DEC Collective Learning Initiative

Introduction

Nepal was shocked by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake on 25th of April 2015 and then after seventeen days another 7.3 magnitude rocked the country, exacerbating the humanitarian situation and reinforcing an already chaotic situation . This resulted in the death of approximately 9,000 individuals, impacting 8.1 million people by causing widespread displacement and destruction of homes, infrastructure and services . Numerous actors were involved in the response and recovery from local communities, national NGOs, the Nepal Army and Police, Government of Nepal, Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, foreign militaries, and international NGOs. To meet the devastation of the two earthquakes, there was a massive response; however, there were also challenges to reach the most vulnerable and those most in need.

In the UK, the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) launched a national fundraising appeal for the Nepal Earthquake, which raised £87 million, including £5 million UK Government Aid Match. Of this amount, £55 million was donated directly to the DEC Secretariat for allocations to its 13 members charities responding with humanitarian assistance to the earthquake in Nepal. DEC funded operations started in April 2015 and will continue until the end of April 2018, covering the full range of relief, recovery and reconstruction activities.

Program overview

In the subsequent two years, extensive work was completed by the responding agencies, government bodies and earthquake-affected communities themselves. However, there have not been sufficient opportunities for collective learning for partners to join together, share and reflect on thematic successes and challenges faced during the earthquake response. On 14th November 2016, DEC contacted its involved in the Nepal Earthquake Response and introduced the Collective Initiative Fund. A consortium of seven DEC member agencies and Nepal affiliates (CARE, Oxfam, British Red Cross, Tearfund, Plan, World Vision and Christian Aid) joined together for this review and launched the Collective Learning Initiative. The top three themes were collectively chosen for the collective learning initiative.

An enumerator facilites 'Community Level Participatory Reflection Meeting' during field level learning event

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1 UNOCHA. 2015. https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/nepal-earthquake-humanitarian-snapshot-25-april-2015
2 D. Guha-Sapir, R. Below, Ph. Hoyois - EM-DAT: The CRED/OFDA International Disaster Database – www.emdat.
   be – Université Catholique de Louvain – Brussels – Belgium.

PROJECT GOAL
Earthquake recovery plans of aid agencies in Nepal are strengthened based on recommendations/action points from collective learning experiences

PROJECT DURATION
March – October, 2017

PROJECT AMOUNT:
GBP 18,789

COLLABORATING AGENCIES (study location)
British Red Cross (Bhaktapur)
CARE Nepal (Sindhupalchowk)
Christian Aid Nepal (Gorkha)
OXFAM Nepal (Dhading)
Plan Nepal (Dolakha)
Tearfund Nepal (Makawanpur)
World Vision International Nepal (Nuwakot)

Key study themes

1. To what extent have we ensured inclusion of the most vulnerable during beneficiary targeting and selection processes?
2. What have been the impacts of community participation and community ownership on programme quality, sustainability, and Build Back Better?
3. What have been the successful strategies in partnering with national actors and building up their capacity?

Key activities

Level	Key activity	Informants and sample strategy	Tools	Sample size	Aggregate (district level)
National	Agency Level KII	Purposive sample of staff profiles who have worked on EQ	Self-administered questionnaire	One per agency	I
	National Level Workshop	Purposive sample of agency staff, government officials, other relevant stakeholders.	Thematic discussions	n/a	n/a
District	Community Level 'Participatory Reflection Meeting'	Purposive selection of EQ affected HH men, women, youths, Child HH, disabled, Farmers from targeted community	Reflection meeting; structured questionnaire	One meeting in each targeted spot/VDC	Total 3 meeting per district
	Key informants Interview (with VDC level stakeholders)	Purposive sampling of chairperson of WCF/CAC, FCHV, ward chairperson, VDC Secretary, School Principal, Social Figure, Advising Committee, Local Leader	KII one-to-one; structured questionnaire	2 - 3 persons per VDC	At least 6 persons per district
	Key Informant Interview (with Implementing Agency)	Convenience sampling of partner organization (NGO that Agency had partnered with to implement earthquake related programmes at community level)	KII one-to-one; structured questionnaire	n/a	3 - 5 informants per district
	District Level Learning Workshop	Government representatives from DDC/DCC, DEO, DHO, DADO, DLSO, DWSSO, DWO etc. Also representatives of NGO Federation, media persons	River of Life	n/a	One for each district

Total reach

Total number of learning events organized: 108 (at district and national level)

District Level Activities:

- Total reach: 625 participants (target: 575) (Male: 63% Female: 37%)
- Community level participatory reflection meeting:
  Total reach: 412 (Male: 51%   Female: 49%)
  Age Range: 14 to 89
  Participation from disadvantage group: 52%

Findings

Selection Process followed:

- Selection criteria either predetermined by agencies or written in collaboration with village development committee (VDC)/ward citizen forum (WCF) and government, target numbers and activities also shared with VDC/WCF
- National actors/partnering organisations' staff select beneficiaries or WCF coordinators select people (this is then verified by implementing agency staff going house to house, and re-verified by agencies in some cases)
- Beneficiaries are met with
- Information is shared in meetings and/or posted publicly
- Feedback on the lists is sought, and lists are revised accordingly
- Final approval and enrolment of beneficiaries

Factors influencing the selection process:

- Political
- Poor information
- Geographical and physical barriers in attending meetings
- Errors (during name collection, data entry etc)
- Limited resources
- Documentation

Beneficiaries covered during response, recovery and rehabilitation phase:

- most affected by disaster (especially if death of breadwinner, or fully destroyed household and Red Card holder),
- economically poor
- marginalised (Dalit, Janjati, Chepang)
- single women Female Headed Household,
- differently abled peopled (especially with chronic illness),
- elderly alone or headed households,
- food insecure,
- child headed household,
- pregnant or lactating women

