CASE STUDY

NEPAL 2015–2019 / COORDINATION
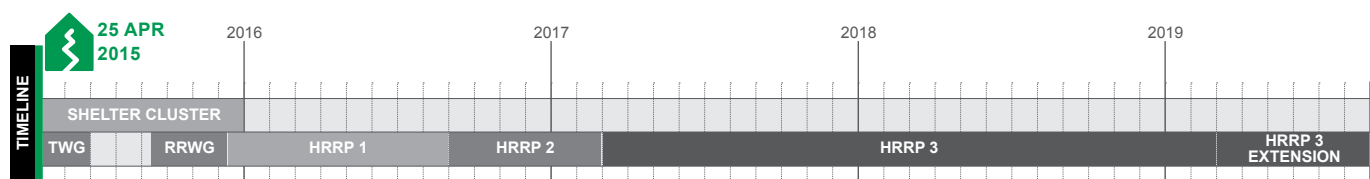
KEYWORDS: Housing recovery, Coordination, Advocacy

CRISIS	**Nepal Earthquake, 25 April 2015** (and major aftershock on 12 May 2015)
TOTAL PEOPLE AFFECTED[1]	**8 million** people (almost one third of the population)
TOTAL PEOPLE DISPLACED AS OF MARCH 2019	**3,913 households** (approx. 19,095 people) identified as eligible for relocation grant (1,669 of these households have already completed relocation)[2]
TOTAL HOUSES DAMAGED[3]	**812,371 fully** damaged (to be reconstructed) **61,891 partially** damaged (to be retrofitted)
TOTAL HOUSING NEEDS	Over **4.2 million people** (based on number of houses damaged and average family size of 4.88)
PROJECT LOCATIONS	National level and 32 earthquake-affected districts
PROJECT OUTPUTS	**Coordination services** provided across 32 districts for a total of 203 partners (45 active as of Feb 2019) **Guidance and reports** including: joint advocacy report,[4] information bulletins,[5] and Socio-Technical Assistance package agreed with NRA and partners[6]
PROJECT OUTCOMES	**61%** of survey respondents made changes to activities based on information from HRRP 3 district-level events; **99%** agree that HRRP 3 technical guidance is easy to access, **86%** that it is well researched, and **96%** that it is relevant to their work; **82%** agree that HRRP 3 has reduced gaps and prevented duplication in reconstruction efforts; **60%** agree that HRRP 3 has supported strengthening of emergency preparedness and response

CHINA

INDIA

KATHMANDU

PDNA CLASSIFICATION:

- *SEVERELY HIT*
- *CRISIS HIT*
- *HIT, HEAVY LOSS*
- *HIT*
- *SLIGHTLY AFFECTED*
- *NON-AFFECTED*

This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the Global Shelter Cluster.
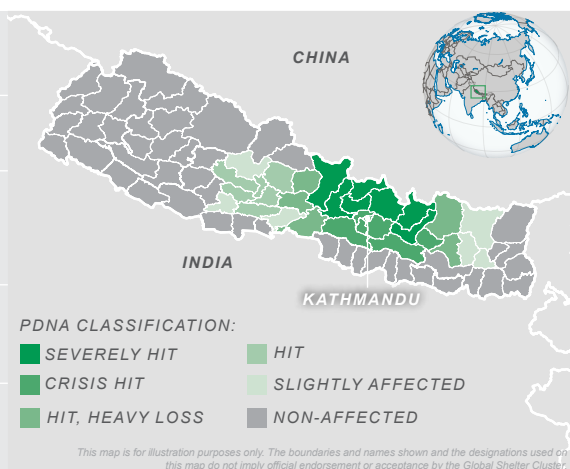
PROJECT SUMMARY

After the Nepal earthquake of 2015 and its aftershocks, coordination of recovery efforts was critical. Since 2015, the coordination platform for these efforts evolved, with leadership from a series of different recovery actors. The case study focuses on two periods of time. First, on the transition of coordination leadership from the Nepal Shelter Cluster to the Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform (HRRP) in its first phase. Second, on the HRRP's third phase, under the co-leadership of a national and an international NGO. Through these two snapshots, the case study highlights the impact of initial challenges and successes on later recovery coordination efforts.

TIMELINE

25 APR 2015 — 2016 — 2017 — 2018 — 2019

SHELTER CLUSTER

TWG | RRWG | HRRP 1 | HRRP 2 | HRRP 3 | HRRP 3 EXTENSION

25 Apr–31 Dec 2015: **Nepal Earthquake Shelter Cluster.**

May–Jun 2015: **Shelter Cluster Technical Assistance and Training (TWG).**

10 Sep–7 Dec 2015: **Recovery and Reconstruction Working Group under Shelter Cluster (RRWG).**

Dec 2015–Aug 2016: **HRRP 1 (led by two UN agencies).**

Sep 2016–Feb 2017: **HRRP 2 (led by one UN agency).**

Mar 2017–Feb 2019: **HRRP 3 (led by INGO). Extension expected until July.**

Aug 2019–Dec 2020 / Jul 2021: **HRRP 4 (planned). Depends on National Reconstruction Authority timeframe.**

Refer to the expanded timeline on "The Path to Housing Recovery", available at https://bit.ly/2UhxkXt.

STRENGTHS

+ Early start of the Recovery Working Group under the Cluster.
+ Holding technical meetings at national NGO offices helped developing a collective approach to technical assistance.
+ Having a recovery advisor within the Cluster early.
+ High involvement of national organization in HRRP 3.
+ Flexibility of HRRP 3 to adapt to the changing context.
+ Two-year funding was attracted thanks to initial contributions from the HRRP 3 lead INGO.

WEAKNESSES

- Collaboration challenges in HRRP 1 reduced effectiveness.
- Limited translation services led to the exclusion of local actors.
- Assistance was prioritized towards 14 out of 32 districts affected.
- Lower global experience and support mechanisms of the HRRP 3 lead INGO compared to larger agencies.
- Some activities were not handed over to the government.
- Lack of funding diversification.

Government grants were used to rebuild a variety of different housing typologies. From load bearing brick masonry and reinforced concrete (above-left) to timber frame and stone masonry (above-right).

CONTEXT

See overview A.16 in this edition and overview A.3 and case study A.4 in Shelter Projects 2015-2016 for more information.

The Shelter Cluster has been working in Nepal from 2008, contributing annually to the local, district, and national monsoon and earthquake contingency planning process led by the government and the United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator's Office.

In response to the 2015 earthquake, the Shelter Cluster was fully activated, along with the majority of other clusters. The government designated a ministry for coordination of the emergency response activities, which was supported by other ministries as well as by UN agencies and a number of national and international NGOs working in the country. However, a government authority to lead the recovery and reconstruction was not designated until August 2015.

Post-cluster coordination for recovery and reconstruction has generally been ad hoc, because there is no global support mechanism to replace the cluster system. In many cases, national governments have the capacity to take on this role. Where this capacity is not fully developed, additional support is requested from the international aid community. The development of HRRP Nepal is one such case.

TRANSITION FROM CLUSTER TO HRRP

The 2015 earthquake was a major disaster for the housing sector and was met with a large-scale response by over 300 agencies. The wider humanitarian coordination context favoured ending operations and coordination and closing the cluster system as soon as possible. Deactivation of the clusters was endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Team. Most clusters, including Shelter, were deactivated by December 2015. This occurred in the context of an ongoing winterization response, along with the continuing development and roll-out of government structures for the recovery phase, potentially impacting the transition. Given the scale of the response, it was acknowledged early by the Shelter Cluster, donors, government, and I/NGOs, that coordination support would be required in the long term. Two UN agencies jointly led the Recovery and Reconstruction Working Group (RRWG),

which launched in September 2015 under the Shelter Cluster. Importantly, all the lead agencies of the Cluster and the HRRP were members of the Global Shelter Cluster Strategic Advisory Group (SAG), which promoted linking the emergency shelter coordination with the subsequent recovery.

HRRP PHASE 1

In December 2015, the RRWG transitioned to become the first phase of the HRRP (HRRP 1). HRRP 1 was jointly led by the two agencies and was funded by two donors, with significant in-kind contributions from partners to implement the platform. With both agencies having been involved in the Cluster response, it was an opportunity to ensure a smooth transition of work, staff and knowledge. Coordination under HRRP 1 kept the same structure and core functions as it had under the leadership of the Shelter Cluster. National coordination was led by the same two agencies, and in the districts there was an effort to maintain the leadership from the same organizations that had supported the Cluster. The leading agencies conducted a series of consultations with key partners, including government, NRA, HRRP SAG members and donors, to make recommendations for the following 18 months of the platform, captured in a strategic document.

HRRP PHASE 2

Based on the recommendations, the second phase of the HRRP saw one of the lead agencies at the national level discontinue its involvement. This ensured that there was greater clarity and ownership of HRRP 2 for the remaining lead agency and for platform members. Launched in September 2016, HRRP 2 was mainly funded by one donor and some contributions from the lead agency. As a result of the review process and limited funding, HRRP 2 initially adopted a different model with no technical coordination and with limited district staff. Partners were expected to provide technical coordination capacity. The lead agency collaborated with an existing INGO member of the platform to fill the National Coordinator position. HRRP 2 then began to implement changes to include some technical coordination and increase its district presence. The lead agency discontinued its role in February 2017, and the platform tendered for a new lead agency.

The response and recovery efforts from INGOs were limited in urban areas.

Grants were given in three tranches, based on construction milestones. However, some houses were missed in damage assessments and did not receive the grants.

HRRP PHASE 3

For the third phase of the HRRP, an INGO took the leadership and agreed to co-fund the platform, while sub-national coordination in five districts was led by Nepalese NGO partners. Technical coordination at national and district levels was led by a national NGO with extensive technical and coordination experience from Nepal and the region.

The three-tiered structure (district, national and hub) was shared by all phases of the HRRP. However, the make-up was a bit different, with three types of coordinators at each level: technical, information management, and general. The national level structure of HRRP 3 included some new elements. For example, HRRP 3 included a dedicated staff member and a comprehensive system for monitoring and evaluation; technical coordinators in the districts; operational, finance, IT and administrative staff; a translator; and a recovery advisor. Building on the relationships developed during HRRP 1 and 2, the majority of HRRP 3 staff worked from government offices. The platform maintained a high level of investment in staff capacity-building and development, as part of a platform-wide staff performance management system (non-agency specific).

With the recovery needing significant time, and having regained some trust with partners, donors and government, the platform secured two years of funding for the first time under HRRP 3. This allowed for longer-term planning and the chance to adapt implementation to changing circumstances. In February 2019, the platform was going to be extended for five months and a new phase planned to start in August.

MAIN CHALLENGES IN THE TRANSITION

In spite of the willingness and significant investment in handover, there were challenges in engaging partners and establishing government ownership of the Shelter Cluster RRWG, the precursor to HRRP. Significant and frequent leadership changes in the government institutions established to oversee reconstruction were happening, making it difficult to build momentum and agree on longer-term goals and coordination strategy.

In addition, the transition of resources and knowledge from the Cluster to HRRP 1 was challenging, including staff continuity, and some key activities were dropped or redone. Challenges with joint leadership of the HRRP 1 also affected the overall performance of the platform. With limited resources and many roles yet to be fully established, discussions remained at a high level. Challenges of continuity during the transition, phase 1 and 2 of HRRP were exacerbated by uneven sporadic funding.

MAIN CHALLENGES IN HRRP 3

With the September 2017 changes to Nepal's administrative structure, HRRP 3 had to stretch funding levels to provide capacity-building and information-sharing support to the newly elected municipal officials.

The structure of HRRP 3 involved multiple agencies, each with different salary scales, operational support and expectations, and a very large geographical area. This presented challenges to team spirit and cohesion, management, staff security and maintaining a positive reputation.

Differences in communication, language, representation within the Humanitarian Country Team, and management structures created **challenges to meaningful engagement of local NGOs** and limited the platform's impact, although their involvement was key to its success.

International partners were asked to focus on socio-technical assistance, to support households in rebuilding using earthquake resilient techniques

Since NGO deputed staff often had to dedicate time and effort to non-HRRP related work, **there were issues of identity and impartiality.**

The platform lead also faced operational and administrative challenges, including central management of staff hired by multiple organizations, especially in relation to expenditures and performance.

