

# REBUILDING WITH THE COMMUNITY AFTER A DISASTER:

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IN THE 2015 NEPAL EARTHQUAKE



**FRONT COVER PHOTOS:**

**TOP:** A building remains standing after the earthquake but is rendered uninhabitable. The building needs to be safely demolished so it will not pose a danger to the community. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

**MIDDLE:** UN Volunteer civil engineers serving under the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project gather at their camp in Karthali, Sindhupalchowk. (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2015)

**BOTTOM:** People affected by the disaster join hands in order to recover as one community. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

**BACK COVER PHOTO:**

UN Volunteers and cash-for-work participants strategize among themselves as they prepare to carry out demolition operations. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)



Overwhelming quantities of debris are left in the path of the earthquake. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

**The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. We work with partners to integrate qualified, highly motivated and well supported UN Volunteers into development programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism.**

**UNV is active in around 130 countries every year. With Field Presences in over 80 countries, UNV is represented worldwide. UNV is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and reports to the UNDP Executive Board.**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**6**

**FOREWORD**

**9**

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

**10**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**17**

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Objectives and scope of the report .....	19
Methodology .....	20

**21**

**CHAPTER 2: UNV RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKE**

Training of the UN Volunteers .....	22
Structural assessment of damaged public and private buildings .....	22
Formation of brigades and provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) .....	24
Technical supervision of demolition, rubble clearance and recycling of materials .....	25
Provision of training and emergency income to earthquake victims .....	26
Utilization of UNDP-Microsoft software application in field operations .....	29
Training for local masons and engineers to “build back better” .....	31
Awareness-raising campaign for local people on earthquake-resilient houses .....	32
Capacity development and livelihood assistance for grassroots organizations .....	34

## **35**

### **CHAPTER 3: IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERISM ON THE EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES**

Strengthening of local institutions in times of crises .....	<b>36</b>
Mobilization and capacity development of distraught communities .....	<b>40</b>
Increased coordination among key players responding to the earthquake .....	<b>42</b>
Advancement of social inclusion of women .....	<b>43</b>
Promotion of volunteerism among local people and decision-makers .....	<b>47</b>
Creation of opportunities for youth participation and capacity development .....	<b>49</b>

## **50**

### **CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION**

## **55**

### **CHAPTER 5: LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Engaging the volunteer sector in disaster risk management programmes .....	<b>56</b>
Deepening public awareness on the volunteer sector .....	<b>58</b>
Establishing volunteer exchanges for south-south cooperation .....	<b>61</b>
Improving the governance environment for volunteerism .....	<b>61</b>

## **62**

### **ANNEX: LIST OF UN VOLUNTEERS**

# Foreword

**In one fell swoop, a natural disaster can undo years of a country's progress and development, and take its heaviest toll on the most vulnerable. To address this, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has been carrying out a two pronged response in building action and resilience in communities. First, UNV has been rapidly fielding national and international UN Volunteers at the behest of UN organizations during the emergency response to many natural disasters worldwide, including recently after the earthquakes in Ecuador in 2016 and in Nepal in 2015. Second, UNV has been supporting UN joint programmes and projects to build the capacities at various levels of government and civil society in countries with inherent vulnerabilities and broad exposure; to prevent, reduce the risk of, prepare for and recover from natural disasters.**

In the wake of the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, UNV established a Nepal Earthquake Taskforce to coordinate the most effective and essential support on the ground, and enlisted the services of 107 UN Volunteers who worked in the affected sites to deliver essential services to people from the community.

These UN Volunteers worked with the community and government authorities in the demolition of private and government structures terminally damaged by the earthquake and in clearing the rubble to facilitate the reconstruction work. Similarly, UN Volunteers facilitated the delivery of livelihood assistance and advocated disaster risk management measures.

This was made possible through our partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which provided the resources, programme approaches and institutional set-up within which these UN Volunteers performed their duties, along with the coordination and leadership efforts of local bodies at the district, municipal and village

development committee (VDC) level. You will find this commitment of UNV and UN Volunteers in Nepal outlined in detail in this report.

More recently, after the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that hit the Pacific Coast of Ecuador on 16 April 2016, UNV established an Ecuador Earthquake Taskforce to coordinate recovery on the ground. Fifty national and international UN Volunteers were deployed as frontline responders following demand from UN Women, IOM, UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR and OCHA. The assignments of UN Volunteers were diverse, and areas of intervention included: monitoring and evaluation of shelters, training and mentoring of women, communications, architecture, health and reporting.

The threat of natural disasters has been a major challenge to many countries. It is thus no surprise that addressing disasters continues to figure prominently in the global development agenda, as seen in recent international agreements such as the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs), the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. As the world embarks on the pursuit of the SDGs, the quest to build greater resilience to natural disasters will become highly relevant to more and more countries.

No one should be left behind to face a natural disaster. Volunteers have a vital role to play as facilitators in building resilience particularly among vulnerable sectors of the community. Volunteers are often the first on the ground and the last to leave in humanitarian crisis and emergency relief efforts.

UNV is developing and already engaged in a number of projects around the world to strengthen community resilience for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation through volunteerism.

This experience in Nepal has been an interesting case from which learnings can be drawn to inform policy and programme development. It has shown

how volunteers can provide vital support to and cooperate with the community in tackling the effects of a tremendous disaster, while transferring skills and knowledge to people from the community in order to help build greater resilience.

It is my pleasure to present this publication to government partners, and humanitarian and development organizations especially volunteer-involving organizations. As you will find in the subsequent sections of this report, the publication puts forward important insights that can strengthen our approach to building resilience and recovery for communities through volunteerism.



Richard Dictus  
Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers

# Foreword

**In the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, UN Volunteers were rapidly mobilized from different parts of Nepal to provide vital aid. Volunteer action in response to disasters is one of the strongest expressions of the human desire to attend to the needs of others.**

National UN Volunteers motivated by their longing to help others and contribute to their community were on the front line, supporting government-led interventions alongside approximately 300 organizations. The UN Volunteers were mobilized to support the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Demolition and Debris Management Project to conduct the structural assessment of damaged buildings and oversee the destruction of structures found to be unsafe. The UN Volunteers trained members of the community who participated in the project's cash-for-work scheme and who continued the activities started by the UN Volunteers well after the project, demonstrating that engaging with communities to encourage participation fosters increased local ownership. Similarly, the UN Volunteers worked with local partners in delivering livelihood assistance and promoting disaster risk management under the UNDP Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Programme (CDRMP). The participation of the UN Volunteers in these two UNDP projects in the disaster-affected sites is documented in this report.

Apart from these projects, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme continues to collaborate with UNDP in reconstruction efforts under the UNDP Site Preparation for Reconstruction Project which aims to improve healthcare access, provide employment opportunities, and build capacities on safer construction practices. The UN Volunteers currently support the UNDP Community Infrastructure and Livelihood Recovery Programme in the earthquake-affected sites where to date 20,000 households have benefitted from livelihood development initiatives and 250 earthquake-damaged community structures have been restored.

UNV likewise supports the Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project (CFP), an innovative and creative approach to ensuring accountability to and responsive

communication with affected communities. UNV has deployed national UN Volunteers as district liaison and information management officers who collect and document the sentiments and views of the earthquake-affected people on relief and recovery efforts at the district level, in coordination with government partners and civil society actors.

These initiatives have been realized through the fruitful collaboration among UNDP, Government of Nepal and UNV that has strengthened community commitment to reconstruction, encouraged cohesion and contributed to the sustainability of recovery efforts at the local level. Due to its significant contributions in addressing the needs of the earthquake-affected communities, UNV has been invited by the National Reconstruction Authority to take on an important role in supporting recovery and reconstruction efforts in partnership with government and other UN entities.

In Nepal, volunteerism is founded on strong cultural and historical traditions. The most important and potent resource of a country in working towards its recovery and development goals is its people. What we witnessed in the aftermath of the earthquake was the dedicated and selfless efforts of the UN Volunteers at a time when their assistance mattered most. The UN Volunteers have played and continue to play a vital role in helping ensure that no one is left behind as the country endeavors to build resilience. As Nepal mobilizes itself towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), there is no doubt that volunteerism as demonstrated in aftermath of the earthquake will continue to play an essential role.



Valerie Julliard

UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative  
Nepal

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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**CAC:** Citizen Awareness Center

**CBO:** Community-based organization

**CBDRMC:** Community-Based Disaster Risk Management Committee

**CDRMP:** Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Programme

**DADO:** District Agriculture Development Office

**DDC:** District Development Committee

**DDRC:** District Disaster Relief Committee

**DHM:** Department of Hydrology and Meteorology

**DLSO:** District Livestock Services Office

**DOA:** Department of Agriculture

**DUDBC:** Department of Urban Development and Building Construction

**DWIDM:** Department of Water Induced Disaster Management

**FGD:** Focus group discussion

**IEC:** Information, education and communication

**IOM:** International Organization for Migration

**KII:** Key informant interview

**MCG:** Micro Capital Grant

**MHA:** Ministry of Home Affairs

**MIC:** Microsoft Innovation Center

**MOFALD:** Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development

**NBC:** National Building Code

**NDVS:** National Development Volunteer Service

**NGO:** Non-government organization

**NPC:** National Planning Commission

**OCHA:** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**PDNA:** Post-Disaster Needs Assessment

**PPE:** Personal protective equipment

**UN:** United Nations

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme

**UNV:** United Nations Volunteers

**VDC:** Village Development Committee

**WCF:** Ward Citizen Forum

**WFP:** World Food Programme

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report summarizes the findings of a documentation exercise undertaken from April to July 2016 with the intent to chronicle and assess the role of volunteerism in the response to the 2015 Nepal earthquake which killed at least 8,790 people and occasioned approximately US \$7 billion in damages and losses. Carried out by an external consultant, the report examines the participation of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in supporting the response efforts of the Government of Nepal and uses the experience of UNV as the primary basis of its analysis. In the wake of widespread destruction, which prompted government authorities to draw on the support of the international community, UNV partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in swiftly mobilizing a total of 107 UN Volunteers who served in the earthquake-affected sites to perform critical functions and deliver services to the earthquake victims.

**In the wake of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme partnered with UNDP in swiftly mobilizing a total of 107 UN Volunteers who served in the earthquake-affected sites to perform critical functions and deliver services to the earthquake victims.**

Under the auspices and supervision of UNDP which together with its partners provided the resources and institutional framework within which they served, the UN Volunteers worked with local bodies and the community in restoring normal conditions in the affected sites by assessing damaged structures and clearing the rubble left by the earthquake, as well as in delivering livelihood assistance and promoting disaster risk management initiatives. Mostly engineers by profession, including some who are experts in agriculture, forestry, accounting, and administrative and logistical support, the UN Volunteers were integrated into the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project and the Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Programme (CDRMP). The report draws its findings from 20 focus group discussions (FGD) involving 280 cash-for-work participants, 76 key informant interviews (KII) with representatives from ministries and government offices at the central and local levels, UN and partner organizations, and 54 of the 107 UN Volunteers who either participated in FGDs or were interviewed by email.

In coordination with six UNDP international experts on demolition, the UN Volunteers undertook the structural assessment of public and private buildings damaged by the earthquake and supervised cash-for-work brigades comprised of people from the community which cleared vast quantities of debris scattered in the calamity-hit areas. These activities were important in ensuring that

no further fatalities resulted from such debris and that the sound physical environment in these areas were quickly restored in order to pave the way for the rebuilding of private houses and public buildings. The UN Volunteers worked in tandem with local volunteers and coordinated with important local authorities and bodies, such as the Village Development Committee (VDC) secretary and the Ward Citizen Forum (WCF), in making door-to-door visits to households to conduct the assessment and in performing the day-to-day oversight and quality assurance of debris clearance operations undertaken by the brigades.

The cash-for-work scheme adopted in the implementation of debris management operations provided earthquake victims with much-needed emergency income that enabled the community to meet immediate needs, including that of women who were deliberately targeted by the UN Volunteers to include in this scheme. Working with different local stakeholders and the community, the UN Volunteers assessed 4,060 earthquake-damaged structures and led the clearing of 294,279.18 cubic meters of debris both from houses and from public structures such as schools, health posts and monasteries.



Demolishing damaged buildings requires the hard work and collective effort of the community. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

The UN Volunteers who served under CDRMP provided technical and project management support to various community-based organizations (CBO) such as forest user groups, women networks and Community-Based Disaster Risk Management Committees (CBDRMC) and contributed in developing the institutional capacities of these grassroots organizations. As local implementers of activities under the Micro Capital Grant (MCG) scheme of UNDP, the CBOs were trained and mentored by the UN Volunteers in carrying out and documenting different project processes such as meetings and consultations on specific topics such as livelihood development, construction of community infrastructure and bioengineering, adoption of accountability and transparency measures in project implementation, and execution of finance and procurement procedures in accordance with established rules.

The UN Volunteers supported the CBOs in documenting important consultations, selecting beneficiaries and writing proposals and inception reports, and introduced the practice of organizing community hearings on project finances to serve as a participatory “social audit” of community-based projects in the earthquake-affected sites. The engagement of the UN Volunteers in CDRMP provided 16 CBOs with a sound understanding and practical experience of the different processes in the project management cycle and contributed to the efficient delivery of recovery assistance to the earthquake victims. Furthermore, the UN Volunteers facilitated the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns which used a mobile van that travelled from community to community in order to bring to the local people information on earthquake-resilient construction principles.

Based on the insights and assessment of different stakeholders both at the central and local levels, the report puts forward the assertion that the involvement of the UN Volunteers in earthquake response efforts served to: 1) strengthen local institutions; 2) mobilize and develop the capacities of distraught communities; 3) increase coordination efforts among key players that responded to the earthquake; 4) advance the social inclusion of women; 5) promote volunteerism among local people and decision-makers; and 6) create opportunities for youth participation and capacity development.

**Working with local volunteers, the UN Volunteers were effective in building rapport and in quickly assimilating into the community in order to nurture trust and healthy relationships with the local people, which were requisites for the successful implementation of earthquake response efforts.**

The efforts of the UN Volunteers were highly appreciated by people from the community who valued the fact that the UN Volunteers travelled from far-away places in order to provide assistance at a time of critical need. Working with local volunteers, the UN Volunteers were effective in building rapport and in quickly assimilating into the community in order to nurture trust and healthy relationships with the local people, which were requisites for the successful implementation of earthquake response efforts. As observed during the documentation exercise, the spirit of teamwork, cooperation and solidarity – instead of a supervisor-subordinate relationship – was highly evident in the interaction between the UN Volunteers and cash-for-work participants. Furthermore, the adoption of volunteerism as an approach in the UNDP projects covered by the report enabled young people to serve as UN Volunteers, thereby allowing the youth to take part in responding to the earthquake while developing their individual skills and capacities in the process.

In the event of a similar crisis situation in the future, the report recommends the increased engagement of the volunteer sector in disaster risk management interventions as a programme strategy to build resilience at the grassroots level. It stresses the importance of involving volunteers not only in the humanitarian phase but in other phases of the disaster risk management cycle such as preparedness, mitigation and recovery and rehabilitation. The report recommends that public awareness of the volunteer sector and its accomplishments be increased, including through collaboration with media partners, and that the social value of volunteerism and schemes for the public recognition of volunteers be promoted. The report calls for the establishment of volunteer exchange mechanisms among southern countries, and in order to strengthen the governance environment for volunteerism in Nepal, the formulation of an overarching government policy that will facilitate long-term strategic planning for the volunteer sector.



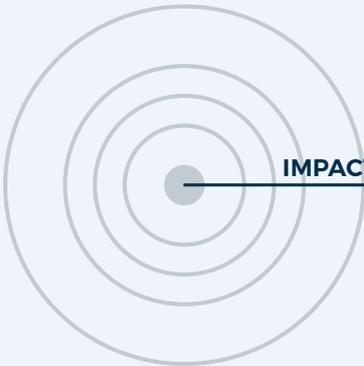
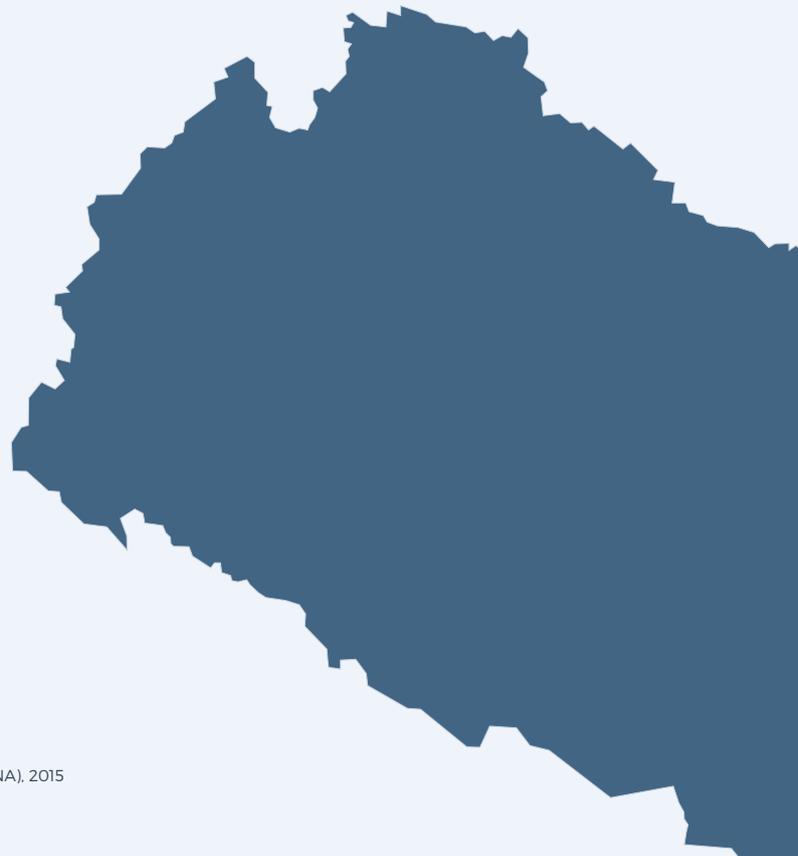
## PLACE OF ASSIGNMENT OF THE UN VOLUNTEERS

### DEMOLITION AND DEBRIS MANAGEMENT PROJECT

- Sindhupalchowk
- Kavrepalanchowk
- Nuwakot

### COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

- Sindhupalchowk
- Chitwan
- Kathmandu



## IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE

Source: Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), 2015

 **8,790**  
deaths

 **US\$ 7 billion**  
damages and losses

 **22,300**  
injuries

 **5.6 million**  
workers affected

 **755,549**  
partially and totally  
damaged houses

**Findings show that the involvement of the UN Volunteers in earthquake response efforts served to strengthen local institutions, mobilize and develop the capacities of distraught communities, increase coordination efforts among key players that responded to the earthquake, advance the social inclusion of women, promote volunteerism among local people and decision-makers, and create opportunities for youth participation and capacity development.**



#### KEY PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

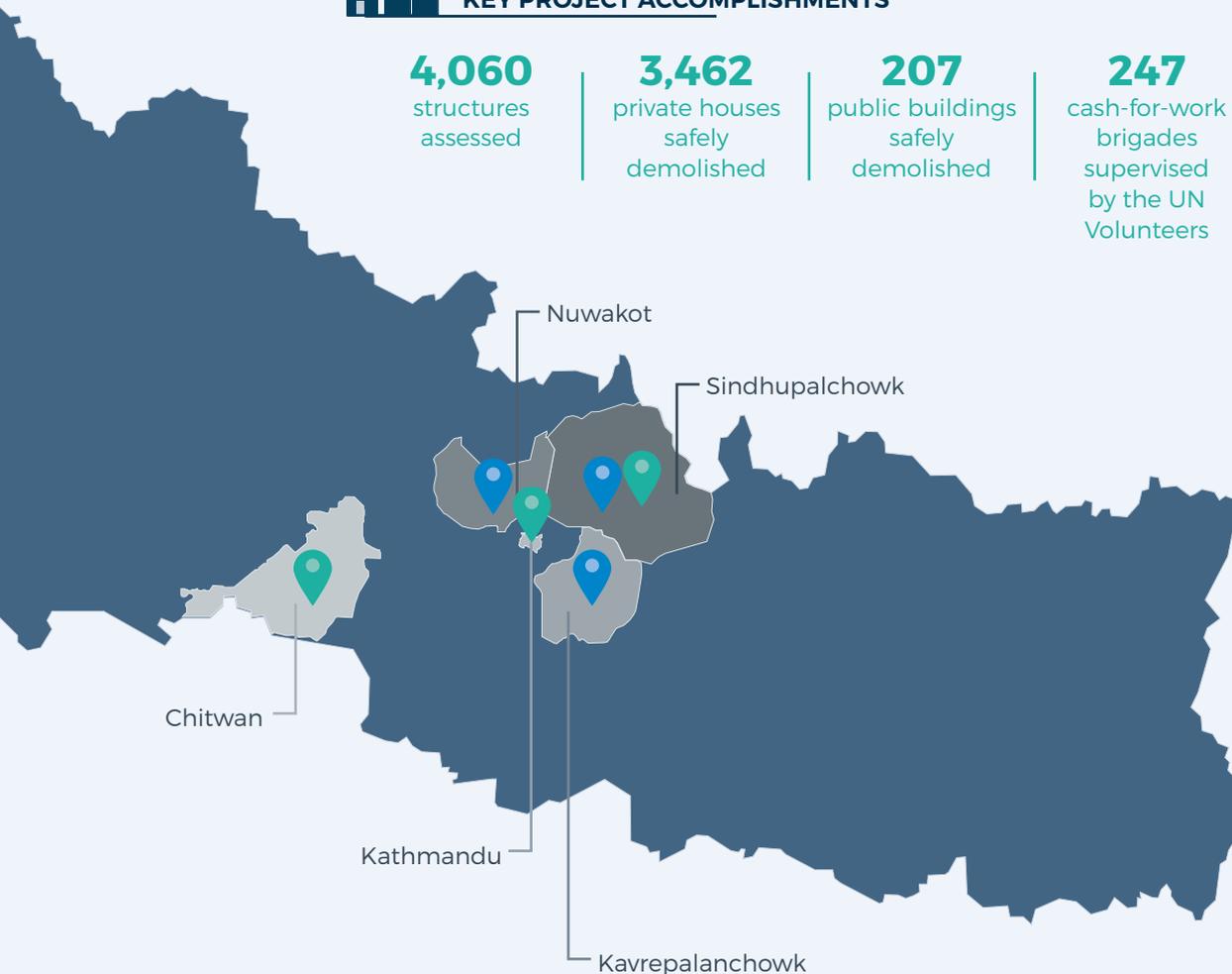
**4,060**  
structures  
assessed

**3,462**  
private houses  
safely  
demolished

**207**  
public buildings  
safely  
demolished

**247**  
cash-for-work  
brigades  
supervised  
by the UN  
Volunteers

**16**  
community-  
based  
organizations  
capacitated





A woman works with her fellow community members in picking up and disposing of the rubble left by the powerful earthquake. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

On 25 April 2015, a powerful earthquake of 7.6 magnitude struck Nepal and was followed by a series of aftershocks including a major one which occurred on 12 May 2015 and measured 7.3 in magnitude, causing a devastating loss of life and property. The earthquake resulted in 8,790 deaths, 22,300 injuries, and damaged or destroyed 755,549 houses. Access to basic facilities was obstructed particularly in the 14 hardest-hit districts where an estimated 700,000 people were forced into sudden poverty. According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) undertaken by the Government of Nepal in collaboration with international partners, damage and loss totals rose to US \$7 billion and reconstruction costs were estimated to be US \$6.7 billion.

**Twenty focus group discussions (FGD) were carried out involving 280 cash-for-work participants in the project sites. Fifty-four of the 107 UN Volunteers either participated in FGDs or were given questionnaires by email, while 76 key informant interviews were conducted face-to-face or via telephone or Skype with different project stakeholders.**

Given the severe and widespread impact of the disaster, the Government of Nepal requested for international assistance and subsequently organized the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction where the United Nations (UN) and other development partners were called upon for immediate and long-term support to reconstruction efforts.

In response to the earthquake, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme rapidly mobilized UN Volunteers and collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to deliver programmes and services for the earthquake-affected people. UNV partnered with UNDP and mobilized a total of 83 UN Volunteers with engineering expertise, as well as seven UN Volunteers who served as administrative and logistical support staff, to organize and lead cash-for-work teams undertaking the demolition and debris management operations of UNDP. Seventeen UN Volunteers with expertise in agriculture, civil engineering, forestry and accounting supported livelihood efforts and awareness-raising campaigns on disaster risk reduction under the UNDP Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Programme (CDRMP). Likewise, 14 UN Volunteers with expertise in engineering, information and communications technology, and liaison were mobilized to support the UN Resident Coordinator's Office as well as UNDP efforts to rebuild community infrastructure.

Furthermore, a total of seven UN Volunteers with various professional backgrounds were mobilized to support the response efforts of IOM (i.e. civil engineering), WFP (i.e. programme policy and livelihood) and OCHA (i.e. information management, humanitarian affairs, reporting).

## OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE REPORT

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This report presents the outcome of an undertaking to document and assess UNV response efforts to the 2015 Nepal earthquake. The specific objectives of this report are to:

1. Document the role and contribution of volunteerism in the response to the 2015 Nepal earthquake in the context of the UNV experience
2. Assess volunteerism in terms of its effectiveness, immediate impact and value to the overall response efforts
3. Identify good practices, challenges and lessons learned
4. Present recommendations on the use of volunteerism in addressing future disasters

This report covers the UN Volunteers who served under the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project and under CDRMP.

## METHODOLOGY

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Field visits were undertaken to different project sites in the earthquake-affected districts of Sindhupalchowk, Kavrepalanchowk and Nuwakot to conduct focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII) which were taped and carried out following structured questionnaires. Data gathered during the FGDs and KIIs were transcribed, translated into English and processed in tables and charts.

Twenty FGDs were carried out involving 280 cash-for-work participants in the project sites in order to gather community perceptions on the work done by the UN Volunteers. Meanwhile, 54 of the 107 UN Volunteers who supported the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project and CDRMP either participated in FGDs or were given questionnaires by email. The UN Volunteers answered questions on the nature of their participation in the earthquake response efforts, areas of individual contribution, challenges, perceived effectiveness of their work and perceived impact of completed work on the community.

Seventy-six KIIs were conducted face-to-face or via telephone or Skype with project stakeholders who were directly or indirectly involved in the projects documented in this report. Central government officials, local bodies (i.e. district and village development committees, municipalities), teachers, principals, police, masons, representatives from community-based organizations (CBO), and UNDP and UNV staff were interviewed to gather feedback on the role of volunteerism in the earthquake response efforts. The government officials interviewed were from the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MOFALD), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Department of Agriculture, National Planning Commission (NPC), Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM), and the Department of Water Induced Disaster Management (DWIDM).

The field visits, FGDs and KIIs were done intermittently from April to July 2016.

**According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) undertaken by the Government of Nepal in collaboration with international partners, damage and loss totals rose to US \$7 billion and reconstruction costs were estimated to be US \$6.7 billion.**

## CHAPTER 2

# UNV RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKE

- 1 After the earthquake, temporary shelters and safe alternatives to remaining in damaged structures were among the most urgent needs of people from the community. As a result, demolition of public and private structures in a timely manner became a priority. In partnership with UNDP under its Demolition and Debris Management Project, UNV rapidly mobilized 83 UN volunteer engineers who were assigned to the affected districts to organize and lead cash-for-work teams and ensure safety throughout implementation. This initiative focused on the structural assessment of damaged buildings, safe demolition and debris management, and emergency employment for earthquake victims who contributed labor as cash-for-work participants.

## TRAINING OF THE UN VOLUNTEERS

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Training was provided by UNDP and its partners to the UN Volunteers prior to deployment. The UN Volunteers were trained by UNDP international experts on how to conduct demolition in the field through theoretical and practical demonstrations on the correct and safe way to demolish earthquake-damaged houses. The UN Volunteers were trained in handling heavy mechanical equipment while working with damaged structures and in implementing applicable safety measures during the demolition process. They were instructed to follow a top-to-bottom approach (i.e. demolition should start from the highest point in the structure, such as the ceiling, to the lowest point such as the floor, in order to avoid accidents resulting from falling debris).

Given that community attitudes and behaviors typically deviate from the norm during times of shock and trauma, the UN Volunteers were likewise trained on psychosocial support to enable them to manage people from the community. The training emphasized appropriate ways to maintain communication with earthquake victims as well as ways to resolve conflict and avoid interference in political affairs. Additionally, the UN Volunteers were trained on how to overcome personal stress in the field.

As accidents are likely to occur during demolition and debris management operations, basic life support and first aid training was provided to the UN Volunteers by the Nepal Red Cross Society.

## STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUILDINGS

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The UN Volunteers were recruited to assess damaged public and private structures which would inform the decisions made during the demolition process. This exercise enabled the UN Volunteers to: 1) determine the total number of buildings to be demolished; 2) determine the total number of brigades necessary for carrying out the tasks; 3) determine the location of the structures for demolition; 4) identify the owners of the damaged structures; and 5) identify types of tools and equipment needed in order to carry out necessary tasks. In this work the UN Volunteers were supported by local volunteers who were selected from each ward upon the recommendation of the VDC secretary and WCF. A total of 4,060 structures were structurally assessed.



**DAMAGE ASSESSMENT**

**4,060 structures  
assessed**

UN Volunteers take part in technical trainings organized by UNDP and its partners prior to deployment to their respective places of assignment.



(Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2015)



(UNDP Nepal, 2015)



UN Volunteer Saroj Chalise (right) provides personal protective equipment (PPE) to cash-for-work participants. (Kamal Sigdel/UNDP, 2015)

## FORMATION OF BRIGADES AND PROVISION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

With the support of the VDC secretary and WCF, the UN Volunteers were responsible for the formation of cash-for-work brigades that would enable locals to contribute manual labor in the demolition and debris management process. The UN Volunteers were involved in making a list of earthquake victims from the community who were interested to enlist in the cash-for-work scheme. Each brigade included a total of up to 17 workers of whom six were skilled laborers while 11 were unskilled or people who had not undergone specialized training. Enlistment priority was given to women in order to encourage their participation. As a result, approximately 40 percent of the brigade demographic was female. A total of 247 brigades were formed and each one appointed a supervisor for masons and a supervisor for laborers who would work alongside the UN Volunteers to solve challenges as they arose.

Before commencing demolition work, brigades were provided with sets of necessary tools identified during a prior technical assessment conducted by the UN Volunteers. The tools included PPE supplied to each individual taking part in the cash-for-work scheme. The PPE package was comprised of goggles, hardhat, mask, reflective vest, t-shirt, medical kit and a pair of boots and gloves. The UN Volunteers were trained on the appropriate use of and the strict rules around PPE.

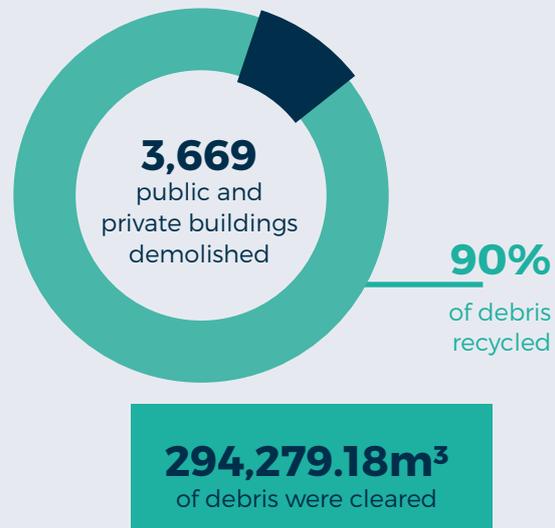
A majority of the UN Volunteers who participated in the FGDs held views similar to that of UN Volunteer Hishila Maharjan. She observed that at first it was difficult to make people use PPE but when minor injuries occurred due to negligence, the cash-for-work participants began to use PPE appropriately. The community expressed appreciation of the “safety first” principle during the operations and recommended its adoption in future disasters.

## TECHNICAL SUPERVISION OF DEMOLITION, RUBBLE CLEARANCE AND RECYCLING OF MATERIALS

Under the guidance of six UNDP international experts on demolition, the UN Volunteers led the demolition of terminally damaged structures in the aftermath of the earthquake. The brigades demolished 3,462 private houses and 207 public buildings such as schools, health posts, hospitals, District Development Committee (DDC) offices, temples and monasteries. The UN Volunteers supervised cash-for-work participants and trained them on the appropriate ways to demolish structures. After the demolition, leftover rubble needed to be cleared in order to create space for the construction of temporary shelters and eventually new houses. It was noted that women were predominantly involved in clearing debris rather than in demolishing structures mainly due to the physically challenging work required by the latter. A total of 294,279.18 cubic meters of debris was safely removed from the earthquake-affected sites after the demolition, which rendered these sites suitable for the construction of new structures and the resumption of community activities.

During the operations, the UN Volunteers and brigades ensured the preservation of materials such as stone, cement, reinforcing bar, steel and wood that could be repurposed for the construction of shelters and other infrastructure. Approximately 90 percent of the rubble collected was recycled to reinforce land exposed to slopes, make roads more durable and fortify walls that were partially destroyed.

The UN Volunteers were highly attentive towards avoiding the destruction of recyclable materials during the demolition. According to Dhurba Prasad Bhattarai, principal of Himalaya Secondary School, "The UN Volunteers were very careful not to damage the materials of buildings while undertaking the demolition. When mechanical demolition was being done in our school, we asked them to stop temporarily until we took out the tables and windows carefully. They agreed immediately and ensured the tables and windows were transferred to another place before proceeding." He added, "They were active promoters of demolition without destruction of materials which could be reused in the future."



## PROVISION OF TRAINING AND EMERGENCY INCOME TO EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

The earthquake victims who provided labor in the demolition and debris management operations did not only physically revive their own communities but in the process earned a daily wage through the cash-for-work scheme of UNDP administered in the field by the UN Volunteers.

The 2015 Nepal earthquake affected the livelihood of 2.3 million households, or about 5.6 million workers in 31 districts. Cash-for-work proved highly effective as a means to immediately compensate for impacted livelihoods and enable the local community to meet basic needs. The participants earned daily wages under the scheme which they utilized for different purposes such as to purchase livestock and poultry (e.g. goats, chicks) and to pay for school-related expenses of their children. A total of 4,324 people from the community, 1,714 of whom were women, benefitted from the cash-for-work scheme.

Earthquake victims were given the opportunity to work together and learn that collective effort could yield positive outcomes. Enlistment in the cash-for-work scheme enabled them to take part in a communal activity which seemed to provide therapeutic relief in the wake of the disaster. "If free cash were instead given to people without the need to work, then the experience would not have been as valuable and as appreciated," commented Jivan Baniya, a teacher at the Shri Mahendra Higher Secondary School in Kunchowk.

The UN Volunteers conducted orientation sessions for cash-for-work participants on the proper procedures followed during the demolition and on key safety measures, emphasizing the need for safety equipment and the importance of managing one's own safety while working. The UN Volunteers acted as "skill builders" in the community as they imparted technical knowledge and skills to the earthquake victims.

Ganesh Shrestha, a mason from Irkhu, stated, "I used to think that whatever I had been doing throughout my life for 30 years regarding construction and demolition of structures was right. But when I worked under the supervision of the UN Volunteers, I learned new things and I was trained on the proper way of undertaking a demolition."



### CASH-FOR-WORK SCHEME

**247**  
cash-for-work  
brigades  
supervised  
by the UN  
Volunteers

**4,324**  
community  
residents  
engaged in  
cash-for-work

**1,714**  
cash-for-work  
participants  
were women

## In Focus

**“I felt better after sharing my problems. People run away from the scene of big calamities but these UN Volunteers were different.”**

Ungsang Tamang, cash-for-work participant

### *Homeless after the earthquake but moving on*

Ungsang Tamang lives in an evacuation camp for Internally Displaced People with his wife, Supa, and two daughters. His family was displaced by the earthquake from Bundang VDC-1, a community in the northern part of Nuwakot district. Prior to the catastrophe, the family had been living in Kathmandu where Ungsang was employed as a daily wage earner. The earthquake, however, destroyed the house that the family was renting in Kathmandu as well as the family's house in Bundang.

In August 2015, Ungsang contacted UN Volunteers who were coordinating the cash-for-work scheme of UNDP and UNV in his community. Both he and Supa worked for 18 to 19 days, receiving support and information from the UN Volunteers on on-the-job personal safety, payment of wages, and prior orientation on debris clearance.

Ungsang recounts that with the destruction of his family's home, he felt that he had lost everything and that he was under enormous stress each day. The young UN Volunteers who were supervising his team in the cash-for-work scheme provided him with constant counseling and income-generating ideas. “I was impressed by the UN Volunteers because

they were polite, kind and helpful,” he recalls. “I felt better after sharing my problems. People run away from the scene of big calamities but these UN Volunteers were different.”

The money earned by the couple contributed to their daughters' education and to the family's celebration of Dashain, a national festival in Nepal. “The earnings helped our family to at least enjoy a normal festival that year,” shares Supa.





The QR card used with the UNDP-Microsoft software application is featured in a photo exhibit held to mark one year since the 2015 Nepal earthquake. (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2016).



Hotreeka Joshi, a UN Volunteer civil engineer, uses the UNDP-Microsoft software application to record the attendance of cash-for-work participants in the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project. (Kamal Sigdel/UNDP Nepal, 2015)

## UTILIZATION OF UNDP-MICROSOFT SOFTWARE APPLICATION IN FIELD OPERATIONS

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UNDP partnered with the Microsoft Innovation Center (MIC) Nepal to design a custom-built software application for its demolition and debris management operations. The application was used by the UN Volunteers to organize and manage their respective brigades. It required them to log in from the smartphones provided by UNDP using a unique ID and password to access the features of the application which include: 1) damage assessment; 2) workers' registration; 3) workers' attendance; and 4) survey forms. The application was used to register workers, record and track damage assessments, monitor daily attendance and determine cash payments to workers.

Using the application eased and systematized the damage assessment process and cash-for-work scheme as key information (e.g. details of the homeowner, spouse, total number of dependents, name of the UN volunteer undertaking the damage assessment, date of assessment, location and type of the structure assessed, debris collected during the demolition) was digitally documented.

Cash-for-work participants were each supplied with a QR card that stored his or her name, citizenship number, worker classification, brigade number and photo. The QR card was used by the workers to log their daily attendance by swiping the QR card on the smartphone of the UN Volunteer supervising the brigade.

As internet access was not available in many remote earthquake-affected sites, the application was designed for both online and offline use. Data could be stored offline in the memory of the smartphone until it was synchronized once internet connection became available.

As electronic devices can be prone to accidents, regular synchronization was needed. This was not always easy due to the limited internet connection available in the areas where the UN Volunteers worked. "The application can work offline but if the smartphone gets damaged before synchronization, then the data is lost," observed UN Volunteer Sudarshan Ghimire.

**The application was used to register workers, record and track damage assessments, monitor daily attendance and determine cash payments to workers. Using the application eased and systematized the damage assessment process and cash-for-work scheme as key information was digitally documented.**



A monitoring team from UNV Bonn and Bangkok led by Geoffrey Prewitt (third from right), chief of the UNV Development Programming Section, conducts a field visit to Melanchi municipality in Sindhupalchowk where UN Volunteer Suresh Deuja (first from right) supports local government efforts to educate the community on housing grant applications and the National Building Code (NBC). (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2016)

- 2 Aside from the need to restore physical order in areas hit by the earthquake, communities similarly required livelihood assistance and capacity building on disaster risk management as they embarked on the path to recovery and longer-term development. Seventeen UN Volunteers with expertise in agriculture, civil engineering, forestry and accounting served under the UNDP Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Programme (CDRMP) which included components focusing on support to the victims of the 2015 Nepal earthquake. The UN Volunteers facilitated livelihood development efforts and community trainings and awareness campaigns on disaster risk management.

## TRAINING FOR LOCAL MASONS AND ENGINEERS TO “BUILD BACK BETTER”

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The PDNA identified housing as the sector most affected by the earthquake. Approximately 498,852 houses were categorized as fully collapsed or damaged beyond repair while 256,697 were partly damaged. The total damage and loss in the housing and human settlements sector was valued at US \$3.5 billion.

The devastating effects of the disaster demonstrated that the majority of the buildings that collapsed were not built to withstand the earthquake. The need to create greater awareness of and enforce stricter compliance with the updated standards set by the National Building Code (NBC) came to the fore. Although the construction of new houses for the affected communities was generally delayed by many different factors, it was clear from the start that organized efforts were necessary to ensure that the new houses to be built followed higher construction standards in harmony with “build back better” principles, and not old construction practices which had failed to resist the earthquake.

The UN Volunteers worked with UNDP consultants in organizing community-based trainings on earthquake-resistant construction

technology for local masons and engineers. As local masons are the ones actually building houses for individual homeowners at the grassroots level, it was important to train them on the updated standards of the NBC and on safe construction principles. The UN Volunteers provided technical backstopping and coordination support and acted as facilitators during the community-based trainings.

The training of masons and engineers was an important undertaking of UNDP supported by the UN Volunteers. In the aftermath of a disaster, it is necessary to improve the construction quality and safety of buildings by updating the knowledge and skills of local masons and engineers who are directly responsible for constructing buildings. The trained local masons and engineers can then apply their skills in subsequent construction projects and thereby contribute in decreasing vulnerability to future disasters.

## AWARENESS-RAISING CAMPAIGN FOR LOCAL PEOPLE ON EARTHQUAKE-RESILIENT HOUSES

After the disaster, it was equally important to promote awareness on earthquake-resilient construction among people from the community. As individual homeowners are key decision-makers in the building of new houses, community residents need to be educated on “build back better” principles as much as local masons and engineers.

The CDRMP project used a mobile van as a means to spread awareness on earthquake-resilient construction. Driven from community to community, the van was equipped with a television, laptop, microphone, speaker, cameras, lights and other equipment which ran on electricity supplied by solar panels and a back-up generator. The mobile van principally used visual techniques in disseminating information on what constituted an earthquake-resilient house, its structure and the human and other resources needed to build it.

The mobile van had various information, communication and education (IEC) materials such as posters, brochures, pamphlets and design catalogues describing the qualities of earthquake-resistant houses. It carried a miniature model house which gave a visual demonstration of safe construction techniques. Awareness-raising activities such as presentations, individual counselling for homeowners and orientation sessions were organized in the communities visited by the mobile van which was operated by one driver who also performed documentation tasks, and one civil engineer or architect who was responsible for the van’s educational video.

The UN Volunteers contributed in conceptualizing the overall design of the mobile van, interviewed the civil engineers and architects operating the vehicle and facilitated the recruitment process. This initiative was implemented in coordination with the local offices of the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC) and various local bodies.

The mobile van initiative was able to reach 10,937 people in 99 VDCs in the districts of Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha and Gorkha.



Mobile van reached 10,937 people in

**99 earthquake-affected villages**





UN Volunteer Pragati Manandhar (second from right) welcomes local partners and residents in Bhaktapur into the mobile van exhibit on earthquake-resilient construction techniques. (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2016)



Poultry and related supplies are delivered and distributed in Sindhupalchowk to support livelihood development under the Micro Capital Grant (MCG) scheme of CDRMP. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)



A community consultation is organized in Thakani village to identify needs and propose project activities under CDRMP. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND LIVELIHOOD ASSISTANCE FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

The UN Volunteers provided support to CBOs in the earthquake-affected sites by providing training, and technical and project management support in the implementation of activities related to livelihood development, construction of community infrastructure (e.g. water systems), bioengineering and others. In order to strengthen the institutional capacities of CBOs, the UN Volunteers worked closely with these grassroots organizations in the identification and analysis of needs in the communities, implementation and monitoring of activities. A total of 16 CBOs – such as forest user groups, women’s networks, Community-Based Disaster Risk Management Committees (CBDRMC) – were supported in Sindhupalchowk and Chitwan.

The UN Volunteers assisted CBOs which were recipients under the Micro Capital Grant (MCG) scheme of CDRMP. They organized orientation sessions for the CBOs on topics such as activity planning, beneficiary selection, proposal development, preparation of meeting agendas, inception report writing and minute-taking. The CBOs initially found it difficult to manage discussions and to take the minutes of project meetings but with the support provided by the UN Volunteers, all the 16 CBOs eventually became capable of independently organizing these meetings. Furthermore, the UN Volunteers taught the CBOs how to develop important forms and templates required in planning and documenting (e.g. project reports) MCG activities. The

UN Volunteers provided logistical support in organizing trainings under the MCG scheme and served as trainers on topics such as livestock care, home garden cultivation, and off-season and organic farming.

Similarly, the UN Volunteers played a vital role in the procurement of goods and services for MCG activities. They carried out a one-day finance orientation for each CBO in order to explain procurement processes and requirements and assisted the CBOs in determining technical specifications of goods and in soliciting quotations from suppliers. They helped the CBOs develop forms to document the goods procured and to track the delivery of such goods to the intended beneficiaries.

In the area of agriculture, the UN Volunteers coordinated with the CBDRMC to determine prevailing needs and proposed appropriate interventions such as community forest replanting, bioengineering in landslide-prone areas and crop cultivation. Once the proposed assistance had been reviewed and approved by UNDP, the UN Volunteers coordinated the procurement of goods (e.g. seedlings) and services required in implementation.

**CHAPTER 3**

**IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF  
VOLUNTEERISM ON THE  
EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED  
COMMUNITIES**

## STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN TIMES OF CRISES

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The PDNA estimated that 1,711 government facilities at the central, district, municipal and village levels were fully or partially damaged during the earthquake. These included central ministry buildings, district administration offices, police buildings, district courts, district treasury comptroller offices, and VDC and municipal facilities.

Because government facilities and staff directly suffered the impact of the earthquake, many government offices at the local level could not resume operations quickly and local authorities were in shock due to the loss of their own family members and houses. The earthquake consequently left the public service delivery system in the affected sites paralyzed for some time and people could not receive services as usual. District public offices were forced to deliver services from tents and temporary shelters. In the affected sites, many VDCs – which were frontline government service outlets at the grassroots level – had long been out of their own buildings due to long-standing insurgency issues in their areas and were thus unprepared to deal with a much larger catastrophe.

Under these dire circumstances, the rapid deployment of the UN Volunteers served to support and strengthen local bodies as the government sought to respond to a sudden large-scale disaster. The assistance provided by the UN Volunteers helped fill immediate gaps in service delivery and supported key government institutions in undertaking steps to become

fully functional once more. Under the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project, the UN Volunteers were expressly mobilized and assigned to severely damaged areas in close coordination with the District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC). Ram Krishna Rajbhanddari, an official of the Nuwakot DDC and DDRC, recounted that the UN Volunteers performed their work in coordination with the DDRC and under the leadership of local bodies. The UN Volunteers likewise supported the work of the VDC secretaries who were serving as the VDC chair in the meantime while local elections were still to be held.

Megh Raj Khadaka, VDC secretary in Karthali, said that the UN Volunteers were supportive in identifying problems in the field, implementing activities and facilitating fund flow mechanisms needed in the operations, adding that the UN Volunteers filled gaps occasioned by understaffing in the local bodies. Khagendra Ghimire, administrative officer at the District Administration Office in Nuwakot, expressed the same view explaining that the UN Volunteers assisted VDCs and municipalities with technical assessments of damaged structures at a time when only limited government human resources were available.

**Under dire circumstances, the rapid deployment of the UN Volunteers served to support and strengthen local bodies as the government sought to respond to a sudden large-scale disaster. The assistance provided by the UN Volunteers helped fill immediate gaps in service delivery and supported key government institutions in undertaking steps to become fully functional once more.**

Apart from government institutions, the engagement of the UN Volunteers in earthquake response efforts helped strengthen CBOs as grassroots organizations. They helped augment the institutional capacities of CBOs by providing guidance in the area of coordination and improvement of internal systems through, among others, the establishment of financial and administrative processes and the creation of forms and templates. As the UN Volunteers facilitated meetings, trainings and orientation sessions for the CBOs, these grassroots organizations gained a direct experience of how such activities were undertaken. "CBOs are now capable of organizing the meetings and sharing experiences with other CBOs. We are able to learn from the mistakes of others," said Shere Tamang, treasurer of the CBDRMC in Haibung.

Accountability and transparency are important principles which serve to ensure that resources are spent judiciously and that critical services are able to reach the people for whom such services are intended. The UN Volunteers regularly monitored CBOs under the MCG scheme to ensure that these principles were duly applied in project implementation. Januka Tamang, chair of the CBDRMC in Dahapokhari, said that the CBDRMC already started to adopt the practice of carrying out regular community hearings where project finances (e.g. expenditures and balance, status of funds) were discussed, adding that every CBO office improved its transparency efforts by setting up a notice board which outlined project activities, location, allocated budget and beneficiaries. The guidance provided by the UN Volunteers to the CBOs in the use of accountability tools such as community hearings – which in effect served as a "social audit" of MCG activities –

contributed in raising governance standards and accountability and transparency measures at the grassroots level.

Shere Tamang further said that once he had a misunderstanding with a senior colleague regarding procurement. He wanted to follow the guidelines explained by the UN Volunteers while the senior colleague suggested that the goods be procured directly because the purchase was highly urgent. In that particular situation, he sought the assistance of the UN Volunteers to resolve the matter, saying that he was confident to insist on complying with the guidelines in the presence of the UN Volunteers.

**The guidance provided by the UN Volunteers to the CBOs in the use of accountability tools such as community hearings – which in effect served as a “social audit” of MCG activities – contributed in raising governance standards and accountability and transparency measures at the grassroots level.**

## IN FOCUS

# “I talked about volunteerism and the important role it plays in bringing change to a community in a humanitarian situation.”

Prakash Sharma, UN Volunteer

## *Sharing volunteer stories with the world*

Prior to joining UNV, Prakash Sharma used to work as a consultant making engineering designs for different types of buildings. He had also worked as a site engineer for one and a half years constructing community health posts. But soon after the earthquake, Prakash came across an announcement on Facebook from a former professor looking for civil engineers and architects who could serve as UN Volunteers. Driven by his desire to be of help in that time of crisis, he wasted no time and sent his application immediately.

In May 2016, one year after the earthquake, Prakash attended the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey where he shared his story as a UN volunteer. “My stint at UNV yielded an opportunity to take part in this global summit. I spoke as a panelist in a side event on ‘Volunteers as First Responders,’” he says. “I talked about volunteerism and the important role it plays in bringing change to a community in a humanitarian situation.” Prakash also had the chance to meet other volunteers helping out in humanitarian operations in other countries.

Upon joining UNV, Prakash was assigned to Irkhu in Sindhupalchowk district where he worked with fellow UN Volunteers in coordinating demolition and debris management activities. After a tiring five-hour drive to the mission base in Sindhupalchowk, what Prakash and his companions found was a camp with no more than a tin shed. The weather was hot and there was no water supply nor a toilet of their own. Furthermore, the group had to share a room, without any proper mattress, with 12 other people.

Similarly tough conditions, however, could be seen all around them. Aware of the need to set up their dwellings quickly so they could begin to work, they covered the rough floor with plastic sheets and a layer of tarpaulin. An improvised toilet was built by the group by digging a pit and surrounding it with a four-legged metal frame that used tarpaulin as the substitute for a

wall. Using a pick-up truck, they transported drinking water from a stream about three kilometers away from their camp.

At the demolition site, the main responsibility of Prakash was to ensure that safety standards were being followed at all times to prevent accidents from happening during such hazardous activity. At first, people seemed hesitant to demolish their houses but he persuaded them by explaining that these structures posed a physical risk to human life as well as to their cattle. “The cash-for-work scheme helped the local people clear away these life-threatening structures. Their enthusiasm and positive outlook motivated me as I faced the daily rigors of my job,” he explains.

Prakash takes pride in the fact that he successfully led his team in safely demolishing structures with no casualties involved. In addition, he assisted house owners to salvage as much material as possible so that it could be recycled for use in building their new houses.





Cash-for-work participants demolish the Nuwakot District Hospital which was among the public facilities destroyed by the earthquake. (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2015)

## MOBILIZATION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF DISTRAUGHT COMMUNITIES

The UN Volunteers provided much-needed support that helped the most affected people get back on their feet. The contribution of the UN Volunteers in terms of organizing distraught communities, augmenting local knowledge and introducing modern techniques and processes was clearly evident.

By rallying people from the community to work towards a common objective, the UN Volunteers in effect created opportunities for these people to participate in a collective undertaking. “Bringing together people from the community, including the poor and marginalized, was a remarkable initiative of the UN Volunteers and a memorable experience for us,” said Ram Prasad Rimal, headmaster at the Batuk Bhairab Primary School.

Through the formation of brigades supervised by the UN Volunteers, the tremendous work that had to be done was performed systematically and efficiently. “The community people took a long time to clear the rubble from their houses but they were able to finish cleaning up the local school within a few days,” recalled Dev Kumari B.K., a resident of Bidur and coordinator

of the Citizen Awareness Center (CAC) in her locality, explaining that this became possible only after the brigades had been formed and the community had been organized as one.

Beyond the scope of their official duties, the UN Volunteers worked hard to boost the morale of people from the community and rekindled hope especially among those who lost family members and homes to the earthquake.

According to Chaudamani Parajuli, VDC secretary in Irkhu, it was difficult to convince the people to participate, particularly those who were still in shock. He recounted that in the beginning the UN Volunteers had some difficulty winning the trust of the community, but with their constant efforts, the people started to listen to them and agreed to participate in the cash-for-work scheme. The role of the UN Volunteers in regenerating hope in the wake of a tremendous calamity was well appreciated by the community.

Through the implementation of various initiatives under the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management

## **Beyond the scope of their official duties, the UN Volunteers worked hard to boost the morale of people from the community and rekindled hope especially among those who lost family members and homes to the earthquake.**

Project and CDRMP, the UN Volunteers transferred important knowledge and skills to the local community drawing from the knowledge base of these UNDP projects and from their own personal expertise in engineering, agriculture, forestry and accounting. Ramchandra Migar, a cash-for-work participant in Aagaputar, said that he and his fellow workers gained knowledge on how to use different types of tools and equipment, how to demolish structures following the top-to-bottom approach and how to cordon off an area being demolished.

Administered by the UN Volunteers, the utilization of the UNDP-Microsoft software application in the cash-for-work scheme also enabled people from the community to experience and harness a new technology as they worked together to restore normal conditions in their areas.

Under CDRMP, the UN Volunteers maintained regular contact from the very start with beneficiaries of CBOs under the MCG scheme and provided technical and logistical support to MCG activities. Working with the UN

Volunteers, the CBOs involved people from the community from the early stages of the project in order to build local ownership. The community was provided with trainings and mobilized in every activity not only as beneficiaries but as decision-makers. This helped people from the community understand every step of the project cycle which included needs assessment, verification, procurement, implementation and monitoring.



