

JAJARKOT EARTHQUAKE

Monthly Situation Analysis Report

(16 Mar - 15 Apr, 2024)

Editor: Dr. Raju Thapa, DpNet



75,157

Identified Beneficiaries



1,859 M

Grant released from DDMC to LDMC



1739.10 M

Grant released from LDMC to beneficiaries

64,184

Temporary shelter constructed

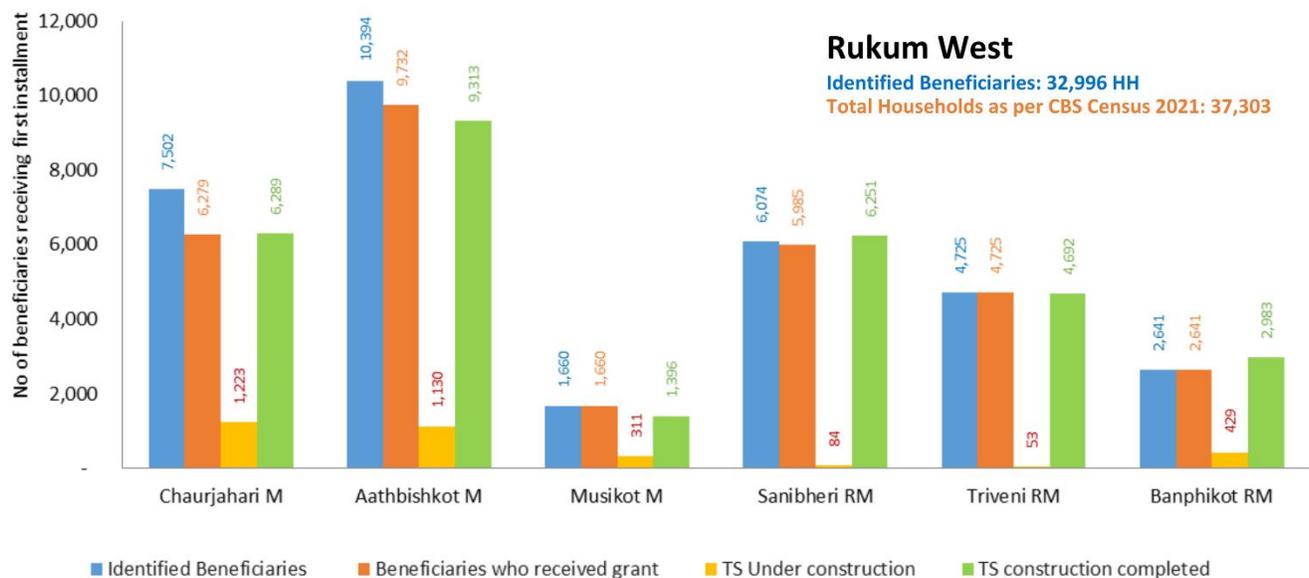
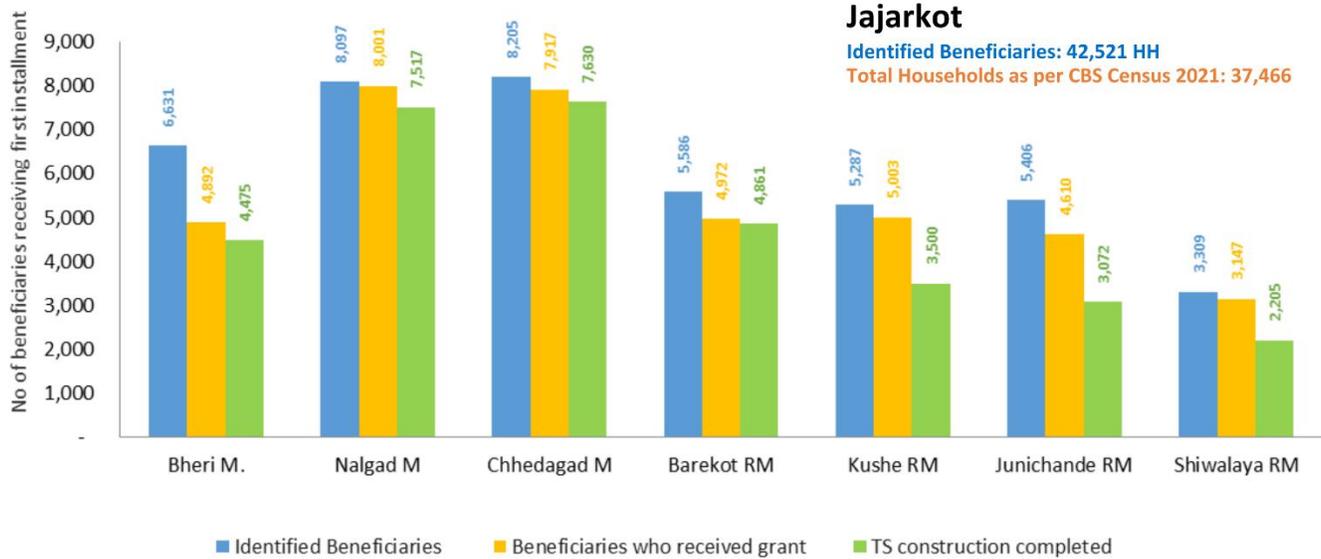
85%

Total Temporary shelter constructed

Out of total 75,517 established beneficiaries in both districts

0

beneficiaries who received second installment



Summary

This monthly report is prepared from an intensive field visit by the DPNet Team. The team, comprising Dr. Raju Thapa, Chairperson of DPNet, Immediate Past Chairperson of DPNet Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, and DPNet Advisor and Former Secretary Mr. Kedar Neupane, visited the field in the third and fourth weeks of March with the support from WHH. During the visit, several issues related to post-earthquake recovery in Jajarkot and West Rukum were observed and documented.

