

Welcome to the thirty-first 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.

CONCERNS

SUNKHANI, DOLAKHA

"If the government provides us the house designs, we will borrow loans and build houses ourselves."

PURANAGAUN, RAMECHHAP

"Even people who have money are unable to build house because they don't know what kinds of houses to build."

BARUNESHWOR, OKHALDHUNGA

"A technician should be sent with house designs to villages to help us build houses."

HARKAPUR, OKHALDHUNGA

"Technicians and house designs should be sent to villages."

KHIJEE PHALATE, OKHALDHUNGA

"The government should provide house designs and the grant right away."

ANSWERS

The government has finalised the catalogue of rural house designs, which is available for view online at www.dudbc.gov.np in both English and Nepali.

The Department of Urban Development and Building Construction had planned to send copies of the catalogue to Village Development Committees (VDCs) and municipalities in earthquake-affected districts by mid January. It now requires district-level division offices to pick up the copies in Kathmandu for distribution. So far, only some of them have received the catalogue. Contact your division office to ask for a catalogue.

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) plans to start setting up resource centres in April. Resource centres will have engineers and technicians to advise homeowners to build earthquake-resistant houses. One resource centre is expected to cover a few VDCs.

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CONCERNS

PASLANG, GORKHA

"They say if we use mud mortar, the house can only be one storey tall."



BARUNESHWOR, OKHALDHUNGA

"People in villages don't know what an earthquake-resistant house looks like."

ANSWERS

Houseowners must hire masons trained in building earthquake-resistant houses to receive the reconstruction grant. Here are some basic methods of building earthquake-resistant houses appropriate to the Nepali context and design aesthetics.

An earthquake-resistant house can be built with bricks, stones or cinder blocks. Regardless of the material used, the principle is to connect the foundation, walls and roof securely together.

To make mud-and-stone houses earthquake-resistant, the shape must be compact and regular such as rectangular, square or circular. The length and the height of the house must not exceed three times its width.

While building a wall, a stone must be placed on top of the joint of every two stones to make sure that the vertical joints do not form a continuous line. On top of every two feet of the wall, thorough stones as long as the width of the wall must be placed three feet apart from each other. The placement of the thorough stones must be staggered, as well.

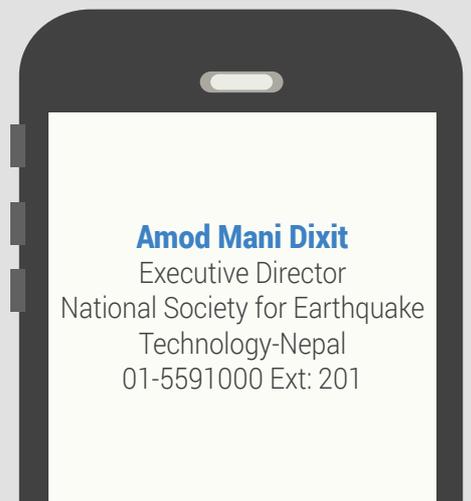
Vertical steel bars or wooden beams must be inserted in the wall at all corners and adjacent to all doors and windows. These vertical bars must be anchored to the foundation and the roof.

Horizontal bands should be inserted at the plinth, sill, lintel and roof level. Additionally, they should be inserted at the vertical spacing of every two feet.

Doors and windows should be at least two feet away from each other and from the corners.

While building roofs, try not to use gable bands, but trusses that are tied securely to the wooden beams.

The catalogue of rural house designs has prescribed one-storied design for mud mortar houses. If a household wants to build two storeys—engineers recommend not building more than two-storied tall mud-and-stone houses—it should consult an engineer.



CONCERNS

PHULASI, RAMECHHAP

"If the organisations come with mason training programmes, instead of relief material, it would be more effective."

"If we could take training classes on building earthquake-resistant houses, we would at least build our own house."

PURANAGAUN, RAMECHHAP

"Masons here need training on building earthquake-resistant houses."

KHARPANI, RAMECHHAP

"Every citizen is in the mood to build permanent shelter, but since the government has not yet provided Rs 200,000 and since there are no trained masons, they are not able to do so."

KOUCHHINI, RAMECHHAP

"They say the government will provide training to build earthquake-resistant houses. If the government provides such training to the youths in the village, we might be able to build strong houses soon."

KHIJEE PHALATE, OKHALDHUNGA

"Right now, training on building houses should be provided."

ANSWERS

Some organisations, such as Helvetas and Tearfund UK, have been training masons on building earthquake-resistant houses in some earthquake-affected districts.

Currently, District Disaster Relief Committees are coordinating mason training in their respective districts. VDC secretaries are the best source of contact to find out about upcoming training in your neighbourhood.

The NRA plans to coordinate future mason training through the resource centres that will be set up in every district. One resource centre will cover a few VDCs. Every organisation or individual planning to train masons will have to receive permission from the NRA.

Most organisations have not started mason training yet and are expected to do so after the NRA amends the earthquake-resistant building training procedures.

The training will focus mostly on enhancing the skills of working masons. Others are expected to get the training from the trained masons on the job.

Once the resource centres are set up, they and VDC secretaries both are expected to notify communities about upcoming training programmes.

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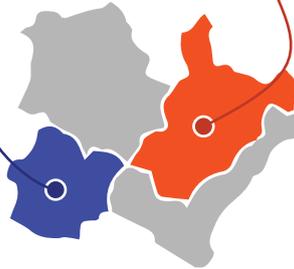
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CONCERNS

SANKHU, KAVRE

"They say engineers will soon come to reassess and collect details on houses. They also say the reconstruction grant will be distributed based on this reassessment. We have been living in tents since our house has cracks all over. But they say the engineers count only those houses, which have either completely or partially collapsed as completely damaged. How will they assess our house then?"



SUNKHANI, DOLAKHA

"The engineers measured the houses in whatever way they wanted. Some used measuring tapes, some didn't. Are they here to collect data or to do whatever they want?"

ANSWERS

The Central Bureau of Statistics has mobilised teams, consisting of a social mobiliser and an engineer, to assess the damage to a house in detail.

The team collects data on the overall damage to the house: whether it has collapsed or is leaning or is in danger from an adjacent house. The team also assesses and notes damage to the foundation and roofs, cracks on the walls, column and beam failures, and damage to the stairs and parapets, among others.

The team determines the severity of the damage and records it on a scale of severe-extreme, moderate-heavy, insignificant, or none.

If your house has developed cracks because of the earthquake, it will be recorded.

Since the measurements need to be approximate and not accurate, engineers do not always use measuring tapes to measure the dimensions of the house. Some rely on informal methods such as the approximate length of a footstep.

If you are not happy with the way engineers are assessing your house, contact your local development officer. Local development officers chair the survey management committees at the district level.

The NRA has not finalised the eligibility criteria for reconstruction support although it will use data from the reassessment to finalise the beneficiary list.

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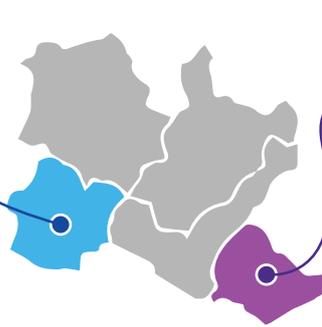
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CONCERNS

SANKHU, KAVRE

"They say the reconstruction work will take five years. The government has plans to provide reconstruction support to the earthquake affected within five years."



KHIJEE PHALATE, OKHALDHUNGA

"There should be a programme to inform people about the services the government will provide, especially about the reconstruction guidelines."

ANSWERS

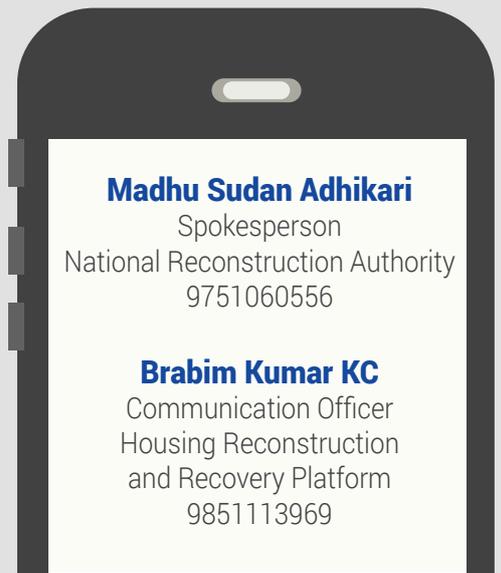
The NRA, with support from partner organisations in the Housing Reconstruction and Recovery Platform (HRRP), plans to use social mobilisers to inform households about the procedures related to the housing reconstruction programme. The HRRP coordinates the activities of non-governmental agencies working in housing reconstruction.

The NRA will also use public communication channels such as radio and newspapers to disseminate information.

Social mobilisers will be part of a mobile technical assistance team comprising three members, including a mason and a sub/engineer. Every VDC is expected to have one technical assistance team. Most partner organisations in the HRRP plan to begin training social mobilisers in April.

The reconstruction is a five-year long process, during which the NRA is expected to help earthquake-affected communities not just with the rebuilding of houses but also with their rehabilitation.

The timeline for the disbursement of the grant has not been set up yet.



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 206 people in 6 districts between 4 -11 February. 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:

