

ASIAN CONGRESS FOR MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION (ACMC)
2016 International Conference

in partnership with the
Departemen Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

**The Changing Power Structures
of Communication:
Shifting Notions of Authority and Influence**
27-29 October 2016
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Conference Proceedings
ISSN: 2508-0466





Media Monitoring of Nepal Earthquake: Lessons Learnt and Way Forward

Sudeep Uprety¹, Sushil C Baral¹, Kritagya Regmi¹ and Bipul Lamichanne¹

Health Research and Social Development Forum (HERD), Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal
Corresponding Author: Sudeep Uprety
Email: sudeep.uprety@herd.org.np

Abstract: The 2015 Nepal Earthquake created massive damage with 9000 lives taken away. Immediately after earthquake, stories about damages and casualties, relief efforts were coming from various sources. Due to information overflow, there was need for quick and reliable information. Immediately after earthquake, HERD conducted media monitoring from April 29 to May 22, 2015, scanning stories available online and on social media. Covering stories to mark first year of earthquake, media monitoring was also conducted from April 18 to 25, 2016. Scanning about 500 stories, we documented statistics on deaths and injuries, relief supplies, aid pledged and provided. These stories revealed perceptions of general public and international community regarding relief efforts and emergency disaster management. Major lesson drawn was the greater demand for real-time, neutral and detailed information feeding policy makers for prompt action during emergencies. As way forward, such media monitoring exercises need to be promoted for evidence-based decision making.

Key Words: Media Monitoring, Earthquake, Nepal, Reconstruction

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank Ministry of Health officials, particularly from Health Emergency Operations Centre for their encouragement to conduct the media monitoring. Special gratitude also goes to Mr Deepak Joshi, Ms Shophika Regmi, and Mr Ram Kanta Tiwari for reviewing the draft paper and providing valuable feedback on the paper.

1. Introduction

The afternoon of April 25, 2015 was not a pleasant one for Nepal. The earthquakes of April 25 and May 12, 2015 along with several subsequent aftershocks took away almost 9000 lives and destroyed properties worth millions. With the occurrence of the earthquake, national and international media played an instrumental role in reporting about the Nepal Earthquake, especially in 14 highly affected districts where government, humanitarian agencies, development organizations and volunteer groups concentrated their relief works.

1.1 Media Coverage and Perceived Realities

Events occurred in this world including disasters are a “shared reality” held not only by individuals, but also institutionalised in everyday practices and public artifacts such as media coverage (Uchida et al, 2015). While communicating a certain message through media, stories present socio-cultural attitudes and values apart from presenting objective facts, consequently generating a “collective” perception. However, the story teller or the journalist brings in his/her individuality making stories more interesting. In that sense, media coverage is not just a collective or macro phenomenon, but also comprises of individual psychological facts (ibid).

Social media has added a new dimension in the era of communication. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter provide that space of inter-linkage where ‘weak links’ or connections could be established with another person or group without having any previous interaction or good understanding about such people and groups (ibid). The power of digital media is as such today that a mere photograph or video of a farmer struggling to survive amidst flood in rural Nepal could actually help him in changing his fortune in no time with immediate support.

US Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Craig Fugate discusses about the social media phenomenon during disasters in a fortnightly *Down to Earth* (Saleem, 2015):

“Social media has revolutionised communication during disasters...Today we have a two-way street—residents are informed about hazards in real time and emergency managers receive immediate feedback on the consequences of a disaster. Twitter Alerts provide an opportunity to get information directly from trusted sources.”

Wider reach and accessibility also creates more susceptibility of false and distorted news/stories being spread. There could be a flood of irrelevant and wrong information that is being fed to us. In extreme times such as earthquake, verifying the truth of the information could be extremely difficult and time consuming (Uchida et al, 2015).

Jo Chandler, senior writer at *The Age* opines that despite difficult circumstances of reporting during disasters, it is important for journalists to forget their identities as journalists for a while and come out of ‘scoop mentality’ while reporting (Melbourne Press Club, 2011). In a similar line, according to Centre for Advancing Journalism (2011), current acceleration in media environment has led to “more immediate and graphic images, more instant interviews with survivors and less time to decide what sort of coverage is ethically responsible or what represents major invasions of the privacy of victims or survivors”.

1.2 Rationale for Conducting Media Monitoring

Alike in other natural disasters such as earthquakes in Japan and Haiti, media stories about the Nepal earthquake was predominantly prioritised by national and international media. The ‘information overflow’ also created confusion, anxiety and helplessness to find a one-stop media portal that provides quick and reliable information.

Health Research and Social Development Forum (HERD), a national organization working in the sector of health and social development in Nepal was engaged from Day Zero supporting Ministry of Health (MoH) and other government authorities in emergency relief operations. MoH had started its own Health Emergency Operations Centre coordinating with National Emergency Operations Centre to collect information from health facilities all over the country and mobilise the national and foreign medical teams with the support of development partners.

The information MoH was collecting after the earthquake was helpful only for emergency health care management. However, various layers of other information such as rescue and relief support required, extent of damage, aid management, efforts of the government, public reactions were missing. It was also important to cross-verify the figures about damages/aid support pledged and other such statistics from various sources.

Thus, this project was carried out with two objectives in mind: track the stories reported during the period through mainstream media as well as social media; and provide quick and updated information to government and other non-government agencies in a single platform on a daily basis.

2. Methodology

The media monitoring was conducted in two phases – immediately after the earthquake for about a month period from April 30 to May 22, 2015 and after a year marking the anniversary for a week long period from April 18 to 25, 2016.

Monitoring was conducted on the basis of real time recording of the news/articles in an MS Excel file. The stories were categorised into different issues such as public health care, economic impact, government efforts, sanitation, management of food, drugs and supplies, rescue efforts and public reactions.

Table 1: Sample of Daily Collection and Categorisation of Media Stories of April 30, 2015

Date	Content	Source	Link
30-Apr	Urgent need for tents and blankets for Kavre, 4000 people out in the open	Twitter	
30-Apr	Useful map of water, food, shelter and medical resources by USAID	Twitter	https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zi9UK0TLB9F4.k-0-hoWJ9ECE
30-Apr	Number of reported deaths in Nepal Earthquake in Maps	Code for Nepal via Twitter	http://www.codefornepal.org/2015/04/map-of-reported-nepalearthquake-deaths-april-27/
30-Apr	Earthquake victims in Kathmandu Valley and elsewhere have complained that they remain deprived of even basic things like food and tents even after five days	Republica	http://myrepublica.com/politics/item/20103-quake-assistance-fails-to-reach-victims.html
30-Apr	Victims of Sipaghat waiting for aids	Pahilo post.com	http://www.pahilopost.com/content/-3831.html
30-Apr	Death toll reaches 18 in Okhaldhunga	Republica	http://myrepublica.com/t20/item/20122-quake-death-toll-reaches-18-in-okhaldhunga.html
30-Apr	Affected people and sick ones not receiving drugs in Kirtipur One died due to pneumonia	onlinekhabar.com	http://www.onlinekhabar.com/2015/04/271652/
30-Apr	Manufacturer says there's abundance of drugs but lacks distribution mechanism	onlinekhabar.com	http://www.onlinekhabar.com/2015/04/271856/
30-Apr	Piled boxes of rice and noodles aren't nearly enough to meet the needs of local people	CNN	http://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/29/asia/nepal-earthquake-rescue-flight/index.html

Altogether we scanned through 500 stories related to Nepal Earthquake which we collated, analysed and included in our media monitoring reports. These stories were collected as they were available online while doing random Google Search and search on social media with the search terms like “Nepal Earthquake”, “Earthquake”, “Nepal Quake”, “Gorkha Earthquake”, among others.

3. Findings

Findings from this media monitoring exercise are categorised into two sections: stories reported immediately after the earthquake and stories published after a year reflecting the year-long efforts of dealing with the disaster.

In the phase 1 of the media monitoring, the findings are presented based on the major issues highlighted through the stories such as public health care, rescue efforts, efforts to promote sanitation, management of food, drugs and supplies, economic impact of the earthquake, aid management, efforts from the government and reactions about the relief and reconstruction works.

As the phase 2 of the media monitoring collected stories reflecting one year's of post-earthquake activities, we have presented major stories covering delay in reconstruction, issues of dignity of women and children due to their vulnerability of becoming victims of sexual violence and child trafficking, the positive and negative consequences of earthquake in the tourism sector and also excessive media coverage.

3.1 Stories reported immediately after earthquake

3.1.1 Public Health Care

Majority of stories published concerning public health care were about the ministry's efforts in collaboration with foreign and national medical teams as well as development organizations to provide emergency health care.

There were stories about how Ministry of Health initiated the emergency health care services with the support of other national and international medical teams. The stories detailed about the emergency care services provided by World Health Organisation¹ in the affected districts; Indian Army² through Operation Maitri provided emergency health treatment services at field hospitals in Sinamangal, Lagankhel and Gorkha; Red Cross in Dhunche; Doctors without Borders at various places and Israeli Army provided treatment by setting up a makeshift hospital in Chhauni, Kathmandu.

The stories also covered health ministry's efforts in ensuring no occurrence of epidemic outbreaks by requesting international medical teams to extend their period of stay, suspending health workers

¹ World Health Organization Nepal (2015). Emergency and Humanitarian Action: Nepal Earthquake Health Update. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.searo.who.int/entity/emergencies/crises/nepal/who-sitrep5-30-april-2015.pdf>

² Indian Army (2015). Operation Maitri. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <https://www.facebook.com/Indianarmy.adgpi/posts/369565036573465>

who deny going to affected areas, listing 25 government hospitals as ‘central hub’ hospitals, galvanising emergency health care management. Media stories also covered efforts by global health agencies such as UNICEF³ and UNFPA in setting up women and child friendly camps to address their issues of trauma and helplessness during this period.

3.1.2 Rescue Efforts

Amidst the pain, also comes glory. Stories about the rescue efforts mostly concentrated on how those under the rubble were rescued by the government, security forces and humanitarian agencies.

Media stories during this period also covered stories of bravery, hope and resilience. A 4 month old baby⁴ was rescued alive after being buried for 22 hours under rubble in Bhaktapur while a 15 year old teenager was rescued after 5 days. This heroic deed was covered by almost all national and international media – with the message of igniting hope at times of helplessness. Other similar stories of Nepal Army rescuing an 11 year old girl from Bhaktapur and drones used especially to locate the devastation and affected sites were also given special attention in the media. There were also stories about European Commission deploying additional humanitarian aid and civil protection experts to the affected areas; Copernicus Emergency Management Service developing satellite images and maps of the disaster area to support the rescue operations.

3.1.3 Efforts to promote sanitation

Clearing the rubble created by the earthquake was also a major challenge. With the threat of epidemic outbreak looming, considerable efforts were made to promote sanitation and maintain cleanliness.

After occurrence of any major disasters such as earthquake, flood and landslides, epidemic outbreaks especially in countries with not-so-efficient emergency health care management systems in place, there is obvious caution and attention by media regarding possibility of epidemic outbreaks. Thankfully, during the early days of earthquake, sanitation condition was effectively managed by the health ministry with the support from development partners that prevented epidemic outbreaks. Stories covered efforts by government and non-government organizations as well as local volunteers engaging in clean-up campaigns, such as the one led by Chief Secretary⁵. Another story covered by the

³ UNICEF Nepal (2015). Nepal earthquake: Emergency immunisation campaign for hundreds of thousands of children. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from http://www.unicef.org/media/media_81757.html

⁴ Gerken, J. (2015). Rescuers Pull 4-Month-Old Baby From Nepal Earthquake Rubble. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/29/nepal-baby-rescued_n_7173892.html

⁵ Setopati (2015). Mukhya sachib paudel ko netritwama Bhaktapurma safai. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://setopati.com/samaj/28240/>

media was the mountaineers cleaning up large amount of debris was created in the area following the avalanche blast at the Everest Base Camp.

3.1.4 Management of Food, Drugs and Supplies

The epidemic outbreak also caused quick response for emergency management of food, drugs and other supplies for the quake affected. Media stories have mainly focused on grievances of the quake affected in lack of efficiency in distribution of essential supplies and various other mismanagement issues.

A major issue that both national and international media highlighted through their stories was the improper management of food, drugs and other supplies to the affected ones. Some stories explained how piled boxes of rice and noodles were said to be not enough to meet the needs of the local people at places where the relief aids were distributed⁶. In order to arrange this dire situation, some development partners also extended support which was highlighted in the media. UN urged Nepal to relax customs controls⁷ which it says are holding up deliveries of aid to survivors of last week's earthquake.

Media stories also criticised the government's efforts working at snail's pace. A media story covered how even after three weeks of the disaster, the government was yet to formulate a working procedure for relief distribution⁸ and identify the quake affected.

3.1.5 Economic Impact

Media reports estimated that the second earthquake in Nepal could add to 1 billion US dollars to the total cost of rebuilding the country; which would push the total cost of repairs to more than 6 billion US dollars; equivalent to 30 percent of Nepal's economic output.⁹

⁶ Hume, T. (2015). Days after Nepal earthquake, traumatized villagers escape quake zone. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/29/asia/nepal-earthquake-rescue-flight/index.html>

⁷ Radio New Zealand (2015). Customs delaying Nepal quake aid – UN. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/world/272675/customs-delaying-nepal-quake-aid-un>

⁸ Sharma, B. and Bhattarai, K. D. (2015). 'Red tape may delay plan to build shelters' in *The Kathmandu Post*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-05-20/red-tape-may-delay-plan-to-build-shelters.html>

⁹ Young, A. (2015). 'Nepal Earthquake could cost half of the country's total economic output: damage to hydroelectric projects still being assessed'. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.ibtimes.com/nepal-earthquake-could-cost-half-countrys-annual-economic-output-damage-hydroelectric-1898481>

3.1.6 Efforts from the Government

Despite criticisms at various levels regarding ineffective and improper management of emergency response, the media stories also covered some of the notable efforts made by the Government of Nepal.

One interesting development a week after the earthquake was a Twitter account set up by the Government of Nepal (GoN)'s National Emergency Operation Centre, which started to tweet the official number of people who had died and who were injured. The account also provided information such as access to clean water and the relief that was being received from around the world.

Media stories covered government's positive response to misuse of donations for quake affected by launching earthquake relief fund¹⁰ as a single portal with all sorts of required information about the earthquake. Media agencies also covered news regarding the government asking Constituent Assembly members not to misuse helicopters¹¹ in the name of monitoring visits that need to be used for relief and rescue operations; urging locals to call police if the local transport agencies demand for high bus fare; arresting notorious people spreading false news regarding earthquake predictions; and arresting retailers for selling essentials to consumers at a high price with a penalty up to two hundred thousand rupees. Another major news covered by most media was GoN's decision to inspect the extent of damage of the buildings¹² and put up a two month ban on house design approvals barring any new building construction to take place in the coming two months as well as on construction of new buildings to two storeys until it comes up with a new building code. It has also demolished thousands of houses at the capital which were damaged by the disaster.

3.1.7 Reactions

Media stories also effectively captured the reactions to the relief and rescue efforts by the GoN and development partners. Most stories concentrated on mistrust with the government's capacity and intention for prompt action for emergency response.

¹⁰ The Kathmandu Post (2015). Government appeals for help. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-04-26/govt-appeals-for-help.html>

¹¹ Pahilopost (2015). Anugaman tolile helicopter durupayog gareko bhandai birodh, tatkal rokna Nembangko nirdeshan. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.pahilopost.com/content/-4209.html>

¹² Setopati (2015). Sahari tatha bhawan nirman bibhaagko anugamanmaa ke cha? Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://setopati.com/raajneeti/27882/>

There was prioritised media coverage on public mistrust over aid management¹³. Some stories covered how residents of Bhaktapur protested against the government for not providing relief material. Another story covered how with the increasing mistrust in the PM's relief fund, the locals of Sindhupalchowk suspected corruption and requested anyone willing to provide them relief to directly hand over the relief items rather than through any agency.

There were also media reports about residents of Bungamati struggling to house families in temporary shelters. Another story covered victims of Ramkot were begging for relief as the locals were infuriated with the government and felt discriminated not being able to receive any relief support being so close, 5 kilometres away from the heart of the city. There were also complaints about low quality food and tarpaulins and torn clothes distributed in the name of relief.

A story by Headlines Today about a man who lost all his family in the earthquake upset many viewers because the reporter was interviewing the man when rescuers found one of the bodies of his family members. Later, when the man broke down during the interview, the camera zoomed in on him and followed him briefly as he tried to walk away from the interviewer.

3.1.8 Aid Management

There was obvious concern about the extent of aid support received for the earthquake rescue, relief and rehabilitation. Media stories covered news about pledges and appeals, aid support and relief funds. Stories covered aid support by USAID, UKAID, Nissan Motor, UNFPA, Governments of Japan and Italy, Prince of Saudi Arabia, Monsoon Accessorize Trust, International Medical Corp, Habitat for Humanity and World Food Programme, among various other national and international agencies.

3.2 Stories reported after one year of earthquake

Marking one year of the earthquake, media agencies covered stories reflecting one year of the disaster highlighting the relief and rescue efforts, the efforts made in the reconstruction, the challenges faced, the pros and cons of the earthquake for the tourism sector, concerns of dignity for women, among others.

3.2.1 Delay in Reconstruction

TIME Magazine¹⁴ reported that except communities coming together for rebuilding work in Barpak, the quake epicenter, there has been little sign of progress since last year. The report highlighted that the

¹³ The Kathmandu Post (2015). Aid through government channel says Rijal. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-04-30/aid-through-govt-channel-says-rijal.html>

¹⁴ Kumar, N. (2016). 'James Nachtwey: A Year After the Devastating Earthquake' in *The Time*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://time.com/4293060/james-nachtwey-a-year-after-the-devastating-earthquake/>

delay was also fueled by the Terai unrest and lack of essential drugs and supplies, paralysing efforts of even non-government sectors in relief work.

Nepali Times covered a story of painful lesson¹⁵ taught by the earthquake and its aftermath that the people of Nepal can expect nothing from the state or those they elected as responsible authorities of the state. According to the magazine, there is lack of serious effort on the part of the government when there is no sign of reconstruction activities in Bungmati in Kathmandu valley while Prime Minister K P Oli launched the government's rebuilding campaign back in January, 2016. The story also highlights that snail paced National Reconstruction Authority that provided first installment of the 200,000 rupees rebuilding grant only in Dolakha district so far.

Aljazeera¹⁶ covering the story of a year of devastation claimed that despite 4.1 billion US dollars in donations from the international community and promises by the government to rebuild, very little has been done and even as reconstruction appears about to belatedly begin, there are more questions and contradictions than clarity over the rules for using (or misusing) all this cash.

According to Wall Street Journal¹⁷, Nepal's rebuilding progress is still moving slowly a year after the devastating April Earthquake. The agency claims that billions of aids have been pledged, but getting these aids to those in need have been difficult in Nepal.

Firstpost¹⁸ reported that very little has been rebuilt, so few lives have been repaired in the aftermath of the earthquake. The agency claims that Nepal government spent most of the past year wrangling over the country's constitution, a debate that sparked ethnic turmoil in Nepal's plains, a diplomatic spat with New Delhi and, for more many months, a blocked border with India that reduced fuel supplies to a trickle.

¹⁵ Nepali Times (2016). The Year of Living Off-Balance. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://nepalitimes.com/regular-columns/Moving-Target/2072-the-year-of-living-off-balance,697>

¹⁶ Aljazeera (2016). Returning to the devastation of the Nepal Earthquake. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/asia/2016/04/returning-devastation-nepal-earthquake-16041111435620.html>

¹⁷ Zhong, R. (2016). 'Nepal Rebuilding Progresses Slowly A Year After Earthquake' in *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.wsj.com/articles/rebuilding-progresses-slowly-in-nepal-year-after-quake-1461078256>

¹⁸ Firstpost (2016). Nepal earthquake: Girls scarred by tragedy share friendship, but not luck. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.firstpost.com/living/nepal-earthquake-girls-scarred-by-tragedy-share-friendship-but-not-luck-2743526.html>

Channel News Asia¹⁹ covered a pitiful news about how vast quantities of rice meant to be distributed to earthquake victims, remains stored in warehouses throughout Nepal, and instead of being handed out for free, it is to be sold to the public at wholesale prices.

A sad fate of Sindhupalchowk District Hospital in Chautara²⁰ being destroyed twice over the last decade was covered by Nepali Times. Once it was destroyed when Maoists attacked a Royal Nepal Army unit guarding a telecom tower adjacent to the hospital. The government took eight long years to rebuild the Sindhupalchowk District Hospital and for the second time, it was destroyed by the earthquake. The hospital had sought rupees 500,000 to build a stronger temporary structure, but the ministry neither denied the budget nor allocated it.

3.2.2 Dignity amidst Devastation

The Himalayan Times published a story about the 'Dignity First' campaign²¹ that had been launched by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), after the devastating earthquake. For this campaign, Department of Women and Children partnered with UNFPA to distribute kits containing clothes, sanitary items, and torch lights to women and girls in the quake-affected districts.

Undispatch also covered story of a journalist who had documented some experiences of quake victims, including the struggles, hopes and fears that women face as they piece their lives back together. She mentioned how women can be victims in such situations with temporary and weak shelter making women prone and vulnerable to various types of abuse.

The Guardian²² covered a much talked about controversy regarding investigation about child survivors of the Nepal earthquake and other vulnerable children are being sold to British families to

¹⁹ Board, J. (2016). 'Donated rice for Nepal earthquake victims to be sold, not to be distributed', in *Channel News Asia*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/donated-rice-for-nepal/2713534.html?cid=twtcna>

²⁰ Rai, O. A. (2016). 'The hospital that was destroyed twice' in *Nepali Times*. Retrieved from July 21, 2016 from <http://nepalitimes.com/article/nation/hospital-destroyed-in-conflict-and-earthquake,2971>

²¹ The Himalayan Times (2016). 'Dignity First' campaign continues in quake-hit districts. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://nepalitimes.com/article/nation/hospital-destroyed-in-conflict-and-earthquake,2971>

²² Rawlinson, K. (2016). 'Child survivors of Nepal earthquake being sold in the UK' in *The Guardian*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/04/child-nepal-earthquake-slaves-sold-uk?CMP=share_btn_fb

work as domestic slaves. This story created global attention and called for immediate investigation in the case by both Nepali and British authorities.

3.2.3 Opportunity amidst Loss

Nepali Times published an article of award-winning heritage conservationist where he opined how Kathmandu Valley restoration can be an international showpiece²³. The Kathmandu Post covered another story of reconstruction of historical and religious sites²⁴ initiated by the Department of Archaeology (DoA), with the funding support from German government, and Bhaktapur Municipality.

Express and Star covered an interesting story of a Staffordshire humanitarian aid worker²⁵ who reflected on the devastation and impact of the disaster after a year following the deadly earthquake. The story covered how emergency response has supported many vulnerable children and communities through provision of emergency shelter, food and water, immediate access to temporary learning centers and safe spaces, psychosocial support, temporary educational facilities and health services.

Similarly, Daily Mail published a story of Prince Harry²⁶ completing a charity project to help rebuild a school in a remote Nepalese village devastated by last year's earthquake. Trekking deep into the Himalayas, he had joined a disaster relief charity for six days to help the stricken community construct classrooms so that children no longer need to take lessons in makeshift structures made from tarpaulin and tin. He had initially gone on a five-day tour of Nepal.

Online Khabar – a popular Nepali online news portal covered an interesting story of international media coverage on recent earthquake. Thousands of tourists had cancelled already booked holiday to Nepal due to the news headline showing the damage to the country much greater than on the ground, giving tourists an impression that the entire country is at a standstill and it is a No-Go Zone²⁷.

²³ Lee, S. (2016). 'Learning from 25 April' in *Nepali Times*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://nepalitimes.com/article/Nepali-Times-Buzz/lessons-from-25-April,2967#.VwkR7oxw4kU.twitter>

²⁴ The Kathmandu Post (2016). Bhaktapur monument reconstruction begins. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2016-04-10/bhaktapur-monument-reconstruction-begins.html>

²⁵ Express and Star (2016). Nepal earthquake: Staffordshire aid worker looks back at deadly disaster one year on. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.expressandstar.com/news/2016/04/14/nepal-earthquake-staffordshire-aid-worker-looks-back-at-deadly-disaster-one-year-on/>

²⁶ Daily Mail (2016). Harry the hero: Prince helps rebuild a remote school destroyed in the Nepal earthquake after extending his stay in the country to join the project. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3524870/Prince-Harry-helps-rebuild-remote-school-destroyed-Nepal-earthquake-extending-stay-country-join-project.html>

²⁷ Giri, R. R. (2016). 'The real state of tourism in Nepal after the earthquake' in *Online Khabar*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.onlinekhabar.com/2015/05/282869/>

4 Discussion

4.1 Major Issues Highlighted through the Stories

As the findings suggest, through the media monitoring conducted immediately after the earthquake – major issues highlighted through the stories were about public health care, rescue efforts, sanitation, management of food, drugs and supplies, economic impact, aid management, efforts from the government and public reactions.

During the phase 2 of the media monitoring which covered stories reflecting a year of the occurrence of the earthquake and the subsequent relief and reconstruction works carried out, the predominant themes of these stories included the delay in the reconstruction and criticisms from various corners regarding the ‘snail-paced’ development activities, fund mismanagement, incompetent bureaucracy and political power-play.

The disaster also brought the issue of dignity in the forefront with the attention towards safety and hygiene of women and girls while they were residing in the temporary camps. Another major issue was the safety of the children – as a story and series of follow up stories flagged up how young quake affected children were trafficked to countries like Britain, taking advantage of their fragile situation.

Nepal Earthquake also brought about various opportunities amidst the tragedy that Nepalis encountered. The tragedy led to a united effort from GoN through Department of Archaeology (DoA) with the support from German government resurrecting historical, cultural and religious monuments in 20 districts damaged by the earthquake. High profile visits by celebrities such as David Beckham and Prince Harry (with his prolonged stay) also helped in raising country’s international profile as a tourist destination.

There were several positives from Nepal Earthquake that helped in providing some relief at times of sorrow. Unity among the people was clearly seen when they came together to support each other irrespective of their caste, class, gender and other socio-economic hierarchies. Security forces such as Nepal Army and Nepal Police Force reacted very quickly and effectively managed the early chaotic situation. Exemplary work was displayed by Nepal Air Traffic Control to manage domestic and international flights. Likewise, good connection and information broadcasting was available as Nepal Telecom managed to keep networks and Radio Nepal provided 24/7 coverage. There was good management of electricity with electricity restoration earlier than expected. The global communications community also extended its helping hand with waivers on international call charges by Viber, Skype and others.

4.2 Media Reporting Features and Trends

As the earthquake occurred, the Nepali people were unclear about the extent of the disaster as local media struggled to react to the earthquake (Fitzerald et al 2015). Lack of media reporting by Nepali media early on was also partly due to the fact that the quake had damaged the infrastructure of the

media houses. Even though most newspapers continued their publication despite damage to their buildings, distribution was halted – as a result did not reach out to many people. This all showed that Nepali media was not prepared for disaster reporting. Disasters are typically categorised under ‘Current Affairs’ and therefore no specialised practice of disaster reporting was prevalent in Nepal during the time of April 2015 earthquake.

For the international media, though the earthquake got a lot of global attention, for ground reporting, it was very difficult. “Getting beyond Kathmandu was a ‘logistical challenge’ with poor infrastructure and difficult topography to reach out to remote villages”, shared Richard Engel (Warren, 2015). Due to budgetary limitations and difficulty to go outside Kathmandu, there wasn’t many ‘episodic coverage’ by international media says Engel.

Ethical issues were also in the forefront during media reporting of Nepal Earthquake especially by Indian media. The hashtag - #GoHomeIndianMedia had trended as the Indian media were criticized for being ‘aggressive, insensitive and voyeuristic’ in their reporting (Karni, 2015).

As lessons drawn from this media monitoring exercise, the earthquake in Nepal taught a great lesson in terms of pitfalls of lack of preparedness in emergency disaster management for policy makers, implementers and development practitioners. The disaster also exposed the media capacity to report disaster situations on a real time basis.

5. Conclusion

Natural disasters in today’s digital world can draw global attention within seconds. The 2015 earthquake in Nepal helped the country to understand better its effectiveness and readiness to deal with such disasters. Amidst anxiety and initial hiccups for emergency management for health care, food, drugs and supplies, aid management and ongoing reconstruction efforts, the overall efforts for disaster management in Nepal has been a mixed bag with both positive and negative reactions.

Disaster management can only be effective when the public and the decision makers are informed with reliable and quick information. For that reason, it is necessary to have a professional media network within the country with effective disaster reporting practice. Maintaining media ethics is also a key issue in order to ensure that media stories are not “over-the-top” that they are boycotted by the public and the civil society.

Effective media management leads to enabling environment for evidence informed decision making with better quality and reliability of the information. A neutral, objective and critical overview of the media reports through media monitoring exercise by non-government, non-partisan agencies such as Non-Government Agencies (NGOs) or media research agencies could play an instrumental role in developing a resource bank of the media reports published about a certain issue in order to collate and analyse various dimensions within the issue – which would be helpful for the policy makers to make appropriate decisions.

6. Limitations

A major limitation of this study is that we have covered only aforementioned two short time frames of one month and one week respectively and do not include the stories reported before or after those two time periods. We tried to cover all stories published online in national and international media portals and through Google search, but might have missed relevant stories. As almost all of the news media are published online, we presume that we have missed very less information.

References

- Centre for Advancing Journalism (2011). The Challenges for the Media in Disaster Reporting. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://caj.unimelb.edu.au/event/challenges-media-disaster-reporting>
- Fitzerald, G., Gurung, A., and Poudel, B. R., (2015). 'How the media struggled in Nepal's earthquake rescue'. In *The Conversation*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://theconversation.com/how-the-media-struggled-in-nepals-earthquake-rescue-40970>
- Karni, A. D. (2015). Ethical dilemmas of reporting trauma: Indian media's coverage of Nepal's earthquake. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <https://storify.com/anujanadkarni/ethical-dilemmas-of-reporting-trauma-indian-media->
- Melbourne Press Club (2011). Panel identifies disaster reporting challenges. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from http://old.melbournepressclub.com/news/panel-identifies-disaster-reporting-challenges_02_05_2011
- Saleem, V. (2015). 'How people turn to social media during natural disasters'. In *Down to Earth*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/how-people-turn-to-social-media-during-natural-disasters-49587>
- Uchida, Y., Kanagawa, C., Takenishi, A., Harada, A., Okawa, K., and Yabuno, H. (2015). How Did the Media Report on the Great East Japan Earthquake? Objectivity and Emotionality Seeking in Japanese Media Coverage. *PLoS ONE* 10(5): e0125966.doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0125966
- Warren, J. (2015). Has the media forgotten Nepal post-earthquake? NBC's Richard Engel clearly hasn't. In *Poynter*. Retrieved on July 21, 2016 from <http://www.poynter.org/2015/has-the-media-forgotten-nepal-post-earthquake-nbcs-richard-engel-clearly-hasnt/353199/>

About the Presenting Author

Sudeep Uprety

Sudeep Uprety is development communications professional with experience of 6 years in the field of research uptake, knowledge management, communications, social media, networking and fundraising. He specialises in media research – with previous experience of presenting media research projects in conferences in Kenya, Bangladesh and Nepal. He has authored over 100 research uptake outputs which includes case studies, special reports, backgrounders, how-to guides and blogs. Sudeep has been leading Research Uptake and Communications unit at HERD for last 3 years and is a core team member of COMDIS-HSD, a DFID funded RPC based at University of Leeds, UK.

2016 ACMC International Conference Collaborators



University of the Philippines
College of Mass Communication



Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
Faculty of Communication Arts



Universiti Islam Malaysia
Centre for Research on Women
and Gender



Monash University, Australia
School of Media, Film and Journalism



Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand
School of Communication Studies



Veer - Bharati University, India
Center For Journalism and
Mass Communication