WIDER IMPACTS

The transition from Cluster to HRRP set the scene for recovery and reconstruction coordination support after the closeout of clusters.

HRRP provided technical input for the development of reconstruction guidelines and policies, allowing the government inspection of housing reconstruction for tranche disbursement to be uniform and harmonized.

Advocacy on STA and overcoming barriers to reconstruction led to some agencies changing their programmes to include more or more effective STA. HRRP advocacy also resulted in the government engaging more in co-funding activities, and considering provision of direct STA.

District- and local-level orientations and trainings for I/NGO and government staff reduced the misinformation presented to affected households, increased the knowledge and improved the practices of responders, as well as improved government access to tools for coordination.

Information management provided access to dynamic data and analysis, which was used by government and partners to reduce gaps, avoid duplications and target appropriate responses, based on better defined needs. This resulted in households having better access to more appropriate support.

The HRRP provided coordination services, guidance and advocacy to support reconstruction efforts. The early start of the Recovery Working Group under the Cluster was key in facilitating a transition from the relief phase.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

National actors assumed a stronger role in the third phase of the HRRP, which helped developing a shared approach to technical assistance and more local ownership.

STRENGTHS

+ The planning for the RRWG began early and was supported by the Shelter Cluster SAG and contributions from the two organizations that co-chaired the group. Partner organizations were also supportive of the group and actively engaged with its activities.

+ Holding technical working group meetings at national NGO partner offices provided a space for them to share experience and guidance collectively, and enabled planning for a shared approach to technical assistance and training.

+ Having a recovery advisor within the Shelter Cluster providing input at early stages of the response.

+ In HRRP 3, the number and responsibilities of national organizations implementing coordination at district and national levels increased, also thanks to the partnership focus of the INGO lead.

+ HRRP 3 was able to adapt to the changing context. It did so by expanding coordination support to the newly-established municipal-level government; expanding support to a wider geographic area without additional resources; and supporting training needs of government and partners as gaps arose.

+ The lead agency of HRRP 3 contributed significant funds to the platform, which made the timing for receiving donor funds less critical. This then allowed to attract two-year funding.

WEAKNESSES

- The two lead agencies of HRRP 1 found it challenging to work together, which impacted the effectiveness of the platform and undermined transition, creating gaps in coordination services at critical moments.

- Limited translation services led to the exclusion of local actors and, subsequently, less than optimal communications.

- Although 32 districts were identified as affected, the humanitarian community advocated for partners to work in 14 districts, as outlined by the government. **This left the majority of those affected with little international support.**

- The global experience, size and support mechanisms of the lead INGO of HRRP 3 were limited compared to larger agencies. This resulted in a learning curve and an additional workload for staff, who had to balance the operational requirements with national and global expectations, and needs of post-cluster coordination services in Nepal.

- Some activities and services were not handed over, especially in the area of communications. For example, the HRRP developed a significant subscriber audience for email updates and for social media. However, with no government counterparts and not enough effort by the platform itself, these initiatives may struggle to be sustained after exit.

- Up to 2019, most funds came from only one donor, while more efforts should have been made to attract more diverse contributions.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **The concept of "transition" is not entirely applicable.** In Nepal, coordination for recovery began early (May 2015), but coordination for residual humanitarian needs was also needed in 2017 (e.g. winterization).

- **Recovery specialists should be deployed early** and have provision for remaining beyond the cluster.

- Coordination services for reconstruction need to be **mindful of the time frames for various government activities.** NGOs and donors often make rigid decisions on projects and activities in advance of policies and frameworks from government. **Transition should build on and support government structures for recovery,** not only emergency.

- **Strengthening engagement of a wide range of partners** – especially national organizations – contributes to the effectiveness of the platform. **The higher the degree of impartiality, the more effective** the coordination platform. Agency visibility may hamper this.

- **Longer-term, dependable funding** contributes to better retention of staff (as well as allowing time to support capacity-building initiatives), dependability of coordination services, and establishing and developing key relationships with reconstruction actors. It also aligns better with recovery time frames.

- **No coordination mechanism should operate without translation as a core service.** Having live translations at meetings requires additional consideration and investment. With such investment, the platform could improve inclusivity of meetings at the national level and continue to support document translation.