

NEPAL 2015 EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE REVIEW AFTER FIVE YEARS



April 22, 2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The devastating earthquake that hit Nepal in 2015 caused grave loss of lives and widespread destruction of public and private properties. Around 9000 people lost their lives and more than 8 million people were directly or indirectly affected as a result of the earthquake. The humanitarian consequences from the disaster triggered a massive international humanitarian response in the form of development and technical assistance.

After 2015, one of the leading organizations providing humanitarian support in Nepal was Swiss Solidarity (SwS). Swiss Solidarity and its partner NGOs collectively delivered a geographically focused multi-thematic assistance in some of the most disaster-struck regions of Nepal.

Purpose:

The main objective of this review is to evaluate the perception of the earthquake affected population of the multitude of assistance that they received and to review the modalities of engagement that occurred between local officials and the project implementers. The geographic focus of this review is Melamchi Municipality and Helambu Rural Municipality of Sindhupalchowk district and the purpose of this review can be summarized by the following fundamental themes:

- 1) Evaluate the perception of the Earthquake Affected Population (EAP) in Melamchi Municipality and Helambu Rural Municipality of Sindhupalchowk district, on the multi-thematic assistance they received from Swiss Solidarity after the 2015 Nepal earthquake. This includes a thorough assessment of the EAP's perception on the relevance, impact and inclusiveness of the multitude of assistance that was offered.
- 2) Assess the overall effectiveness of the dynamics of engagement that took place between various stakeholders of the projects. The Swiss Solidarity supported projects were implemented through various local government channels, with close collaboration among project implementers, local NGOs and local government representatives. This review systematically evaluates the status of partnership that took place between all the relevant stakeholders.

Methodology:

This study is designed as a cross-sectional survey research and review, with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. A holistic mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed for the collection of primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through: i) beneficiary satisfaction and perception surveys of earthquake affected population, ii) focus group discussion with select groups of beneficiaries and iii) key informant interviews with project implementers, NGO officials, school teachers, and local government authorities. Secondary data was collected through systematic review of project documents from SwS partner NGOs, including technical evaluation of Swiss Solidarity supported projects.

Main Findings:

Overall Perception on Impact of the Assistance

A large majority of the respondents considered that the Swiss Solidarity assistance resulted in lasting improvements of their daily economic and social livelihoods. Across the board, beneficiaries were confident that SwS support had enabled them to jumpstart their life after the 2015 Nepal earthquake.

- **Rehabilitation of houses and sanitation facilities:** Specifically, 76% (130) of the respondents were pleased with the overall earthquake resilient reconstruction of their house. Similarly, 91% (156) of the respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the rehabilitation of their toilets. In addition, 71% (123) of the respondents were content with the functionality of private drinking water taps in their yards. Shelter, sanitation and drinking water are the fundamental necessities of life. This review found that basic necessities were fulfilled, through Swiss Solidarity support, for majority of the households.
- **Economic recovery of livelihood:** Overwhelming majority of households (92%) appreciated the economic livelihood support they received in the form of unconditional cash grants (UCG). Respondents claimed that the UCG played a highly supportive role in helping them purchase food, assets and livestock after the 2015 Nepal earthquake.
- **Rehabilitation of Irrigation Schemes:** Almost all of the sampled beneficiaries (91%) were satisfied with the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes in their community. Moreover, many felt that the irrigation schemes had improved their production capacity. This indicates the development of irrigation canals has led to enhancement of their economic and agricultural livelihood.
- **Rehabilitation of Schools:** The case for schools is even more positive. Around 99% of the students are satisfied with the rehabilitation of their school and feel safe in their schools.

Overall Perception on Relevance and Inclusiveness of the Assistance

The findings of this review show that majority of the respondents consider that the assistance from Swiss Solidarity responded to their immediate priority needs.

- Around 97% of the respondents are confident that their houses are built to standards of earthquake resilience. This is a positive sign as many of the beneficiaries' homes were partially/completely destroyed by the 2015 Nepal earthquake.
- Similarly, almost everyone believes that Swiss Solidarity support resulted in rehabilitation of the most damaged irrigation schemes in the area. This indicates the fact that local beneficiaries have trusted the selection of project interventions they received.
- The distribution of unconditional cash grants was a difficult process. Considering the challenges of beneficiary identification, the beneficiaries appreciate the cash support they received. Around 83% of the beneficiaries believe that the UCG was distributed to the population that needed it the most.
- In terms of inclusivity, 94% of the students who were surveyed were either very satisfied or satisfied with the gender sensitive and inclusive design of their schools.

Stakeholder Perception on Effectiveness of Collaboration

A large majority of the participants of this study were highly satisfied with the modes of collaboration and communication between them and Swiss Solidarity partner NGOs. Stakeholders described the experience of working with Helvetas, Caritas and Solidar as easy, cordial and efficient. More specifically, key stakeholders were grateful for the following features of the partnership:

- **Transparency:** Across the board, local government authorities and local NGO officials were pleasantly satisfied with the transparent nature of the projects. They mentioned themselves as being informed and involved throughout the project duration, from starting from project design until post-completion monitoring.
- **Opportunity for close collaboration:** Local government officials and members of School Management Committees had the opportunity to closely collaborate with staff and team members from Helvetas, Solidar and Caritas. They appreciated the fact that technical staff were highly approachable and well-mannered, and knowledge was readily shared amongst the stakeholders.
- **Comprehensive:** A large majority of stakeholders were pleased with the breadth and comprehensiveness of Swiss Solidarity support. The fact that Swiss Solidarity, Helvetas, Solidar and Caritas, invested tremendous levels of technical and financial resources for the rehabilitation of houses and sanitation facilities, rehabilitation of irrigation canals and drinking water systems and the rehabilitation of schools was very positively considered by the community.

Conclusions:

The overall perception regarding the relevance, impact and inclusiveness of Swiss Solidarity and partner NGO support has been exceedingly positive. Local communities of Melamchi Municipality and Helambu Rural Municipality have greatly appreciated the wide-ranging support they've received. Furthermore, the stakeholders of the assistance (e.g. local government officials, local NGO authorities, SMC members etc.) are highly pleased with the close and productive engagement they could have with Swiss Solidarity partner NGOs. They have commended the transparent and comprehensive nature of the projects and have applauded the Swiss Solidarity and partner NGOs for their dedication and accountability.

Recommendations:

The study team offers some recommendations and areas of improvement categorized as follows:

- A. General recommendations on approach and methodology:
 - I. Reviews like these are more informative if the study team can execute even more extensive consultations with the beneficiaries when carried out in normal circumstances.
 - II. Brief questionnaire surveys like the ones used in this review could be complemented by having longer, residential assessments.

- III. Clustered random sampling technique could have eased and accelerated the field movement
- B. General recommendations based on the approach undertaken by projects:
 - I. Specific contingency measures should be incorporated into project design during the early phase of the project.
- C. Specific recommendations from key technical findings of this review:
 - I. The issue of insect infestations of wood used in shelters should be addressed.
 - II. Irrigation scheme maintenance systems should be strengthened.
 - III. The designs of the infrastructures supported under the projects could have been more flexible as per the needs of the beneficiaries.