



## HOMES & COMMUNITIES

# Building Safe Homes and Communities: Nepal

Vision: Ensuring local, provincial and national governments and other stakeholders have the policy instruments, systems and capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters and support the housing recovery of vulnerable communities.



In Nepal, vulnerable families are at risk when earthquakes, landslides and floods threaten their already fragile homes. Ambika Pudasaini's newly built house (inset) was designed to withstand earthquakes. Read her story over the page.

Photos by Benny Manser

## Context

In the last two years alone, earthquakes, landslides and floods have claimed more than 798 lives, damaged over 100,000 homes, and led to economic losses exceeding \$700 million<sup>1</sup> in Nepal. Following the West Nepal Earthquake of November 2023, some 95,787 households need reconstruction support at an estimated cost of \$363 million. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), the country's central coordinating body for disaster risk reduction, management and recovery, was established in 2018 and seeks support from government and organizations in its formal establishment at the provincial level. Coordination and resource mobilization for disaster management for housing recovery is fragmented, and CRS Nepal, through the National Housing and Settlements Resilience Platform (NHSRP) is investing in the system strengthening of the NDRRMA and all seven provincial bodies for multi-hazard resilience and promoting localization of disaster risk

reduction in housing recovery and resilience. The platform comprises seven organizations that bring together various expertise to influence government and collaborate. This combined and varied experience widens opportunities to engage with government and other stakeholders, humanitarian and development actors, and academics.

## Opportunity

In line with the NDRRMA's strategic plan of action, the platform has been working on three major components: (1) institutionalizing disaster risk management and housing recovery solutions into relevant policies, procedures and tools; (2) developing and implementing an effective and inclusive information management system; and (3) building the capacity of the NDRRMA, and provincial and local governments in disaster risk management and recovery. Platform staff are seconded to the NDRRMA and provincial ministries, providing easy access to and opportunities for collaboration and resources-sharing.



<sup>1</sup>. [Bipad Portal](#) (July 2022 - July 2024)

Ambika Pudasaini and her husband, children and father-in-law, pose for a family photograph outside their newly built house, designed to withstand earthquakes, in Makawanpur district, Bagmati Province.

Photo by Benny Manser



## Story of impact

### 'We didn't have any option but to stay in a damaged house'

In a remote village in Nepal, Ambika Pudasaini's life was changed forever one day in 2015 when a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake destroyed her home in Makawanpur district of Bagmati Province.

"We were more or less camping in a school," she recalls. However, as time passed and the school reopened to students, Ambika's family had to return to their damaged home, even though engineers had deemed it unsafe.

The Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform (HRRP, renamed the NHSRP in 2021) was formed to facilitate collaboration between government and reconstruction actors. Catholic Relief Services led the platform, working with counterpart agencies of the Nepal government at the local level on:

- Policy formulation and dissemination.
- Coordination and strategic planning.
- Advocacy, communication and research.
- Information management.
- Technical expertise and solutions.

This approach evolved into a much larger effort, bringing key players together to rebuild resilient homes and communities. Because of her situation, Ambika's family was one of the **300 highly vulnerable families** selected to receive a new home. Through the Resilient Communities through Vulnerable Earthquake Recovery (ReCoVER) project, CRS and our partners provided technical support, oversight to masons, and building materials to assist families like Ambika's. In total, CRS has supported about 6,240 households affected by the 2015 earthquake to rebuild their lives.

As part of the recovery support, Ambika attended training on raising goats and livestock and started a milk-selling business after receiving two goats. Ambika later expanded her small enterprise to include cattle. By selling milk, she supports her family and ensures her children can attend school. Although their income is modest, Ambika's efforts have put them on a path toward financial stability.

- Read more of Ambika's story [here](#).

“I did some low maintenance, covering cracks and making sure the house was clean. We stayed there for almost five years.”

Ambika Pudasaini  
Bhimphedi,  
Bagmati Province

To make her home safer, Ambika was among the many families who received a government grant of 50,000 rupees (\$370) as part of a series of installments to repair and rebuild. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak when she received the first installment, forcing her to use the housing grant for other urgent family needs due to lost income and rising living expenses. Because Ambika didn't use the first installment to repair her house, she was not eligible to receive the second and third installments.

"I did some low maintenance, covering cracks and making sure the house was clean. We stayed there for almost five years," she says.

To further assist people affected by the 2015 earthquake, the government of Nepal established a post-earthquake housing reconstruction program.

## CRS and partner response

### Objectives

To contribute to an efficient and inclusive government system, NHSRP has identified five major workstreams:

- Multi-hazard socio-technical assistance.
- Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) integration for shelter and disaster risk reduction.
- Shelter and disaster risk reduction management information systems (MIS).
- Policy advocacy for multi-hazard resilience, including flood-resilient solutions and geohazard technical solutions.
- Research and collaborative learning for technical solutions (Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID), loss and damage).



## Homes & Communities Strategic Change Platform

As a part of its Vision 2030 agency strategy, Catholic Relief Services has undertaken a transformational shift from a focus on shelter and settlement—the building of roofs and walls—to homes and communities, the foundation on which life rests. CRS is committed to achieving transformational systems-level change to reach 10 million people affected by crisis and enable them to live in safe and dignified homes and communities through its two-pronged approach:

- Expanding CRS programming reach
- Bringing about systems-level change

### Activities

- Developed nine major policies and procedures at the national, provincial and local levels.
- Developed five evidence documents to advocate for green shelter response, building code implementation, government housing policy revision, and flood-resilient housing solutions.
- Oriented more than 95% of local and district government on government information management systems and policies for government tranches for housing recovery and reconstruction.
- Enabled four active technical working groups to collaborate to influence systems on multi-hazard socio-technical assistance, GEDSI, GRID and flood-resilient solutions.

### Looking ahead

Working toward system strengthening, the exit strategy has been planned as a gradual process, focusing on evidence-building and pilot/demonstration in the initial years, policy development and institutionalization midway, and

monitoring support and complete handover in the final years. The gradual handover of each workstream is planned according to the estimated time for influence, and thus the timeframe for each workstream is different.

### Working in partnership

With seven active members on the platform, the NHSRP coordinates with government, development, humanitarian and academic organizations on a context basis, and more than 5,000 members subscribe to its monthly newsletter.

CRS Nepal is strategically focused on investing technical, financial and human resources at the local, provincial and national levels to advance the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategic Plan of Action 2018-2030. Specifically, in line with the plan's strategic priorities, the NHSRP is designed to:

- Ensure that evidence-based risk and needs assessments inform the proposed disaster risk reduction and housing solutions, always leveraging existing resources and working in close coordination with NDRRMA stakeholders.
- Ensure that national, provincial and local governments have the tools to drive and fund resilient housing solutions.
- Integrate Gorkha earthquake policies, systems and lessons learned into supporting households and the government to 'Build Back Better.'

Since its inception, the National Housing and Settlements Resilience Platform has played a pivotal role in the NDRRMA's achievements, which include the formulation of the Monsoon Preparedness and Action Plan for the years 2079, 2080 and 2081,<sup>2</sup> the endorsement of the GEDSI Strategic Plan of Action, localization of NDRRMA management information systems (RMIS and BIPAD portal) and coordination of the recent Jajarkot earthquake response and information management, acknowledged by the NDRRMA and awarded \$298,555 by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the International Organization for Migration to continue socio-technical assistance and information management for shelter recovery from June to December 2024.

Leveraging the NDRRMA's country-wide presence and with technical staff embedded in all seven provinces, the NHSRP is well placed to support the scale-up of innovative housing recovery and disaster risk reduction solutions on behalf of the NDRRMA, to provide socio-technical solutions and capacity strengthening to prepare for and respond to earthquakes and other natural disasters.

2. Nepal uses the Bikram Sambat (BS) lunar calendar. The year 2081 BS corresponds to 2024-2025 in the Gregorian calendar.

“ The NHSRP has played a bridging role in delivering crucial technical assistance since the start of our full operations as an Authority.

Anil Pokhrel, Chief Executive, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority

Durga Sarki (bottom center), a social mobilizer from Caritas Nepal, provides guidance to masons on the procedures and techniques for flood-resilient housing.

Photo by Benny Manser



“ [The National Housing and Settlements Resilience Platform] has brought all organizations together in one place, which is considered a model concept in order to avoid duplication of work.

**Dr. Jagat Basnet**  
Research and Policy  
Analyst, Community Self  
Reliance Centre

### CRS in Nepal

CRS has been working with Caritas Nepal since the 1970s, and has been supporting Caritas Nepal in emergency response, capacity building and disaster management since 2005. CRS' ability to rapidly assess and address needs in the aftermath of disasters, such as the 2015 earthquakes, is thanks to a strong and long-standing partnership with Caritas Nepal.

With sound experience working with the NHSRP's predecessor, the Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform

(HRRP),<sup>1</sup> CRS is well-placed to leverage and extend its 2015 Gorkha earthquake recovery and reconstruction experience to support and coordinate with the government of Nepal to address the risks of recurring and devastating natural disasters.

1. The HRRP was involved in coordination, information management and technical support, which resulted in the development of influential national-level government policies, including 13 technical guidelines, the BIPAD (Building Information Platform Against Disaster) portal, a government information management system and three major policy reforms to improve the resilience of newly reconstructed and retrofitted houses. Through its policy and coordination work, the HRRP unlocked \$1.6 billion in government funding, supporting 760,000 households across Nepal.

“ [The National Housing and Settlements Resilience Platform] team are providing technical assistance in information management whenever necessary through virtual support that has resolved the technical issues in data entry and processing.

**Leknath Sapkota**, Social Security and Registration Officer, Malika Rural Municipality



Catholic Relief Services | 228 W. Lexington Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, USA  
[crs.org](http://crs.org) | [crsespanol.org](http://crsespanol.org)