

## Assessment of the post-earthquake reconstruction process in Nepal

### Introduction

After the devastating earthquakes in 2015, Nepal was marred by a string of challenges on multiple fronts. While the international community and foreign governments provided Nepal with over pouring sympathy and financial aid, the Nepali leaders, bureaucrats and other crucial action-part citizens were ill-prepared for a catastrophe of such magnitude. This policy brief attempts to answer the efficacy of the vital international financial aid in the post disaster period. The author does so by outlining a few causes and consequences of the mismanagement that occurred during the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake. This policy brief also highlights the strategic overtures made by the neighboring countries. Disaster mismanagement was not only limited to Nepal, but it also exposed the weak disaster mechanism of the foremost regional body – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Disaster management is a pertinent issue as at present the world is recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. In November 2023, an earthquake of magnitude 6.4 hit Nepal’s Jajarkot and Rukum West districts which reflects the country’s perennial risk of seismicity. The Covid-19 pandemic and the 2015 and 2023 earthquakes have also questioned the future and prospective role of SAARC as an active regional body.

### Aftermath

In 2015, Nepal was rattled by two major earthquakes on 25<sup>th</sup> April and 12<sup>th</sup> May with subsequent aftershocks. As a result, approximately 9000 lives were lost, 22,000 people were injured and over half a million houses and temples were [destroyed](#). A month after the earthquake, under the auspices of the National Planning Commission (NPC) two volume of Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) reports were published. The first volume [\(A\)](#) focused on the key findings of the PDNA, while the second volume [\(B\)](#) was a sectoral report. The assessment was conducted with support from relevant ministries, members from the civil society, international and national experts, donor agencies and different countries. This was followed by a Post Disaster Reconstruction Framework [\(PDRF\)](#) prepared by the NRA in May 2016 to review and update the earthquake reconstruction process and demands.

In August 2015, the then incumbent and opposition parties agreed to set up a National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) that would expedite the reconstruction process with a mandate of five years. NRA’s tenure was extended [once](#) as per the [Article 3\(3\)](#) of the ‘Act Related to the Reconstruction of Earthquake Affected Structures’. After the mandated term of the NRA was completed only then the responsibility was [handed over to](#) the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2021. The NDRRMA is responsible for monitoring, facilitating and coordinating the earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation process that was handed over to the concerned ministries and government agencies. They will also look into the Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Project (EHRP) which is funded by the World Bank, to prepare an integrated financial report and auditing report of the expenditure incurred by the NRA (Fiscal Year - 2078/79).

International support poured in Nepal and the only international airport, Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) was deluged by humanitarian aid and foreign search-and-rescue teams. There was no paucity of international solidarity, sympathy, humanitarian aid, technical aid and pledged monetary aid. An International Conference on Nepal’s Reconstruction (ICNR) was [held](#) in June 2015. In the conference, dignitaries from foreign countries and development partners pledged [\\$4.1](#) billion in grants and loans to help Nepal’s reconstruction process. The [mentioned amount](#) also includes China’s previously pledged monetary aid of \$3.3 million. Among the international community, [India](#) pledged the highest, amounting to \$1.4 billion.

Despite its size, the foreign aid fell short of the reconstruction amount proposed by the PDNA in volume - A (estimated the cost of reconstruction was NPR 706 billion or its equivalent of US\$ 7 billion). The NRA in its

five-year plan on Post Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation [estimated](#) that \$9.38 billion was required for the rebuilding process in April 2016. What lacks nine years after the devastating earthquakes is accountability on part of some countries and development partners on their pledged financial commitments to Nepal. However, majority of the challenges in aftermath of earthquake were internal. On the domestic front, Nepal was handicapped to effectively manage the disaster response mechanism due to bureaucratic hurdles and the NRA being perpetually hamstrung by political overtures.

### **Altruism or diplomatic maneuvering**

It would be misleading to view the international humanitarian aid and relief and rescue efforts through a black and white lens. All the assistance provided by [Nepal's](#) immediate neighbors and the international community were neither solely altruistic nor entirely a conspicuous move to gain some diplomatic currency. Disaster diplomacy conflates altruism and soft power influence. The humanitarian crises witnessed by Nepal served as an opportunity for external forces to expand their political expediency in the country and perhaps in the region. Along with the humanitarian goodwill provided by various countries, globally, there existed a strategic component to their benignity. It is undeniable that humanitarian goodwill can pay political dividends down the road.

Both of Nepal's [neighbors](#) were swift to respond to the crises. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi who himself experienced the Bhuj earthquake in 2000 was able to effectively launch *Operation Maitri* to assist Nepal in rescue-and-relief efforts and provide relief materials. Within a couple of hours of the earthquake, under *Operation Maitri*, India [mobilized](#) one C-130J aircraft, two C-17 and one IL-76, airlifting 295 National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel, 46.5 tonnes of relief material and five sniffer dogs. The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) was carried out by the Indian Air Force (IAF), Indian Army and other specialized teams. These were just the initial response from India. To further allay Nepal's calamity, India continued their rescue and relief efforts for the next two months from the date of the first earthquake.

It was one of the largest disaster relief operations carried out by India and by far the largest Nepal received in the aftermath of the earthquake. India's response aligned with their role as the 'first responder' in the immediate neighborhood. India's efforts were appreciated by Nepal and also [commended](#) by top UN diplomats. However, India's positive disaster diplomacy was short-lived. Along with India's humanitarian aid, a bevy of media people descended on Kathmandu. The Indian news channels sensationalized India's response to the earthquake. Few news channel's reports appeared to portray that majority of the rescue and relief efforts were carried out by India and Nepali authorities' attempt to alleviate suffering of the affected Nepali populace were limited. The [irresponsible media coverage](#) of Indian audio-visual news channels led to resentment followed by criticism from the Nepali people.

The scale of China's immediate disaster response was smaller than that of India but with a muted HADR, unlike India. China steered clear of political pomposity and rhetoric but shrewdly assembled tents with Chinese logos in noticeably areas in-and-outside Kathmandu Valley. China also quickly [deployed](#) their first rescue team of 60 people (rescuers, medical experts and seismic experts). Subsequently, People's Liberation Army (PLA) [dispatched](#) 55 soldiers and another 45 were deployed a few days later. China also [announced](#) an emergency monetary relief of \$3.3 million. [Furthermore](#), China dispatched a 500-member road repairing brigade of the Chinese People's Armed Police along with 180 engineering machines. These were few prompt measures taken by China to assist Nepal in their disaster response. Additional relief materials and specialized forces were dispatched in the following months after the earthquake.

Historically, China's approach to Nepal was a [hands-off approach](#). The traditional bilateral relationship focused on China's security concerns in Nepal. After the 2015 earthquakes and the economic embargo at the Nepal-India border, China projected itself as a benign neighbor through its disaster response and investments in physical infrastructure projects in Nepal – Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Furthermore, in recent times, China

has become less restrained while raising [issues](#) and getting involved in Nepal’s internal political wranglings. China’s growing humanitarian response (more recently seen in the post Jajarkot earthquake and its vaccine diplomacy after the surge of covid-19) in Nepal is driven by the need to strengthen and deepen bilateral relations with Nepal.

The 2015 Nepal earthquake was one of the largest overseas disaster response deployed by China, largest ever in South Asia. There was also a geopolitical curve to China’s disaster relief and response. For example, the Taiwanese government attempted to send their 20-member tracking team to Nepal. The Taiwanese assistance was rejected by Nepal. There were copious [speculations](#) which floated in the media suggesting that China blocked the aid coming from Taiwan or Nepal did not want to offend their northern neighbor. [Ironically](#), Nepal accepted medical aid and equipment from the Taiwan International Health Action (IHA).

A host of civil society members, [NGOs/INGOs](#), religious groups from [India](#), [China](#) and other countries were involved in external relief and aid operations in Nepal. Such disaster efforts by non-state agencies can allay concerns at a socio-cultural level in the affected country. They are less likely to come under the critical geopolitical lens of optics. NGOs/INGOs are usually not plagued by any strained bilateral relationship with the host country.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Patanjali Yogpeeth were able to mobilize volunteers and distribute relief material through their local links. SEEDS India, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management, to name a few, also distributed relief materials. [Chinese foundations](#) like The One Foundation, the Amity Foundation, Red Cross Society of China, and China Foundation of Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) delivered relief material and deployed response teams to Nepal. Within hours after the earthquake dozens of Chinese NGOs were mobilized. While the said countries mobilized their disaster response to aid Nepal with alacrity, a coordinated regional disaster response was missing.

### **Regional Disaster Mechanism and role of SAARC**

South Asia (SA) is vulnerable to various non-traditional security threats such as floodings, Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF), forest fire, earthquakes and most recently the pandemic to name a few. These disasters transcend political boundaries and can affect multiple countries simultaneously. Nature and human induced disasters can be multifaceted and have a cascading impact across the region and the economy. The advent of Covid-19 can easily attest to the previous statement. The 2015 earthquake not only exposed Nepal’s lack of preparedness but also SAARC’s weak disaster response mechanism, the foremost regional body in SA which is being pushed towards irrelevance. The [response of SAARC](#) to Nepal’s earthquake was somewhat absent. Ironically, during the same period, a Nepali national was the chair of the regional body, however, no delegation from SAARC was included in the disaster response. A similar absence of SAARC is currently being witnessed after the 2023 earthquake in Jajarkot and West Rukum. Globally and regionally countries have resorted to bilateral disaster response which was seen missing in SAARC.

The [13th SAARC Summit](#) at Dhaka in November 2005 paved the way to set up the SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC). The SDMC aligned with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction succeeded the HFA in March 2015, just before the Nepal earthquakes. Accordingly, the SDMC was remodeled as per the international standard set by the Sendai Framework. The Sendai Framework espoused on ‘Build Back Better’ during the recovery period after any crisis strikes a country. The late Prime Minister, Sushil Koirala highlighted the ‘Build Back Better’ target in his message on the PDNA report.

The [49th session](#) of the SAARC Programming Committee decided to merge former centers like SAARC Meteorological Centre, SAARC Forestry Centre (SFC) and SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre with SDMC. However, at the 2014 SAARC summit in Kathmandu, leaders failed to build a consensus on a dedicated disaster management rapid action force which was agreed by all eight countries in 2011 ([Agreement on Rapid](#)

[Response to Natural Disaster](#)). Currently, SDMC functions without an operating force for field activities. A dedicated operating force would have appropriately reacted to the humanitarian crisis in Nepal.

Another agreement that had been perpetually [dormant](#) was the SAARC Food Security Reserve that was signed in Kathmandu in 1987. The agreement ensured stockpiling of food grains. The stockpiled food grains could be availed in times of crisis. Despite multiple disasters hitting the region, no transaction was conducted. To give the initiative a structure and some impetus, the agriculture/food ministers of South Asian countries met in Islamabad in 2006 and agreed to establish the SAARC Regional Food Bank. However, no transaction was conducted by Nepal after the earthquakes. The bank's [first](#) transaction was conducted only in May 2020 by the Food Corporation of Bhutan.

SDMC is involved in various capacity building programs and has outlined road maps on different aspects of disaster management. They coordinate with the regional focal points and various National Focal Points (NFP) in all eight countries. Nepal's SDMC focal point is the Ministry of Home Affairs. [Activities](#) of the SDMC are limited to the above-mentioned points and consultancy roles. SDMC functioning without an operating force, member country's preference to engage bilaterally with affected countries and the strained relations between India and Pakistan have raised the question of the efficacy of SDMC as well as SAARC as the preeminent regional body. If SAARC continues to be non-functional then other regional blocs like BBIN (Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) can consider taking the lead in regional cooperation and collaboration.

Nevertheless, efforts were made to collaborate between the SAARC countries after Covid-19 started surging worldwide. In [March 2020](#), all the heads of state of SAARC, except erstwhile PM Imran Khan of Pakistan met virtually. PM Modi had called on all SAARC countries to outline a strategy to tackle the ongoing global pandemic. [Countries](#) agreed to establish a Covid-19 Emergency Fund and donate funds to it. This impromptu meeting called on by PM Modi gave some hope to regional collaboration. But as expected, the regional covid-19 response program slowly dissipated due to regional political fault lines and country's preference to work in their silos and engage bilaterally.

### **Efficacy of international financial aid**

Four days after the earthquake, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) announced the "2015 UN Nepal Earthquake Flash Appeal". The Flash Appeal was formed in collaboration with UNOCHA, GoN and relevant humanitarian partner agencies. The [Flash Appeal](#) called for \$422 million to address the immediate aftermath and humanitarian crisis that Nepal witnessed, in the next three months. According to the UNOCHA [Financial Tracking System](#) (FTS), \$280.2 million has been funded through the Flash Appeal. The remaining requested amount of \$141 remains unmet.

At the ICNR held in June 2015, a [total](#) of 24 countries and donor agencies pledged monetary aid amounting to \$4.1 billion in grants and loans to rebuild and assist Nepal in the reconstruction process while the total committed amount is \$5.4 billion. As per the [Development Cooperation Report](#) (DCR) 2021/22 which is annually released by the Ministry of Finance (MOF), 30.6% of the committed amount has been disbursed in Nepal which amounts to \$1.7 billion. The process of disbursing the pledged amount has been moving at snail's pace even after nine years. The DCR report has mentioned "*If disbursement continue at the current rate of approximately 30.6% of commitments, it could take another 7-8 years to fulfil the total commitments made*".

The type of fundings Nepal received can be categorized into two – soft loans and grants. It can become difficult for Nepal to payback loans on projects that do not have any commercial and economic output. During the visit of China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in [March 2022](#) Nepali officials [expressed](#) their preference on grants over loans. However, regarding the post-earthquake financial assessment – more than half the money pledged by donor countries and agencies were loans. Only \$1.97 billion has been or is being provided to Nepal as a grant. The remaining \$2.14 billion has been pledged as soft loans. As mentioned above, the Post Disaster

Recovery Framework drawn by NRA estimated \$9.38 billion for the rebuilding process. Basic arithmetic reveals that even if all the pledged amount is released there still will be a shortfall of little more than \$5 billion.

India and China, among foreign governments, have been able to mobilize only a minuscule portion of their commitment funds to Nepal's disaster recovery. India had pledged the highest amount of \$1.4 billion wherein \$750 million came in the form of soft loan, \$250 as grant the remaining amount was diverted to other government projects. India has disbursed only 1.29% (\$ 13.9 million) of the committed amount. The figures of China are not impressive either as only 3.31% (\$ 25.4 million) of the committed amount has been disbursed in Nepal. China's total commitment summed up to \$766.9 million in the form of grant. Nepal and China agreed upon reconstructing 25 projects through their grants. At the moment, China has [completed](#) 12 projects and remaining 13 are in progress.

In the final quarterly report titled '[Rebuilding Nepal](#)' published by NRA, it states that more than 100 per cent of the international aid was mobilized and the actual pledged assistance to Nepal was not \$4.1 billion but \$3.21 billion. This attrition in the pledged amount stems from India's avowed pledge to Nepal of \$1.4 billion. A couple of factors contributed to the reduction in the slated amount. Firstly, \$400 million of the \$1.4 billion was not part of the reconstruction process, rather the same fund was used for other government related projects. Secondly, the loan of \$750 million was to be channelized through the Export Impot bank of India (Exim bank). But this fund came with some conditions. One of the conditions mandated that 65% of the construction material had to be from India. Other condition, only Indian construction companies and contractors were to be appointed. Finally, these funds had already been deposited into the government treasury of Nepal.

The catch here is that there were multiple small scale physical infrastructures like – heritage monuments, health posts, to name a few, that had to be rebuilt. For instance, Bhimsen Temple at Patan Durbar Square was to be built through Indian commitment, however due to hassles and delays, the temple was [reconstructed](#) through the money raised by the local people. Given the above-mentioned conditions set by India, no construction company in their right mind would construct small scale projects. As the mentioned funds were deposited in the government treasury, the Ministry of Finance and NRA charted out possible areas of work and realized only \$260 million could be used in Nepal out of \$750 million in loan. Adding \$260 million and the \$250 million in grant, only \$510 million could be used for earthquake reconstruction. Therefore, the remaining amount of \$890 million was used in other government projects not for earthquake reconstruction. Altogether \$3.21 billion was pledged amount and the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) mobilized additional \$754 million approximately (NPR 92 billion).

The delay in disbursing the committed funds in the first year (2015-16) after the earthquake was due to a combination of factors. The hindrance occurred because of political bickering and the sluggish functioning of the [NRA](#). In addition, there were frequent changes in the leadership of NRA. Disbursement was further [exacerbated](#) when Nepal's supply chain was obstructed by the Indian blockade. However, after nine years the disbursed amount remains low, and commitments on part of the donor countries and agencies are equivocal.

Nevertheless, India, China, UK's FCDO (erstwhile DFID), EU, Finland, Germany, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Japan, Asian Development Bank (ADB) to name a few have signed an agreement with GoN to release their committed funds. Others like Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Netherlands, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Turkey have not released a single penny of their pledged financial aid to Nepal. While in the past, Nepal [provided](#) humanitarian relief assistance to countries in the region. On the other hand, World bank has disbursed more than their pledged amount. Instead of signing a formal agreement, some countries [diverted](#) their financial aid to already established partner agencies or NGOs based in Nepal through direct payment. Some of the donors followed a [reimbursement model](#) wherein the affected government makes the expenditure from its own resources and later claims the spent amount from the donor.

The mode of disbursement of funds can broadly be divided into four categories in Nepal – cash, commodity, reimbursement and direct payment. There were two procedures that the international communities were

allowed to follow to channelize their funds into Nepal for earthquake reconstruction – on-treasury and off-treasury. The on-treasury funds were disbursed through the government system (cash and reimbursement model). The funds that are not channelized through the government treasury system are called off-treasury (commodity and direct payment). Although, the off-treasury funds were not channelized through the government agencies, there had to be an official consensus between NRA and the fund provider before implementing the project. Furthermore, NRA monitored the off-treasury projects (keeping a check on the standard and eligibility criteria) while the fund providers conducted the remaining tasks like procurement, hiring the consultants and contractors.

It may seem off-treasury funding is a way to bypass the government of Nepal as the funds are not transferred through the government treasury. But that is not the case. The [Development Cooperation Report](#) of FY-2015/16 defines off-treasury as “*Assistance not channeled through the Government treasury system. This include[s] “direct payment” and “commodity” aid mentioned in the Source Book and the amounts reflected in the “Statement of Technical and Other Assistance” Book*”. Off-treasury fundings are recorded in the Ministry of Finance database. Taking an example of India, the Indian embassy in Nepal [announced](#) \$150 million Indian-funded reconstruction of housing projects in Gorkha and Nuwakot. These financial details were reflected in the [Statement of Technical and Other Assistance](#) (FY-2021/22).