CDRMP supports the construction of irrigation facilities in Sindhupalchowk. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

## INCREASED COORDINATION AMONG KEY PLAYERS RESPONDING TO THE EARTHQUAKE

The UN Volunteers built rapport with key players responding to the earthquake to foster increased coordination and help encourage local ownership and minimize duplication. They nurtured close working relationships with the DDC, VDC, municipalities, school management committees, health post managers and WCF in the various project sites where they worked.

According to Ram Krishna Rajbhandari, an official of the Nuwakot DDC and DDRRC, many other organizations were implementing debris clearance and cash-for-work schemes in his district, but he was more aware of the UNDP project because funds were channeled by UNDP and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MOFALD), the government partner of UNDP at the central level, to the DDC and then to particular VDCs where the cash-for-work scheme was being implemented. He opined that the presence of the UN Volunteers helped ensure efficient and smooth project implementation because it was easy for the DDC to regularly coordinate with them.

Tight and regular coordination with the DDC, VDC and municipalities was critical as these were the lead local bodies. Planned activities were reviewed and approved by the VDC chair and coordinated with the DDC. The cash-for-work participants were paid wages based on fixed rates determined by the DDC and in accordance with the cash-for-work guidelines set by MOFALD. Upon completion of demolition and debris management tasks, workers were paid in cash in the presence of the UN Volunteers and the VDC secretary in order to ensure transparency.

Similarly, the UN Volunteers promoted closer coordination between CBOs and line agencies such as the District Livestock Services Office (DLSO) and the District Agriculture Development Office (DADO). Whenever CBOs encountered problems regarding vegetable farming or animal diseases, the concerned technical staff from the line agencies came to assist the CBO in resolving the issue. The UN Volunteers also tapped technical staff from the line agencies as resource persons during trainings, thereby facilitating greater interaction and coordination between these line agencies and the CBOs.

Januka Tamang, chair of the CBDRMC in Dahapokhari, said that the committee did not implement CDRMP activities before and thus did not have close links with the VDC and line agencies. The committee did not have a good understanding of the guidelines on procurement and finance because it did not manage project funds. But the situation changed when it became an implementer of the programme's activities because funds were directly channeled through it. The UN Volunteers oriented CBDRMC staff and provided regular coaching on procurement and finance guidelines so fund flow mechanisms became more transparent. He said that when CBDRMC staff had problems, they would schedule meetings to coordinate and raise their issues directly with the concerned local bodies and line agencies in order to seek a solution. Furthermore, he said that they would often coordinate with other CBOs in order to share their difficulties and learnings related to project processes.



Rosemary Kalapurakal, UNV deputy executive coordinator, is welcomed by UN Volunteer civil engineers in Irkhu village in Sindhupalchowk. (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2015)



A joint UNV-UNDP monitoring team undertakes a field visit to the humanitarian hub in Chautara municipality in Sindhupalchowk. The team is led by UNV deputy executive coordinator Rosemary Kalapurakal (second from left) and UNDP country director Renaud Meyer (third from right). (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2015)

## ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF WOMEN

In Nepal, gender is integrated into key legislation such as the civil service law which prescribes that at least 33 percent of vacant government positions should be occupied by women. This provision has sometimes been interpreted by development actors in the country as the minimum requirement for women participation in all development interventions. In the context of natural disasters, the application of gender principles in project implementation is necessary in order to create equitable opportunities for both women and men to access important services and to take part and have a voice in recovery processes.

In the cash-for-work scheme, it was seen that the participation of women was considerably high. Following UNDP standards, the UN Volunteers gave priority to women interested to enlist as cash-for-work participants. Out of the 4,324 workers who took part in the demolition and debris management

operations, 1,714 or 40 percent were women. Due to the labor-intensive and risky nature of demolishing buildings, most of the women participated instead in clearing the rubble in the earthquake-affected sites.

According to Dev Kumari B.K., a resident of Bidur, she and her female neighbors were asked if they wanted to participate in clearing the rubble in local schools. They decided to refuse the invitation at first but due to the encouragement and insistence of the UN Volunteers, they later changed their minds. "We realized we should earn money for ourselves rather than just merely depend on our husbands," she said. The cash-for-work scheme was an eye-opening experience for the women in the community as it showed them that women ought to get involved and take action in order to recover from the earthquake.

As a result of their involvement in the cash-for-work scheme, women became self-reliant to a certain extent and were able to build self-confidence. The female cash-for-work participants used their earnings to purchase goats and chicks, reopen small businesses (e.g. tea shop) disrupted by the earthquake, purchase ornaments and buy daily meals for their families, among others. Madhav Raj Ghimire, VDC secretary in Kunchowk, expressed that both men and women worked conscientiously but the women seemed to make wiser use of their earnings. "Some of the male workers were inclined to use their wages to buy alcohol," he observed.

Thirteen of the 83 UN Volunteers who served as engineers in the demolition and debris management operations of UNDP were women. The female volunteers were active in the performance of their tasks as much as their male counterparts but it must be noted that in the beginning they were treated differently by people from the community. The people doubted the work performed by the female UN Volunteers thinking it might not be perfect or inferior to the work done by the male UN volunteers. Sometimes the cash-for-work participants did not obey the instructions of the female UN Volunteers or intentionally did not perform well the work assigned by them. Over time, however, when the community saw the dedication and good quality of the work performed by the female UN Volunteers, attitudes in the community changed and people began to appreciate their efforts.

In CDRMP activities, the UN Volunteers made a special and deliberate effort to inform women about community-level meetings and encouraged them to attend. During trainings, women were motivated by the

UN Volunteers to express their views and to take part in the discussions and in decision-making. As prescribed by UNDP, at least 40 percent of participants in trainings and meetings under CDRMP were women.

By providing guidance and advice to the CBOs, the UN Volunteers likewise ensured that women held key positions in the CBDRMC and other local groups with which the UN Volunteers worked. In the implementation of CDRMP activities, the UN Volunteers provided technical and project management support to women networks and contributed to the capacity development of such groups.



UN Volunteers who served as engineers in the demolition and debris management operations of UNDP were women.



### A mother rising to the challenge

Dev Kumari B.K., a mother of two daughters, lives in a rural part of Bidur municipality in Nuwakot district with her husband. She is passionate about social work and is the coordinator of the Community Awareness Center in her locality, apart from being involved in the Ward Citizen Forum. Her active participation in community activities fulfills her desire to help other people in need. When the earthquake struck and she learned about the demolition and debris management project of UNDP and UNV, she saw it as an opportunity to take part in reviving her community.

“UN Volunteers came all the way from far-away places to help us so I thought we should also act and help ourselves. We did not just want to be beneficiaries but also helpers,” she says. The work performed by Dev and her

neighbors together with the UN Volunteers restored a local school which had been closed for many days due to the rubble lying around in its premises.

“Cash-for-work taught our community how to join hands and work together towards a common goal,” she shares. Using the money she earned as a cash-for-work participant, Dev decided to buy a goat for her family. “I made some earnings but I was also able to help my community,” she adds.

**“UN Volunteers came all the way from far-away places to help us so I thought we should also act and help ourselves. We did not just want to be beneficiaries but also helpers.”**

Dev Kumari B.K., cash-for-work participant

# Women engineers: breaking professional stereotypes

## IN FOCUS

Anima Dhakal is a 25-year-old civil engineer who served as a UN Youth Volunteer in Karthali, Sindhupalchowk immediately after the earthquake. "Engineering is for boys while girls are supposed to study management and work in banks," she recalls her uncle as saying when she was still a student asking for career advice years ago.

Anima used to work as a site engineer for a water supply improvement project in Kathmandu Valley. When the earthquake hit Nepal, she was having a meeting with her teammates and was terrified as they began to feel the ground shaking and saw a nearby building collapse. The days that followed were even worse as news of people's deaths, landslides and destroyed houses came, making her realize the extent of the damage. Anima felt the urge to help but she could not find the means to do so at first.

Anima then started working as a volunteer in the Nepal Engineering Association where she used her skills to assess damaged buildings in the Kathmandu Valley. While doing her work, she realized that the buildings she inspected were aesthetically sound but structurally weak to withstand earthquakes. People did not understand what good construction meant, and the grave consequences that substandard construction materials could bring.

In May 2015, Anima decided to join UNV and was deployed to Karthali. Her parents were initially hesitant to let her go as her place of assignment was among those severely damaged by the calamity. As she was travelling from Kathmandu to Karthali, she saw landslide sites along the way and hundreds of buildings either partially damaged or completely destroyed. Because news of powerful aftershocks was prevalent

at the time, Anima was unsurprisingly afraid but, motivated by her desire to help the earthquake victims, she continued her journey just the same.

Upon arriving in Karthali, Anima could not find a single house left standing. People, meanwhile, were in a state of shock and were emotionally vulnerable. Born and raised in the city, she herself needed to adjust and put up with difficult living conditions and the very basic facilities available in the place where she stayed.

Anima was one of the UN Volunteers with engineering know-how who organized the demolition and debris management operations of UNDP in different earthquake-affected areas. She took part in assessing damaged structures and in demolishing buildings that could no longer be salvaged and were thus unfit for habitation.

"The personal satisfaction you obtain when an old woman thanks you for your work, or when you witness small children become excited to return to school, is inexplicable and priceless. Serving as a volunteer after the earthquake was a tough experience but it was worth all the hard work. I consider the experience I gained from helping people after the earthquake one of the best in my life," admits Anima, who adds that she feels proud to have been a UN Volunteer and will continue to do volunteer work in the future.



**"I consider the experience I gained from helping people after the earthquake one of the best in my life."**

Anima Dhakal, UN Volunteer

## PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEERISM AMONG LOCAL PEOPLE AND DECISION-MAKERS

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As in many societies around the world, volunteerism is a social value and practice in Nepal. Within the organizational structure of the government, it is the National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS) that is mandated to promote volunteerism while many other organizations, both public and private, work with volunteers around the country in many different fields.

The participation of the UN Volunteers in earthquake response efforts served to uphold and reinforce the social value of volunteerism in areas where the two UNDP projects were implemented. Each UN Volunteer was paired with two local volunteers selected by local bodies to take part in conducting damage assessments and organizing cash-for-work activities. On the other hand, the UN Volunteers under CDRMP facilitated the selection of local volunteers who served as social mobilizers and who supported the CBOs, although this initiative was still in its early stages.

Witnessing the work performed by the UN Volunteers and local volunteers to revive the community, people became motivated to support one another and to volunteer as well. Women who had lost their husbands to the earthquake and could not enlist in the cash-for-work scheme decided instead to do their part by volunteering to bring lunch and water for the UN Volunteers.

In one of the FGDs, a cash-for-work participant said that he was amazed that the UN Volunteers came to help despite the fact that they were from other communities.

As he saw the UN Volunteers work late into the night in order to help earthquake victims like him, he expressed his desire to volunteer as well in the future for the betterment of his community and fellow residents. "The UN Volunteers had no relationship with us whatsoever and yet they came to help our community. Witnessing the dedication of the UN Volunteers changed my perspectives. I would like to lend a hand to other people in need just as the UN Volunteers did," said Santa Tamang, a cash-for-work participant in Irkhu.

