

Welcome to the second issue of **OPEN MIC NEPAL** bulletin. The Open Mic project captures rumours and perceptions on the ground to eliminate information gaps between the media, humanitarian agencies and local people. By providing local media and outreach workers with facts, Open Mic aims to create a better understanding of the needs of the earthquake-affected communities and to debunk rumours before they can do any harm.

RUMOURS



SIDDHIPUR, LALITPUR

"The ward officer said that the damaged houses can be demolished after taking their pictures. Nothing else, such as filling up a form, needs to be done."

CHARIKOT, DOLAKHA

"They say the government is going to demolish damaged houses and clear the debris but people are doing this on their own right now. They say the administration is going to demolish seven or eight houses but nothing has happened so far."

FACTS

A house owner has to file an application for demolition with the ward offices in municipalities or Village Development Committees (VDC). If possible, the house owner should provide a picture of the damaged house, but it is not mandatory.

The government sends a technical team to assess the house after receiving an application. Following the assessment, the house owner can now begin to demolish the house, but will have to pay for it out of her own pocket.

The Chief District Officer can authorise the demolition of a damaged building if the owner refuses to do so or cannot be contacted. However, the receipt will be sent to the house owner.

The house owner is responsible for paying for any damage caused by the demolition such as on neighbours' property.

In urban areas, people are advised not to start the demolition process on their own without technical inputs from engineers. The government can provide this assistance at a cost to the house owners.

Yadav Prasad Koirala
Chief District Officer
Lalitpur
9851227777

RUMOURS



● CHAUTARA, SINDHUPALCHOK

“A person died after a damaged house collapsed following a heavy rainfall.”

● CHARIKOT, DOLAKHA

“After the government and other organisations did not come forward to help with the demolition of the buildings damaged in the quake, a few house owners have started demolishing houses on their own. But because the house owners do not have safety measures in place, a person lost his life the other day.”

FACTS

There have been no deaths reported in Chautara, but there was a report of a damaged house collapsing on its own.

In Dolakha, a death was reported while workers were trying to retrieve items from inside a damaged building before the demolition. The local administration said that if the house owner had notified them beforehand, they would have sent the police or army personnel to help with the demolition. This is in line with the government's decision to provide technical assistance to people who cannot demolish houses on their own. The house owner will still have to bear the costs, however.

In some districts, humanitarian agencies are assisting in the demolition and debris management of both public and private property, which is free of cost. District Disaster Relief Committees (DDRC) are coordinating this support but it is not uniform across the districts as it is based on needs.

- In urban areas, people are advised not to start the demolition process on their own without technical inputs from engineers.
- Damaged buildings can collapse anytime during aftershocks. People should not enter them to retrieve items.
- While demolishing mud-and-stone houses on your own, start from the top floor and maintain a distance while pulling down larger structures.

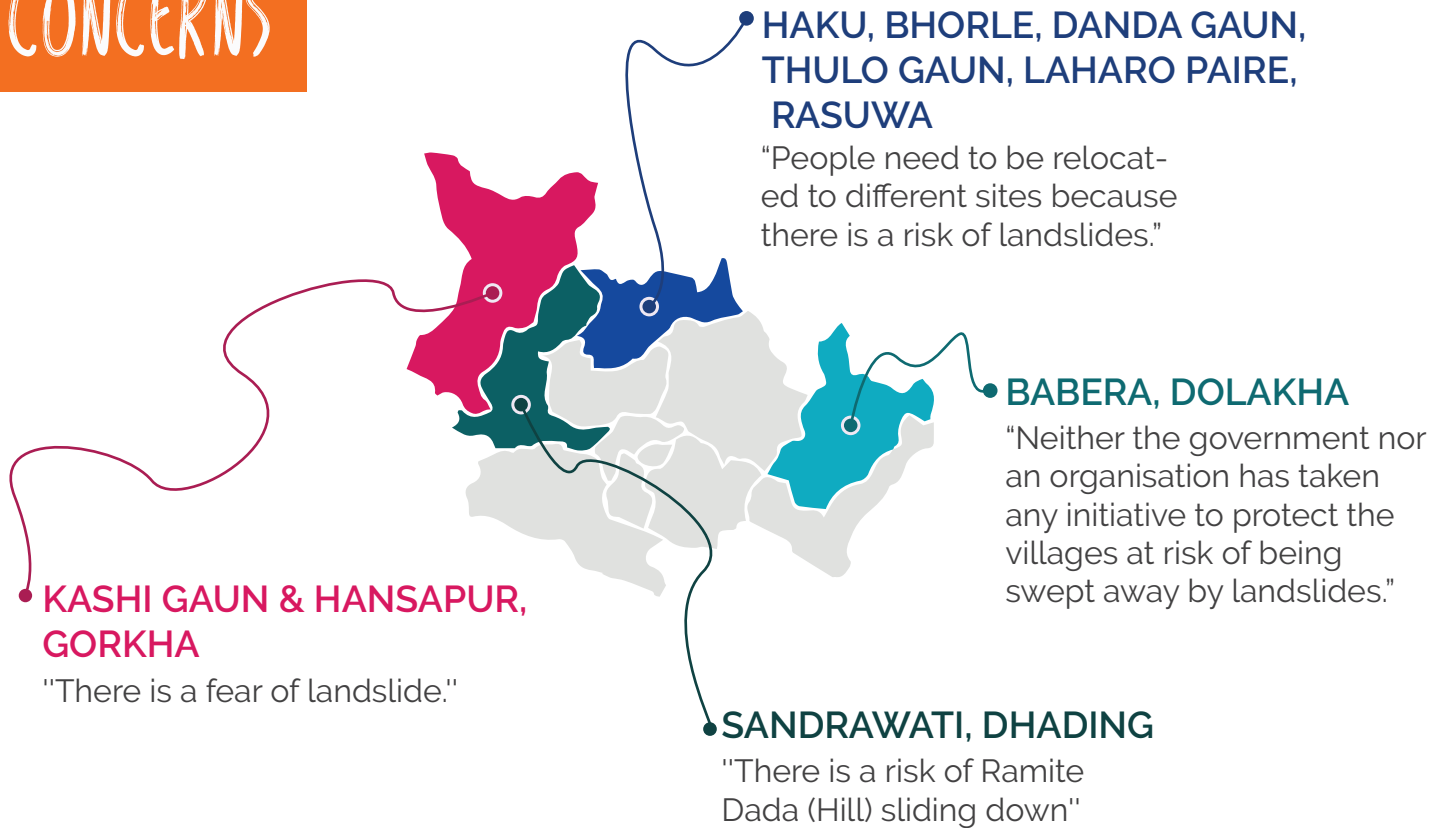
Devendra Lamichhane

Chief District Officer
Dolakha
9854017777

Binod Ghimire

Early Recovery Cluster
Co-lead, UNDP
9851145988

CONCERNS



ANSWERS

The government has created a list of settlements to be relocated based on the reports submitted by earthquake experts and Constituent Assembly members. But an action plan for evacuation and relocation is yet to be finalised.

The government has delegated the task of evacuation and relocation of high-risk settlements to local bodies, including the DDRC, Nepal Police and the Nepal Army. The VDCs are responsible for providing information about relocations.

If you want to know if your village is on the list of those that will be relocated, check with your VDC secretary.

In some areas, non-governmental organisations are assisting in evacuation and relocation of settlements that are affected by landslides. If you feel your village is at risk, please contact your VDC or DDRC immediately.

While building temporary shelters, do not do so on riverbanks, next to steep slopes and in areas prone to landslides.

Shivaram Golal

Chief District Officer
Rasuwa
9851277777

Bashudev Ghimire

Chief District Officer
Dhading
9851477777

CONCERNS

ASRANG AND BORLANG, GORKHA

"It seems that a number of families that live under the same roof, but effectively live separate lives are being counted as one 'household' during registration by the VDC. The families find this unfair. How does the government define a 'household'?"

NUWAKOT

"VDC secretaries are finding it difficult to address people's demand to define a household/family as a group of people who share the same kitchen, regardless of whether they live in the same building."

DHAIBUNG, RASUWA

"Family members who had been living together in the same house before the earthquake have been registering themselves as different households in order to get relief cash and material."

CHITRAPUR, BHAKTAPUR

"Each of the brothers in a family seems to be collecting money from the government by claiming to represent separate households."

SIDDHIPUR, LALITPUR

"In some instances, families, separated but living together in the same house, are receiving Rs 15,000 each. In some cases, they are not."

ANSWERS

The confusion about what constitutes a household has risen because the government is vague in its definition.

In a directive issued by the Home Ministry on May 16, a unit of family was defined as the family members living together. On May 25, the government defined a unit of family as constituting a mother, father, a married couple. There is nothing explicitly said about sharing a kitchen.

The definition of a household seems to be on the discretion of the team assigned to identify earthquake-affected families. The work of identifying the affected families and distributing the ID cards is done by the officials of municipality and VDCs.

As a result, in some cases families living in the same house but separated have received Rs 15,000 each. And in some cases, they have not.

The spokesperson of the Ministry told us that a family should be a group of people who live together and share a kitchen.

General public can file a complaint with the DDRC if they notice any discrepancy in relief distribution.

Laxmi Dhakal

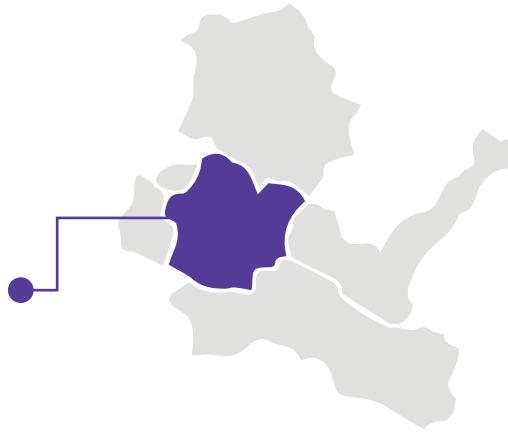
Spokesperson, Home Ministry
9851140003

Anil Thakur

Chief District Officer
Bhaktapur
9851217777

Q&A

KAVREPALANCHOK



BHIMKHORI

- "Squatter families who lost their shelter to the earthquake did not get Rs 15,000 in relief, as they don't have land ownership certificates."

The government has not made separate provisions to compensate squatters whose houses built on public land were destroyed by the earthquake. Existing laws on squatter settlements are applicable on this issue.

- "My son separated from us five years ago and lives separately. Our house is in his name, but when people came for assessment we put down my wife's name. Villagers here say I need to call my son. Can't my wife get the money?"

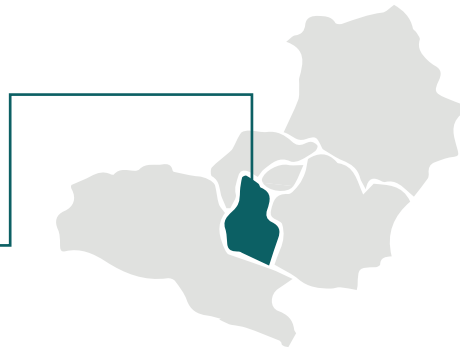
The name and photo of the household head appears on the earthquake victim ID card. Family members determine who the household head will be in spite of who is named in land ownership papers. This person declared as the household head gets the money in the name of the family.

- "All my neighbours have got Rs 15,000 each and built shelters weeks ago. When I went to the VDC office, they said the money in my name had already been taken. They said they would investigate the matter but no one is in the VDC office anymore."

If the VDC secretary fails to help you, file a complaint with the DDRC. Contact Sudarshan Prasad Dhakal, Chief District Officer of Kavre, at 9851237777.

Q&A

LALITPUR



LUBHU

"We are not satisfied with the government's giving compensation only to those whose houses are totally damaged. Our houses are not fit to live in. We should also get some compensation because we don't have any option other than to build temporary shelters and that costs money too."

If the technical team finds that the damaged house is liveable and does not recommend it for demolition, the owner of that house will not be entitled to Rs 15,000. The owner can instead file an application with the VDC or municipality office to get Rs 25,000 to cover repair costs.

This week's feedback was collected by frontline workers from partner organisations and #quakedhelpdesk volunteers based on their face-to-face conversations with around 250 people in 10 districts. The selection was done on the basis of prevalence and relevance.

Open Mic Nepal presented by:

