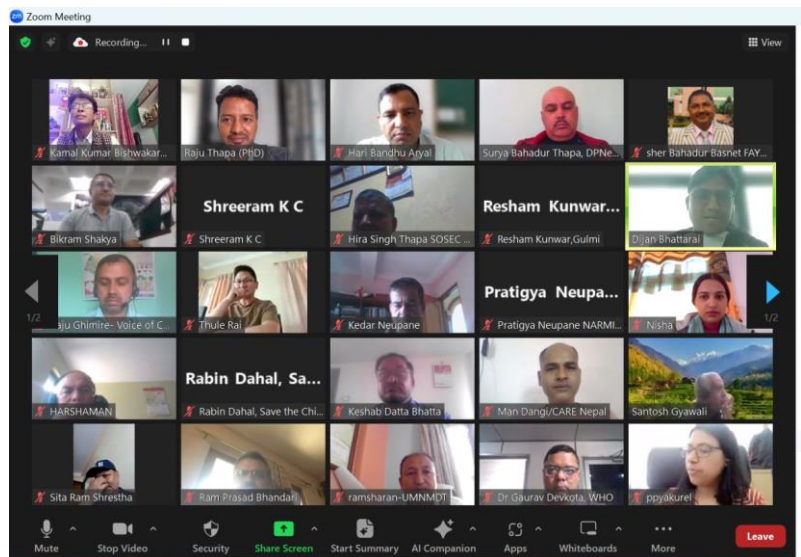
He mentioned that the program was scheduled to mark the anniversary of the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake. He emphasized the importance of requesting international assistance and funding. Mr. Thapa emphasized that the initial relief should be provided at the local level, but unfortunately, that does not happen often. He even addressed the issues that there are huge gaps in implementations and need to focus on how could we be prepared for the scenario. Also, the gaps can be observed on the sectors like livelihood, agriculture etc. Mr. Thapa emphasized that the first important things is the need of clear data and the need of targeted approach rather than the blanket one.

Closing remarks by Dr. Raju Thapa, Chairperson, DPNet Nepal

Dr. Thapa expressed gratitude to all participants for their active participation. He informed them that the reconstruction guidelines would be released before the monsoon and emphasized the significance of integrating retrofitting context by amending the guidelines in his closing statement.

Discussion Program on Recent Fire Incidents in Nepal

DPNet organized a virtual discussion program on April 22, 2024, on Recent Fire Incidents in Nepal. The event was participated by 60 plus stakeholders, including government, I/NGOs, and Media. The program was chaired by Dr. Raju Thapa, Chairperson of DPNet. Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, Immediate Past President of DPNet, welcome participants who highlight the ongoing fires, stressing their detrimental effects on lives, assets, and the environment, including biodiversity loss. Mr. Thapa acknowledged that, under the leadership of NDRRMA, development agencies could effectively coordinate and collaborate moving forward. He emphasized that, based on the insights gathered from this program, a way forward could be determined.



Dr. Dijan Bhattarai, Spokesperson of NDRRMA presented on "Current Incidence of Fires in Nepal and the Way Forward." He highlighted a recent fire incident in Gulmi where 89 houses and cattle sheds were lost, along with 75 livestock. Additionally, over the past three days, according to the Bipad portal, there have been two fatalities, an estimated loss of 37 million, 150 damaged infrastructures, and 174 livestock destroyed, with ten people injured across Nepal. He noted that the data indicated the central region of Nepal, particularly Lumbini Province, has experienced a higher number of incidents. Dr. Bhattarai also shared records from the past three years, highlighting Okhaldhunga and Dolpa as the districts most affected by fire incidents. He also emphasized the prevalence of domestic fires, with Morang district reporting the highest number. From the data spanning from Baisakh 1 to 9 of the year 2081, domestic fires claimed the lives of 5 individuals, left 17 injured and resulted in a total of 208 incidents. The districts most affected by domestic fires were Rupendehi and Kapilvastu. Similarly, forest fire incidents resulted in no deaths but left 4 injured, with a total of 72 incidents, and Pyuthan being the district most affected.

Dr. Bhattarai outlined the way forward, emphasizing the necessity of collaboration between the three tiers of government, raising public awareness, and the crucial role of all stakeholders and individuals.

He stressed the need for adequate equipment and training centers for firefighting purposes. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of training forest security personnel, increasing the number of volunteers, adopting relevant technologies, and implementing an incident command system.

Mr. Bhagat Singh Khadka, Chairperson, Isma Rural Municipality in Gulmi, shared an incident that occurred on Baishak 8 in wards 1, 2, and 4, due to fires, along with winds, and storms. He mentioned that in Ward 2 (Sindunkhaa, Dhegatol, Maindada) and Ward 4 (Kotkoteli, Timlekhadka, Matkina), a total of 23 houses, 46 livestock shelters, one temple, and public infrastructure were affected. To manage the fire, the Armed Police Force (APF), Municipal Police, and Nepal Police are working together. He highlighted the initiation of drinking water supply in two locations and the start of construction for temporary toilet facilities to prevent the spread of infections. Additionally, temporary tarpaulin shelters for livestock have been set up. He requested all stakeholders to assist with their respective positions.