Many of the UN Volunteers, on the other hand, expressed during the FGDs that it was their first time to serve as volunteers in a disaster, explaining that they gained personal fulfillment from this learning experience. They expressed interest in volunteering in future disasters and in sharing their experiences to motivate other people to volunteer. "Serving as a UN Volunteer after the earthquake gave me the chance to help people recover from a traumatizing incident. Because of this experience, I now have a keen interest to volunteer again and assist people going through equally traumatizing and difficult times," said Amrit Adhikari, one of the UN Volunteers who participated in demolition and debris management activities.

**Witnessing the work performed by the UN Volunteers and local volunteers to revive the community, people became motivated to support one another and to volunteer as well. Women who had lost their husbands to the earthquake and could not enlist in the cash-for-work scheme decided instead to do their part by volunteering to bring lunch and water for the UN Volunteers.**



A project briefing is held by UN Volunteers for UN deputy secretary-general Jan Eliasson in Irkhu village in Sindhupalchowk. (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2016)

Aside from reinforcing the value of volunteerism among people from the community, it was seen that the presence of the UN Volunteers in the two UNDP projects and the visibility they created helped to advance volunteerism in the thinking of key decision-makers in government.

Kanchan Raj Pandey, senior agriculture economist at the Department of Agriculture (DOA), recommended that every district in Nepal ought to have a roster of local volunteers who can be mobilized not only to support disaster-related initiatives but also development projects in general.

Meanwhile, Babu Ram Bhandari, undersecretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), stated that the government should form search and rescue and rapid assessment teams composed of local volunteers in coordination with

volunteer organizations. He said that the UN Volunteers can contribute to the formation of these teams given that they already acquired the requisite knowledge and skills when they served in response efforts after the 2015 Nepal earthquake.

“In the earthquake response, the importance of volunteers and what they can accomplish as a team were clearly seen. The support and leadership of government is vital if such volunteer efforts are to be scaled up,” said Pragma Bashyal, programme analyst at UNDP.

## CREATION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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While the UN Volunteers were recruited under different contract modalities (i.e. regular UN Volunteer, youth UN Volunteer), it is important to note that majority of them (i.e. 91 out of 107) were young Nepalese whose ages ranged from 23 to 29. The adoption of volunteerism as one of the core strategies in the earthquake response efforts of UNDP resulted in the creation of a valuable opportunity for the youth sector to participate in national affairs and to contribute their skills and knowledge at a crucial time in their country's history.

At the same time, the adoption of volunteerism as a project approach generated an opportunity for local bodies to gain increased experience in collaborating with the youth sector and to harness this segment of their constituency towards recovery from the earthquake.

The UN Volunteers were very dedicated to their mission as they left their homes to work in places where there was hardly food to eat or water to drink. "The courage of these young UN Volunteers was extremely admirable," remarked Chaudamani Parajuli, VDC secretary in Irkhu.

While primarily the UN Volunteers shared their time and skills to help earthquake-affected families, in return they also obtained new knowledge and broadened their experience by serving under the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project and CDRMP.

The UN Volunteers were given the opportunity to undergo various trainings organized by UNDP and its partners and worked closely with its national and international experts. This enabled the UN Volunteers to acquire new skills and perspectives and to further their personal development as young people.

In the FGDs, the UN Volunteers expressed that before being on assignment in the earthquake-affected sites, their personal belief was that only the police and the army had the ability to take action and the obligation to help people in the aftermath of a disaster. However, their experience as UN Volunteers changed such a perception as this made them understand that young people could also be mobilized to facilitate disaster response efforts and that they had the moral duty to serve the community especially in extremely difficult times. "Young people are valuable to this country. They can deliver well if they are tapped in times of disasters and if given the opportunity," said Tez Bahadur Chand, one of the UN Volunteers under the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project.

**The adoption of volunteerism as a project approach generated an opportunity for local bodies to gain increased experience in collaborating with the youth sector and to harness this segment of their constituency towards recovery from the earthquake.**

## CHAPTER 4

# CONCLUSION

The valuable work undertaken by the UN Volunteers in the aftermath of the earthquake helped alleviate the situation of the affected communities and demonstrated what the volunteer sector can possibly accomplish if such efforts are expanded and implemented on a larger scale in the future. The UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project and CDRMP, under the framework of which the UN Volunteers provided services, were widely appreciated by local stakeholders in the project sites. Benefitting from the guidance and resources of UNDP while utilizing their own skills and knowledge, the UN Volunteers facilitated post-earthquake interventions which led to the safe demolition of damaged structures, clearance and recycling of rubble, strengthening of disaster risk management at the local level, and provision of emergency income and livelihood opportunities to the earthquake-affected people.

## **The UN Volunteers provided various forms of capacity development to people from the community and brought new skills, knowledge, practices and technologies to the earthquake-affected sites. The UN Volunteers provided training, coaching and daily guidance as the community went through a hands-on experience of post-disaster activities.**

Mostly engineers by profession, the UN Volunteers were a vital and skilled human resource positioned at the local level to support demolition and debris management operations. Apart from the recruitment and administrative management of the UN Volunteers, UNV ensured the selection of qualified UN Volunteers in order to give technical assistance where it was needed the most. The UN Volunteers implemented safety measures in order to avoid further fatalities that might occur during hazardous operations. Together with the local volunteers, the UN Volunteers applied the theoretical knowledge gained from the UNDP international experts on demolition and adapted such knowledge to the local context, contributing to an effective response to the earthquake.

The UN Volunteers were able to catalyze widespread social mobilization and participation as they engaged people from the community in the demolition of public and private structures. The enthusiasm of the UN Volunteers who epitomized in the project sites the spirit of volunteerism motivated the earthquake victims who were in great distress and consequently inspired these people to unite in order to help restore the community. The UN Volunteers managed to establish harmony and social cohesion by mobilizing earthquake-affected people towards a common goal. The cash-for-work scheme created a sense of community by encouraging people to help demolish each other's damaged houses and to properly collect and dispose of the debris.

The UN Volunteers contributed to the resumption of service delivery at the grassroots level by mobilizing the community to clear the rubble in schools, health posts and other key local facilities. The reopening of schools provided children with an environment where they could share their feelings and cope better with the trauma brought about by the experience of

the disaster. Through the efforts of the UN Volunteers and the community, these facilities were reopened and enabled people to avail themselves of important services which made them feel that their locality was returning to normal life. Given that many government facilities and staff directly suffered the impact of the disaster, the work performed by the UN Volunteers addressed the need to support different local bodies at the district, municipality and village levels in implementing earthquake response efforts and in delivering services to the community.

The UN Volunteers led the assessment of 4,060 structures and demolition of 3,669 public and private buildings and supervised 4,324 cash-for-work participants. The short-term employment of people from the community under the cash-for-work scheme served as an economic lifeline to the earthquake victims including women and marginalized sectors such as the Dalit minority group.

Under the leadership of the UN Volunteers, the different brigades of cash-for-work participants were able to clear 294,279.18 cubic meters of debris from the earthquake-affected sites. The UN Volunteers ensured the careful separation of wood, metal and other materials which could be recycled for the construction of new houses and which could therefore contribute to minimizing costs. Of the total volume of debris cleared, approximately 90 percent was recycled. This was made possible by the efforts of the UN Volunteers in ensuring the careful demolition of structures without destroying such materials. Individual homeowners appreciated the work of the UN Volunteers and labelled them as the "young demolition experts of Nepal."

**The UN Volunteers were able to catalyze widespread social mobilization and participation as they engaged people from the community in the demolition of public and private structures. The enthusiasm of the UN Volunteers who epitomized in the project sites the spirit of volunteerism motivated the earthquake victims who were in great distress and consequently inspired these people to unite in order to help restore the community.**

Knowledge-sharing is a potent means of instigating social transformation. The UN Volunteers provided various forms of capacity development to people from the community and brought new skills, knowledge, practices and technologies to the earthquake-affected sites. Their effort to emphasize and strictly enforce safety measures did not only allow the community to safely conduct demolition and debris management activities but it equipped the community with the skills necessary to ensure safety during any future emergency. From the highly technical aspects of demolition and debris management to simple hygiene practices such as regularly washing hands after handling debris, the UN Volunteers provided training, coaching and daily guidance as the community went through a hands-on experience of post-disaster activities.

The UN Volunteers facilitated the dissemination of important messages and knowledge about disaster mitigation which were accepted by the community because these initiatives involved local people and were implemented in coordination with local authorities. The UN Volunteers supported the implementation of advocacy campaigns on earthquake-resilient construction through a mobile van which travelled from community to community in order to disseminate information using visual means and to counsel homeowners on earthquake-resilient construction principles. As the main users, along with the cash-for-work participants, of the UNDP-Microsoft software application designed to digitalize demolition and debris management operations, the UN Volunteers served as an instrument in introducing this new technology to the community.

With professional expertise in agriculture, civil engineering, forestry and accounting, the UN Volunteers provided technical and project management support to CBOs under the MCG scheme of CDRMP and worked closely with these organizations in producing various forms of project documentation for the assessment of CDRMP staff. The assistance extended by the UN Volunteers in organizing meetings and technical trainings of the CBOs helped these organizations to properly document processes and decisions while the support of the UN Volunteers to CBDRMCs, forest user groups and District Forest Offices in bioengineering and plantation activities was instrumental in strengthening measures to prevent landslides.

The UN Volunteers helped ensure the social inclusion of women and contributed to the increased participation and access of women to various forms of recovery assistance. Employing standards set by UNDP with regard to the minimum required participation of women in project activities, the UN Volunteers deliberately reached out to women in the community to encourage them to enlist as cash-for-work participants. This strategy resulted in a 40 percent female participation rate in the cash-for-work scheme and helped women earn emergency income which was used to address important needs such as food, children's education and longer-term livelihood (e.g. purchase of livestock). Special effort was likewise made by the UN Volunteers to inform women about community meetings and trainings in order to motivate women to attend and participate.

The UN Volunteers, majority of whom were young people aged 23 to 29, served to advance the spirit of volunteerism among local stakeholders in the earthquake-affected sites. The work done by the UN Volunteers was well appreciated by the community and made people realize that they themselves should be prepared to volunteer if others such as the UN Volunteers could come from far-away places in order to help their community. The participation of the UN Volunteers in earthquake response efforts also served to fuel greater awareness and understanding among decision-makers in government of volunteerism and its ability to support the achievement of disaster risk management objectives.

Among the challenges encountered in implementation were: 1) certain difficulty in engaging people from the community in the cash-for-work scheme due to their initial reluctance to work at the wage rates determined by district authorities; 2) limited participation of stakeholders from the education sector – i.e. teachers, school administrators, students – in disaster risk management capacity-building activities; 3) interface of the UN Volunteers only with local bodies at the district, municipality and village levels but not with central government, restricting possibilities of influencing high-level policy and programming in government; 4) absence of Internet access in some project sites which prevented UN Volunteers from immediately synchronizing data in order to prevent data loss; and 5) difficult logistical conditions in the project sites (e.g. no water and toilet facilities, rudimentary lodging).

Good practices and innovative approaches were adopted in the implementation of activities and may be considered for replication in disaster risk management programmes in the future. These include the use of a mobile van to reach out to the community and carry out visually appealing awareness-raising campaigns on earthquake-resilient construction. The use of the mobile van to literally bring important technical information to the community was an effective strategy to educate affected homeowners living in remote areas.

The utilization of the UNDP-Microsoft software application in demolition and debris management operations served to increase efficiency in organizing and documenting cash-for-work activities as well as greater accuracy and transparency in payments made to cash-for-work participants. In conducting trainings on the updated standards of the NBC, the deliberate attempt to target community-based masons and engineers was an effective strategy that allowed UNDP and UNV to methodically promote “build back better” principles and influence the manner in which new houses were being constructed in the earthquake-affected sites. Finally, the engagement of local volunteers who worked in tandem with the UN Volunteers was a project strategy that functioned well and enabled the creation of effective relationships with people from the community and facilitated the implementation of activities in a highly stressful post-earthquake environment.

**Employing standards set by UNDP with regard to the minimum required participation of women in project activities, the UN Volunteers deliberately reached out to women in the community to encourage them to enlist as cash-for-work participants. This strategy resulted in a 40 percent female participation rate in the cash-for-work scheme and helped women earn emergency income.**

**CHAPTER 5**

**LESSONS LEARNED  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## ENGAGING THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

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The first emergency responders to the earthquake in Nepal were young local volunteers from diverse sections of the community. As in most other comparable disasters around the world, communities in Nepal responded to the disaster by assisting those directly affected. Networks of non-government organizations (NGO) and people from the community swiftly mobilized themselves to support search and rescue and relief efforts. This initiative included many volunteer groups, comprised primarily of young local volunteers and professionals in medical and engineering fields who actively treated the wounded, established temporary shelters, supplied food and tended to vital needs. The local volunteers displayed remarkable motivation to contribute to the community in the context of national pride and solidarity.

Volunteers are often the first ones to reach the scene of disasters and to provide immediate assistance to victims. As volunteers come from the affected community and its contiguous areas, they are in a better position to quickly respond as compared with other aid providers which do not benefit from the same geographical proximity and local knowledge. Moreover, many public and private organizations are often bound by pre-determined limitations such as finite project duration, scope and budget, which cause these organizations to leave the affected community once the objective of their interventions has been achieved. Thus, it is the volunteers and other groups intrinsic

to the community that are left behind to address residual needs and to seek solutions to longer-term challenges.

In order to build resilience at the grassroots level, capacities inherent to the community must be developed and strengthened in disaster risk management programmes. Volunteerism is one such capacity of the community that can be of use in the pursuit of resilience and longer-term development objectives. Volunteers are an important resource that should be tapped in a highly systematic and carefully planned fashion.

To nurture the ability of the community for self-help in times of crisis, local people, especially women, youth, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities, should be capacitated and organized as volunteers who can provide assistance when the need arises. As seen in the experience of the UNDP Demolition and Debris Management Project and CDRMP, when volunteers are meaningfully and strategically engaged by public and private organizations in disaster risk management programmes, their impact can be highly significant and far-reaching. The central government and local bodies at the district, municipality and village levels should establish linkages with volunteer groups.

Furthermore, it is often the case that local volunteers extensively participate in the humanitarian phase when highly urgent life-saving activities requiring the large-scale mobilization of people are implemented. However, the mobilization of local volunteers to support initiatives in other phases of the disaster risk management cycle remains relatively limited. The implementation model that deployed the UN Volunteers in demolition and debris management operations and CDRMP activities can further be expanded and scaled up to increase the engagement of volunteers in longer-term interventions within the disaster risk management cycle.

Harnessing their grassroots knowledge and close ties with the community, volunteers can contribute to disaster mitigation (e.g. reinforcement of river embankments with locally available materials, mangrove planting in coastal areas to mitigate risk of storm surges, awareness-raising activities to dispel superstitious beliefs surrounding disasters), disaster preparedness (e.g. implementation of earthquake and flood evacuation drills in the community, first aid training, maintenance of community warehouses for relief supplies), disaster recovery and rehabilitation (e.g. construction of community infrastructure such as schools, health posts and farm-to-market roads, mobilization of communities for livelihood initiatives), as well as disaster response (e.g. distribution of food and non-food items, medical missions, rapid needs assessments).

**As volunteers come from the affected community and its contiguous areas, they are in a better position to quickly respond as compared with other aid providers which do not benefit from the same geographical proximity and local knowledge.**

## DEEPENING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR

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It is important to document and disseminate information on the valuable achievements made by volunteers which are often poorly or unsystematically recorded given the ad hoc nature in which volunteer groups operate, or the informal manner in which individual volunteers are engaged by organizations, especially in a highly confused context such as that of natural disasters. Proper documentation of the work performed by the volunteer sector in crisis situations is key in culling lessons and experiences that can properly inform and strengthen disaster risk management programs in the future.

The social importance of the value of volunteerism and the contributions of the volunteer sector to society at large must be communicated to the public, as this would facilitate, when the need arises, the efficient mobilization of volunteers who will provide crucial services in future natural disasters and support disaster risk management programmes. Misconceptions of the public on volunteerism should likewise be clarified. In the FGDs with cash-for-work participants as well as some KIIs, several misconceptions surfaced such as: 1) volunteering is practiced only in NGOs and not in other types of organizations; 2) only youth who have no jobs and lack experience should volunteer; 3) male volunteers are better than women volunteers; 4) volunteers only work for brief periods of time and thus make no impact; and 5) volunteer assignments can only be done face-to-face (to the exclusion of online modes of volunteering).

In Nepal, there is limited collaboration between the volunteer sector and the media. However, in increasing public awareness of volunteerism, the role of media partners is particularly important especially in terms of facilitating the transmission of clear and consistent messages to as wide an audience as possible. Traditional media such as print, radio and television must be used together with social media. Where the target audience is disadvantaged populations living in remote places with highly limited or unreliable access to modern technology, the use of community radio in disseminating messages to the community must be promoted.

The proper recognition of the achievements made by volunteer groups and individual volunteers should also be ensured through the establishment of public recognition schemes (e.g. awards, incentives) in order to motivate people to volunteer and serve their community. Such recognition schemes should draw on the support of media partners. Good media coverage of the stories and achievements of volunteers can boost their morale and reinforce the social value of volunteerism among the public.



Different moments depicting the work of the UN Volunteers in the earthquake-affected sites are captured in a photo exhibit held to mark one year since the 2015 Nepal earthquake. (Ayush Karki/UNV Nepal, 2016)

**In order to build resilience at the grassroots level, capacities inherent to the community must be developed and strengthened in disaster risk management programmes. Volunteerism is one such capacity of the community that can be of use in the pursuit of resilience and longer-term development objectives. Volunteers are an important resource that should be tapped in a highly systematic and carefully planned fashion.**

## ESTABLISHING VOLUNTEER EXCHANGES FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

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In the aftermath of the earthquake, many international experts went to Nepal to work with national stakeholders and institutions and in the process transferred knowledge, skills and global perspectives. In contrast, relatively limited numbers of international volunteers had the same opportunity to visit Nepal in order to assimilate into the community and provide services after the catastrophe. This could largely be attributed to the overall lack of appropriate channels or schemes for international volunteers to help in a disaster-stricken country. A highly qualified individual wanting to volunteer abroad is likely to have difficulty finding a volunteer program or vacancy to apply for, unlike international experts who can connect with humanitarian organizations which often already have complex and tested schemes for the swift hiring of international experts in the event of a disaster.

Existing mechanisms that enable the exchange of international volunteers among developing countries should be strengthened and further developed while new ones should be created, in order to serve as a means for developing countries affected by natural disasters to share skills, practices and methodologies. Such mechanisms will serve to promote internationally the spirit of volunteerism and encourage south-south cooperation based on the social value of volunteerism. Moreover, such mechanisms will serve as a means to further enrich and develop the capacities of the volunteer corps of the participating countries, given that international volunteers serving abroad have the opportunity to broaden their horizons and gain new perspectives.

## IMPROVING THE GOVERNANCE ENVIRONMENT FOR VOLUNTEERISM

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Despite efforts in past years to put in place a government policy on volunteerism, to this day such efforts have been largely unsuccessful and there is still no volunteerism policy in Nepal. While a focal government agency for volunteerism (i.e. NDVS) is in place and implements volunteerism programmes around the country, the lack of a high-level and overarching policy instrument limits the prospects for long-term planning. The current lack of a clear policy direction on volunteerism also possibly impedes greater government budget allocation for the volunteer sector. A government policy on volunteerism which includes appropriate provisions for volunteer activities in the context of natural disasters must be put in place.

At the local level, there is no clear focal point or body that coordinates volunteer activities even if the deployment of volunteers in the aftermath of a calamity often takes place at this level. As earthquake response efforts were ongoing, there was no attempt to document where the volunteers were working and what specialist skills they had. For instance, after the completion of demolition and debris management operations, a record of the local volunteers who served in the project – which could be used to increase local-level preparedness to address future disasters – was not kept for posterity. A governing body which is integrated into government structures at the local level and has clearly defined responsibilities should be designated in order to coordinate the activities of the volunteer sector.

# ANNEX: LIST OF UN VOLUNTEERS

## DEMOLITION AND DEBRIS MANAGEMENT PROJECT

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### PROJECT ENGINEERS

Chirangivi Karki	Rajendra Gautam
Madhu Sigdel	Roshan Raj Bhatta
Pravin Kumar	Subash Adhikari
Dinesh Poudel	Suraj Devkota
Trilok Karki	Santosh Bhattarai
Sangeeta Shrestha	Santosh Thapa
Amrit Adhikari	Sadhana Tiwari
Hari Paudel	Sashi Thapa
Manish Upreti	Saugat Upreti
Suman Acharya	Hotrika Joshi
Luna Thapa	Manash Gadtaula
Parasmani Tripathi	Binod Adhikari
Suraj Bhandari	Saroj Parajuli
Saroj Khadka	Tej Binod Pandey
Ganesh Poudel	Badal Regmi
Prakash Sharma	Sudarshan Ghimire
Bibas Banstola	Dipak Shrestha
Pramod Pokharel	Kabindra Gautam
Suman Tiwari	Manish Pakhrin
Saugat Khadka	Madhukar Chaudhary
Niroj Maharjan	Darshan Babu Adhikari
Tez Bahadur Chand	Bibek Shrestha
Surya Pariyar	Sushil Pokhrel
Jigesh Prasad Chaudhary	Shekhar Raj Mote
Hishila Maharjan	Anima Dhakal
Himal Kafle	Dipesh Sijapati
Rakesh Katwal	Subodh Adhikari
Sonal Baskota	Sagar Khadka

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOGISTICS STAFF

Raju Lama  
Ram Neupane  
Rabi Giri  
Kamala Devi Chhantel  
Thapa  
Netra Kunwar  
Suresh Shrestha  
Deepti Rai



Government forces are mobilized to provide assistance to the community in clearing earthquake debris. (UNDP Nepal, 2015)

## COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

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### COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Rakesh Shah

Mendel Jarga Magar

Tilak Khand Thakuri

Nima Acharya Adhikari

Om Prakash Prasad Kalwar

Ashok Parajuli

Manju Thapa

Vijaya Kumar Chand

Santosh Kumar Karn

Pragati Manandhar

Afrin Khan

Subash Gyawali

Vicky Koirala

Hari Chandra Satyal

Aditya Raj Timilsina

Suresh Deuja

Arun Poudel



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