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# **Aiding the Distressed Compatriots**

**Assessing the Scope, Impacts and Potential of Support Activities of Nepalese  
Diaspora Community in Japan Post Nepal-Earthquake 2015**

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## **Abstract**

In response to the disastrous M7.8 Earthquake and subsequent aftershocks that struck Nepal, Nepalese Diaspora community living across the world came to the immediate aid of Nepal in organizational as well as personal capacities. This paper expounds the role of Japan-based Nepalese Diaspora community in marshalling resources in Japan and administering support for the earthquake victims in Nepal.

Analyzing the support activities of Nepal Earthquake Victims Rescue and Help Association 2015 (NEVRHA 2015) and various other Nepalese community organizations in Japan, this paper argues that the support from Nepalese Diaspora community in Japan has been substantial in terms of fundraising and administering of the fund for relief activities.

The paper calls for policy innovation on the part of Nepal Embassy in Japan and Nepal Government to tap the immense philanthropic potential of Nepalese Diaspora communities in Japan and other countries.

# **Aiding the Distressed Compatriots: Assessing the Scope, Impacts and Potential of Support Activities of Nepalese Diaspora Community in Japan Post-Nepal Earthquake 2015**

## **1. Introduction**

In response to the disastrous M7.8 Earthquake and subsequent aftershocks, Nepalese Diaspora community living across the world came to the immediate aid of Nepal in organizational as well as personal capacities. Evidently, their relief activities involved charity initiatives, particularly fund-raising in the country they are living in and relief activities targeting affected people and communities in Nepal. Some expatriates are also involved in generating and debating ideas for rebuilding Nepal post-Earthquake.

Focusing on the support activities of Japan based Nepalese Diaspora community; this paper expounds the role of Nepalese Diaspora in marshalling resources in Japan and delivering aid to Nepal to support the Earthquake victims. As post-Earthquake support constitutes short term relief and long-term rebuilding process, this paper assess the support activities of Diaspora communities by discussing

- Scope of charity initiatives undertaken by Diaspora communities to accumulate the resources needed for support activities in Nepal.
- Process and impacts of support activities carried out by Diaspora communities.
- Potential of long term rebuilding and developmental support from Diaspora communities

Research methodology consists of empirical study of the support activities carried out by Japan based Diaspora Nepalese community organizations and individuals. Extensive interviews were conducted to understand the role various community organizations and individuals played in

fundraising and administering support to the Earthquake victims in Nepal. The data for the research were mostly drawn from the interview and first hand observation of the author.

## **2. Literature Review**

International migration is an old phenomenon which has been enhanced by globalization in the modern era. Scholars have long argued international migration as a part of development (Skeldon 2008). In the recent decades, governments and international development agencies have considered the management of international migration and remittance as an important development tool (Lavenix and Kunj, 2008; Skeldon 2008; Stark and Wang 2002). In general, it is agreed that remittance from Diaspora communities leads to reduction in poverty in the developing countries (Katheline Newland and Erin Patrick 2004)

The role of migration in the development of the migrant sending country is not limited to transfer of remittance anymore. Migrants and/or Diaspora communities who achieve entrepreneurial successes in the foreign lands are credited to have played transformative role in the development of countries like China and India through investment (Min Ye, 2014). While earlier studies discussed migration as causing brain drain in the sending country, recent studies are highlighting the brain gain aspect of migration through increased productivity of returning migrants and knowledge transfer (Karin Mayr, Giovanni Peri, 2008 ).

The vibrant social network between migrants and communities in their country are of particular interests for the scholars. Scholars are increasingly focusing their attention on how the family, community and cultural ties that migrants maintain with their country of origin lead them to contribute tangible resources to the country of origin (Katheline Newland and Erin Patrick 2004).

In particular, studies have pointed out that Diasporas are adept in rapidly mobilizing humanitarian

relief in the wake of natural disasters (Kathleen Newland et al. 2010). Diaspora communities make donations individually and through intermediaries such as Diaspora community organizations and networks to support social causes in their country of origin.

In the case of Nepal, assessing the real number of migrants is impossible, considering the countries open border with India and migrant's use of irregular channels for going to other countries (Ministry of labor and Employment Nepal 2013/2014). More than 2 million Nepalese people are estimated to live and work in overseas today. In the recent decades, Nepal has experienced a sharp growth in remittance receipts with the remittance growing from US\$50 million to US\$3 billion with an increase in the ratio of remittance to GDP from 2% to 23% during 1990-2009 (World Bank, 2011). Today remittance amount to about US\$ 4 billion per year. Remittance is easily the largest foreign exchange earner in Nepal.

Thus, the role of Nepalese Diaspora community in providing relief and rebuilding support in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that hit the country is the subject of immense interest. Some have observed that remittance from Nepal's overseas workers will help rebuild the country<sup>i</sup>. Nepal government seems to be expecting more than remittance from the Diaspora community- it has gone extra mile in nominating Shesh Ghale, the Australia based Nepalese entrepreneur and the Chairman of Non residential Nepalese Association (NRNA) as a special envoy for national reconstruction fund.

### **1.1 Nepalese community in Japan**

Nepalese population is one of the fastest growing foreign populations in Japan. According to Japanese government data, Nepalese population has increased from 399 in 1990 to 3649 in 2000 and 4392 at the end of 2014 making it the ninth largest foreign population in Japan<sup>ii</sup>. With the

growth rate of more than 30 percent year-on-year, Nepali community is poised to grow as one of the biggest foreign populations in Japan.

Japan has been a lucrative destination for low-skilled Nepalese workers who come to Japan as cooks. Nepali workers started coming to Japan as cooks as early as 1980 via India<sup>iii</sup>. The first generations of these workers are now well settled in Japan, most of them owning Indian-Nepalese restaurant businesses. According to some reports, there are more than 2000 Indian-Nepalese restaurants being run by Nepalese people. As owners of the business they have facilitated their relatives, neighbors and Nepalese compatriots to come to Japan as cooks. Later generations also followed in the footsteps of earlier generation- starting Indian restaurant business and opening up employment opportunities for even more Nepalese compatriots. Increasing number of Nepalese are now settling in Japan with spouses and children. More recently, Nepali workers have also started coming to Japan on Industrial and agriculture sector Trainee visas.

Japan is also one of the major developed world destinations for Nepalese students. There are about 16565 students currently studying in Japan at Japanese language schools, colleges and universities<sup>iv</sup>. Increasing number of Nepalese students who graduate from Japanese colleges and universities are landing white collar jobs in the sectors encompassing manufacturing, trade, finance, services, information technology etc. Some have pursued higher education, research and academic career in Japan's premium academic and research institutes such as Tokyo University, Kyoto University, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Japan Meteorological Agency etc. Yet others have established themselves as successful entrepreneurs in the fields of trading, hotel and tourism, remittance etc.

The growth of Nepali population in Japan is not without problems though. There have been widespread problems especially in the Indian restaurant sector where workers face the harsh working environment- long working hours and minimal payment at the hands of Nepalese restaurant owners. There are also increasing cases of Nepali students and trainee visa holders applying for Refugee visa in Japan<sup>v</sup>.

## **1.2 Nepalese Diaspora Community Organizations in Japan**

Japan has seen a proliferation of Nepalese community organizations – few legally established but most of them operating on the informal basis as social networks. For the purpose of this paper, all Nepalese social networks, forums etc are also considered as community organizations. While there is no exact data about how many Nepalese community organizations are currently active in Japan, it is estimated that there are over 100 Nepali community organizations. In other words, for every 500 Nepalese people in Japan, there is one community organization. Nepalese community organizations can be roughly categorized into five groups on the basis of their constituencies: collective organizations, hometown associations, political organizations, ethnic organizations, professional organizations and social networks. Table 1 at the end of the manuscript lists the representative Nepalese Diaspora community organizations in Japan. In addition to these organizations, Nepalese community activity in Japan is also complimented by Nepalese businesses and philanthropic organizations like TBI Trust, YouMe Nepal Trust, Nepalese print and online media, and Nepalese international school where more than 100 Nepalese children are getting education based on the Nepalese curriculum.

If the number of community organizations and their activities is considered, Nepalese community in Japan is indeed a very dynamic community. Most of the Nepalese community organizations

share the common goal of promoting mutual support and cooperation among the members and broader Nepalese community and supporting socio-economic development in Nepal. There is seldom a week that goes by without one or another kind of Nepalese community activities. Social events such as Nepal festival, music concerts, celebration of Nepalese festivals, meeting with Nepalese policymakers, inter-community sports activities are some of the regular activities Nepalese community organizations are involved in.

In terms of networks and activities though there is a great disparity among these organizations. The presence of some organizations like NRN Japan is broad in terms of constituency and membership. Some organizations are always in action providing humanitarian support to needy people and contributing time and effort for social causes. Yet others are in names only. Irrespective of disparity in networks and activities, Nepalese community organizations have generated immense affinity towards voluntarism and social works in Japan and in Nepal.

## **2 Community mobilizations after earthquake**

Nepalese community organizations and individuals undertook substantial fundraising and support activities in the aftermath of Nepal Earthquake. In fact, earthquake resulted in an unprecedented unity among disparate Nepalese individuals and organization to support the country at its hour of greatest need. Nepalese community organizations promoted the cause not just among themselves; they mobilized their broad network to reach all Nepalese people living in Japan, Japanese public, Nepal Embassy in Tokyo and even Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This section discusses the scope of charity initiatives undertaken by Diaspora communities focusing on the fund-raising activities of Nepal Earthquake Victims Rescue and Help Association 2015 (NEVRHA 2015) and various Nepalese Diaspora community organizations, networks and individuals.



## **2.1 Activities of NEVRHA 2015**

NEVRHA 2015 is a volunteer association established in Japan in the immediate aftermath of the Earthquake in Nepal. It represents a unique effort on the part of Nepalese Diaspora community to aggregate resources from various Nepali Diaspora community organizations and broader community to support Earthquake victims in Nepal. This association was established under the chief patronage of Nepali Ambassador to Japan Dr. Madan Kumar Bhattarai and Chairmanship of Bhaban Bhatta, Japan based Nepali entrepreneur and the Vice President of NRN International Association.

NEVRHA 2015 collected a total fund of 55.16 million yen through fund-raising campaigns targeting Nepalese Diaspora community organizations, Nepalese individuals and businesses and Japanese public and businesses. While not a very sophisticated organization in terms of capability and planning, the effort of NEVRHA 2015 is nevertheless notable in terms of inclusivity, organizational structure and outreach to Japanese media and policy circle. These aspects helped NEVRHA 2015 collect significant amount of fund to help Earthquake victims in Nepal.