Top 3 most vulnerable groups identified:

- Economically poor
- Elderly and disabled
- Single women

❛ In order to make any programme a success, community people have a great role to play
- Nuwakot community

❛ Some of the ethnic groups have good economic status over others like Brahmin, Chhetri in some areas. Survey should be done and really affected identified to receive the benefits
– Dhading community

Best practice identified

Identified best practice	Field Level	National Level
Targeting		
Focus on poor, elderly, FHH, single women, severely damaged HH	X	X
Initial Selection		
Beneficiaries are well informed about the selection criteria and involved in the process of drawing up the lists through ground level meetings with the presence of the most vulnerable members	X	X
Beneficiaries should be selected through community meetings and not by heads from the community	X	X
Selection process & criteria to be followed transparently and as informed to community members	X	X
Verification		
Lists which are at the village level, are verified and validated by community members as well as external impartial agency staff		X
Physical verification (i.e. door to door) of the vulnerability of beneficiaries added to the list	X	X
Amendments & Feedback		
Flexibility in changing the lists based on community feedback including the incorporation of people for support if they had been initially excluded	X	X
Re-assessments of vulnerability at different stages of the programme		X
Modify feedback system depending on response or recovery (e.g hotline calls good in response, but FGD better in recovery)		X
Public hearing, event audits and FGDs are more successful and appropriate feedback mechanisms		X
Trouble-shooting		
Feedback mechanisms help adjust programme strategy and interventions according to community needs and priorities		X
Issues (such as political interference or negative attitudes to NGOs) to be raised and discussed in community meetings		X
Create task forces to deal with specific issues		X
Address feedback in collaboration with community and carry our corrective actions		X
If there are negative attitudes towards NGOs, or when tensions or miscommunication arises resolve this with repeated community visits and explanation to convince community		X
Political interference can be managed by bringing issues for discussion in community meetings.		X

Key Definitions Rephrased:

Several definitions previously used by partnering organisations had to be reformulated and tailored to the specific context in Nepal

Community Participation:
Refers to the active responsibility of people across whole programme life-cycle (assessment, selection, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) where they create a positive working environment, provide labour, protect the infrastructure or asset, share information, advocate for their needs and resolve disputes.
- *Community perspective*

Quality:
A quality programme has the benefits to the people at its core, emphasising a bottom-up approach with the direct, active, and empowering participation of everyone in the community alongside skilled professionals. It must be transparent, generating a sense of ownership and providing space for people to raise concerns, and must focus on long term results and improvements. It should bring income generating activities. - *VDC perspective*

Community Ownership:
Full understanding of the project and ability to direct changes, based on voluntary contributions by all members of a community - *Community perspective*

Sustainability:
A sustainable programme is one that is accepted by the community, increases their awareness of an issue, and its outcomes remain useful to the community for generations/long time. -*Community perspective*

❝ This disaster has helped us. Slowly, we are moving towards more prosperous and well off living conditions. This has increased our confidence inside out.''
— Sindhupalchowk community

❝ People have started income generating activities and they will continue it even after the phase out of the programme.
- Bhaktapur Community

<u>Successful partnering strategy includes:</u>

Collaborating agencies' view	Implementing partners' view
Benefit for all through shared vision and values	Experienced staff and established organizational policies
Strengthening and not weakening	Supportive behaviour
Clarity on the terms of the relationship and contributions	Joint consultations
Trust, transparency and mutual accountability	Regular and clear coordination and communication
Effective and efficient communication and coordination	Understanding and flexibility
	Good relationships with the local community and context

<u>Capacity Building includes:</u>
- GAP assessment
- Organizational development
- Relationships with stakeholders and intervention area
- Trainings and mentoring
- Implementation of plan

Suggested action points

Theme wise suggested Action Points are generated from field level and national level learning during six month's project period. Theme wise Action Points are suggested to strengthen the Earthquake recovery plans of aid agencies here in Nepal. The final report with suggested Action Points shall be disseminated to development agencies, media house and government stakeholders to meet the goal of DEC Collective Learning Initiative.

Theme 1:
- Agencies and partners to verify assumptions of vulnerability with communities and to mitigate political influence in selection - Community suggestion
- Agencies and partners to ensure better communication of information regarding meeting times and criteria - Community Suggestion
- The selection process can be improved if the organization goes from door to door to collect information. This would require the hiring of more enumerators to visit houses and conduct a need assessments or the mobilisation of vulnerable representatives to visit other household - National Suggestions

Theme 2:
- Agencies to provide more information on projects - including timing and resources - so that community members can increase their active participation - Community suggestion
- Agencies to ensure training programmes are of sufficient length to transfer knowledge - Community Suggestion
- Agencies to improve feedback mechanisms so that communities can influence programmes and have timely follow up of remedial actions - Finding from Sphere Standards analysis
- Agencies to better investigate and, as appropriate, acted upon complaints received about the assistance provided - Finding from Sphere Standards analysis
- Communities to continue mobilisation and gathering funds from individual households to maintain common goods - Community Suggestion
- Agencies to make contingency plan with communities for sustainability beyond funding period - Agency Suggestion
- Partners and agencies to gather feedback through social audits and public meetings to ensure transparency and accuracy of information - Community Suggestion

Theme 3:
- Partnerships to be more long term and about shared missions and values with equal respect between all organisations - National and Partner Suggestion
- Create a regularly updated roster of qualified national actors, through which international organisations can more quickly identify those who share the same mission, vision and objectives. This roster could include up to date reference checks for national organisations, and information on any history of fraudulence - National Suggestion
- Develop flexible and community friendly administrative policies and processes for implementation of emergency programme - National Suggestion