

Press Release

Third Anniversary of the Gorkha Earthquake 2015 Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform

The third anniversary of the Gorkha Earthquake provides an opportunity to reflect the enormous efforts made by people at all levels, but most of all in those earthquake affected communities, that have been required to reach the point where we are now with almost 320,000 households having received the second tranche of the Government of Nepal (GoN) housing reconstruction grant as of 15 April. This is particularly impressive given the limited time during the year when construction is possible due to the impacts of winter and monsoon periods.

There are many lessons from the recovery process so far which demand reflection; we must learn from the efforts of the last three years and carry this forward in the years ahead to the completion of the housing reconstruction. To support this, the HRRP hosted an event on 23 April 2018 to mark the third year anniversary of the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake and provide an opportunity for the various actors involved in the housing reconstruction to share experience to date, and to consider actions required moving into the next year of reconstruction. The 23 April event, which was officially inaugurated by **Dr. Bhisma Bhusal**, Deputy Spokesperson of NRA, comprised a district exhibition, with information stalls representing the reconstruction context in each of the 32 districts, and a general meeting with plenary discussion. The panel for the discussion included the **NRA CEO, Mr. Yuvraj Bhusal, NRA Deputy Spokesperson, Dr. Bhisma Bhusal, Governance Management and Local Infrastructure (GMALI) CLPIU Project Director, Mr. Ganesh Raj Osti, and Building-CLPIU Project Director, Mr. Tapendra Bdr. Khadka.**

This event provided a much needed space for dialogue between national and local government representatives, with local representatives sharing their experiences to date in reconstruction. The event highlighted the need to work with implementing agencies to identify good practices and share details of modalities that work and have a positive impact on the reconstruction and enable households who have limited capacity, to reconstruct. Reconstruction actors are well aware of the issues and challenges facing recovery and reconstruction and it is time to start highlighting ways to overcome the challenges and what drives HHs to construct appropriate safe houses in a timely manner.

Representatives from I/NGOs, donors, and other reconstruction actors also took part. Some of the major issues discussed included:

- The impact of the GoN deadlines for the disbursement of the housing reconstruction grant with many families building one room, one storey houses simply to access the grant, but which means that they will continue to live in unsafe houses and the reconstruction programme will not have had the intended impact on housing compliance with building code.
- The need to increase coverage and quality of socio-technical assistance, particularly to provide additional, targeted support to vulnerable households. Socio-technical assistance also needs to be refocused on households that have not started building, having been primarily focused on households that are building to date.
- The need to invest in support and mentoring for socio-technical assistance field staff. These staff are a key component of the reconstruction and are unfortunately not receiving sufficient support to be able to effectively support households.
- The NRA CEO, Mr. Yuvraj Bhusal, requested Partner Organisations to provide additional support, financial and other, to the 18,505 households identified as vulnerable by the NRA.

- Mr. Bhusal also addressed the current issue regarding distribution of subsidized loans and the main difference between soft loans and interest free loans. He highlighted that the NRA is working in coordination with NRB to initiate a solution where beneficiaries can be provided soft loans/subsidized loans for reconstruction grants, if NRB can provide a way to provide guarantees for these loans, however, Mr. Bhusal, has mentioned that interest free loans may not be feasible in the current context anymore.

During his presentation Mr. Loren Lockwood, HRRP National Coordinator, concluded with a call to action for the next year of the reconstruction, and requested all actors to focus on:

- Door to door assistance – intensive socio-technical support, with more than 6 visits by a mobile support team at times convenient to the HH
- Working closely with elected officials at municipal and ward level and support to field staff
- Refresher trainings for masons – not 7 day trainings
- Improving the engagement of women in reconstruction
- Mobile teams living in the field, engaging locals as agents of technical assistance
- Engaging Community Reconstruction Committees (CRCs) and support planning and implementation
- Support to temporary shelter
- Engaging construction material suppliers and vendors as agents of the reconstruction
- Water supply rectification
- Collective purchasing of materials, material transport support
- Support to landless HHs for housing reconstruction and relocation
- Interlinked reconstruction with livelihoods and sustainable livelihood opportunities
- Top-up grant for vulnerable HHs support and transportation support
- Provision of revolving fund by Rural Municipality and POs
- Mobilization of Mobile Masons in the Mobile Support teams
- Tarpaulin support for rainy season reconstruction
- Community planning and community Infrastructure
- Training on retrofitting, concrete blocks, urban, communication, etc.

This was echoed by the NRA CEO and Deputy Spokesperson who closed the event with a strong positive message calling all those involved in the reconstruction to come together as one team and work together to support and speed up the housing reconstruction in the years ahead.

The Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform (HRRP) was established in December 2015 to support the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), Building- CLPIU and Governance Management and Local Infrastructure (GMALI) Central Level Programme Implementation Units (CL-PIUs), other relevant government authorities, and Partner Organisations (POs) with coordination of the post-earthquake housing reconstruction. The HRRP is led by CRS Nepal, and primarily funded by DFID and CRS. Other financial contributors and implementing partners include NSET, Oxfam, Caritas Nepal, Plan International, and Habitat for Humanity. The National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET), as an implementing partner, is leading on the technical coordination component of HRRP. The third phase of HRRP began in March 2017 and will run until the end of February 2019.