

Far-Western Earthquake Response Operation Report: Lesson learnt workshop



CEA focal point interacting with shelter beneficiaries of earthquake response. *(Photo: NRCS)*



Introduction

An [earthquake](#) of 6.6 magnitude struck Doti on 8 November 2022 followed by 5.4 magnitude at Bajhang on 11 November 2022 leaving impacts mostly on Doti, Achham, Bajura and Bajhang districts of Nepal. The epicenter of the earthquake was located in Khaptad Chhana Rural Municipality of Bajhang district. Six people lost their lives and eight were seriously injured in Purbichauki Rural Municipality of Doti District. As per assessment report received from NRCS district chapters, 10,732 families were affected, 1,882 houses were fully destroyed and 6,181 houses were partially damaged in Achham, Bajhang, Bajura and Doti districts. The affected population were in urgent need of nonfood items, emergency shelter, access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); psychosocial support (PSS), and protection services.

In response to earthquake, NRCS distributed 4,082 tarpaulins together with 2,663 blanket, 250 mattress, 270 hygiene kits and 500 dignity kits as per the data till May 2023. Similarly, 10 emergency toilets with hand washing stations were also installed for communal use within few day after the earthquake. NRCS provided conditional cash of NPR. 98,600 (CHF 652.34) to 300 household for construction of transitional shelter together with multipurpose cash support and latrine constructions. Additionally, NRCS provided Rs. 47,200 equivalent to CHF 312.28 to 33 households who received 3 bundles of the CGI sheets from Volunteer Corps Nepal (VCN) through Nepal Red Cross Society in Purbichauki -5, Doti district. Apart from that, 518 household from the 3 districts received multipurpose cash support of Rs. 15,000 (CHF 99.24).

Similarly, NRCS supported to renovate 22 water schemes, constructed 300 toilets, constructed 32 sanitary pad disposal sites in the targeted communities and installed four child-friendly spaces in schools. Three events of RCEC camps were organized in three different places in Purbichauki Rural Municipality of Doti District where 439 people including 196 females received basic medical services. In addition, NRCS mobilized 26 ECV volunteers (Doti -10, Achham-8, and Bajhang-8) where 11 of them were female volunteers. These volunteers visited communities and targeted households, actively participating in community-based awareness activities that focused on disease prevention, epidemic control, and healthy behavior. Similarly, 26 PSS volunteers (Doti-8, Achham- 8, and Bajhang-10) were mobilized in the response district to support psychosocial support. These volunteers provided mental health and psychosocial support, including specific PFA assistance on a need basis.

IFRC and its members, mainly American Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross and Danish Red Cross, collectively provided fund to NRCS to provide immediate relief services to earthquake affected people. IFRC allocated CHF 499,479 from DREF, American Red Cross provided US\$ 50,000 equivalent to CHF 44,906.75 through IFRC and Danish Red Cross provided CHF 248,276 for NRCS to carry out response operations to cover the basic needs for shelter, WASH, health and PGI. The funds provided by IFRC and its members were focused on carrying out integrated response to support beneficiaries for transitional shelter, WASH, health, Protection Gender Inclusion (PGI) and multipurpose cash to meet basic daily needs in Achham, Bajhang, Bajura and Doti districts.

Far Western Earthquake Response in Nepal was implemented from November 2022 to May 2023. The field operation was closed in April 2023 and final report was published in August 2023. IFRC wide lessons learned workshop was conducted from 4-5 July 2023 in Doti district.

Objective of the workshop

Specific objectives of lesson-learning process were to:

- Capture strengths of response operation, gaps and areas of improvement, and critical issues that accelerate or impede the progress,
- Generate key learnings and good practices for the future references,
- Generate specific recommendations for future response,
- Develop action plan for implementing key recommendations and
- Share the achievements, challenges, learning and recommendations to the NRCS and IFRC stakeholders at national level.

Participants of the workshop

Total 43 people attended the workshop organized at Silgudi Doti from 4 to 5 July 2023. NRCS NHQs invited three people, including at least one female representative from all district chapters and government authorities however the number of female participants were very less (total seven female) in the workshop. The participants of the workshop were from:

- Response operation team of NRCS, both at NHQs and field operation team members
- Staff from NRCS technical department (DM, Shelter, WASH, PGI, CEA, CVA, Finance)
- Program team from IFRC and members
- Three members from 4 District Chapters (governance and staff)
- Beneficiaries from 3 districts
- Representatives from district and local authorities (District Administration Office, Municipalities)

Workshop Proceeding

Opening Ceremony

The workshop started on 4 July 2023 in a meeting hall provided by Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality office in Doti district. The opening session was chaired by Mayor of Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality, attended the opening session as chief guest whereas Acting Chief District Officer of Doti, Mayors of two Municipalities of Achham, Purbichauki Rural municipality of Doti, President of NRCS Sudur-Paschim Province offices were present as guests. The chairperson, chief guests and guests provided their remarks, highlighting the impact of earthquake and immediate response carried out after the earthquake.



President, NRCS Doti delivering the speech during the workshop. *(Photo: NRCS)*

Presentation on overall response operation of NRCS:

NRCS Response Coordinator made a presentation about the situation in all four districts after the earthquake, the response actions taken by NRCS and challenges faced during the operation. He highlighted the achievements of the response operation. The presentation was focused on operation modality, major outcomes of the operation & coordination mechanism within the local government and District Disaster Response Team (DDRT). The presentation covered the overall outcomes on the Shelter, WASH, Health, CEA & PGI. The operation was successfully implemented through the support of IFRC Network including IFRC DREF and other dedicated funds. Similarly, the information on physical damage & loss, sectoral response, beneficiary selection criteria for shelter, beneficiary selection criteria of the multi-purpose cash under PGI & detail process for shelter construction & multi-purpose cash (MPC) distribution was presented.



NRCS Response Coordinator presenting the overall achievement of the response. *(Photo: NRCS)*

The presentation ended with information on the overall challenges faced and mitigation measures implemented. Some of the major challenges identified were: **i.** beneficiary's selection process, **ii.**

banking documentation process as most vulnerable groups did not have citizenship and lack access to the financial service provider and **iii.** transportation of construction materials.

The operation related activities were implemented in close coordination and support from the local government, District Disaster Management Committees, provincial and central government. There was regular support from the local community, Red Cross unit and all the partners.

Presentation from DDMC Doti

Acting Chief District Officer of Doti made a presentation highlighting the impact of earthquake, response actions taken by the government, challenges faced during the response. He shared that the earthquake occurred just before constitutional election and all security forces as well as government units were very much engaged for management of the election. However, search and response team of Nepal Police reached the affected areas within 6-12 hours and rescued people buried in rubble. Due to the election, security forces had very difficult time to conduct assessment. The DDMC assigned NRCS to conduct assessment as well as coordinate relief distribution until election was completed. DDMC and NRCS team provided 40 PCs of family tents which were installed in affected communities and displaced families were kept in the tent. The coordination between DDMC and NRCS remained very effective as NRCS team had been continuously sharing information about the communities and response plan developed by NRCS in regular basis which was supported to select actual beneficiaries, complete field level relief activities smoothly and also to avoid duplication among stakeholders. DDMC shared assessment report and list of beneficiaries with NEOC, NDRRMA and MoHA in regular basis. The NDRRMA deployed a technical team to conduct Damage and Need Assessment of affected houses in March 2023. He also informed that DDMC also provided cash to families who lost their members due to earthquake.

Presentation on findings of the PDM survey

IFRC hired external consultant for conducting Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey in four districts. Team of consultants visited all four districts and conducted 10 events of key information interviews and four events of focus group discussion (FGDs). The findings of draft PDM report were shared during the workshop and collected feedbacks during the workshop. Lead consultant made a presentation highlighting findings and recommendations for future operations. Key findings from PDM survey presented in the workshop are:

Transitional Shelter support: The decision for temporary shelter assistance was very relevant and the size of cash provided for the temporary shelter assistance with the given design was reasonable. Some beneficiaries had to top-up cash to complete the construction of the shelter. This case was specific to those HHs who have used iron poles instead of bamboo, and for those who have nothing to salvage from the damaged house. The construction of shelter was delayed substantively. In the core winter the affected people could not shift to the new shelter and therefore they had to cope with chilled winters within the tent-made emergency shelters. There was on-site monitoring and technical guidance to the shelter under construction. This technical assistance, however, was inadequate which had led to the poor construction result. Some shelters have been constructed with the CGI sheets covered all sides which may cause extreme heat during summer days and cold during the winter. The beneficiaries reported that two installments of cash top up was good instead of single installment

which made them accountable for job completion (shelter construction), and also provided opportunity for controlled expenditure for other needs.

Multi-purpose Cash: The cash transferred through the beneficiary's bank account was noticeably a big shift of humanitarian assistance *in the remote districts of Far-western Province of Nepal*. However, this was a time-consuming process in the beginning, but it left with an increased financial literacy and banking access to the beneficiaries. Total of 99.3 per cent of the recipients had utilized the cash received from the NRCS, and 80 per cent of them had responded that the cash was also used for general urgent household needs. The time taken to collect the cash from the banks was relatively higher as 31 per cent had to travel around 2 hours or more while 18 per cent had to use more than 3 hours. Total of 93.5 per cent beneficiaries mentioned that they collected cash by their own, whereas 6.5 per cent had to request to someone to collect the cash from the banks.

Community Engagement and Accountability: In a survey question for "had any recipients to pay any service charges to NRCS staffs for providing these assistances?", there is 100 per cent "no" response. The respondents were also aware on the reason for the assistance they were entitled for. 70.4 per cent had mentioned that they were supported for meeting the basic urgent needs in the HHS. There were 100 per cent positive response on the quality of relief items received in good condition.

Relief Distribution: The relief items were distributed at the dedicated locations about which the beneficiaries were updated in advance. The distribution centers were gender friendly and the security concerns were well integrated in the plan. There were no cases of looting, theft, harassments and other forms of disclination. There were, however, 18.5 per cent response on the 'somehow managed' and 1.5% responses 'unmanaged' on the distribution site. This suggested to re-think on whether the waiting time was long for those beneficiaries, whether the distribution in the cold winter caused additional problem, whether the travel time to collect the relief items was substantively long.

Overall Humanitarian Response:

- They agree almost fully that targeting was done appropriately (>90%),
- Cash grants are better than other form of humanitarian assistance (~88%),
- Information from NRCS was adequate (~85%),
- The behaviour of NRCS volunteers during the relief assistance was good (~90%).

Recommendation made by the team of consultant in PDM report:

Local governments need to have a provision for opening bank accounts for all the families considering the possible future disasters. Local governments need to strengthen the institutional capacity regarding the emergency response including IRA, search and rescue, stockpiling NFRI etc. Local governments are recommended to prepare and update the municipality risk profile and vulnerability maps. Local governments were recommended to build the humanitarian capacity by having trained local search and rescue teams, assessment teams and necessary guidelines, EOCs and minimum relief and response items in place. Local Governments to prioritize the preparedness programmes for earthquake risk mitigation. Strengthen the DM Fund in each local government.

NRCS was recommended to strengthen the institutional capacity of DCs regarding the response capacity including IRA, search and rescue, loss and damage assessment, CVA, GESI, and SPHERE standards. NRCS need to increase the stockpile of NFRI sets (packages) in the districts. Monitoring response activities including progress of shelter construction from NHQs and field office is quite difficult due to scattered houses. So, NRCS was recommended to deploy its sector specific trained human resources in each district rather than monitoring by region or headquarters. It was also recommended to continuously build the capacity of its staffs on humanitarian cash and voucher assistance so that the response planning for the cash-based interventions in quick, efficient and effective. The opening of bank accounts for the beneficiaries took long time at the local banks. The reason behind this was that the NRCS left the entire responsibilities to the banks only and they took this as a normal process. The process was accelerated when NRCS asked them to speed up. It was recommended that some dedicated staffs with basic knowledge of finance and banking area need to be deployed to assist such banks for this purpose.

IFRC was recommended to support strengthening the capacity of NRCS DCs on emergency response that include CVA and also to ensure the beneficiary gets selected on the basis of the vulnerability (damage, poverty, gender, disability, caste/ethnicity, age etc.) situation.

Sharing experience from beneficiaries and their suggestions:

Beneficiaries experience sharing session were conducted where three people (2 male and 1 female) of the community from different districts shared their story from the day earthquake struck to the day they received support from NRCS. During the panel discussion, they expressed their happiness with Red Cross for providing the support. They were happy with the cash support for transitional shelter and multipurpose. Also, they were thankful to the NRCS volunteer for being readily available in the community to provide required support and answering queries about the support and NRCS.

In addition to this, they provide some insight on challenges they faced while receiving the cash transfer where they have to face difficulty while opening the bank account, and cash withdrawal from the bank. It was mentioned that someone was trying to ask for the cash that have been received by them from Red Cross.

Based on the challenges, some suggestions were put forward by the beneficiaries to NRCS as below:

- NRCS should properly follow the beneficiary selection process as number of people were left out who were more affected by earthquake.
- Though the text messages were sent to people in their mobile regarding the cash transfers, some of the people did not have mobile so they could not read the message. For this, they suggested NRCS volunteers to visit beneficiaries individually after the cash transfers.

Group work and findings from the group:

All participants in the workshop were divided into four groups. Four major topics were defined and assigned for each group to discuss about:

- i) major success or strengths of the operation,
- ii) area of improvement or the priorities which were missed out,

- iii) constraints/challenges which led NRCS to miss opportunities and
- iv) recommendation for future operations.

Each team were asked to unfold several sub-topics/issues under each broader topic. One hour time was provided for each group to discuss and prepare notes. World Café method was applied for the group work and the groups were switched in every one hour, so all groups get opportunities to work for all four topics. Out of management team one moderator and one reporter focal person were assigned for each group. The findings from group works are given below:

Group 1: Assessment, planning, documentation, data management and reporting

Sectors	What went well?	Areas of Improvement	Constraints/ challenges	Recommendation for future
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely information dissemination • Timely action on Search and Rescue • Timely distribution of relief • IRA and Detail assessment • Timely information sharing between Subchapter, DC, Province and HQs • Mostly affected people were recused first. • Volunteer mobilization • Timely and effective coordination between local stakeholder • DDMC meeting on time which helped in easy NFRI distribution • NFRI which were with DC were distributed first and insufficient NFRI were requested with HQs • One door assessment system followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making was delayed, resulting challenging to coordinate with the local stakeholders. Preliminary meetings and preparedness plan should be in place. • Information dissemination in the community regarding the assessment • IRA and Detail assessment format should be made ready and in position so that it will not take much more time in managing the formats • Strengthen coordination and collaboration between the local stakeholders and RC • IRA orientation to local stakeholders (Municipality and Rural Municipality) • People should be trained on priority tools and techniques after IRA • Data on damage and casualties should be shared timely and widely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment report of RC, municipality and other organization were not matching • Geographical difficulties due to scattered settlements • Power cut and damaged road facilities • Red Cross was initiating actively but local government failed to respond on time • Political influence due to election time • Lack of trained human resource and lack of budget • Lack of ownership from local government • Affected people were unaware of relief support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity and maintenance of road facilities should be done for timely response • IRA and detail assessment training/orientation needed to local government • IRA and detail assessment format should be in place. • Mobilization of trained volunteer and volunteer mobilization to be done on time • Information dissemination should be done via radio and other means of media regarding assessment ongoing in the community. • Submission of IRA forms within 24 hours filling up IRA, is not applicable in remote areas due to geographical and other difficulties. This should be discussed and allocation of enough

				<p>time for conducting IRA should be done.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and collaboration between local stakeholders
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning was done on the basis of assessment • Prioritization of activity was according to the human and infrastructure destruction/damage • Planning was done in close coordination with Red Cross, local government and other organization. It avoided duplication of support. • Planning was done in close coordination with all sectors. • Regular meetings done with all related stakeholders • Planning was done by DC meeting following the assessment meeting. It was shared with DDMC and LDMC for feedback/suggestion and feedback was well incorporated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning should be unbiased • Well coordination between all sectors • Planning should be led by the trained person • Capacity building of DC ,SC and other stakeholders in planning and designing • Planning should not be finalized based on previous experiences as previous year plan can only be taken as a reference. Not every time disaster is same and same people are not affected every time. • Strong information dissemination mechanism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real data couldn't be achieved which hindered in planning • Lack of trained human resource • Political influence while planning due to election period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real time data collection should be done • Capacity building of staff and volunteers needed • All sectors involvement required while planning • Follow evidence based data during activities planning • Strengthen the collaboration between local stakeholders and other organizations • Strengthen the coordination with Sub Chapter (SC) and engage SC in planning process
Beneficiary targeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiary selection was done based on assessment data • Beneficiary selection was done after the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most affected household should be in first priority • Beneficiary selection criteria should be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources • Geographical challenge during beneficiary selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and regular monitoring of volunteers • Beneficiary selection in an effective way

	<p>recommendation of police administration, Red Cross and Municipality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiary selection criteria was developed and followed 	<p>developed together with local stakeholders and community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiary selection criteria should be agreed with the participation of community/community representatives Beneficiary selection criteria should be introduced by municipality so that all organization working in the same community can follow consistently Information sharing regarding the beneficiary selection criteria so that people know why they are selected/why they aren't selected Timely and effective monitoring during the beneficiary selection Regular meeting between RC, LDMC and Municipality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gap in information sharing (regarding the beneficiary selection) Lack in understanding regarding the importance of IRA and detail assessment Volunteers' negligence, not reaching to the most affected household Challenge in identifying the real beneficiary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unbiased beneficiary selection (use of evidence-based data)
Documentation data management and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected data were recorded/kept safely Data collection was done at every level and shared with NRCS HQs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitalization of collected data Well trained HR and enough resources at DC Online data management so that people can refer to data at any time Capacity building of DC, SC staff and volunteers Digitalize reporting system in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of trained staff and volunteers in DC Lack of resources Lack of reporting format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building of staff and volunteers with relatable trainings Easy and understandable reporting format Reporting system at all level

Group 2: Coordination, partnerships relation management

Sectors	What went well?	Areas of Improvement	Constraints/ challenges	Recommendation for future
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective coordination established with one door policy mechanism set by DDMC. • District Administration office provided full authority of coordination to NRCS, Doti from initial to final stage of response. • Easy access to mobilize the volunteers at local level by effective coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper and efficient information management requires through Initial Rapid Assessment coordination mechanism • Improve the involvement and (IRA) team's coordination as per the government IRA standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties on initial stage of response and consistent coordination for proper beneficiary identification and distribution of NFIs • Lack of coordination among the members of IRA (local government bodies, Nepal police and RC volunteer) • Gap in timely flow of IRA information from affected areas due to unstable internet network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to work for Information Management tools and technique • Need of clear instruction to district and local level government for IRA initiation/ implementation by NDRRMA so as to get the improved coordination through NRCS representation • Develop the local level coordination mechanism /structure/plan for effective coordination with relevant local bodies • Manage the advance and absolute medium of communication to address the insufficient network problems
Partnership and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional fulfillment of relief items (dignity kits, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership and collaboration are needed for aligning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to partnership and to lead the instant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local level authorities to prepare the

	<p>protection kits, health support system) was received from different stakeholders (UNFPA, HFH, Save the Children) through partnership and collaboration where NRCS took lead in the distribution process</p>	<p>the relief standards during distribution of relief materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the stakeholders for partnership in similar goal and objective of NRCS to respond during the emergency • Enhance the capacity to collaborate with the relevant partners to fulfill the additional requirement of affected populations which would not be addressed through NRCS resources 	<p>action with limited resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay on arrangement of DDMC meeting • Lack of HR for effective and timely response during initial days of response 	<p>emergency response plan and capacity building of local level authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the partners and stakeholders within district to prepare plan of action in collaboration with partners for preparedness and response
Internal and external relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the localized response methods by program was effective • Increased knowledge and understanding among the community about RC approaches to serve the disaster affected populations for relief and other activities during crisis. • Enhanced internal coordination and collaboration among 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the coordination within NRCS (SC, DC, Province and Central) and external (UN, NGOs, Government authorities) in preparedness actions, meetings, and workshops in future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge faced in initial response period to standardize the NFIs distribution. • Time constraints to discuss and plan the immediate joint response actions in emergencies with external partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the collaboration and partnership with local, provincial and federal level agencies to work hand in hand during emergency response and further joint action for preparedness

