

Welcome to the sixth 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

MALU, DOLAKHA

"We've heard that the plates underneath us are not in balance. A big earthquake has to occur once again in order to bring the plates back in balance. We want to know if this is true."



CHARIKOT, DOLAKHA

"Apparently, it's written on a lot of websites that another earthquake of 8 Richter in scale will hit Nepal again. We were trying to return to our houses thinking that it was over, but British geologists are saying that another big earthquake will happen in Nepal again. So, we are back living outside."

FACTS

Nepal lies in the area where the Indian tectonic plate is continuously pushing into the Eurasian plate, building up stress where they meet. When this energy gets released, we feel it as an earthquake.

Scientists and geologists, who are studying the Nepal earthquake on 25 April, have found that not all of the energy built up underground was released on that day. They believe that the energy has shifted westwards and that a major earthquake in West Nepal could release it.

No one can predict exactly when the next earthquake will occur and how large it will be.

We are in a seismically active zone and should take precautions. Earthquakes do not kill people, but weak buildings and structures that collapse during an earthquake do. After a major earthquake, aftershocks are frequent occurrences. People should be careful while re-entering their houses after an earthquake.

It is important to follow the building codes as people start to rebuild their homes. It is possible to build small houses that can withstand large earthquakes. The government is about to release designs for such houses.

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RUMOURS



CHILIME, RASUWA

"The hot-water spring, which used to attract a lot of tourists here is no longer hot. Some are worried that this will bring bad luck. Othes are worried that this will hurt their tourism business."

FACTS

The Village District Committee (VDC) Assistant Secretary of Chilime has confirmed that five out of six spouts at the hot-water spring has been dry for a while and that only cold water flows from the sixth one.

The hot-water spring was popular among domestic tourists; so, its drying up might affect domestic tourism business in the area.

Without doing a detailed study on the specific spring, however, it is hard to determine the cause of its drying up.

Generally, when an earthquake hits, it can disturb the aquifers resulting in the springs' running dry or overflowing for a while. Springs can dry up when disturbed because the water can be dispersed underground.

Hot-water springs could be affected similarly. The water might cool down if the channel underground has widened.

In a majority of the cases, aquifers move back to the original position after a certain period of time.

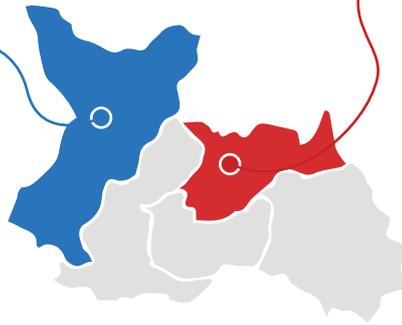
If water does not flow from the same spring as before the earthquake, it could mean that the point at which groundwater is released might have moved.

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CONCERNS

NIMJUNG, GORKHA

"Families who live far from roads will not get loans. Is that true?"



DHAIBUNG, RASUWA

"We've heard that the government is going to provide Rs 1.5 million in loans to an earthquake-affected family. We don't have lands for collateral. How will we get the loan?"

ANSWERS

The Nepal Rashtra Bank has issued a directive for banks and financial institutions to provide loans to earthquake-affected families at 2 percent interest rate.

Individual banks and financial institutions can make their own procedures for such loans. Usually banks ask for collateral in the form of land or other property.

One of the commercial banks, the Rashtriya Banijya Bank, has announced the following conditions for receiving the low-interest loans:

- The applicant should not cross the age of 65 by the deadline of loan repayment. The branch office can, however, make an exception based on its own assessment.
- The applicant has to provide a proof of ownership of the land where the house is to be built.
- If the applicant lives outside the Kathmandu Valley and wants more than Rs 500,000 in loans, the house has to be built alongside a motorable road.
- The applicant family's earnings should be double the value of each payment.
- If the applicant wants more than Rs 200,000 in loans, the house has to be built following the building code.
- The applicant will have to provide a copy of Nepali citizenship, descriptions of land surrounding the house to be built, and a letter certifying that the victim has no alternative abode.

If you want to know more about the loan procedures, please contact your local bank with your earthquake victim ID card.

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CONCERNS

GORKHA BAZAAR, GORKHA

"People are dividing villages according to what kind of institutions is providing them relief. There are INGO villages, NGO villages and *sarkari* (government) villages. People don't like *sarkari* village because they only get Rs 15,000."



BHORLE, RASUWA

"There has been discrimination in the distribution of aid by an INGO. It only distributed relief to the elderly, single women, and the disabled people. Humanitarian organisations should not discriminate while distributing aid."

PATAN, LALITPUR

"We've found that some people, especially those in need, are still deprived of aid despite a lot of it pouring in."

ANSWERS

District Disaster Relief Committees (DDRCs) lead all relief and recovery work, with support from non-governmental organisations.

DDRCs assign organisations to different VDCs in order to avoid duplication of relief work. This assignment is based on the needs assessment the DDRCs conduct.

Partner organisations can feed into this process if they have also done their own assessments, and request approval from the DDRC to work in areas they deem to be of priority.

The DDRCs have categorised some geographical areas and demographics as high-priority for receiving relief based on the communities' needs and vulnerability.

For example, nine remote VDCs in northern Gorkha are identified as priority areas, as are some demographics such as the elderly, disabled and single women.

Each cluster sets guidelines for its partner organisations on the minimum standards for relief packages and services, but they may not be able to monitor individual items in the packages.

Individual organisations may sometimes choose to upgrade services or add additional items. If an organisation distributes a hygiene kit that includes a large bucket in one VDC, another organisation might distribute a similar package that includes a smaller bucket in another VDC.

If people feel that the aid distribution is unfair, they can report it to their respective DDRC.

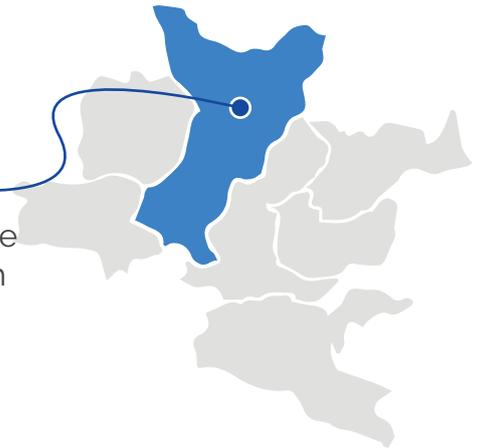
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CONCERNS

GORKHA BAZAAR, GORKHA

"A lot of women have now come to realise that their husbands have been living with second wives. That the relief materials the first wives were eligible for were being whisked to second wives."



ANSWERS

The Women Development Office in Gorkha has received reports of disputes between first wives and their husbands over relief money, as well as other relief packages. Such reports are also recorded in other earthquake-affected districts.

The Office, however, could not confirm if any woman had found out about their husbands' second marriages because of the earthquake.

In some villages, if a husband and a wife live separately, they have been registered as two separate families. This decision seems to be based on the discretion of the Rescue and Relief Distribution Committee at the VDC or municipality level.

If a woman is legally separated from her husband and does not receive a separate relief package, she can file a complaint with the DDRC. A woman can be deemed legally separated from her husband if she has taken her share of property from him even if she does not have a divorce certificate. Unless legally separated, the DDRC will not process the request as a separate household.

The Women Development Office and some women's rights organisations are assisting families as mediators in disputes over relief packages.

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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 with around 425 people in 9 districts between 31 July – 6 August. The selection was done on the basis of prevalence and relevance.

Open Mic Nepal presented by: