

Welcome to the twentieth issue of **OPEN MIC NEPAL** bulletin. The Open Mic project captures rumours and perceptions on the ground to eliminate information gaps between the media, humanitarian agencies and local people. By providing local media and outreach workers with facts, Open Mic aims to create a better understanding of the needs of the earthquake-affected communities and to debunk rumours before they can do any harm.

CONCERNS

JIWANPUR, DHADING

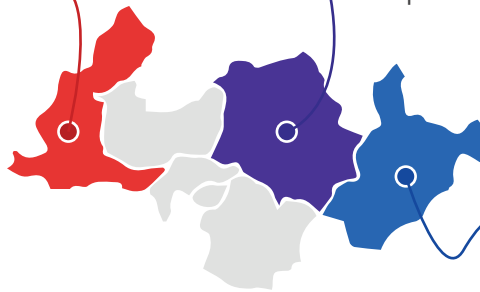
"They say we will get Rs 10,000. First Rs 7,000, then Rs 15,000 and now this. The government parcels out money like that and we go on consuming it. The government will later say it ran out of money and our houses will never be rebuilt. Isn't that so?"

MANKHA, SINDHUPALCHOK

"The government had prepared to distribute warm clothes and bedding items for winter, but the blockade stalled the process of distribution."

NAMDU, DOLAKHA

"They say the government has decided to provide Rs 10,000 for winter. Is this as much of a rumour as distributing Rs 200,000?"



ANSWERS

The government recently announced its plan to provide Rs 10,000 to every household whose house was completely destroyed by the earthquake.

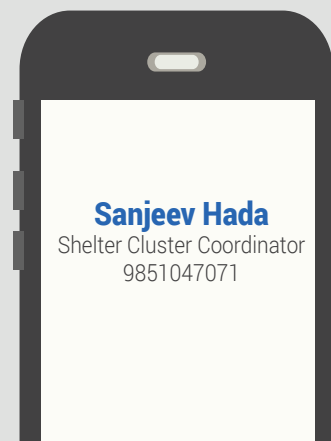
This amount is to help affected families purchase warm clothes for winter. It will not be deducted from Rs 200,000, which the government will provide for the construction of permanent shelter later.

The government plans to disburse the funds for winter by mid-December through local bodies.

Organisations in the shelter cluster, in coordination with the government, are distributing winterisation kits or money equivalent to the cost of a kit to vulnerable households living above 1500 metres.

The kit comprises warm clothing (hats and jackets), blankets, bedding items (foam sheeting) and sealing off material (tarpaulins wires and foam sheeting). Households above 2000m will be eligible for supplemental kits that include improved wood-burning cooking stoves and solar lamps.

The problems in transportation have hampered the procurement and distribution of the kits, leading to cancellation of programmes in some cases. Contact your local District Development Office to find out when the distribution will begin.



CONCERNS

KUMPUR, DHADING

"We've heard about the loans at a subsidised interest rate and want to know when we might get that."

BHIMPHEDE, MAKWANPUR

"Some say the government will provide Rs 200,000. Some say the government is saying so only to prevent people from rising up in protest. What is the truth?"

SANGACHOK, SINDHUPALCHOK

"They say the government is going to distribute Rs 200,000 for sure. If this amount is not enough to build a house, organisations will provide the rest."

GOTIKHEL, LALITPUR

"Locals here expect to get home loans at 2 percent interest rate."



ANSWERS

The government has plans to provide Rs 200,000 or the cost of building a house, whichever amount is smaller, to households whose houses were rendered uninhabitable by the earthquake.

Recently, the government announced that the first instalment of the grant will be disbursed immediately. The exact timeline of disbursement, however, is not clear.

The grant is a form of support. It might not cover the total cost of reconstruction. If it does not, households will have to finance the rest of the building expenditure themselves.

If an organisation helps a household rebuild the house, the household will not be eligible for the grant.

There are two kinds of home loans that the government plans to provide the earthquake-affected families.

One, the poorest of the poor and socially marginalised groups will be eligible for Rs 300,000 in bank credit at a subsidised interest rate. Community members will have to be the guarantor for such a loan. This amount is in addition to the grant of Rs 200,000.

The government is in the process of finalising the procedures for taking out this loan.

Second, affected families living in rural areas can take out home loans of up to Rs 1.5 million at 2 percent interest rate and those in urban areas up to Rs 2.5 million. But if a household receives this loan, it will not be eligible for the grant of Rs 200,000.

Commercial banks and financial institutions have already been issued a directive to provide the second kind of loan. Please contact your local banks to know if they are accepting applications.

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RUMOURS

GORKHA BAZAAR, GORKHA

"There are rumours that if we build houses using our own design, we will not get the government grant later."

SIMJUNG, GORKHA

"There are rumours that we can rebuild our houses only after the government finalises the designs for houses."



JIWANPUR, DHADING

"They say the Building Construction Office has created designs for houses, but none of them are appropriate for our village."

FACTS

The Ministry of Urban Development has just released a catalogue of earthquake-resistant designs for rural houses. The catalogue will soon be circulated to local agencies.

Once the designs are available for view at Village Development Committees (VDCs), households can choose one of the models and apply for approval to build accordingly. Not all VDCs, however, have set up the mechanism for approving designs.

Alternately, households can change the designs with the help of an engineer certified by the Nepal Engineering Council. Households cannot design their own houses without the help of an engineer.

The existing procedures on disbursing grants are silent on whether a household will be eligible for Rs 200,000 if it has already built a house based on a design created by an engineer.



CONCERNS

GORKARNESHWOR, KATHMANDU

"Illegal logging and selling of trees have increased. There are risks of deforestation and landslides now."



MAHADEVSTHAN, KAVREPALANCHOWK

"Green forests are meant to be Nepal's wealth, but after the earthquake, deforestation has become a problem."

ANSWERS

The Forest Act and the provisions on community forestry bars people from cutting down trees indiscriminately. Trees can be felled only with a permit and without disrupting the ecology of the forest.

The District Forest Offices in Kathmandu and Kavrepalanchowk informed that they had not received complaints of people's violating the rules and selling timber illegally. But to avoid smuggling of wood because of the ongoing fuel crisis and other reasons, police have increased its surveillance on forests.

To avoid deforestation while rebuilding houses, households should reuse wooden beams from collapsed buildings. If they have to cut down trees, they should do so from private forests and try to keep the trees in national and community forests intact. If possible, families should use iron and aluminum for construction.

For firewood, households can burn unusable wood and bamboo from the destroyed houses. They can also use improved cooking stove to optimise the consumption of wood.

If you find someone illegally felling and selling trees, file a complaint with the forest office or with the local police.

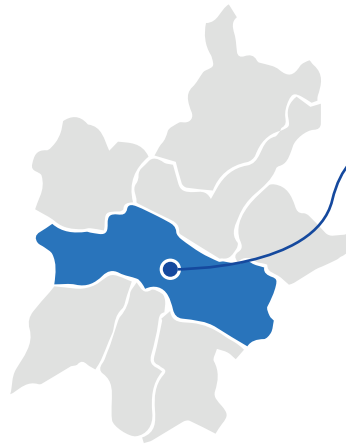
Prem Khanal

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CONCERNS



KAMALAMAI, SINDHULI

"They say women will be provided training to rebuild earthquake-resistant houses."

ANSWERS

The government aims to train at least 50,000 people in earthquake-affected districts for reconstruction. Both men and women can participate in the training sessions on masonry, carpentry, wiring, plumbing and others.

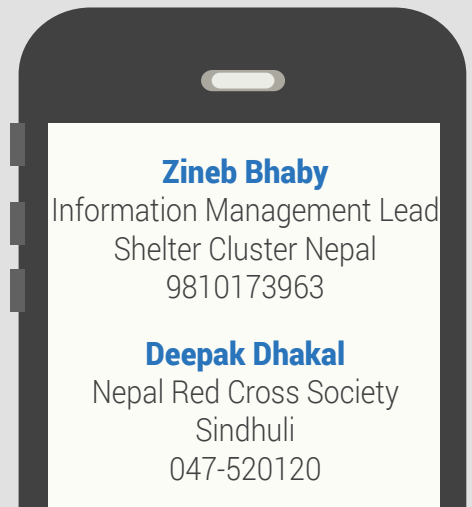
Organisations providing training can prioritise the participation of women.

Some organisations like Plan International, CRS Caritas and Cesvi have begun training women (and men) on building earthquake-resistant houses in the affected districts. But trainings so far have not been designed specifically for women.

In Sindhuli, organisations such as Concern Worldwide and Nepal Red Cross Society have provided training for reconstruction.

If you are interested in participating in the training, contact your VDC or municipality office or the local division office of the Ministry of Urban Development to learn about when the next training session will take place.

You can also keep yourself informed by listening to the radio, as organisations providing training use radio channels too to advertise their programme.



The rumours and issues presented here were collected by frontline workers from partner organisations and #quakehelpdesk volunteers based on their face-to-face conversation with around 450 people in 13 districts between 17-26 November. The selection was done on the basis of prevalence and relevance. The information presented here is correct at the time of issue.

Open Mic Nepal presented by:

