

Final Evaluation Report

of the

Welthungerhilfe Nepal

Earthquake Emergency Response 2015

Kathmandu / Stuttgart 10 April 2016



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Executive Summary

This evaluation was commissioned by Welthungerhilfe for November 2015. Due to the fuel crisis and the problematic logistics situation, it was shifted to February 2016. The field mission took place between the 1st and 18th February. The international consultant was supported by two national consultants who shared one position.

The inception report was finalized together with the evaluation matrix with the help of the Welthungerhilfe Country Team. All but one Alliance2015 partners were interviewed and the three most important local partners were visited in their offices and in their field projects. Five village development committees / municipalities in three districts (Ramechhap, Bhaktapur, Dhading) were visited.

Interviews with beneficiaries were conducted in focus groups or individually by household, partly together with partners' field staff, partly without. Working relations between partners, local authorities and beneficiaries were found to be characterized by trust and mutual respect. In some of the visited areas, partners had development projects ongoing, that were turned to relief for some time.

With partners and with the Welthungerhilfe country team, reflection meetings were conducted regularly to verify findings and preliminary conclusions. The overall findings and preliminary recommendations were presented and discussed in a final debriefing meeting in the Welthungerhilfe office in Kathmandu.

Comments of Welthungerhilfe staff and partners informed the debriefing notes, containing still some open questions, that were sent on the 21st February. This draft takes note of the comments to the debriefing notes and further information by email.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Preparedness: while a solid partnership with a large national NGO with emergency response capacity was well developed, the preparedness of Welthungerhilfe country team itself was at a low level. A disaster preparedness workshop in April 2014 identified a list of gaps but did not translate into a contingency plan and the physical infrastructure of the country office was not adequate. The preparedness of emergency response mechanisms at the WHH HQ allowed swift and substantial response in cooperation with local partners.

Contingency planning: The Welthungerhilfe country programme in Nepal has, ten months after the disaster, no contingency plan for another earthquake or another large disaster, not as a stand-alone plan, not as a plan with national partners and not as a plan with the Alliance2015. Nepal is newly appointed as among the pilot countries for preparedness planning, driven by the Humanitarian Assistance Team at WHH HQ.

Preparedness within Government structures allowed impressive responsiveness by the Nepali army and police and installed streamlined disaster response mechanisms in each affected district and at the national level. The Government's formulation of rules and regulations and the transmitting of information to the international humanitarian system was at times slow and less-than consistent.

Geographic targeting: Early relief interventions of Welthungerhilfe, exclusively through partners, took place in 11 districts (three of which were visited) and there in about 20 village development committees or municipalities. This represents a wide geographical spread, making it more difficult to connect to development (before and after relief and during and after reconstruction) and connect to target groups and local authorities. This wide geographical spread was significantly reducing effectiveness, efficiency and lowering potential impact. During the later relief interventions, Dhading and Ramechhap Districts became the focus for relief and early recovery and will be considered for longer term rehabilitation.

Registration and assessments had to follow Government of Nepal figures during initial stages and partly throughout the relief phase. This prevented independent assessments but reduced a proliferation of disconnected registrations and assessments (and saved time). Welthungerhilfe and other NGOs had no choice but to accept in some districts a non-targeted or even blanket distribution, thereby diluting humanitarian assistance for the most needy among the affected populations.

Logistics: Most distributions of relief material, even though useful and with excellent quality, came later than planned to reduce human suffering as early as possible or before the monsoon. All delivered shelter material arrived in time before winter. Reason for delays were mainly logistics problems of transport, border crossing and

market availability outside the control of WHH. Some of the delays resulted from missing logistics preparedness arrangements.

The Welthungerhilfe's partner approach was upheld during the humanitarian cooperation in Nepal. However, most procurement of relief materials was done through Welthungerhilfe, despite earlier arrangements of partners' approved ability for procurement. The relief-oriented cooperation in general strengthened the partner relations but did not exploit its full potential because of a non-strategic geographic allocation and a still missing joint rehabilitation strategy.

Targeting of relief items followed largely a gap-filling, opportunistic approach in selecting many areas, less so an approach of satisfying all or most humanitarian needs in fewer areas, thereby missing opportunities of building development links in the focussed-on areas.

Cash for work activities have produced impressive results with excellent quality of output, where community-driven project selection was combined with technical skills of engineers employed by partners. The self-selecting nature of cash for work was important in favour of the poorer sections of the affected as a counter-balance to untargeted or blanket distributions.

Cash programming as unconditional and unrestricted cash transfer was only utilized on a small scale. The pros and cons of such free cash transfers after the Nepal earthquake remain undocumented and perhaps un-reflected among the Welthungerhilfe, partners and Alliance2015.

Following a GoN order, none of the relief items was adjusted to family size, leading to insufficient effectiveness, especially among larger families.