Foreign aid becomes a necessity during an extraordinary time like the humanitarian crises caused by the earthquake and for the development of crucial infrastructure projects like hydropower where Nepal lacks both the technical and financial capacity. But even during ordinary times Nepal has been dependent and spends much of its political capital to garner foreign aid. This dependency mentality of Nepal has obstructed decision-makers to conjure up the country’s own sound fiscal policy to generate a reliable revenue stream. To top it off, Nepal is marred by bad governance.

The international community [rightly](#) posits that Nepal has a poor track record in maintaining integrity and accountability wherein [corruption](#) is pervasive, hence impacting the implementation process. The legacy issue of poor governance in Nepal should not be glossed over and the major culprits being the decision makers of the country. There were no explicit or blatant examples of countries, donors and INGOs creating parallel plans or avoiding the official channel of providing the disaster funds through on-treasury and off-treasury modes. But due to Nepal’s bad governance, the international community showed proclivity to bypass the official modes of channeling funds. Although the international financial aid was well intended, it is imperative that coordination and coherence is reflected during disaster funding. Donor friendly [politicians](#) in Nepal were unhappy with donor agencies and the international community for not depositing financial assistance in the Prime Minister Disaster Relief Fund immediately after the earthquake.

Functioning in silos and in an ad-hoc manner hampers the reconstruction process which generally takes a couple of years to complete [unlike](#) response-relief (short term) and rehabilitation (mid-term). Rescue and relief are quick and immediate demands in the aftermath of the earthquake. It can cause mismanagement and incoherence between the international community and the government, given Nepal’s weak disaster mechanism. Had it been any other country with a systematic and coordinated disaster relief and rescue measure, the issue of mismanagement would have not occurred. But for the long-term reconstruction process the gap between the host government and the international community should be bridged for efficacy and transparency.

Fund management is a crucial part in any humanitarian crisis. Fragmented approaches to disaster relief can cause duplication and confusion. In [Gorkha district](#) alone there were 300 NGOs involved in disaster relief after the earthquake. For the purpose of transparency, the Nepal government launched the Aid Management Information System ([AMIS](#)) in 2019 replacing the predecessor – Aid Management Platform (AMP). This software is publicly available and puts the onus on the international community and development partners to report responsibly to the AMIS web-software. The disaster response from the international community and NGOs had a mixed response. The host country must assure that the funding procedure is conducive and clear

for the donor partners. Donor partners have strict reporting provisions, and it is imperative that the fund reaches the needy and is well-utilized.

Development Partner	Pledge	Commitment	Disbursements	Disbursement over Commitment
ADB	\$ 600.0M	\$ 1,821.6M	\$ 272.3M	14.95%
Australia	\$ 4.6M	-	\$ 4.8M	-
Austria	\$ 1.2M	-	-	-
Bangladesh	\$ 0.5M	-	-	-
Canada	\$ 10.5M	-	-	-
China	\$ 766.9M	\$ 766.9M	\$ 25.4M	3.31%
EU	\$ 117.5M	\$ 194.4M	\$ 65.0M	33.44%
Finland	\$ 2.2M	\$ 1.1M	\$ 0.4M	36.36%
Germany	\$ 33.6M	\$ 34.0M	\$ 12.7M	37.35%
IMF	\$ 50.0M	\$ 50.0M	-	-
India	\$ 1,400.0M	\$ 1,078.8M	\$ 13.9M	1.29%
Japan	\$ 260.0M	\$ 372.0M	\$ 247.1M	66.42%
Netherlands	\$ 26.0M	-	-	-
Norway	\$ 16.0M	\$ 6.2M	\$ 13.3M	214.52%
Pakistan	\$ 1.0M	-	-	-
Republic of Korea	\$ 10.0M	\$ 8.4M	\$ 12.7M	151.19%
Saudi Fund	\$ 30.0M	\$ 29.2M	\$ 19.7M	67.47%
Sri Lanka	\$ 2.5M	-	-	-
Sweden	\$ 10.0M	-	-	-
Switzerland	\$ 25.0M	\$ 7.5M	\$ 16.4M	218.67%
Turkey	\$ 2.0M	-	-	-
UK (DFID)	\$ 110.0M	\$ 165.5M	\$ 98.3M	59.40%
USA	\$ 130.0M	\$ 172.1M	\$ 60.5M	35.15%
WB	\$ 500.0M	\$ 704.0M	\$ 791.0M	112.36%

### Post-earthquake reconstruction pledges and commitments

*Source: Ministry of Finance, Development Cooperation Report 2021-22 (November 2023)*

### Way Forward

Nepal is a country that is prone to natural calamities and climate change induced disasters. The recent pandemic and the earthquakes in 2015 depicted Nepal's weak disaster response. This policy brief should also serve as a reminder for the Government of Nepal to not repeat the earlier mal-governance in the post disaster recovery process of the 2023 earthquake. Furthermore, given the past precedence – [India](#), China, among other development partners can also focus on the timely release of their recently pledged financial aid for the 2023 earthquake. Nepal's incapability to react adeptly to natural calamities compels Nepal to rely on the foreign

countries, donor agencies and policy banks for assistance. Given Nepal's vulnerability to disasters, the Government of Nepal should be capacitated to counter and pre-empt future challenges faced by the country in the aftermath of a disaster. Disaster policy framework for Nepal must consider the geopolitical realities, regional disaster mechanism, role of foreign governments, donor agencies and the host country.

First, both the host country and the international community viewed each other with suspicion and apprehension throughout the recovery and rehabilitation period. Hence, trust and communication between the two is crucial for a joint coordinated response to any catastrophe. The international community's distrust after the earthquake stemmed from Nepal's bureaucratic hassles, a weak and divided incumbent and opposition and the rumors regarding the [funding procedure](#). As mentioned above, a fragmented response causes duplications of disaster relief efforts, therefore, both parties should work together. Unlike the NRA, political parties must ensure that NDRRMA works effectively without becoming victim to the political whims as it can stymie the post disaster recovery process.

Second, internally Nepal must not only rely on external support during times of crisis. As the data above suggests only \$ 3.21 billion was pledged by the international communities. This is less than half the amount Nepal required as per NRA's estimate of \$9.38 billion. Remaining amount is drawn from the state coffers. Nepal has been ranked very poorly in global platforms like Transparency International. Nepal needs to work towards good governance and reduce bureaucratic hassles in country. With the new federal structure in place, disaster management is a concurrent responsibility/power between the three-tier government. Roles and task execution of each level of the government should be clearly defined to ease the process of disaster management.

Third, [ASEAN](#) Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is a legally binding instrument of the ASEAN region on disaster management and disaster response. The ASEAN Coordinating Centre of Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management ([AHA](#)) serves as the inter-government body that coordinates disaster management in the region. Furthermore, they have a designated [action force](#) called ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT). For financing, each ASEAN member state contributes \$30,000 annually. Additional source of funding is the voluntary ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief Fund. While ASEAN member states are setting higher goals, making effective standard operating procedures, and implementing capacity building programs, South-Asian countries struggle to maintain an undisturbed bilateral or multilateral relation. South Asia can draw a couple of lessons from AADMER.

Areas like natural induced disaster and non-traditional security threats should become top priority as the IPCC report has painted a bleak and morbid picture for the future of the region. Nepali leaders should realize that the country remains threatened by non-traditional security threats. A matter as serious as disaster management should become the topmost priority of the country when dealing with security threats. Political bickering hampered the effective performance of the designated reconstructing and rehabilitating body. A weak government during the earthquake made Nepal a lucrative land to conquer for foreign entities and donor agencies to establish their diplomatic footprint in the country. The pandemic, the 2015 and 2023 earthquakes, Sindhupalchok floods and landslides should serve as historical lessons to keep the country prepared for any unforeseeable disaster.