A primary concern highlighted was the slow pace of temporary shelter construction, exacerbated by the delay in the disbursement of the second installment of aid. Despite initial rapid distribution of the first installment to facilitate immediate relief, the requirement for extensive documentation for the second installment has led to significant delays. This situation has been further complicated by the inflated number of beneficiaries reported by local governments, possibly due to political influences, which has stalled the process and left many residents in precarious financial and living conditions. The report also noted the misrepresentation of household data has not only delayed the aid distribution but also raised questions about the integrity of the process. Local governments have been slow in updating beneficiary data on the Bipad portal, essential for releasing the second installment, with only Bheri Municipality showing efficiency in this regard.

Another issue discussed was the physical and material inadequacies of the temporary shelters. Many shelters, constructed quickly with materials like zinc sheets, fail to provide adequate protection from the heat and cold, leading to discomfort and health risks for the inhabitants. The design and size of these shelters do not accommodate larger families or consider the local geographical and environmental conditions, which has significant implications for the residents' quality of life. Moreover, the approach to aid has been criticized for not considering the unique needs of the most vulnerable populations. The senior citizen and people with disability, unable to participate actively in rebuilding their homes, have faced additional challenges. The report calls for a more inclusive approach to aid distribution that considers individual needs and capabilities, suggesting that aid be tailored rather than uniform.

The report also touches on broader socio-political and environmental challenges affecting the recovery process. Issues such as the environmental impact of increased timber demand due to reconstruction, and the need for better disaster preparedness and resilient building practices were discussed. The community's resilience is being tested, not only by their immediate recovery needs but also by the broader implications of rebuilding efforts that must consider future sustainability and disaster preparedness.

Temporary Shelter Construction Update: Five Months with No Second Installment Disbursed

Following the devastating earthquake, the governments of Jajarkot and West Rukum rapidly provided the first installment of funds to the affected families for the construction of temporary shelters. This initial financial aid was distributed with minimal documentation requirements, a strategy aimed at speeding up the relief



process. However, this approach has led to significant challenges in the distribution of the second installment of aid.

The requirement for concrete documentation to release the second installment has emerged as a stumbling block. Beneficiaries are now required to present land ownership certificates and, for families claiming separation, additional proof. This requirement has unveiled a critical issue: an inflated number of beneficiaries. In 2021, the total number of households in the Jajarkot district was recorded as 37,466. Yet, post-earthquake, the total number of identified beneficiaries has risen to 42,524. Considering that almost all RCC (Reinforced Cement Concrete) pillar houses, which account for 1.3 percent of the total houses, were unaffected by the earthquake, the current beneficiary count is significantly higher than expected. This discrepancy is largely attributed to local governments possibly inflating beneficiary numbers for political interests.

As a result of these inflated numbers and stricter documentation requirements, the District Disaster Management Committees (DDMC) of both Jajarkot and West Rukum have more than Rs. 50 crore each, allocated for the second installment, lying unclaimed. Many individuals, having started the construction of their shelters with the first installment and anticipating the quick arrival of the second, took out high-interest loans to cover the costs. Nearly five months have passed without

the disbursement of the second installment, leaving these individuals facing a debt trap and mounting tension. The situation highlights a broader problem within the temporary shelter construction effort. Many have begun constructing their shelters in hope, but the delay in receiving the second installment has put them in a



precarious financial and emotional state. With monsoon season approaching, the urgency to complete shelter construction becomes even more critical to avoid further hardship.

This situation calls for immediate government intervention to address the documentation and beneficiary verification challenges. A streamlined process for identifying and verifying real beneficiaries is crucial. The government must act swiftly to ensure that the funds reach those genuinely in need, especially before the onset of the monsoon, to prevent those under construction shelters from remaining unfinished and exposing families to the elements.

Moreover, the government must also tackle the issue of the inflated beneficiary count head-on. This involves a thorough review and audit of the beneficiary list to remove inaccuracies and ensure that aid is not diverted from those in dire need. By doing so, the government can mitigate the risk of individuals falling into debt traps due to unnecessary loans taken in anticipation of the second installment.

Additionally, the provision of the second installment should not just be about completing temporary shelters but also ensuring that these shelters are safe, habitable, and capable of withstanding future adversities because reconstruction will take number of years to complete. This means considering the geographical and geological aspects of shelter construction, encouraging the use of engineering principles even in temporary structures, and ensuring that every family, regardless of size, has a safe space to call home.

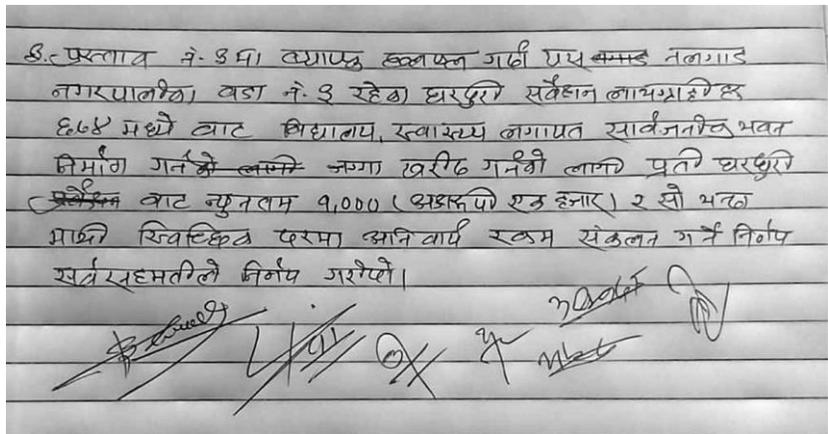
Forced Donations by Local Government Burden Earthquake Affected People

Some earthquake affected beneficiaries have been coerced into paying a mandatory donation of Rs. 1,000 to prioritize their receipt of the second installment for temporary housing aid. This practice has reportedly put considerable strain on the already distressed beneficiaries who are struggling with the financial burden of rebuilding



their lives post-disaster. DPNet came to know that the local government has been giving preference to those who pay the donation first, a policy that has led many affected people to borrow money at high interest rates or even sell their essential grains to meet this unexpected demand. DPNet, upon hearing this complaint, coordinated with journalists from the district headquarters of Jajarkot and traveled to remote Nalgad Municipality to investigate further but initially local people avoided

talk with the media. However, with DPNet's coordination, affected residents eventually agreed to discuss their grievances in an isolated location, away from potential retaliation. They provided evidence and testimonies on



how the Nalgad ward number 3 office has been compelling them to make these payments. The situation not only highlights the additional hardships imposed on earthquake affected people by local government but also the exploitation by other stakeholders in the community, including high-interest lenders, businessperson, and brokers. In response to this issue, DPNet has reached out to

Jajarkot's Chief District Officer, Rishi Raj Acharya, requesting immediate intervention to halt these forced donations.

Humanitarian Partner's Delay in Temporary Shelter

The involvement of humanitarian partners in the aftermath of the Jajarkot earthquake has been a critical aspect of the disaster response and relief efforts. These organizations stepped in swiftly to provide essential relief support to the affected communities, playing a pivotal role in addressing the immediate needs for shelter,



food, and medical assistance. Their rapid mobilization and resource allocation have been commendable, significantly contributing to alleviating the hardship faced by the earthquake affected people. In the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated parts of Jajarkot District, humanitarian partners promised to enhance the government's efforts by offering to construct temporary shelters with additional amenities, surpassing the governmental provision of Rs. 50,000. These partners proposed an augmented package that included Rs. 50,000 for shelter construction plus essential facilities like toilets and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) installations, aiming to provide a more comprehensive response to the dire needs of the affected communities.

However, the implementation of these promises has encountered significant delays, leading to considerable hardship for the earthquake victims who opted for this support in lieu of government aid. For instance, Sumir Kumar KC from Bheri Municipality ward number 1 in Jajarkot, whose home was completely destroyed, chose the support offered by development partners over the government's aid. Despite his decision, three months passed without any assistance, compelling him to initiate the construction of his dwelling using his own limited resources. Similarly, Purna Bahadur Rawat, also from Bheri Municipality ward number 1, found himself in a desperate

situation. Having lost his 6 family members and relative in the earthquake, and with no forthcoming aid from the humanitarian partners, he resorted to using zinc sheets provided by a political party to construct a makeshift shelter.



These delays have been attributed to compliance

issues within the humanitarian partners' project frameworks, which have hindered their ability to deliver the promised aid promptly. The affected residents, who had high expectations of receiving timely and substantial assistance, have been left in a state of uncertainty and despair. The development partners acknowledge these setbacks and express their commitment to resolving the compliance issues swiftly. They have also recognized the need for improving the living conditions within these temporary shelters, including addressing concerns related to natural air conditioning by utilizing wood and other locally available materials to better insulate the structures.

This situation highlights the critical importance of coordination and prompt action in disaster response efforts. It highlights the challenges that can arise from discrepancies between the promises made by different aid organizations and the reality of their execution on the ground. For the residents of Jajarkot, the delays have not just been a matter of inconvenience but of survival, as they navigate the complexities of rebuilding their lives with limited support. Moving forward, it is imperative for development partners to streamline their processes and work closely with government agencies to ensure that aid reaches those in need promptly and efficiently, thereby honoring their commitments and helping to restore normalcy in the earthquake-stricken areas.

Helpless and Vulnerable People Struggle to Construct Temporary Shelter

The construction of temporary shelter post-disaster, particularly for the most vulnerable and helpless people highlights a significant challenge in disaster management and recovery. The government's approach to distributing the temporary shelter amount equally among affected persons does not account for the varying



capabilities and resources of individuals, especially those who are unable to dismantle their old homes or engage in the physical labor required to construct new ones due to age, disability, or other factors. This lack of differentiation in aid distribution has left a gap in support for those who are most in need.

Helpless individuals, including the elderly, disabled, and those with no family support, face a intimidating task. They cannot easily partake in the physical work of dismantling damaged structures or building new temporary shelters. The government's financial assistance for temporary shelter construction, although well-intentioned, often falls short for these groups. The flat rate provided does not consider the additional costs they incur when they must hire labor to assist in construction work. As a result, the amount, which might suffice for an able-bodied person to construct a basic shelter by themselves or with community support, is inadequate for those who need to pay for labor.

Furthermore, the requirement for producing documents to receive the second installment of the aid exacerbates the situation for many. The initial leniency in document requirements for the first installment has not been extended for the second, leaving many vulnerable individuals in a bind. They are caught in a vicious cycle – unable to proceed without the necessary documents and unable

to afford the costs of obtaining such documents or hiring labor to meet the government's construction standards for the second installment.

This situation has highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach to disaster aid distribution. Special consideration and adjustments are required to address the unique needs of the most vulnerable populations. Solutions could include varying the aid amount based on individual or family needs, providing direct assistance in the form of labor for those who cannot construct shelters themselves, and simplifying the documentation process for obtaining further aid.

The plight of helpless individuals in the face of disaster recovery calls for a compassionate and flexible response from government and aid organizations. Tailoring support to fit the diverse needs of all affected individuals is crucial for ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to rebuild their lives with dignity and security. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort that recognizes the varying capacities within communities and strives to provide targeted support that can truly make a difference in the lives of those who are most in need.

Rebuilding House Using Mud and Rounded Stones Without Proper Engineering

The traditional construction practices of using mud and round or oval stones gathered from nearby rivers like Bheri and Nalgadh need to review. These materials, while locally abundant, do not adhere well and are highly vulnerable in seismic events. The recent



catastrophe has not only caused significant loss of life and property but also spotlighted the urgent need for a shift towards earthquake-resistant building methods. The Karnali Province, known for

its seismic activity, includes a seismic gap that has not experienced a major earthquake in over 500 years. This historical pattern indicates the potential for more substantial seismic events in the future. In response to this threat, experts and concerned stakeholders are advocating for a fundamental change in building practices. They emphasize the necessity of adopting modern construction techniques that incorporate reinforced materials such as bamboo, wood, concrete, and steel. These materials, combined with contemporary engineering knowledge, are crucial for enhancing structural resilience against earthquakes. If round stone need to be used, it should be cut to make it earthquake resilient.

There should be comprehensive overhaul of how communities construct buildings, aiming to fundamentally enhance safety and sustainability. This transformative approach requires educating the local population on earthquake-safe practices, retrofitting existing structures to meet higher safety standards, and



enforcing stringent building codes tailored to the seismic risks of the region. During recent field visits by DPNet team, it was observed that many locals continue to build homes using the traditional method of round stones, which lacks essential engineering features such as lintels and other reinforcing elements. This practice persists despite the known risks and the region's long seismic history, suggesting a looming threat of an earthquake potentially greater than magnitude 8 on the Richter scale. Such a significant seismic event could have catastrophic consequences given the current building practices.

There is a critical need to raise awareness among the affected populations about the dangers associated with these traditional building methods. The community must be educated about the benefits of modern construction techniques that are better suited to withstand seismic forces.

Communication efforts should utilize various channels to effectively reach and educate all segments of the population, ensuring that the message of safety and resilience is clearly understood and embraced.

To support these efforts, DPNet request the government and development partners to prioritize this issue and to take immediate actions to halt the construction of vulnerable structures and to promote the adoption of earthquake-resilient building practices. Additionally, the government is requested to invest in the training of skilled masons who are capable of constructing safer, more resilient homes. This workforce development will be vital for the region's long-term safety and recovery.

As Jajarkot and similar regions embark on the path to recovery, the focus must shift from merely rebuilding to rebuilding responsibly. Investing in safer construction practices is not just about recovery from the past earthquake; it's about proactively safeguarding the community against future disasters. This shift is essential for the sustainable development of earthquake-prone areas, ensuring that resilience becomes a cornerstone of community planning and construction efforts.

Earthquake Damage Impairs Grain Storage in Earthquake Affected Area

In earthquake affected area, farmers are currently facing a problem as the wheat harvest season arrives, these farmers, already struggling with the loss of their homes, are now confronted with the challenge of storing their harvested wheat due to damaged or destroyed granaries. Agricultural Development Office Jajarkot report that food



grains worth over 80 million rupees were destroyed in the quake in Jajarkot district, exacerbating the already precarious food security situation in the region.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the government's response included the provision of the first installment of aid for temporary shelter construction. However, the requirement to dismantle their existing homes to qualify for the second installment has put many farmers in a tough spot. Some have already demolished their earthquake-damaged houses and taken out loans to build temporary shelters, hoping to secure the second installment soon. This has led to a precarious financial situation, as the delay in receiving the second installment leaves them in debt and their temporary shelters too cramped to store any grain. This situation is especially critical as the monsoon season approaches, potentially worsening their living conditions and threatening their food supplies.

Currently, local government are working to submit the names of earthquake victims to the disaster portal as required for processing the second installment of aid. However, the pace has been slow, and the uncertainty around the timing of this aid continues to cause distress among the farmers. This issue calls for immediate attention from both the government and development agencies to ensure that these communities can safely store their harvest and secure their food supplies while they rebuild their lives.

Dilemma to Dismantle House to Get Second Installment Grant

The Temporary Housing Grant Procedure, introduced to aid in the reconstruction of homes post- earthquake, has inadvertently placed homeowners in a difficult position. According to the procedure, beneficiaries must completely dismantle their existing structures to qualify for the second



installment of the grant, which amounts to Rs. 25,000. This requirement has led to a significant dilemma for many residents whose homes, despite sustaining partial damage, could potentially be made habitable again through retrofitting.

For many, the financial assistance provided by the second installment does not justify the demolition of structures that are still largely intact and could be restored at a fraction of the cost of rebuilding from scratch. This is especially true for multi-story buildings where the upper floors might have been compromised by the earthquake, yet the ground floor remains structurally sound and suitable for immediate use. Homeowners are considering using these intact lower floors for practical purposes such as grain storage or as cowsheds, preferring to only dismantle the damaged upper sections of their buildings.

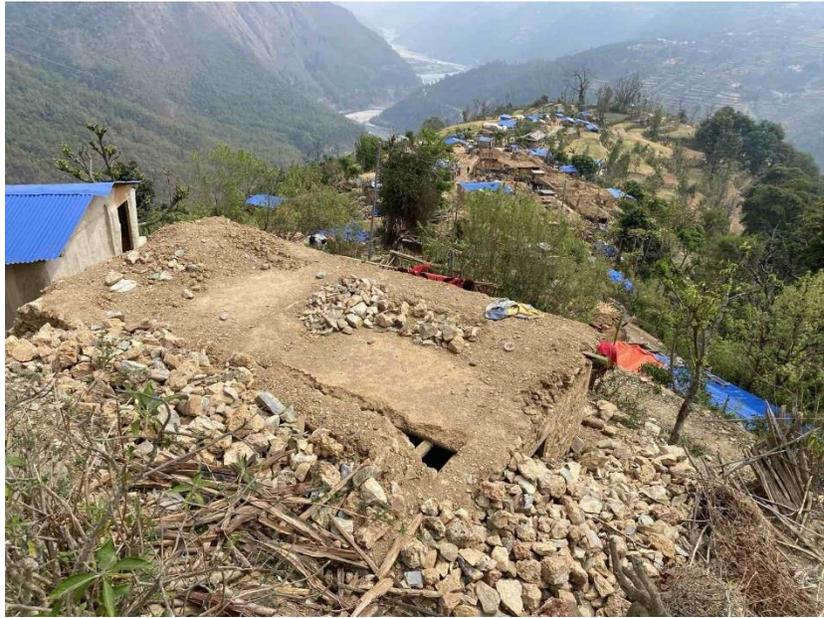


This rigidity in the grant's stipulations forces people to choose between retaining a partially usable home or receiving financial aid, which often doesn't cover the full cost of reconstruction but necessitates complete demolition as a prerequisite. Such a policy not only results in unnecessary waste of materials and resources but also delays the recovery process, as families struggle to make economically sound decisions that align with their immediate and long-term shelter needs.

The current situation calls for a revision of the grant procedures to allow more flexibility in how the funds can be utilized, taking into account the varying degrees of damage and the potential for retrofitting. Allowing partial demolition or the retrofitting of structures could provide a more practical and cost-effective solution for many families, helping them to recover more quickly while preserving as much of their existing homes as possible. This approach would not only support the efficient use of resources but also address the unique needs of the affected communities, promoting a recovery process that is both sensitive and sustainable

Alarming Food Insecurity and Livelihood Struggles Post-Earthquake

The Jajarkot earthquake has particularly impacted the livelihoods of many families who depend on wage labor in India and other urban parts of Nepal for their sustenance. The earthquake forced those who were away for work to return home and those planning to leave for work to stay back in order to rebuild their homes and claim government grants.



This disruption in the primary source of income for many families has led to severe livelihood challenges, forcing some to go without meals, including their children, thus heightening the risk of malnutrition and subsequent health complications among the affected populations.

In regions already struggling with the scourge of malnutrition, such as Karnali and Sudurpaschim, the situation has turned dire. According to a SMART survey 48.8% of children aged 6 to 59 months suffer from stunting, 8.6% from wasting, and 30.6% are underweight, highlighting the severe nutritional challenges in these areas. The earthquake has further deepened these challenges, with families losing their homes and livelihoods, pushing them into a cycle of poverty and malnutrition that is hard to escape.

The plight of these families is a reminder of the complex interplay between disasters and food security. With their main income source disrupted, many families find themselves unable to provide for their basic needs, including nutritious food for their children, leading to increased cases of malnutrition. The situation is particularly acute for those already living in poverty, for whom the earthquake has meant not just the loss of shelter but also a significant setback in their struggle against hunger and malnutrition.

Moreover, the earthquake's impact on agricultural land and infrastructure has posed additional challenges to food security in the affected regions. Many families, who rely on subsistence farming

for their livelihood, have to build houses, further diminishing their ability to produce food and earn a living. This loss of agricultural productivity is likely to have long-term effects on the food security and nutritional status of the population, compounding the difficulties faced by communities already vulnerable to food insecurity.



In the aftermath of the earthquake, the need for targeted interventions to address food security and livelihood issues has become increasingly evident. Efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the affected areas must include measures to restore agricultural productivity and provide alternative livelihood options for those affected. Moreover, there is an urgent need for nutritional support programs to address the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, especially children, to prevent the exacerbation of malnutrition and its associated health complications.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from the government, development partners, and the community. It is crucial to ensure that aid and reconstruction efforts are closely aligned with the needs of the affected populations, with a particular focus on restoring livelihoods and ensuring food security. Initiatives such as cash-for-work programs, agricultural support services, and nutrition supplementation can play a vital role in mitigating the impact of the earthquake on the most vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, the experience highlights the importance of building resilience in communities prone to natural disasters. This includes not only strengthening physical infrastructure but also enhancing the capacity of communities to sustain their livelihoods and nutritional status in the face of adversity. Long-term strategies for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are essential to safeguard the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable populations.

Challenges in Meeting Humanitarian Standards After the Disaster

In the aftermath of the disaster, both development partners and government agencies have made efforts to adhere to minimum humanitarian standards, primarily guided by a general sense of responsibility and awareness. While there have been instances where beneficiaries expressed dissatisfaction, overall, the response efforts have largely aimed to meet these basic standards during relief activities.



Under the Temporary Shelter Grant Procedure, each beneficiary is entitled to receive the same amount of funding, specifically Rs. 50,000, regardless of family size. This uniform approach to financial assistance has led to challenges in accommodating varying family sizes within the provided shelters. For example, it's not uncommon to find a single shelter housing a family of twelve or more, while another may house just one individual. According to Sphere standards, each person should have at least 3.5 square meters of living space. However, the fixed grant amount of Rs. 50,000 often fails to provide sufficient space for larger families, forcing them to live in cramped conditions that fall short of these standards.

Looking ahead to the reconstruction of permanent houses, it is imperative that the government considers these issues of family size. The next phase of construction must adapt the financial and structural planning to ensure that all new homes meet the minimum living space requirements per individual, thereby adhering more closely to humanitarian standards and improving the quality of life for the affected families.

Challenges of Living in Temporary Shelters Post-Earthquake

Living in temporary shelters after the earthquake in areas like Jajarkot and West Rukum has introduced a excess of problems for the affected families, significantly impacting their daily lives and well-being. These shelters, predominantly constructed from zinc sheets for both roofing and enclosing walls, pose



several challenges. Firstly, the material choice zinc greatly exacerbates the shelters' internal temperature. During sunny days, the heat becomes almost unbearable inside these shelters, making it difficult for families to stay indoors. Conversely, at night and particularly in the winter months, the temperature inside these shelters drops significantly, making them extremely cold and uncomfortable to live in. This temperature fluctuation presents a harsh living condition for the inhabitants, affecting their health and overall comfort.

Another significant concern with temporary shelters is their security and safety, particularly from wildlife. The construction of these shelters often leaves gaps and openings that can easily become passageways for snakes and insects. Reports from the field visits and focused group discussions highlight increasing incidents of snake bites and the constant fear among small children and adults alike that snakes might enter their beds. This fear adds a layer of psychological stress to the already traumatized earthquake victims.

The size and design of the temporary shelters, typically built with a budget of Rs. 50,000, do not accommodate the needs of joint families. These shelters lack separate rooms, forcing families to live in a single, cramped space. This lack of privacy and personal space is particularly challenging for women and girls, who have no secure room to go if male members become violent, especially

under the influence of drugs and alcohol. The consumption of locally brewed alcohol has been identified as a growing problem in these communities, exacerbating domestic violence and making the living conditions in temporary shelters even more unsafe for women and children.

Additionally, the design and construction of temporary shelters without considering the local climate and geographical challenges have led to other problems. Fire accidents have increased due to the necessity of setting up kitchens outside these small shelters, near areas where straw for livestock and firewood are stored, creating a high risk of fire. Furthermore, the temporary shelters' insufficient protection against landslides and heavy monsoon rains poses a significant risk to the families' safety and the stability of their temporary homes.

The inflated number of beneficiaries, as discussed, has also contributed to the delay in receiving the second installment for shelter improvement, pushing families into a debt trap as they took loans hoping for prompt aid. This financial strain adds to the emotional and psychological burden families face daily.

Upcoming Monsoon and Preparedness

As the monsoon season approaches, the communities affected by the earthquake in Karnali Province face significant challenges. The temporary shelters, hurriedly constructed in the aftermath of the disaster, are proving to be inadequate for the needs of the families they're meant to serve. Typically



small in size, these shelters cannot comfortably accommodate the larger joint families common in the region, presenting a pressing issue as the rainy season nears. Before the earthquake, it was common for families to have multi-purpose homes where livestock resided on the ground floor,

the family lived on the first floor, and the upper floors were used for grain storage and other purposes. The compact and singular structure of the temporary shelters, however, fails to provide the necessary space to house both people and livestock, let alone store essential food supplies. This setup poses a severe problem, especially with the monsoon's onset, as families will struggle to find adequate shelter for all members and their animals, increasing the risk of loss to their primary sources of livelihood and sustenance.

Moreover, the earthquake has left the land scarred with cracks and fissures, a dark reminder of the land's vulnerability. These pre-existing damages are a cause for alarm, as the monsoon rains could exacerbate these conditions, potentially leading to significant landslides. The infiltration of water into these cracks can weaken the already fragile terrain, increasing the likelihood of more extensive and destructive landslides, which poses an additional threat to the lives and the makeshift homes of the earthquake survivors.

As the community stays for the monsoon, there's an urgent need for comprehensive planning and support to address these imminent challenges. The current state of temporary shelters highlights the necessity for more robust and resilient housing solutions that can accommodate the unique living arrangements of the affected families. Additionally, measures to stabilize and rehabilitate the land must be a priority to mitigate the risk of landslides triggered by the seasonal rains. Without timely and effective intervention, the monsoon season could exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities, further compounding the difficulties faced by earthquake affected people.

Call Development Partners to Work on Land Fissure Before Monsoon

The Jajarkot earthquake has left a trail of destruction, with ground fissures and unstable slopes posing a significant threat to local communities. The study team's visit to earthquake-affected areas visible cracks and shifting landscapes in Both Jajarkot and West Rukum. In Maidi village of Bheri Municipality and Baskoti village of Nalagadh Municipality, extensive ground cracking and sliding of slopes have been observed, exacerbating issues such as damage to water supply and the alteration of natural spring water sources. Grave concern is the significant crack discovered in a temporary learning center in Bheri Municipality ward number 1. The village, situated on a ridge, faces the imminent risk of landslides if adequate measures are not taken promptly. The urgency of the situation cannot be overstated. The impending monsoon season only heightens the risk of

further destabilization and potential disasters. Study team also found that Maidi village of Bheri Municipality Ward Number 1, where a temporary learning center has to be relocated due to land fissure in the middle of learning center. The village, situated on a ridge, has suffered extensive damage and is now divided by a substantial crack that runs through the center. This crack poses an imminent threat of a major landslide, particularly with the upcoming monsoon season, which could exacerbate the fissure, leading to potentially catastrophic outcomes. The temporary learning center, for the education of children in this earthquake-affected area, is directly affected by this geological instability.



With the crack running through the middle of the structure, there is a significant risk of increased crack width and potential children trap in the crack. Given the safety risks to the children and staff, urgent relocation of the learning center is recommended to a safer area of the community, away from the unstable ridge.

In the rural part of Nepal traditional methods to seal fissures, particularly before the onset of the monsoon season, to prevent water infiltration is in practice. This indigenous knowledge, combined with modern engineering practices, could prove instrumental in safeguarding vulnerable communities and infrastructure. Mobilizing the local community through cash-for-work initiatives and harnessing indigenous knowledge can yield significant benefits. By investing modest funds in these initiatives, community can effectively seal cracks and redirect water flow, thereby reducing the risk of landslides and protecting lives and property. It is requested development partners to integrate low-cost landslide mitigation technologies into their earthquake recovery projects. The

emphasis should be on completing these crucial tasks before the monsoon season, leveraging both indigenous knowledge and community participation.

The benefits of proactive measures extend beyond immediate risk reduction. By safeguarding communities and infrastructure, we not only save lives but also mitigate long-term financial losses. Prevention is indeed better than cure, and investing in pre-emptive measures now can yield substantial savings in the future.

Visionary Risk Transfer of Karnali Province

Karnali Province has taken a visionary step towards mitigating the impact of disasters on its residents through an innovative insurance program. This initiative ensures financial support to the families of individuals who lose their lives due to natural disasters within the province. Following a powerful earthquake in Jajarkot, the province's commitment to this insurance



scheme began to show tangible results approximately two months post-disaster. In partnership with a national insurance company, Karnali Province has been proactive in providing an insured amount of Rs. 200,000 to each bereaved family.

This program, initiated two years prior to the earthquake, represents a strategic approach to risk transfer in disaster management. The effectiveness of this initiative was highlighted when the insurance company, in collaboration with the province's internal affairs and law ministry, distributed financial assistance to the families of the deceased.

This scheme not only provides immediate financial relief to affected families but also showcases the potential of insurance as a mechanism for risk transfer in Nepal. Although some families,

particularly those abroad, are yet to claim their insurance due to procedural requirements, the system promises to extend support once the necessary documents are submitted. Karnali Province's proactive approach underscores the importance of preparedness and financial protection against unforeseeable natural disasters, marking a significant step towards resilience and recovery for vulnerable communities.

The Struggle of Women and Children in Earthquake Affected Regions

In the aftermath of Jajarkot earthquake, the disrupted socio-economic dynamics have significantly heightened the vulnerabilities of women and children in the affected area. The earthquake's repercussion has led to deep changes in household structures and economic activities, putting an immense strain on these already marginalized groups.

For women, the situation is particularly dire due to the design and allocation of temporary shelters. Constructed with a limited budget of Rs. 50,000, these shelters are not equipped to accommodate the needs of joint families, lacking separate rooms and sufficient space. This constriction of living quarters has severely impacted privacy and safety, leaving

women and girls vulnerable to domestic violence, especially as frustrations mount among male household members. Traditionally, many men in these regions traveled to India for wage labor, but the earthquake has bound them to their villages to comply with governmental grant processes. The resulting economic stagnation, combined with the delayed disbursement of government grants



meant for rebuilding homes, has fueled alcohol and drug use, further exacerbating the risk of violence in cramped living conditions.

Children in these regions face their own set of grave challenges. The seismic event has disrupted the primary sources of income for many families, leading to a significant uptick in malnutrition rates among the youngest. The destruction of agricultural land and infrastructure, coupled with the necessity for many families to focus on rebuilding efforts rather than farming, has decreased food production and access. The latest figures from regions like Karnali and Sudurpaschim show alarming rates of stunting, wasting, and underweight conditions among children, reflecting the severe impact of these compounded crises on their health and development.

Moreover, as the community scrambles to rebuild, there has been an increased demand for stone quarrying, a labor-intensive and low-paying job. Despite the hardship associated with this work, it is primarily women and children who are engaged in these quarries. Men often hesitate to participate in what is seen as menial labor, inadvertently placing an even



greater burden on women and children. This not only exposes them to physical strain but also perpetuates a cycle of economic disadvantage and limits their capacity to engage in more profitable or sustainable livelihoods.

The challenges facing women and children in the earthquake-affected areas highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions that consider the unique vulnerabilities of these groups. Efforts to rebuild homes and restore livelihoods must be accompanied by measures that ensure safety, nutrition, and economic opportunity. This includes the enforcement of stricter building codes to enhance the safety of living conditions, the implementation of comprehensive nutritional support programs for children, and the creation of more equitable employment opportunities that do not

disproportionately burden women and children. Moreover, any long-term recovery strategy must prioritize the development of resilience in these communities to better withstand future disasters, ensuring that the most vulnerable are not perpetually caught in the crossfire of recurring crises.

Environmental Impact of Timber Demand After Earthquake

Five months after the devastating earthquake in Jajarkot, the community is struggling with the urgent need for suitable housing materials and the associated environmental consequences. As families endeavor to construct temporary shelters, the demand for timber has surged, leading to increased pressure on



local community forests. The prevalent use of zinc sheets for roofing and walls in temporary constructions has exacerbated living conditions, as these materials fail to offer thermal comfort, making interiors intolerably hot during the day and extremely cold at night. Consequently, there is a growing preference among the affected population for wood to enclose walls, aiming to alleviate these harsh living conditions.

This shift toward timber usage is leading to widespread deforestation, with trees being cut in community forest. Such actions may forest resources but are also enhancing the risk of landslides in areas already destabilized by seismic activity. The removal of vegetation destabilizes the soil, increasing the susceptibility of these earthquake-hit regions to further geological disruptions.

Additionally, the rise in temperatures has brought about another critical concern—increased snake encounters, including venomous species like cobras. The makeshift nature of the temporary shelters, often poorly sealed and constructed, allows easy access for snakes, scorpion posing a

significant risk to the inhabitants. This issue is compounded by the lack of adequate medical facilities in the area, as the local district hospital is ill-equipped to handle snakebite treatments. The absence of anti-venom and proper medical care heightens the peril faced by the community, which, in turn, fuels a sense of desperation and anxiety among the people.

In a misguided attempt to mitigate the threat from snakes and other insects people are setting fires in the forests, believing that this will eliminate the snakes. However, this practice has led to an increase in forest fires, further exacerbating the environmental degradation



and contributing to a cycle of habitat destruction that threatens local wildlife and the ecological balance.

The ongoing deforestation and environmental damage highlight the need for a coordinated response that addresses both the immediate housing needs and the longer-term environmental impacts. Sustainable building practices must be adopted that minimize ecological footprints while providing safe and comfortable housing. This includes using alternative building materials that do not lead to excessive deforestation and implementing construction designs that prevent wildlife encounters.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to enhance medical infrastructure in the earthquake-affected regions to provide adequate emergency services, including snakebite treatment. Community education on snake behavior and safety precautions is also critical to reduce the risk of snake bites and discourage harmful practices like forest fires.

As the community looks toward rebuilding permanent homes, it is important that these efforts are guided by considerations of safety, sustainability, and environmental conservation to ensure that the recovery process supports both the people and the planet. The challenges of post-earthquake

recovery are manifold, requiring a multi-faceted approach that balances human needs with ecological stewardship.

Discussion Program at Jajarkot District

DPNet 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 highlights 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.

Discussion Program at Rukum West

DPNet 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.

Meeting with MOIAL Karnali Province

In a meeting organized on March 22nd with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law (MOIAL) of Karnali Province and the Chief District Officer of Surkhet discussed on post-earthquake scenario. Mr. Hit Prasad Poudel, representative from MOIAL Karnali, shared the multifaceted approach to disaster management, the progress in insurance disbursements to the afflicted families, and the

imperative collaboration among different government tiers to overcome the post-earthquake challenges.

Mr. Poudel shared that, around two months following the calamity, there had been significant progress in rendering financial aid to the kin of the deceased. This endeavor is part of a larger initiative, a natural disaster accident insurance program rolled out two



years ago, designed to offer support to families in the province reeling from the aftermath of earthquake. He highlighted that, barring a handful of cases awaiting claims from abroad, the bulk of the affected families had received their insurance dues. Through collaborative efforts in Aathbishkot and Sani Bheri Rural Municipalities, substantial financial support was provided to the families of 46 deceased individuals.

Moreover, Mr. Poudel addressed the glaring inefficiencies in post-disaster data management and reporting. He highlighted the dire need for a unified Relief Data Tracker form, critiquing the prevailing practice where various forms are utilized by various entities like the Federal Government, District Administration Office, and INGOs, leading to redundancy and a drain on humanitarian efforts. Mr. Poudel requested NDRRMA to devise a standard form to enhance coordination, simplify the tracking of resource deployment, and foster more effective relief actions.

Mr. Poudel from MOIAL Karnali Province raised some serious issues about how local governments are managing the funds meant for earthquake relief. Despite the provincial government giving 25 million rupees to help the earthquake-affected areas, there's a significant

lack of clear reports on how this money is being used. He also discussed the limited role the provincial government plays in helping to build temporary shelters. Mr. Poudel suggested that the rules about who does what during disaster response need to be clearer, so that local, provincial, and federal governments understand their roles better. He believes this would make disaster management more organized and effective. He also wants better communication and coordination between the provincial and local governments and suggests using the DRR Portal to keep everything transparent and accountable.

Finally, he emphasized the need for clear roles and responsibilities across different government levels when responding to disasters, especially regarding building temporary shelters. The current confusion leads to delays and inefficiencies, stressing the need for a well-defined strategy for quick and effective aid delivery.

Meeting with Jajarkot DAO

DPNet conducted key informant interview with Asst. CDO Harischandra Sharma of Jajarkot District Administration Office (DAO). In a meeting he provided a comprehensive overview of the situation, touching upon various aspects of the temporary shelter construction, the disbursement of financial aid, and the broader implications of the disaster management strategies employed.



He highlighted shared progress on construction of temporary shelters, with a considerable number of beneficiaries receiving the first installment of aid. However, a unique situation emerged in Bheri municipality ward number 1, where a delay in financial support occurred due to reliance on humanitarian partners for shelter construction. The complexity of compliance and project approval

processes has hindered the swift allocation of funds, leaving the residents awaiting support. The DAO is actively engaging with these partners, urging them to expedite their efforts to meet the community's urgent needs.

A central issue that emerged from the conversation was the initial misrepresentation by families claiming separate households under the same roof, driven by the desire to maximize aid. This led to an inflated number of beneficiaries, complicating the distribution process for the second installment of aid. With more than Rs 50 crore allocated for this purpose, the DAO faces a standstill as local governments hesitate to claim these funds, constrained by the rigorous documentation requirements set forth in the temporary shelter grant procedure. This situation highlights the need for a streamlined and transparent process that accurately assesses and addresses the actual numbers of the affected households. Discussion highlighted on the socio-political dimensions of disaster response, revealing how political interests have inflated beneficiary numbers, complicating the fair distribution of aid. The discrepancy between the total number of households in Jajarkot as per the 2021 census data and the number of identified affected beneficiaries post-earthquake suggests a significant overestimation, pointing towards the influence of local government interests in the identification process.

Bheri Municipality was highlighted as a model of efficiency and integrity, with over 4000 data entries submitted to the Bipad portal, indicating readiness to claim the second installment. In contrast, other local governments lag behind in updating information on this platform, reflecting disparities in administrative response across different areas. Mr. Sharma shared about broader disaster management issues, including the challenges of coordinating aid distribution in remote and inaccessible areas, the importance of establishing a uniform data tracker to enhance response efficiency, and the critical need for technical human resources in reconstruction efforts. Sharma emphasized the importance of engineering considerations in temporary shelter construction and highlighted the need for more substantial coordination and resource allocation to address these gaps effectively.

The Asst. CDO's insights reveal a complex web of challenges faced by disaster management authorities, from logistical hurdles in remote area aid delivery to the need for better technical and financial resource management. The engagement with development partners, the mobilization of

security forces to assist vulnerable populations, and the push for more accurate and equitable aid distribution reflect a multifaceted approach to disaster recovery.

Discussions also highlights the critical need for a more integrated and transparent approach to disaster management, one that bridges the gap between various levels of government and development partners, ensures the equitable distribution of resources, and fosters a more resilient and prepared community in the face of future disasters. The emphasis on engineering aspects, the consideration of geological factors in reconstruction, and the prioritization of humane and standard-compliant aid delivery are pivotal steps towards achieving a more effective disaster response and recovery framework in Nepal.

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