Kamal Kumar Bishwakarma, DPNet Bagmati Province Committee Chairperson, shared data from 2080 Falgun and Chaitra as obtained from the Province Police Station and the Forest Ministry. He reported that four thousand hectares of forests in Bagmati Province had experienced forest fires, resulting in significant damage. Specifically, six cemented houses and sixteen cattle sheds were destroyed, causing an economic loss of 1,71,38,000 NPR. Tragically, two individuals lost their lives while attempting to extinguish a community-based forest fire, with seven others sustaining injuries. Additionally, eight livestock were injured, and seventy-three lost their lives in the fires. He noted that the provincial government provided financial assistance of 1 lakh NPR per affected individual, while the District Administration Office allocated 15 thousand NPR. However, bureaucratic procedures hindered the efficiency of these processes. Furthermore, while the Nepal Red Cross Society offered immediate non-food items for assistance, there was a lack of long-term support. Mr. Bishwakarma also highlighted the establishment of the Disaster Management Fund by the local government of Bagmati Province. However, he noted that the regulations governing this fund did not adequately address long-term reconstruction support, leaving a gap in the provision of assistance and support for affected communities.

Mr. Bikram Shakhya, ICIMOD, in his presentation, shared the forest fire recognition and monitoring system. This system relies on daily data obtained from two satellites. The website for accessing this data is <http://nepal.spatialapps.net/NepalForestFire/>. Mr. Shakhya explained how the website functions and provided the necessary information. Users can input a specific date to retrieve relevant data, and

the site also offers indicators with their meanings. Additionally, users have the option to download pictures and draw data in tabulated form. He emphasized the availability of features for both visual and tabular data representation. In many instances, the forecasts generated by this system have proven to be accurate and consistent, serving as an early warning system for fire incidents. Mr. Shakya presented fire statistics from 2013 to 2024 in chart form, illustrating their trends.

Mr. Nagdev Yadav, Chairperson, DPNet Madhesh Province Committee, explained that all eight districts of the Madhesh province have the Chure range in their upper part. Madhesh has faced various disasters at different times, including the current challenge of forest fires, resulting in significant loss of biodiversity. However, discussions on minimizing forest fires have been limited. The region has experienced two to three instances of forest fires, and recently, light rainfall occurred twice, somewhat mitigating the impact of the fires. He urged the government, communities, and development organizations to collaborate in addressing these challenges together.

Mr. Hari Bandhu Aryal, Chairperson, DPNet Gandaki Province Committee, highlighted an increase in forest fire incidents. He mentioned that they had requested all members from 11 districts to update them on the situation. In Myagdi, 20-35 community forests were affected by fire. Additionally, in Kusma of Parbat district, a village with 30-40 households experienced a forest fire. The Armed Police Force (APF) and police are working to extinguish the fire. Furthermore, Kaligandaki Syangja had two affected families, while Nawalparasi East had one affected family. Mr. Aryal provides information that DPNet Gandaki member organizations have been providing information to the District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC).

Mr. Hira Singh Thapa, Chairperson, DPNet Karnali Province Committee, reported that during the fiscal year 2080/81, a total of 191 incidents occurred, resulting in 17 deaths, 12 injuries, 149 livestock fatalities, and an economic loss of 11,71,59,000. He updated that the incidence of fire has been increasing day by day.

Mr. Sher Bahadur Basnet, Chairperson, DPNet Sudur Paschim Province Committee, emphasized that Kailali and Kanchanpur are abundant in forests. He identified two main causes of forest fires: natural incidents and human-made actions lacking proper precautions, both adversely impacting nearby agriculture. He also raised concerns about short circuits at power line stations. Providing further details, he highlighted specific areas affected by fires, including Kailali, Joshipur, Gaurigunj Municipality, and Dodara Chadani, resulting in agricultural losses exceeding 50 lakhs. Additionally, he mentioned that the Chure areas have encountered fires on three occasions.

Mr. Dharm Raj Ghimire, Coordinator of the DPNet Lumbini Province Committee, provided an update on the situation, reporting approximately 40 fire incidents, mainly occurring in community forests and Kharbari. These incidents have destroyed 140 houses. The reports shows that the 165 cattle sheds are also affected. Thirteen people have been injured, and over 100 livestock have been impacted. The affected areas include Gulmi, Arghakhachi, Rupendehi, and Palpa, specifically Kusma in Gulmi, Bhumikasthan in Arghakhachi, Padini, Malarani, and Sitganga municipality, as well as Rohini and Gaidahawa municipality in Rupendehi. So far, assistance has been provided by the NRCS, wards, and local municipalities. Additionally, the heatwave has exacerbated problems in the Terai region.

Mr. Thakur Bhandari, Chairperson of FECOFUN, expressed gratitude to DPNet Nepal for organizing this important discussion program. He provided some alarming statistics, noting that Nepal has a total of 22,760 community forests covering 23 lakh hectares of forest area, with around 31 lakh households associated with them, representing nearly half of the country's population. Unfortunately, the communities living around these forests are often the most affected by forest fires, resulting in fatalities. Furthermore, national parks and conservation areas have also been impacted by fires, an issue that is often overlooked and under-discussed. Mr. Bhandari emphasized that due to hot weather conditions, tackling forest fires has become increasingly challenging. He called for sustainable solutions to address this issue and highlighted the need for better preparedness, as discussions often occur only during times of vulnerability, with insufficient action taken to prevent fires from occurring every year.

Mr. Thule Rai, Advisor, DPNet Nepal, mentioned that there are currently 147 fire brigades operating at 110 local levels. He emphasized the need for professional firefighters in the event of forest fires.

Dr. Raju Thapa, Chairperson, DPNet Nepal, in his closing remarks, expressed gratitude to all the participants and assured them of continued discussions in the future. He mentioned that program news will also be will be updated on the website. Additionally, Dr. Thapa informed all stakeholders about the Virtual Discussion Platform of DPNet Nepal and requested to provide opinion related fire risk mitigation and formally close the program.