



Nepal Earthquake: Impression from Ground Zero

BIPSS Special Report

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Impressions from Ground Zero

This following text gives an insight of my short stay in Nepal and includes some thoughts that hopefully can be of help to for the recovery of Nepal.

Kathmandu, Nepal. On April the 27th, just two days after the [7.8 magnitude earthquake](#) (centred in Gorkha), I arrived at the airport. It was a hectic but not chaotic scene that met me at the airport, however the impressions were sweeping. Having met two Kathmandu residents on the plane, accompanying me to see what had happened to their hometown, they were kind enough to welcome me to their friend's house for the night, and so the Nepalese hospitality came true to its well-known reputation.

In a taxi from the airport we witnessed the many tents filled with Nepalese displaced that now had made camp in the middle section of the main road of Kathmandu, safely put from any constructions.

Having basically just put foot inside of the outer house railings in the dark, we all experienced one of the several after quakes that normally appear, that however successively grow apart and weaken in number after the first big one. Contrary to what the seismologists say, there were many rumours going around in Kathmandu saying that another, even bigger, earthquake was coming. Rumours like these, scared people and effected the rescue work. You can read more about earthquake myths [here](#).

This after quake- *event*, made me at least understand that an earthquake is a horrific experience, however, having it lasted for just 5- 6 seconds could only give me a sample of what approximately 46 seconds more and another 3 points on the Richter scale would feel like in comparison. The sound cannot be explained nor imagined.

Recommendations for now, (based on from what I could observe, read in the Kathmandu post and hear from the locals of Kathmandu during the four days of my stay), **are as follows:**

- The establishment of the foreign and Nepalese command centrals/ or subSOCCs (regional central for coordination) should make sure to spread the information of its locations. Information can be spread through the Kathmandu newspapers, Facebook and other social media. Just simple updates of ongoing activities from different groups and people can help to make this relief effort to become more efficient, eg so that everyone does not go to the same locations.

→ Communication is of course complicated in confused situations like this one in Nepal right now and information will flow:

1. Within every responding organization;
2. Between organizations;

3. From citizens to organizations; and
4. From organizations to citizens

- There is a huge need for tents in village areas especially since it can start raining any time soon. However, more permanent (up to 2 y) housing solutions can be built fast as well. There are examples of organizations gathering materials for such housings now in Nepal.
- The cluster of food and water organizations can, besides foreign aid supplies, buy supplies at the local stores in Kathmandu which are functioning great.
- Make sure to create a **communications central** as a part of the subSOCCs so that media can be coordinated and used in favour of the relief operation. The Swedish team could recently help a girl having noticed bruises on her face on a picture that a Spanish photographer had taken earlier. By contacting the photographer they got the name and location of this girl, the hospital suspected a severe concussion.
- **Utilize the strength of the Nepalese army** as it has been in charge of the ongoing operation from the start and have unique know-how. It is not unusual that coordination between the foreign community and the national remains ineffective or that the foreign community take over the show.
- **Make an effort to utilize all** the local people and NGOs and volunteers. (It is of course impossible to reach out to everyone but the attempt can be very valuable) There is a number of organisations and self-organized groups of people that can be utilized and given supplies to help out. Many of these groups continuously get intelligence from family and friends and converse with each other on Facebook. Some have vehicles and invaluable information of the situation. Eg; if landslides have disrupted a certain road or assessments of damages. For example, see [Nepal Earthquake Rescue and Relief Effort](#).
- **Educate!** Start reaching out with information that can kill ongoing earthquake myths and random rumours. Some Nepalese people that have helped with delivering clothes have even been stopped at the streets by others saying that their action is illegal.

If you are more interested the topic of you can contact the author or the BIPSS for more reports on the same subject:

Sample of Destruction

9. Olang (400 houses, 4 hrs on walk from Chanaute. difficult and steep route. all of the homes damaged, helicopters needed to supply materials there. Contact: Kalpana Devkota 9804233987. no govt help reached at all till now, Needed now tripaals and food)

10. Lapsibot (120 houses, 1 and half hrs on vehicle from Bhachhek. No medicals service required. Only few tripaals distributed by government. Food Around 100 tripaals still required. Contact: Jhamka Nath Dhital: 9843298395)

11. Gaankhu (75 houses, 300 population, 1 and half hour on vehicle. Nothing reached till now. Contact :Anil Thapa, 9803361911)

12. Nareshwor (1100 houses, 2 wards, 4000 population, 80% homes destroyed , relief materials reached but not enough, 500 tripaals needed, 10-15% people can afford on their own, food not enough. Lack of security to distribute materials. Contact: Anil Thapa , 9803361911)

13. Phinam (2 wards, 750 houses, 3500 population, 600 homes completely destroyed and not in the condition to stay, foods reached, Particularly Dhanubaasey village haven't received anything at all. Contact: Tika Bdr Gurung. 9805800093)