### **Inclusiveness**

The formation of NEVRHA 2015 marked an innovation to leverage the networks and capabilities of Japan based Nepalese individuals and community organizations for optimal fund-raising and delivery of support to the Earthquake victims in Nepal. Structurally, NEVRHA 2015 was organized in such a way that almost all Nepalese community organizations and prominent personalities are represented in its 30 member Committee. Nepal Embassy, the official representation of Nepal in Japan was represented in the association through the patronage of the Ambassador. This move brought together all the Nepali organizations in Japan including the

Embassy, NRN Japan and various community organizations and networks into one fold giving legitimacy to NEVRHA 2015. Indeed, it was evident that there was a broad interest on the part of community organizations to be part of NEVRHA 2015.

According to the leadership of NEVRHA 2015, the rationale of this converging effort was to optimize the support activities. The NEVRHA 2015 Secretariat clearly advocated a “one door policy” to deliver fund and other support to Nepal from Nepalese Diaspora community in Japan. This goal is reflected to some extent in the fund-raising contribution to the NEVRHA 2015 Fund. According to the financial records of the Association, 33 Nepali community organizations and networks contributed a total of 13.6 million Yen to the Fund.

### **Organizational structure and tasks**

The structure of an organization influences the efficiency and effectiveness of its functions. NEVRHA’s functioning is significant in terms of its organization structure and corresponding tasks. It created a 19 member Secretariat including Japan based NRN-ICC members, NRN Japan leadership, leadership of most active Nepali community organizations, academics and individuals with close links with Japanese government agencies and media. The task of the Secretariat was to oversee the fund-raising campaign and to lead support activities in Nepal. In order to carry out successful fund-raising campaign in Japan, four sub-committees namely Volunteer Sub-Committee, Financial Management Sub-Committee, Media Sub-Committee and Committee to coordinate with various Nepali community organizations were established.

Volunteer Sub-Committee was assigned a task to mobilize volunteers to carry out fund-raising campaign at the train stations and streets in Tokyo. Standing in groups at the train stations with banners, placards and Nepalese flags, the volunteers requested Japanese public to support the

Earthquake victims in Nepal through donation. This sub-committee raised a total of 7.5 million Yen. Through its fund-raising campaign, this sub-committee reached out to thousands of Japanese public who donated fund to support Earthquake victims in Nepal. This fund-raising effort was widely covered by Japanese visual and print media publicizing the campaign to the broader Japanese community. It also provided a platform for Nepalese citizens in Japan to contribute their time and effort to support the cause for the motherland. The fund-raising campaign of NEVRHA 2015 was embraced by other Nepali community organizations and social networks throughout Japan.

Financial sub-committee was assigned a task to make financial plans and record the financial flow. In order to realize the fund-raising potential fully, this committee worked with the Secretariat to develop online donation platform and bank transfer platform. 2.5 million yen was raised from online donation<sup>vi</sup>.

Media committee played a key role in dissipating news about fundraising programs and activities through online media as well as social media specifically targeting Nepalese audience. The active use of social media made it easier for volunteers and people to facilitate volunteer participation in fund-raising campaigns and to update fundraising details.

On the other hand Committee to Coordinate with Nepali Community Organizations worked to monitor the fund-raising activities of other community organization and facilitate their fund contribution to NEVRHA 2015 fund.

## **Outreach**

The fund-raising activities in Japan by NEVRHA 2015 and other Nepalese community organizations and social networks have been notable in terms of its outreach to Japanese public, media and policymakers.

Unlike bilateral aid through Nepal Embassy or aid through humanitarian organizations such as Red Cross or UN Agencies, the fund-raising campaign by NEVRHA 2015 and other Nepalese community organizations has made it possible for direct people-to-people support. It was observed that Japanese public not only contributed donation, but many of them cared to show direct concern and sympathy to the Earthquake victims in Nepal. In many cases, including the donation campaign of NEVRHA 2015, Japanese people and other foreigners volunteered for fund-raising campaign themselves<sup>vii</sup>. In some cases, the officials of local government offices and politicians participated actively in the fund-raising campaign initiated by Nepalese organizations and social networks.

The active campaign by NEVRHA 2015 and other Nepalese community organizations and networks has been featured widely in Japanese media. Japanese media has sought to highlight the problems and needs of Earthquake victims in Nepal through the eyes of Nepalese people living in Japan. Jigyan Kumar Thapa, the member of the Secretariat of NEVRHA 2015 tasked with coordinating the outreach effort with Japanese community informed during the interview that he featured in 30 media news – 3 TV talk, 2 Fm interviews, 7 radio talk and 18 newspaper articles. The footage of fundraising campaign by Nepalese community organizations and networks public was widely broadcasted in Japanese media. In contrast, according to Nepal Embassy, Nepal Embassy seldom featured in Japanese media in the post-earthquake period.

The outreach by NEVRHA 2015 even reached highest echelon of Japan's foreign policy making. On June 22, 2015, a delegation of Nepalese community leadership held a meeting with Japanese

State Minister of Foreign Affairs Minoru Kiuchi Ministry to report the situation in Nepal and request for Japan's support for long term rebuilding. According to the members of the NEVRHA delegation, the Japanese minister appreciated the opportunity to consult with Nepalese community about rebuilding needs of Nepal.

## **2.2 Activities of Nepalese Diaspora community organizations, networks and individuals**

The level of response on the part of Nepalese Diaspora community organizations, networks and individuals to support the Earthquake victims in Nepal have been unprecedented in terms of fund-raising and outreach targeting Japanese media, businesses etc to facilitate for further support and cooperation for Earthquake victims in Nepal.

While NEVRHA's fund-raising activities mainly centered in Tokyo region, number of Nepalese community organizations and networks of workers, students, women, etc participated actively in fund-raising activities all across Japan. Some collected fund from among the members while others reached out to Japanese public through fund-raising campaigns. As shown in Table 2, almost all Nepalese community organizations contributed fund fully or partially to the NEVRHA while only few of them contributed to Prime Minister Relief Fund through Nepal Embassy in Tokyo. Many organizations and networks are carrying out their own relief and rebuilding activities in Nepal.

## **2.3 Private donations and support facilitation**

One of the key observations of the post-Earthquake fund-raising campaign in Japan is that Nepalese individuals and business have been the significant sources of donation for the fund-raising campaign of NEVRHA 2015 as well as other community organizations. The analysis of

donation data of NEVRHA 2015 indicated that 112 Nepalese individuals and business contributed a total of 8.92 million yen for the fund.

It is estimated that there are about 2000 Nepali-Indian restaurants owned by Nepalese people in Japan. Following the Earthquake, almost all of these businesses collected donations by arranging donation box. Based on the interview with multiple business owners, it is estimated that at least 40,000 Yen in average was collected in each restaurant to support the Earthquake victims in Nepal. Put together, the total fund from the donation collected at Nepali-Indian restaurant all over Japan would be 80 million Yen. While many business owners contributed the fund to the fund-raising campaign of NEVRHA 2015 and other community organizations, many more used the fund to deliver relief materials such as tents, zinc sheet roof and food to the victims directly. Some sent the money to the relatives for delivery of relief materials and other supports.

The donations by Japan based Nepalese entrepreneurs have been notable too. For example, Bhaban Bhatta the Chairman of TBI group and Vice President of NRN ICC has committed a 10 million yen fund to help rebuild houses damaged by the Earthquake. Separately, as shown in Table 2, TBI Relief Fund he heads contributed a total of 4.3 million yen to the NEVRHA 2015 Fund. Deepak Subedi, a Nepali-Indian restaurant entrepreneur announced a 10 million yen education trust to help rebuild damaged schools in Nepal. Bhuwan Adhikari another restaurant entrepreneur has contributed 5 million yen for relief support. Many other Nepalese entrepreneurs reported donating fund in the range of 0.1 million yen to 1 million yen to support relief and rebuilding efforts in Nepal. Similarly, Nepalese workers and students made small donations to the fund-raising campaign of various community organizations. Indeed, some preferred to deliver their donation directly to Nepal.

The network developed by Nepali students, workers, professionals and entrepreneurs have been crucial in facilitating the decision of Japanese businesses and organization to provide fund for the support of Earthquake victims in Nepal. In one such case, coordinating with its Nepalese employees, a Japanese company called CG Group operating supermarkets in Japan raised a total of 45.5 million yen donation from its supermarket. The amount was handed over to Prime Minister Relief Fund through Nepal Embassy in Japan. Japanese businesses employing Nepalese employees have sent relief materials like tents, dry food, sanitary materials etc worth millions to Nepal. A number of Nepalese salary men working for Japanese companies reported receiving cash donations from coworkers. In coordination with Nepalese members and contacts, Japanese chapters of international service organizations like Rotary Club have donated significant amount of fund to NEVRHA 2015 fund as well as Prime Minister Relief Fund<sup>viii</sup>. Various Japanese language schools and universities where Nepalese students are enrolled have contributed to NEVRHA 2015 Fund as well as Nepal Embassy Fund. Meanwhile, Nepalese people are participating actively in the charity events organized by Japanese companies, media and international humanitarian organizations to support the Earthquake victims in Nepal. For example, in coordination with Jigyan Kumar Thapa, a Nepali TV personality in Japan, Kyodo News has initiated “Futatabi Nepal campaign” with a mission to enhance experience sharing and mutual understanding between the children in Tohoku region of Japan affected by 2011 East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and Nepalese children affected by 2015 Earthquake. Dr. Bijay Gyawali, Japan based clinical psychologist is coordinating the Nepal support program of Japan Israel Support Program (JISP) which is focusing its effort on building temporary houses for Earthquake victims in Sindhupalchok District. JISP is also working to support mental health of the Earthquake victims.

To sum-up, the fund-raising campaign by Nepali Diaspora organizations in Japan have been quite remarkable. It is estimated that the total amount raised through the mobilization of Nepali Diaspora individuals and community organizations is more than 300 million Yen. The Diaspora individuals and organizations leveraged their network and capabilities optimally to raise fund to support the country and the distressed compatriots. Table 3 shows the total fund raised by Nepalese Diaspora community, including NEVRHA 2015 vis-à-vis Nepal Embassy, Japan based humanitarian organizations such as Red Cross, JICA and Japanese government. While the fund raised by Nepalese Diaspora community organizations is evidently less compared to other organizations, it is nonetheless a significant amount if one considers the support it could provide to the Earthquake victims in Nepal. Indeed, in almost all of the cases, the fund and the relief activities were carried out on a voluntary basis without any administrative expenses.

Table 3: Fund contribution from Japan for Relief and Rebuilding Activities in Nepal<sup>ix</sup>

S.N	Organization	Amount contributed (yen)	Targeted activities in Nepal
1	NEVRHA 2015	55.16 million	Relief
2	Nepali Diaspora community in Japan	300 million (estimated)	Relief and rebuilding
3	Nepal Embassy	694 million	PM Relief Fund
4	Red Cross <sup>x</sup>	1983 million	Relief
5	JICA	25 million	Relief goods
6	Japanese Government emergency grant aid	1 billion	Relief and medical support



7	Japanese Government financial pledge	31 billion	Reconstruction
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**3. Process and impacts of support activities carried out by Diaspora communities**

Having raised significant amount of fund, Japan based Nepalese Diaspora community organizations and individuals carried out visible activities to support Earthquake victims in Nepal. This section assesses the process and impact of support activities by Diaspora Nepalese community organizations. First section highlights the scope of relief activities. Second section discusses the contribution of Diaspora Nepalese individuals and community organizations

**3.1 Scope of the relief support**

The relief activities by Japan based Diaspora Nepali community has been distinct in terms of the process of support delivery and scope of relief activities.

