



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

# DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for  
International  
Development

Washington D.C.  
20523

## NEPAL - Earthquake

Date: July 29, 1980 (FY 80)

Location: The mountains of the Far Western Development Region, including the Mahakali, Seti, Karnali, Bheri, and Rapti Zones.

No. Dead: 100

No. Affected: 5,600 injured; 30,000 homeless; 75,000 cared for by mass feeding.

Damage: 5,000-6,000 public and privately-owned buildings were destroyed; 8,000 buildings damaged. Irrigation works, especially terraces, and farm structures were also damaged. Several thousand head of goats, sheep, buffalo, cows, and bullocks are presumed to have perished.

### The Disaster

A severe earthquake registering 6.0 on the Richter scale hit the Far Western Region of Nepal on the evening of July 29, 1980. The main shock lasted 20 seconds and was preceded by a major foreshock registering 5.0. The epicenter was in the Accham, Bajura, Bajhang, Danchula area, a highly active seismic zone which has experienced 13 earthquakes between 1966 and 1977, ranging in intensity from 4.7 to 5.2 on the Richter scale.

Loss of life would probably have been greater had not the fore and main shocks occurred before nightfall. When the main tremor hit, many people had been forewarned by the late afternoon foreshock and were out of doors.

Of the districts in the western Mahakali and Seti Zones, Parchula, Baitadi, and Bajhang were the hardest hit with 25 to 40 deaths and approximately 2,000 people injured in each district; 5,000 families were left homeless. The headquarters town of Darchula district was completely leveled and, throughout the entire affected area, most two-story buildings were in ruins. In Bajhang district alone the quake destroyed 90 schools,

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65 shrines, 21 village panchayat buildings, 12 government buildings, and 2,200 hectares of land; total damage was estimated at NRs 123,578,000 (US\$10.3 million) in Bajhang alone, according to RSS, the official news agency of Nepal. Army barracks in Darchula and Bajhang, as well as police posts in several districts were also destroyed, as were several telegraph communication facilities. This situation was compounded by heavy monsoon rains and landslides which seriously hampered already poor communication and transport systems in these districts.

### Assistance Provided by the Government of Nepal (GON)

His Majesty's Government of Nepal (GON) reacted rapidly and effectively to assess damages and speed necessary relief assistance into the earthquake area. Although assessment of the extent of the disaster proved to be difficult due to communication and transportation problems, GON immediately decided to send food grains, medical assistance, and temporary shelter to Darchula district, where the reported damage appeared worst. At the same time the Nepal Red Cross Society and its local branches in the Far Western Region began to send powdered milk, clothing, tents, rugs, and medicines.

In the Far Western Region a contingent of the Royal Nepal Army was dispatched to Darchula and Bajhang to help in relief work (constructing temporary shelters and administering the provision of free food grains). District panchayat chairmen were used to gather information and to form committees for relief work. Seven district-level relief committees were set up, and in turn 61 separate relief teams, composed of representatives of the district administrations, police, health assistants, range officers, and village leaders, were sent to outlying areas to assess damages and assist in relief works. An additional 16 health posts were established to supplement the existing 48 in the disaster area.

As of August 19, 1980, the contribution (tentative) of GON towards the relief operation was approximately NRs 12.2 million, equivalent to US\$ 1.03 million. By late September accounts, the central-level relief committee had dispatched approximately 500 tons of rice and wheat, 100 tons of which were earmarked for free distribution. Also distributed were 1,100 tents, 24,000 meters of plastic (for temporary shelter), 3,200 meters of cloth, 3,430 blankets, 2,424 garments, and medicines all valued at NRs 320,300 (US \$26,900); 129 bags and tins of milk were also sent.

By late September the earthquake fund committee had realized donations in cash and in kind amounting to more than NRs 6 million, equivalent to approximately US\$ 500,000. GON had completed all immediate relief measures by mid-October 1980; medium and long-term efforts, involving track and road construction, school rebuilding, and community reconstruction activities, will receive special attention with the recent creation of the Fifth Development Region, composed of the Mahakali and Seti Zones.

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Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On August 3, 1980, the Ambassador determined that a disaster existed in Far Western Nepal. At the request of GON the Ambassador's \$25,000 disaster assistance authority was used to cover the cost of approximately 30 tons of food grain (procured from the National Food Corporation) to be delivered to Bajhang district, perhaps the most seriously affected district and an area accessible only on foot or by air. All grain delivered under this fund was for free distribution to the earthquake victims. All of this food grain was delivered to Bajhang by small planes (with payloads of approximately 1.2 tons each) by August 15, 1980, and was received by representatives of the Ministry of Home and Panchayat.....\$25,000

TOTAL \$25,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported.

Assistance Provided by the International Community

International Organizations

European Economic Community (EEC)- tents and other kits valued at \$216,000.

U.N. Development Program (UNDP) - granted \$30,000 for the local procurement of tarpaulins, and the UNDP representative coordinated donor relief assistance.

UNICEF - donated \$11,000 and \$14,000 for the local purchase of tarpaulins and medicines, respectively.

World Health Organization (WHO) - donated \$40,000 for the purchase of medicines.

U.N. Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) - donated \$20,000 for purchase of relief supplies.

World Food Program (WFP) - has been authorized to distribute in-country grain to the earthquake region.

CARE donated \$2,500 for local procurement, preparation, and distribution of approximately 100 household kits (plastic sheets, blankets, etc.)

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Governments

Australia - \$11,776 worth of in-kind aid through UNDRO.

Fed. Rep. of Germany - \$30,000 worth of tents and blankets.

Japan - \$10,000 in cash.

Netherlands - \$40,000 in cash.

New Zealand - \$6,000 in cash.

Rep. of Korea - \$2,000 in cash.

Pakistan - \$416 in cash.

United Kingdom - tents valued at \$22,000.

Voluntary Agencies

Chinese Red Cross - \$10,000 in cash to Nepal Red Cross

Israel Red Cross - medicines valued at \$8,403

Save the Children Fund (SCF)(British) - donated \$7,500 for local procurement, preparation, and distribution of 125 household kits.

Others

Shimizu Construction Co. and Azusa Sekki Co., both of Japan, contributed \$1,000 in cash.

TOTAL \$482,595

\* Please note: the figure for total international assistance is an approximation. In many cases the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.