Emergency response team: Initial problems in the cooperation between the country office, and the emergency response team, were overcome during the following months. Some opportunities in logistics effectiveness, efficiency and 'strategic relief & rehabilitation planning' might have been lost during the initial weeks of the relief operation. The Nepal experience in insufficient cooperation between Welthungerhilfe country team and the emergency response team offers important lessons for the international humanitarian response capacity of the organization. It has been thoroughly analysed in other forms than through external evaluation.

Strategy and plan for reconstruction: The Welthungerhilfe country programme in Nepal has, ten months after the disaster, no reconstruction strategy and –plan, not as a stand-alone strategy/plan, not as a strategy/plan with national partners and not as a strategy/plan with the Alliance2015.

Reconstruction plans of the Government of Nepal are still unclear in detail, thereby complicating or hampering the individual decision-making of families and the planning of governmental and non-governmental agencies, including Welthungerhilfe, national and Alliance2015 partners.

Key Recommendations

Consider income of affected families as the main driver for swift recovery and sustainable reconstruction

Preparedness: Initiate, with high priority, the contingency planning with national partners and with the Alliance2015. Consider both a large earthquake and widespread but localized water-borne disasters. Included in this preparedness exercise is the mapping of capacities and partners, physical infrastructure for field visits and logistics, standing preparations for local and regional purchase and a clear division of tasks within Welthungerhilfe office, partner teams and Alliance2015 partner offices. Utilize findings from the intensive reflection process for a better and smoother cooperation between country team and emergency response team. Further preparedness issues under logistics below.

Geographical targeting: in any emergency with multiple international interventions, the focus of Welthungerhilfe and partners should be on affected areas with a developmental engagement in the past and a rehabilitation and development engagement in the future. The 'most affected' areas, if they are outside the areas of long-term engagement, can be left to the humanitarian 'heavyweights' that have higher personnel and logistics punch. Ideally, most of humanitarian needs in the targeted areas should be covered in cooperation with local partners and / or with Alliance2015 complementary capacities.

Registration and assessment: in Nepal and in other emergencies, follow available or estimated assessment data for initial response - where speed is more important than precision - and refine your data with established trust and relationships. After the initial and life-saving relief, seek alliances for the continued lobbying for good humanitarian practice in standardized but needs-oriented targeting and allocation.

Logistics: pre-establish and update regularly a list of suppliers with price lists for the most commonly needed relief items. Pre-establish links with transporters and warehousing capacity in strategic places of the country. Consider storage of a rub-hall, generators, camping equipment and office tents. Pre-positioning of hardware and information should, wherever possible, be done with partners and Alliance2015 to share costs and management burden. At the very least, both partners should be informed about Welthungerhilfe's state of logistics preparedness.

Partner approach: Consider to leave humanitarian procurement to the partner, at least for national procurement. Prepare framework agreements that guide humanitarian intervention and templates for proposals, tenders, budgets and monitoring and others for emergency projects.

Cash programming: consider cash programming, unrestricted and unconditional in any emergency situation as the most flexible, effective and efficient relief tool. Introduce conditionality (e.g. cash for work, for training) in situations, where the outcome of the condition is crucial for the welfare of the affected population. Replace cash with hardware only in situations where cash has clearly expressed negative effects or where the logistics of exchanging cash into needed relief items is very difficult or expensive.

Cash for work: in irrigation, erosion control and road improvement consider further cash for work as a very appropriate, self-targeting tool to improve economic frame conditions, provide immediate income and sustain long-term improved income and nutrition in remote and affected areas.

Adjustment to family size, need, remoteness: after the first round of relief distributions, increasingly adjust inputs to family size, levels of vulnerability and other economic factors. Remoteness and transportation costs to reach there should not be a reason to focus on closer areas, rather the opposite: try to reach the remotest areas first and foremost.

Emergency response team: follow-up the intensive reflection process with a documentation that is availed to the country team, the emergency response team and – to some degree – to national partners. In general, for other disasters, initiate every deployment of the emergency response team with a thorough briefing meeting with the country team. Establish frequent and regular meetings of the whole Welthungerhilfe team from day one with concise notes. If problematic, put agreed action or conflictual issues in writing and share with HQ.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation strategy and plan: initiate a process that involves national partners and the Alliance2015 to the degree possible, without relying on either partner to develop a Welthungerhilfe rehabilitation strategy and –plan of at least three years.

Generally, consider a **LDRRD** approach, linking (pre-disaster) development with relief, rehabilitation and (post-disaster) development.

Consider to initiate an Alliance2015 model rehabilitation programme in a cluster of VDCs in a strategically well-located district. Such a model should be seen as increasing the visibility of the Alliance2015 for rehabilitation-funding donors and internally for instituting complementary working modalities