A notable aspect of relief activities of Diaspora Nepalese communities have been that they have not only contributed to the fund-raising through their own donation and fund-raising campaign targeting Japanese public, they have also delivered relief to the Earthquake victims in Nepal by themselves. Table 2 indicates that the overwhelming proportion of the fund collected by the Nepalese community organizations and individuals in Japan was administered by community organizations themselves and NEVRHA 2015. Ironically, despite Nepal Embassies’ expectation for contribution, only a handful of Nepalese community organizations contributed fund to Prime Minister Relief Fund through Nepal Embassy in Japan. This shows the lack of trust and confidence Diaspora communities and organizations have towards Nepalese government institutions.

### **NEVRHA's relief activities**

Out of the total fund collected, NEVRHA 2015 contributed 31.27 million yen for relief support activities in Nepal. It contributed this fund to the Earthquake Disaster Relief Fund of Non-Resident Nepali Association of which Bhaban Bhatta, the Chairman of NEVRHA 2015 is a Vice President. NRN-ICC has raised a total of 295.23 million Nepali Rupees worldwide. According to Bhaban Bhatta, the Chairman of NEVRHA 2015, NRNA distributed relief materials to 10,000 families in 6 most affected districts in Nepal. According to Sudan Thapa, a member of NEVRHA 2015 who coordinated NRNA relief delivery in Ramechhap District, the relief his team coordinated was the first one to reach earthquake victims in the district. His team distributed relief materials such as tent and rice and other food items to 1200 households in Ramechhap District.

### **Relief activities of other Diaspora community organizations**

While almost all of the Nepalese Diaspora Community organizations showed solidarity to the NEVRHA 2015 campaign by contributing fund, many of these organizations, especially hometown associations administered the relief activities on their own.

Number of hometown associations contributed fund for relief activities in their respective districts or villages while contributing a minor part of the fund to NEVRHA 2015 or administering direct relief activities in the affected districts. In the case of Gulmi Society total fund of 1.9 million yen was contributed to Gulmi District Disaster Management Committee which coordinated relief activities in Gulmi District. In the case of Wameli Society of Gulmi District, 0.6 million yen cash was distributed among the victims of the earthquake in Wami VDC. Syanja Society delivered 0.65 million yen worth of zinc sheet roof and other relief materials to 96 families in Syanja District affected by Earthquake victims. Galkot Society Japan distributed 2.5 million worth of relief goods

in Galkot area of Baglung District in Nepal. Galkot Society also contributed 1.2 million worth of relief support including medical checkup in two villages in Sindhupalchok District and Dhading District in consultation with respective district administration offices. This shows that home-town associations are most likely to focus their support activities to support specific causes in their communities of origin. However, some home-town association pursued relief activities targeting the most affected districts. The combination of Karlim Society, Bihukot Society and Malika Society contributed relief goods, especially zinc sheet roof worth 3 million yen to 180 households in Chaling VDC of of Bhaktapur VDC through a religious trust.

On the other hand, home-town associations like Sudur Paschim Society, Rapti Society, Argakahnchi Society whose home regions in Nepal were not affected by the Earthquake contributed their fund to NEVRHA 2015 Fund. The expectation was that NRNA which administered NEVRHA 2015 Fund would deliver the support of contributing organization to the people and communities in the most affected districts.

Ethnicity based organizations showed variations in terms of administering of relief fund they raised. Tamu Dhi Japan and Magar Society Japan contributed the fund they raised to NEVRHA 2015 for relief delivery. Tamang Society Japan whose constituency mostly lies in the districts most severely affected by the earthquake carried out support activities of its own across five most affected districts, namely Kavre, Sindhupalchok, Nuwakot, Okahldhunga and Dhading. Carrying out the relief activities more than one month after the Earthquake Tamang Society administered 2.32 million of its relief fund to construct and operate temporary school buildings, public facilities, temples etc.

Japan based branches of major political parties also participated in relief activities. Jana Samparka Samiti contributed 3 million yen worth of relief goods like food items and medicine to Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, Kavre and Chitwan Districts. It used its political contacts in various districts to deliver support. Overseas Nepalese Forum, Japan, the Japan based sister organization of CPN UML party contributed 0.4 million to the UML Earthquake Relief Fund. It also contributed 0.1 million each to NEVRHA 2015 Fund and Nepal Embassy fund. Jana Pragatishil Morcha, the sister organization of UCPN Maoist party contributed 0.43 million to construct a temporary school building in Nuwakot district. Japan branch of Federation of Nepalese Journalist contributed 0.9 million yen it raised to the relief fund of the Central Committee of Federation of Nepalese Journalists.

Not only the community organizations, but a number of Japan based Nepalese individuals, businesses, networks and organizations not covered in this study are participating actively in the relief delivery activities. In a way, fundraising and delivering the support to the earthquake victims in Nepal has been like a campaign from which nobody wants to miss out. In the cases of the relief delivery by NRNA in remote districts like Ramechhap, Rasuwa etc, their support reached people before the support from government and other humanitarian organizations reached. The participation of panorama of Diaspora community organizations, networks and individuals have ensured that the support has reached various districts- some severely affected by Earthquake and some partially.

However, this does not mean the relief activities by Diaspora organizations are without problems and ambiguities. Some organizations were quick in declaring their pledge for Relief Fund which did not materialize at all. Others created social media frenzy updating pictures of relief delivery to the victims while not necessarily making significant contribution. The question of accountability

also became critical as several interviewees of this study reported the financial mismanagement that led to withdrawal of fund and misunderstanding among the members of the organizations. There are also the questions concerning the effective and equitable deployment of relief support by Diaspora community organizations and individuals. According to interviews conducted, in most of the cases the choice of communities and villages for relief distribution seems to have been defined by one's contact or convenience, but not necessarily based on the information about the needs of the people. This resulted in aid duplication- some communities received plenty of relief while communities especially in the hard-to-access areas were devoid of relief aid. Unless properly coordinated with local government agencies, Diaspora community are susceptible to fall into this trap.

On the background of these ambiguities, a critical question that assumes importance is: to what extent Diaspora community organizations are able to administer long-term rebuilding projects that need proper knowledge, adept policies and planning and significant financial resources. A related question here is how policy measures on the part of government/s can enhance the role of Diaspora community organizations in supporting both the short term priorities such as emergency relief and long-term priorities such as post-earthquake rebuilding?

### **3.2 Rebuilding support**

For many Nepalese individual donors as well as community organizations, the initial contribution for earthquake victims in Nepal is not essentially a one-time-donation or contribution. According to interviews conducted with the representatives of multiple community organizations, most of the Nepalese Diaspora community organizations are stipulating activities for rebuilding support. This section discusses how Japan based Nepalese Diaspora community is supporting rebuilding efforts

in Nepal through research and knowledge transfer and support for infrastructure development targeting public housing and education sector.

### **Knowledge transfer for rebuilding**

Being a country which is often struck by natural disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, volcano, hurricanes etc, Japanese universities and research institutes are known to be strong in research related to disaster prevention and management. Many Nepalese researchers have been trained in Japanese universities and research centers-some returning to serve in Nepal and others staying in Japan taking up research, career and faculty positions. The expertise of this community could be valuable for rebuilding effort in Nepal.

Expectedly, Japan based Nepalese experts in the field of disaster management and structural designs are actively involved in research and discourse about post-earthquake reconstruction. In concert with NEVRHA 2015, Nepal Engineers Association, Japan organized a seminar titled “Post Disaster Relief and Rebuilding in Nepal” on July 1 2015 in Tokyo<sup>xi</sup>. In this seminar, Dr. Netra Prakash Bhandary, an associate professor at Disaster Management Center of Ehime University, Dr. Jhabendra Prasad Ghimire, the Chief Engineer of Commonwealth Engineers Co; Ltd and Dr. Yadab Dhakal of National Research Institute for Earth Sciences and Disaster Prevention explained the technical details of the earthquake and the damage it caused and discussed technology to build earthquake resistant structures in Nepal. Japanese experts in disaster management and recovery efforts also presented their insights about relief and recovery in Japan after 2011 triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima nuclear explosion. Dr. Bhandari is currently working as one of the lead researchers of “2015 Nepal Earthquake Disaster Emergency Survey Research Project” sponsored by Ministry of Education, Japan. Dr. Ghimire is contributing to post Earthquake

rebuilding discourse in Nepal by writing opinion pieces in Nepalese media and even helping design the earthquake resistant structure for school funded by Nepalese Diaspora in Japan. In his opinion piece titled “Planned Premises” published in The Kathmandu Post, Dr. Ghimire called for village rebuilding in Nepal following the Japanese village models of concentrated settlements and urban rebuilding following the Japanese model of government built high rises that could be rented to the public. With Japan showing kin interest in Nepal’s post-earthquake rebuilding using the policy framework of “Build Back Better Reconstruction”<sup>xii</sup>, Nepalese experts in Japan are poised to play important role in adopting Japanese experience in Nepal’s reconstruction.

### **Resource Transfer for Rebuilding**

The scale of the damage the earthquake caused to houses, public buildings, schools and roads in Nepal has increased Nepalese Diaspora community’s interest in Japan’s Earthquake resistant buildings and structures. Several Japan based Nepalese community organizations and individuals have made deliberate decision to prioritize rebuilding or at least work on both relief and rebuilding. The leadership of NEVRHA 2015 has floated the idea of constructing model Japanese villages in Nepal following Japanese structural designs. A number of Japan based Nepalese Diaspora organizations and individuals are stipulating plans to support rebuilding efforts in Nepal specially targeting education sector. Everest International School, Japan (EISJ), a Japan based Nepalese school has raised a total of 7.53 million yen to rebuild schools in Nepal. It has initiated a campaign called “Build a Future Project”. Current target of this project is to build five primary level schools in five Earthquake affected districts namely Bhaktapur, Dhading, Gorkha, Sindhupalchok and Nuwakot. The Chairman of Nepal Engineers Association, Japan is helping the project by designing earthquake resistant structure for school building. EISJ is continuing the fundraising campaign to help rebuild more schools.

NRN Japan is also stipulating a plan to build schools in the Earthquake affected districts in Nepal. The chairman of NRN Japan informed that the upcoming activities of NRN Japan will be geared towards fund raising campaign targeting Japanese businesses, individual donors and various service and development organizations to build schools in Nepal. Wami Society has set a 20 million yen fundraising target to build a modern earthquake resistant structure for Sarada Vidya Mandir Secondary School in Wami VDC of Gulmi District in Nepal. YouME Nepal trust used 2 million yen of the fund it raised to build to semi-permanent schools in remote VDC's of Lamjung District. YouMe Nepal Trust and Tamu Dhi Japan also plan to use the remaining fund they have collected to provide scholarship to the students who lost their parents because of Earthquake. Nepalese entrepreneurs are also showing interest to build earthquake resistant model schools in Nepal.

#### **4. Policy measures to enhance the role of Diaspora community in rebuilding**

Clearly, the proactive role of Japan based Diaspora Nepalese community organizations in the aftermath of the Earthquake indicate that Nepalese Diaspora community is evolving as an impactful humanitarian and development actor in Nepal. The question is how policymakers could respond to the vast resources and drive of Diaspora Nepalese to meet post-earthquake rebuilding needs at the short term and broader development goals in the long term.

The policy to tap the resources of Diaspora communities in Japan could very well start from Nepal Embassy in Japan itself. As discussed in section 2, most of the Nepalese community organizations operate informally without official status in Japan. A provision for qualified organizations to get officially registered with Nepal Embassy could help the cause of increased cooperation and coordination between government's official representation and representative organizations of



Nepalese Diaspora communities. This would not only give the legitimacy to these organizations, but this would also allow the embassy to evaluate and monitor the activities of Diaspora community organizations. This in turn would help Nepal Embassy marshal more support and resources of Nepalese Diaspora communities to support the priorities of Nepal government such as contributing fund to the government's relief and rebuilding efforts. Even when Diaspora community organizations implement the support activities of their own, Nepal Embassy could still exercise its influence to make the activities compliment national priorities and goals.

There is general consensus on the part of Nepalese Diaspora community that Nepal government lacks the drive, vision and capability to lead the relief and rebuilding efforts. Hence, their general unwillingness to contribute the millions of fund they raised to Prime Minister Relief Fund. In order to gain the trust of Diaspora communities and translate their contribution into substantial result, government should improvise its policies vis-à-vis the Diaspora organizations support. In the context of post-earthquake rebuilding, a promising policy measure would be for government to promote donations of Diaspora communities by offering matching grant programs especially targeting education sector<sup>xiii</sup>. For example if a Diaspora community organization or even individual donors build one school, government would match the contribution by building another school or contributing 50 percent of the fund to build one school. If this campaign is globalized targeting the global Nepalese Diaspora community, the outcome would be tremendous. Indeed, this very approach could be used at all levels of administration i.e. central, state and local level targeting any other development priorities. The clear policies on the part of government would encourage philanthropic giving among grass root Diaspora communities as well as well-to-do entrepreneurs.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has analyzed in detail the support activities of Nepal Earthquake Victims Rescue and Help Association 2015 (NEVRHA 2015) and various other Nepalese community organizations in Japan. Although relief activities were administered in disparate ways by various organizations, the study concluded that the mobilization of Nepalese Diaspora community in Japan resulted to substantial fundraising and administering of relief support activities for distressed compatriots in Nepal. It regards the establishment and operation of NEVRHA 2015 itself as a successful experiment to pull the Diaspora resources for substantial support to Earthquake victims in Nepal.

It also highlighted the rebuilding contribution of Nepalese Diaspora community in Japan from the perspective of knowledge transfer. It is expected that Japan based Nepalese experts in disaster prevention and management will play substantial role in helping understand the disaster properly and applying Japanese experience of disaster prevention and management for better rebuilding in Nepal.

In order to tap the philanthropic potential of Nepalese Diaspora communities optimally, this study calls for policy innovation on the part of Nepal Embassy and Nepal Government to enhance coordination with the Diaspora organizations and develop matching grant policies focusing education sector whereby government at different level would match the contributions from the Diaspora organizations as well as individuals.

The next level of this research would be to conduct a cross-country analysis of Nepalese Diaspora effort to extend helping hands for the country and distressed compatriots in the wake of the devastating earthquake.

Table 1: Nepalese Diaspora Community Organizations in Japan

S.N	Name of the organization	Organization type
1	NRN Japan	Collective organization

2	Myagdeli Network	Home-town association
3	Manang Society	Home-town association
4	Gokha Society	Home-town association
5	Kaski Pokhara Society	Home-town association
6	Parvat Society	Home-town association
7	Lamjung Society	Home-town association
8	Balewa Society	Home-town association
9	Syanja Society	Home-town association
10	Wami Society	Home-town association
11	Apchaur Society	Home-town association
12	Sudur Paschim Society	Home-town association
13	Rapti Society	Home-town association
14	Chitwan Society	Home-town association
15	Argakhanchi Society	Home-town association
16	Dharapani Society	Home-town association
17	Kurgha Society	Home-town association
18	Nuwakot Society	Home-town association
19	Karlim Society	Home-town association
20	Bihukot Society	Home-town association
21	Malika Society	Home-town associatiom
22	Galkot Society	Home-town association
23	Jana Samparka Society (Nepali Congress)	Political organization
24	Parwashi Nepai Manch (CPN UML)	Political organization

25	Jana Pragatisil Morcha (CPNU MAOIST)	Political organization
26	Janajati Federation	Ethnic forum
27	Tamu Dhi	Ethnic organization
28	Nepal Tamang Society	Ethnic organization
29	Magar Society	Ethnic Organization
30	Sherpa Association	Ethnic Organization
31	Thakali Service Society	Ethnic organization
32	Limbu Society	Ethnic Organization
33	International Nepali Society, Japan	Social network
34	Nepal Sajha Society	Social network
35	We For All	Social network
36	Nepal-Japan Youth Club	Youth network
37	Youth Movement for Motherland	Youth network
38	Galkot Sports Club	Youth network
39	Nepal Japan Student Society	Student network
40	International Nepali Literature Society	Professional network
41	Nepal Engineering Association, Japan	Professional network
42	Federation of Nepalese Journalist	Professional network
43	Nepal Japan Economic Organization	Professional network
44	Sagarmatha Women Group	Women network
45	Nari Kunja, Japan	Women network

Table 2: Fundraising by Nepalese Community Organizations

S.N	Name of the organization	Total fund raised (Yen)	Contribution NEVRHA	Contribution to Nepal Embassy (yen)
1	NRN Hokkaido	1371069	1371069	0
2	NRN Kansai	1500000	1500000	0
3	NRN Hiroshima	85000	85000	0
4	Myagdeli Network	231000	231000	0
5	Manang Society	180000	100000	0
6	Gokha Society	100000	100000	0
7	Kaski Pokhara Society	124000	124000	0
8	Syanja Society	700000	100000	0
9	Gulmi Society	2310000	250000	100000
10	Wami Society	1907440	2310000	350000
11	Sudur Paschim Society	150210	150210	0
12	Rapti Society	100000	100000	0
13	Argakhanchi Society	250000	250000	
14	Kurgha Society	391200	50000	100000
15	Nuwakot Society	320000	125000	0
16	Karlim Society/Bihukot Society/Malika Society	7350000	250000	0
17	Galkot Society	3800000	0	0
18	Galkot Sports Club	1200000	0	0
19	Balewa Society	420000	0	0

20	Jana Samparka Society (Nepali Congress)	3200000	200000	0
21	Parwashi Nepai Manch (CPN UML)	600000	100000	100000
22	Jana Pragatisil Morcha (CPNU MAOIST)	430000	0	0
23	Tamu Dhi	1500000	123016	0
24	Nepal Tamang Society	2420000	100000	0
25	Magar Society	250500	250500	0
26	Nepal Sherpa Association	100000	100000	0
27	International Nepali Society, Japan (INCJ)	20000000	124000	0
28	We For All	124000	124000	0
29	Nepal-Japan Youth Club	124000	124000	0
30	Hitachi Japan Nepal Society	100000	100000	0
31	Federation of Nepalese Journalist	900000	0	0
32	Nepal Engineers Association	100000	0	0
33	Dharapani Society	900000	0	0

34	Nishi Funabashi Nepali Association	200185	200185	0
35	TBI Relief Fund	4306000	4306000	0
36	YouMe Nepal Trust	5000000	0	0
37	Everest International School	8032255	250000	250000
38	Nepal-Japan Economic Association	2010000		
39	Prey for Nepal 2015	7280000	0	4780000
40	Nepal-Japan Student Society	100000	100000	0
41	Gifu Nepali Student Association	828510	828510	0
42	Sagarmatha Women Group	533361	5333361	0
43	Parwashi Bidyarathi Society	1000000	1000000	0
	Total	64028730	13649851	5680000

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Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> See Raveena Anulakh, “How Nepal’s overseas workers can help rebuild country”, <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2015/04/28/how-nepals-overseas-workers-can-help-rebuild-country.html>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.moj.go.jp/content/001140153.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Based on interview conducted by the author among first generation of Nepalese cooks who came to Japan

<sup>iv</sup> Data provided by Nepal Embassy, Tokyo

<sup>v</sup> According to Japanese media report, Nepalese represent the highest number of refugee applicants in Japan. See [http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/social\\_affairs/AJ201410270026](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201410270026)

<sup>vi</sup> Online donation could be seen at <http://helpfornepal.org/>

<sup>vii</sup> It was reported in Japan Times that a donation campaign initiated by Nepalese alumni of Ritumeikan Asia Pacific University in Kyushu was supported by 200 Japanese students, 30 international students and many local Japanese students and businesses, see Magdalena Osumi, “Nepali expat champions aid effort for quake-struck homeland,” *The Japan Times*, July 10, 2015

<sup>viii</sup> For instance Dr. Ram Giri, a Japan based Nepalese professional donated 1.8 million to FNCCI Nepal on behalf of Rotary International District 2750, Tokyo Japan. He also donated another 2 million yen to Prime Minister Relief Fund handing over the amount to Prime Minister Sushil Koirala on behalf of Rotary International District 2750

<sup>ix</sup> Fundraising data is calculated by (1) referring the data provided by NEVRHA 2015 (2) By estimating the total fund raised in the Nepalese community (3) checking the homepage and media releases by Red Cross [http://www.jrc.or.jp/contribute/help/2015\\_1/](http://www.jrc.or.jp/contribute/help/2015_1/), Ministry of Foreign Affairs [http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_000739.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000739.html) and [http://www.mofa.go.jp/sa/sw/np/page22e\\_000673.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/sa/sw/np/page22e_000673.html)

<sup>x</sup> [http://www.jrc.or.jp/contribute/help/2015\\_1/](http://www.jrc.or.jp/contribute/help/2015_1/)

<sup>xi</sup> The author was present at this seminar

<sup>xii</sup> See JICA, [http://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2015/150610\\_01.html](http://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/field/2015/150610_01.html)

<sup>xiii</sup> Kathleen et al. discuss in the report *Diaspora Philanthropy: Private Giving and Public Policy* discuss matching grant program in the context of Mexican government’s policy to promote donations from migrant Mexican’s.