	NRCS District, province and NHQ			
Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASH transfer to beneficiary's account • Regular support provided by finance team of NHQ/IFRC, Nepal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to ensure the timely reporting. • Provide sufficient orientation to the district staffs. • Delay in receiving the clearance sheet (bharpai) of distribution due to number of scattered distribution points and insufficient guidance of using clearance sheet and its use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to clear the remaining payment of different suppliers which is in payable • Lack of trained financial human resources in district with knowledge on updated financial methods and policy of NHQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local level chapters to develop the fund mobilization action plan in emergency responses. • Include province and district chapters for the project planning and finalizing the activities with budget. • Need to utilize the experts for the sectoral part time engagement rather than full time with no activities • Provide support to fulfill the local level necessity as per the identification of local requirements • Share the staff management and utilization plan to the district before any district level appointment has been made in NHQ

Group 3: Decision-making and operation management

Sectors	What went well?	Areas of Improvement	Constraints/ challenges	Recommendation for future
Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate response (1:30-2 Hrs after EQs) provided in coordination (verbal and endorsement in lateral meetings) with DDMC/Local level/ stakeholders. • Provided relief items in one door policy as per need basis. • Timely decisions taken from NRCS HQs and communicated to the DCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear decisions and timely communications • Participatory decision-making. • Modality of program and well communication of program to DC for proper communications with the concerned stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of beneficiary, and implementation of verbal communication. • Interest of different stakeholders, and geographic difficulties. • For immediate response, Lack of time for response. • Frequent transfer of staffs from DDMC and local bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blanket approach shouldn't be used for multiple geographical areas • District and local community feedback and advice should also be used for the implementation of the programs
Use of NRCS policy, guidelines and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS emergency guideline is developed. • Local staffs and volunteers handled their duties as per their assigned responsibilities. • Regular coordination and Collaboration with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers from District Chapter and Sub-Chapters should be oriented on the existing policies and guidelines. • Increase network to the municipal level with skilled manpower. • Divide the roles and responsibility of staffs considering the situation of the response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work was delay due to the difficulties of language, geography, local environment. • Few staff were unclear about policy, procedure and program. • Some staff were not provisioned until the end of the project, and the necessary documentation was not handed over. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced personnel who are familiar with the local context should be deployed for the immediate response. • Decentralization of resources should be done for immediate use. • Revision of policy and rules for flexibility • Transparency to be ensured in staff management.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled staff on thematic knowledge on local language, environment, and geography should be hired and based on the response area. • Documentation process shouldn't be lengthy. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of daily allowance during the emergency.
Relief Items management and distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely distribution of relief items. • The items were distributed through one door system. • Coordination and support with local stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate relief items should be prepositioned in local level. • Improve the capacity of the warehouse and sub-warehouse to store. • Should use Sphere standard while distribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distribution center was not determined considering the geography and easy access to all. • Immediate need and gap couldn't be identified as the IRA/and assessment was not conducted in time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local level and NRCS Chapters should collect the resource/fund jointly. • To coordinate with the Logistic Cluster/WWF and local government for transportation of the relief items.
Sector-specific response activities and timeliness (Shelter, WASH, Health, PGI,)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response program was designed for the safe shelter together with WASH, Health and PGI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated sectors created confusion during implementation of the response. • Orientation needed for district level staff on different sectors/areas. • Health activities were bit unclear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectoral need and gap was higher than available source. • Lack of skilled staff/personal. • The local government giving less priority. • The selection process was manipulated, since we had already had clear/standard PGI selection policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated response need to be decided and implemented timely.
Procurement and logistic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRCS had a Procurement Policy and guideline to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the procurement policy for emergencies to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography difficulties made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relief items should be prepositioned and

	distribute the items when, where, how, and whom.	procure the item at the local level.	<p>transportation difficult.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of the relief items in the market • Short timeline of the program and long lead time during implementation 	<p>managed at the local level and sub-chapters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity of Warehouse /supply chain staff needs to be capacitated. • Uniformity to be maintained in storage. • Information management system should be properly updated and managed.
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Group 4: Cash and voucher assistance and cross cutting issues

Sectors	What went well?	Areas of Improvement	Constraints/ challenges	Recommendation for future
Cash and Voucher Assistance: process, relevance and timeliness (Shelter and WASH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer mobilization and data collection • Development of beneficiary selection criteria • Prioritization and selection of beneficiaries • List of beneficiaries verified by local government • Decisions made with District Disaster Management Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening an account became challenge due to the distant location of the bank from the community. • Area specific orientation needed on banking transaction in community • The quality of materials for transitional shelter to be ensured • Provision of training related to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to open beneficiary account due to geographic difficulty, it took more time, cost and caused physical hardship to the beneficiaries to open account and access the amount • Difficult to convince beneficiaries that they will get the money from the account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area specific orientation needed on banking transaction in community • The quality of materials for transitional shelter to be ensured • Agreement with bank to visit the community to open an account and cash payment • Ensure flexibility in providing cash from

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New account of affected families opened • Getting money from the bank was safe • The development of saving (money) behavior among beneficiaries • The use of banking methods has started. • Sense of ownership within beneficiaries • No misuse of cash 	<p>operation of cash vouchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement with bank to visit the community to open an account and cash payment • Ensure flexibility in providing cash from both the bank and cash on hand, depending on the situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmatched signatures, no immediate payment due to network, complicated paper process 	<p>both the bank and cash on hand, depending on the situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transportation allowance to beneficiaries who travels during cash assistance • Conducting bank transactions for conditional cash and using cash in hand for unconditional cash might be a viable option. • Promote to have 1 bank account in each household
Integration of common sectors: PGI, CEA, PSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relief provided immediately after earthquake • Sense of security among community people after shifting in transitional shelter • Improvement in beneficiary's lifestyle in terms of drinking water and sanitation • Increased feeling of safety among community people after providing PSS • All activities were designed to be inclusive of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide orientation to district level staff on PGI, CEA before response implementation • Specific planning needed for activities related to PGI, CEA and PSS • Skilled personnel should provide thematic volunteer training to identify affected people • Thematic roster to be prepared and used during response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing a transitional shelter close to a damaged house on limited land increased the risk. • Issue of land for the reconstruction • Lack of access to quality measurement systems and technical inspections • Lack of access to timely health services • Gender violence and psychosocial support programs should be done regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic orientation to be provided to staff • Clear roles and responsibility should be provided among staff

	<p>and gender considerations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing relief and assistance to disaster-affected communities effectively reduced anxiety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For program sustainability, follow-up and response needed • Monitoring and maintenance support needed for Water and Sanitation facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of skilled technicians to monitor the construction of transitional shelter • Lack of technical support in shelter construction added further risk to family • Unable to provide adequate psychosocial support increased mental health issues • Adherence to the principles of Building Code during reconstruction 	
Risk Communication and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries were informed about the services and materials offered by the Red Cross. • People were convinced that Red Cross will provide services in a fair manner. • Unbiased service provided in a conflict-free environment. • Provided service without any compromise in procedural service and quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives should be taken to make PASSA orientation effective • The capacity of sub-chapter should be increased • Develop roster of thematic volunteer for orientation • Need to provide essential equipment such as computer, laptop, photocopy machine and vehicle • Conduct training on social and behaviour change communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are in atmosphere of fear so there is need of psychosocial sessions • Initiatives should be taken to make the communication mechanism effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility material should be displayed during activities implementation on project areas • Need of capacity building for technical volunteers • During the construction of the housing, the participants should be provided daily allowance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provided respecting the local culture and behavior in the working area • Beneficiaries got information by making inquiries in Red Cross hotline 1130 • Enhancement of relationships with beneficiaries and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct demo on each ward before constructing transitional shelter • Maintain standard visibility of NRCS, IFRC • Standardize the distribution of relief items such as tarpaulins 		
Community feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper orientation on construction of temporary shelters to beneficiaries • Promotion of clean drinking water and sanitation • Child safety and gender equality maintained • Covered the target community through the planned response • Developed a feedback mechanism to get information from the 1130 hotline • Increased public awareness through community information system • Developed SMS system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularity on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene must be maintained • Use of local language should be emphasized in the production of IC materials • More support should be provided to child-friendly materials and infrastructure • Quality sanitary pad should be provided in the school • Training sessions on clean drinking water and sexual violence during disaster should be provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of tools and resources • Difficulty in mobilizing skilled volunteers • Community demand is high • Scattered settlement on remote geographical severity made it difficult to reach the beneficiary • Beneficiary lacked enough land to construct transitional shelter after destruction of their houses • Due to lack of water purification measures, there is further risk of health hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a roster of skilled volunteers at the local level • Field staff should be made mandatory to stay and work in the local ward • Better communication among community and the Red Cross for effective coordination and supervision of activities • Clear data collection system in all levels of implementation

Action plan for future:

All four groups have identified areas of improvement for NRCS future response operations and drawn recommendation for NRCS units to develop systems and tools in coming years. Based on the recommendations, all participants worked together and developed action plan which has suggested major priorities and timeline for NHQs, provinces and DCs to take necessary actions. Copy of action plan developed by the team is given below:

S.N	Action points	Timeline	Responsible units	Remarks
1	NHQs need to ensure participation of Dcs to develop plan based on post-disaster assessment, data collected from field and local needs	3 months from now	NHQs	As per assessment guideline
2	Revise/update policy/strategy periodically, staff/human resources management and retention strategy, and use of available resources in emergency		NHQs and DCs	
3	NHQs to coordination with logistic cluster and make alternative plan for transportation of relief items		NHQs and DCs	
4	Ensure participation of NRCS units and stakeholders in decision making		NHQs and DCs	
5	Ensure distribution points near to the community/ strategic locations		DCs	
6	Decentralize pre-positioning of relief items at local (sub-chapter and district chapter) level	August	NHQs and DCs	
7	Train HR on post-disaster assessment at Palika and district level and develop retention strategy for it	August	NHQs, DCs and Palika	Sharing resources with Palika
8	Develop systems and tools for data management and digitization	Mid-April 2024	NHQs, Province and DCs	
9	Develop strategy/plan for trained HR (Responders) retention and implement the plan	Mid-April 2024	NHQs, Province and DCs	
10	Develop trained/expert volunteers for CVA at district level	October 2023	NHQs	
11	Coordinate with authorities to develop a system for at least one family member has bank account and also use of SSA account	Regular		
12	Develop strategy to link NRCS volunteers with local government's response system and develop rapid deployment process for assessment and relief management	October 2023	NHQs	
13	Use of revised policy, strategy, response operation manual, CVA SoP at all levels. NHQs need to share the documents and ensure proper use of them	Need basis		
14	Revise Relief items of NRCS as per the need and context			
15	Assign one focal person from Nepal Red Cross for each Palika for coordination.			
16	Revise HR regulation, financial regulation as per the context and appropriate use of them			

Recommendation:

Following recommendations have been drawn from the group work done during the lesson learnt workshop:

1. Enhancing the coordination and capacity of local level government on Initial Rapid Assessment (IRA) process and prompt availability of the IRA and detail assessment format would make the data collection process smooth and enable timely response. Strengthening coordination with local government and involving them in planning and decision making for the selection of the beneficiaries would avoid the duplication and ensure timely service delivery.
2. Beneficiaries' selection process should be implemented timely and in close collaboration with local government to provide the timely support to affected people and also to meet the response planned duration.
3. The lack of emergency response plan in local authorities affected the faster intervention therefore the facilitation on development of emergency response plans and enhancing their capacities is needed. Identification of the local, provincial and federal level agencies to collaboratively develop an action plan for preparedness and response in coordination with partners should also be done.
4. Flexibility on the budget use should also be done on the basis of need and feedback of local chapters.
5. The lack of a well-defined emergency response plan within local authorities has significantly affected timely interventions. Therefore, there is a need to facilitate the development of comprehensive emergency response plans and to enhance the capacities of these authorities. Similarly, relevant agencies at the local, provincial, and federal levels should be collaborated to formulate an action plan for preparedness and response.
6. It is important to establish collaborative funding arrangements with local entities and other service providers for effective and timely support to affected individuals during disasters. This ensures that affected individuals receive timely and effective support.
7. The shortage of relief materials during disasters and the delay in transporting them from headquarters left people suffer post-earthquake. The importance of having prepositioned relief items was recognized at district chapters, and timely replenishment should also be done to ensure preparedness for future calamities.
8. Many community members still lack access to banking transactions and require orientation on its operations. While bank-provided cash support has increased some digital literacy, challenges like geographical distance and limited bank access remain. Promoting banking habits would be useful during disasters for cash assistance. As there are people who lack bank access so there should be alternatives like direct cash handouts during disasters. Collaborations with banks to facilitate account openings and increase digital literacy among the community are also important.
9. Capacity enhancement of district-level staff and volunteers in areas like transitional shelter construction, PGI, digital data collection, documentation, and CEA in emergencies should be done to effectively implement emergency response. Similarly, a roster of skilled personnel and volunteers should also be maintained for utilization of the skilled resources during crises.

Annex 1: Program Schedule

Sn	Events	Time	Methods and tools	Facilitator
Day 1: 4 July 2023				
	Breakfast	08:00 - 08:30		
1	Opening remarks/ Intro	09:00 - 09:45		NRCS Doti
2	Consolidated Presentation of Earthquake Response Operation	09:45-10:30	Power point presentation followed by discussion	DREF Coordinator
3	Presentations from Government on Sudurpaschim EQ Response	10:30-11:15	Power point presentation followed by discussion	DDMC
4	Emergency Shelter Finding - Far Western EQ response	11:15-11:30	Power Point Presentation	Shelter Coordinator
	Tea Break	11:30-11:45		
5	Post Distribution Monitoring - Key highlights on finding	11:45-12:30	Power point presentation followed by discussion	PDM Consultant
6	Open discussion - question answers	12:30-13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districtwide questions on key points • Queries and reflection 	District Chapters
	Lunch	13:00 - 14:00		
7	Group Discussion/Exercise	14:00 - 17:00	<p>World Cafe method</p> <p>i. All participants to be divided in to 4 groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Group 1 : Assessment, planning, documentation, data management and reporting: Process and tools used for assessment, targeting beneficiaries, planning and reporting of earthquake response operation ➤ Group 2: Coordination, partnerships and relation management: Within NRCS (Hqs departments, district chapters/provinces), within RCRC + governments, UN, community ➤ Group 3 : Decision-making and operation management: Timeliness and quality of intervention to the affected population. NFIs composition, System finance, procurement, logistics, policy, structure, HR, etc... 	ALL

			<p>➤ Group 4: CVA and cross cutting issues: Process and tools used for cash-based interventions, CEA, PGI, PSS</p> <p>ii. Group discussion and exercise for 45 minutes</p> <p>Key questions for group exercise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What went well? 2. What could have been improved? 3. What was beyond our control? 4. What recommendation to propose for future similar interventions? <p>This exercise should draw on both positive experiences i.e., good ideas that improve efficiency or effectiveness, as well as negative experiences. As a good practice rule, lessons learned, and comments should be documented and shared with concerned for future reference.</p> <p>iii. Group rotation and feedback</p> <p>➤ 15 min for each group</p>	
Day 2: 5 July 2023				
	Breakfast	08:00 - 08:30		
Going deeper				
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of previous day 	08:30 - 09:00		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of consolidated learnings and recommendations 	09:00 - 10:30	<p>Draw action plan based on the recommendation from the workshop. That will bring into practice in coming days.</p> <p>Action plan of recommendations to be written at HQs level and share to District</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection from beneficiaries 	10:30 - 11:15	<p>Beneficiaries will share their experience, highlighting the support that they have received, effectiveness of the response, challenges and recommendation for future</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations and way forward 	11:15 - 12:15	<p>Workshop prepares action plan based on the recommendation. The plan will bring into practice in coming days. Action plan of recommendations to be written at HQs level & share to District</p>	
9	Closing	12:15 - 13:00		

Annex 2: List of participants

S.N	Name	Organization	Designation
1	Mr. Khadak Bahadur Khadka	NRCS Doti	President
2	Mr. Baji Singh Khadka	Dipayal Silgadi Municipality	Mayor
3	Mr. Rajendra Kunwar	Sanfebagar Municipality	Mayor
4	Mr. Bhim Bahadur Saud	Chaurpati RM	Chairperson
5	Mr. Ram Prasad Upadhyay	Purbichauki RM	Chairperson
6	Mr. Dil Bahadur Budha	NRCS FW Province	Chairman
7	Mr. Lachhiram Kunwar	NRCS Doti	EX. President
8	Ms. Kalabati Mahar (Saud)	Dipayal Silgadi Municipality	Dy. Mayor
9	Mr. Dirgharaj Upadhyay	District Administration Office, Doti	Acting Chief District Officer
10	Mr. Ratna Prasad Dhungana	NRCS Achham	President
11	Mr. Dev Bahadur Bohara	NRCS FW Province	General Secretary
12	Mr. Laxman Bahadur Khadka	Purbichauki RM	DM focal person
13	Mr. Dhurba Kumar Shahi	NRCS Achham	Secretary
14	Ms. Mandhari Khadka	Purbichauki RM	Beneficiary
15	Mr. Jagat Bahadur Bogati	Chaurpati-7, Achham	Beneficiary
16	Mr. Dambar Bhul	Purbichauki RM	Beneficiary
17	Mr. Ram Dutta Upadhyay	NRCS Bajhang	President
18	Ms Gangu Devi Kadayat	NRCS Bajhang	DC Executive member
19	Mr. Bhaktaraj Joshi	NRCS Bajhang	Secretary
20	Mr. Devi Bhakta joshi	Khaptadchhana RM, Bajhang	Chairperson
21	Mr. Prakash Bhandari	Thalara RM, Bajhang	DM Focal person
22	Ms. Sunita Rawat	NRCS Bajura	DC staff
23	Mr. Kiran Jairu	NRCS Bajhang	DC staff
24	Mr. Tanka Prasad Neupane	NRCS Bajura	Secretary
25	Mr. Mekhraj Jaisi	NRCS Bajura	President
26	Mr. Hiuke Luhar	Purbichauki RM	Beneficiary
27	Mr. Rebanta Bista	NRCS Achham	DC staff
28	Mr. Binod Ghimire	IFRC	PDM consultant
29	Mr. Dikendra Pokhrel	NRCS NHQs	CVA focal staff
30	Mr. Prakash KC	NRCS Doti	DC staff
31	Mr. Rabin Kumar Dhakal	NRCS Doti	DC staff
32	Mr. Tikaraj Paudel	NRCS NHQs	Health focal staff
33	Mr. Dinesh Prasad Kushwaha	NRCS NHQs	Finance Officer
34	Ms. Shabanam Pokharel	NRCS NHQs	PGI focal staff
35	Mr. Manish Timsina	NRCS NHQs	Shelter focal staff
36	Ms. Sarita Dhungana	NRCS NHQs	CEA focal staff
37	Mr. Jayaram Basnet	NRCS NHQs	Field coordinator
38	Mr. Subash Shrestha	NRCS Doti	Secretary
39	Mr. Santosh Neupane	NRCS NHQs	Response Coordinator
40	Mr. Nagendra Prasad Dhungana	DDMC, Achham	Member
41	Mr. Prajwal Acharya	IFRC	DRM Program Manager
42	Ms. Geeta Shrestha	IFRC	PMER Officer
43	Mr. Desh Burja Magar	IFRC/Danish RC	Senior Operations Officer