

Welcome to the twenty-eighth 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

**TESREGAUN,
KAVREPALANCHOWK**
“They say the government will begin the house reconstruction programme from mid-January.”



**PURANAGAUN,
RAMECHHAP**

“They say the government has started reconstructing houses from mid-January.”

FACTS

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) formally launched the ‘Reconstruction Campaign’ on 16 January. However, the reconstruction activities did not begin on that day. The Authority is currently working on preparatory work such as finalising the post-earthquake reconstruction and recovery plan.

The NRA or any other body of the government will not build houses for families affected by the earthquake. It will provide a reconstruction grant of up to Rs 200,000 to eligible households to help build houses.

According to the NRA’s current work plan, it will start activities in support of private housing reconstruction in mid-April.

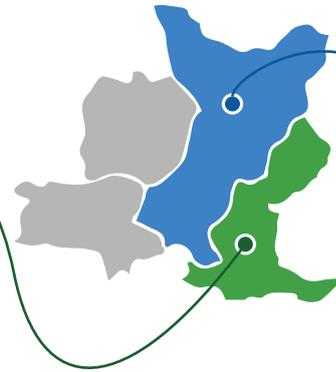
Non-governmental organisations can either build houses or provide assistance for reconstruction to households. Households who receive support for reconstruction from non-governmental organisations will not qualify for the government’s grant.

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CONCERNS

SALANG, DHADING

"They say the designs for the houses are out. When will we be able to take a look at them? Will we be able to build houses on slopes?"



GORKHA BAZAAR, GORKHA

"They say households have to hire one engineer while building their houses. House designs will only be approved after such an engineer has been secured."

SIRDIBAS, GORKHA

"They say a separate building guidelines and house designs are being prepared for the Himalayan region."

ANSWERS

The Department of Urban Development and Building Construction has begun providing physical copies of the catalogue of rural house designs to Village Development Committees (VDCs). Some VDCs have already received the copies by the original deadline of mid January; others are expected to receive them soon.

Those who have access to the Internet can view the catalogue of rural house designs online on the Department's website at www.dudbc.gov.np in both Nepali and English.

The catalogue contains designs for houses in rural areas for the entire country. The government is not creating separate building guidelines and house designs for the Himalayan region.

The catalogue specifies that houses can only be built in an area with a slope of less than 20 percent. An engineer will be able to determine the exact percentage of the slope of an area. For general reference, roofs in traditional rural houses normally have a slope of around 20 percent.

If the slope is steeper than this, households can cut the slope, but not fill in, to create a stable foundation for the house.

Households are not required to independently hire an engineer to create house designs or oversee the construction in order to receive the building permit.

To assist households in building earthquake-resistant houses and to oversee the construction process, the National Reconstruction Authority plans to set up a technical assistance team in mid April in every VDC affected by the earthquake. A technical assistance team will comprise an engineer, a social mobiliser and a trained mason.

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CONCERNS

BORLANG, GORKHA

"There are rumours that the earthquake-affected families will be given permission to get wood from the forests nearby while building houses."



ANSWERS

The Forest Act and the provisions on community forestry prohibit people from cutting down trees indiscriminately. Trees can be felled only with a permit from the government or with permission from community forest users' groups.

In order to facilitate the reconstruction process, community forest users' groups in Gorkha have eased some of the restrictions and allowed earthquake-affected families to cut down trees at a fee. This does not mean families can fell trees as desired. Houseowners can contact their community forest user group to find out more.

The government has not made provisions to allow earthquake-affected communities to cut trees in the national forests.

To avoid deforestation while rebuilding houses, households should reuse wooden beams from collapsed buildings. The government has allowed the transportation of wood from fallen houses across administrative units while building new

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CONCERNS

MECHCHHEGAUN, KAVREPALANCHOWK

"They say that the buildings that have been constructed without following the guidelines in municipalities will be demolished."



ANSWERS

Households in municipalities have always been required to get their house designs approved and follow the building codes during construction.

If a household violates the building codes, the municipality office can demolish the house if authorised by the municipality council. The family will have to cover the cost of the demolition.

Municipalities in Kavrepalanchowk do not have immediate plans to demolish structures built in violation of the building codes.

In newly pronounced municipalities such as Paanchkhal, it is difficult to implement building codes retroactively. Most houses were made in the traditional way before Paanchkhal was upgraded to a municipality.

There is no need for concern if you received a building permit from the municipality and followed the guidelines it issued.

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The rumours and issues presented here were collected by frontline workers from partner organisations and #quakehelpdesk volunteers based on their face-to-face conversation and community hearings with around 264 people in 6 districts between 14 - 20 January. The selection was done on the basis of prevalence and relevance. The information presented here is correct at the time of issue.

Open Mic Nepal presented by:

