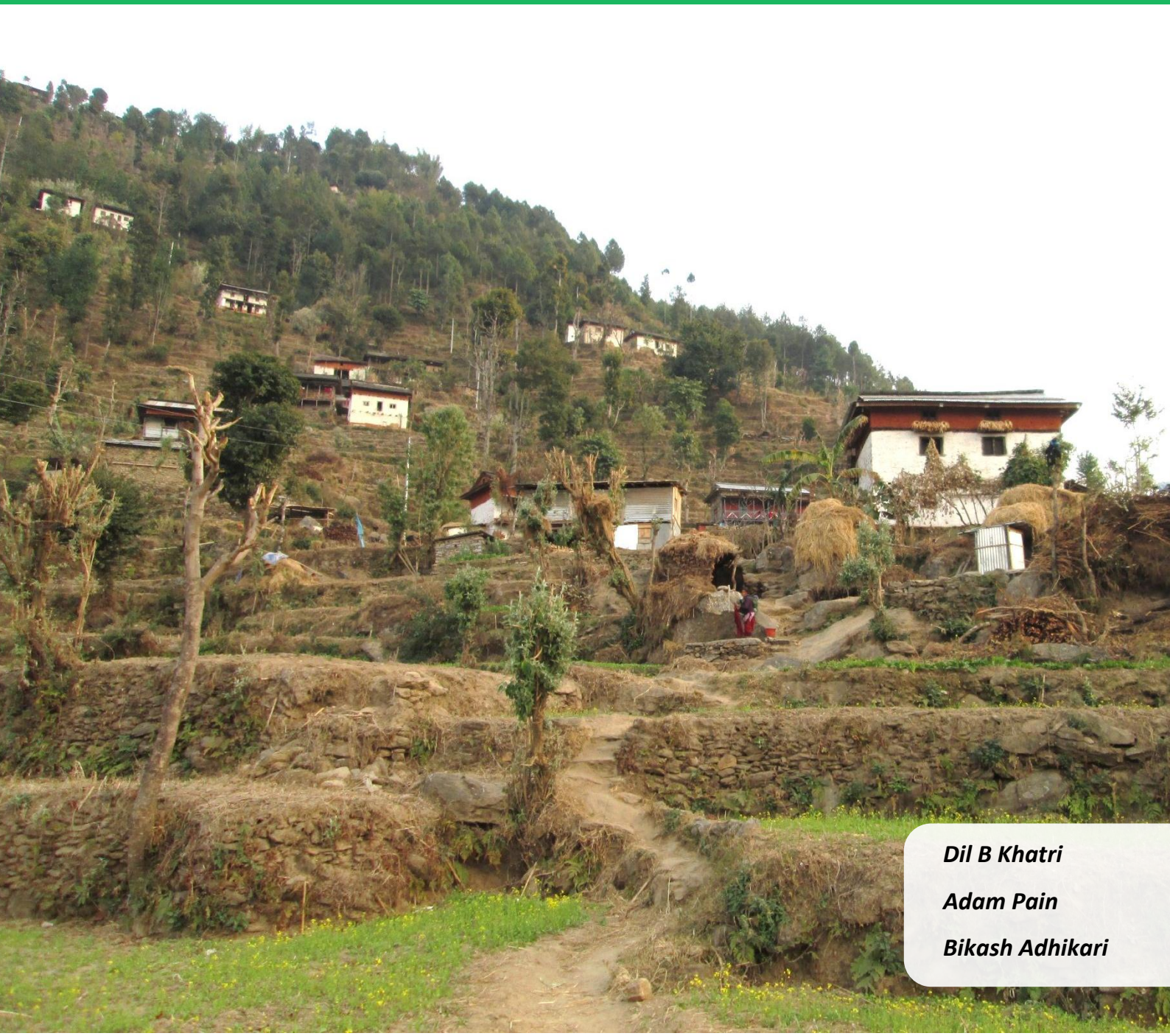
Disaster Response from a Donor Funded Project in Nepal: A case of a NGO implemented project in Dolakha district



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Climate Change and Rural Institutions Research Project

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List of abbreviations

BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CDRMC	Community Disaster Risk Management Committee
CDRMP	Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Program
CFUG	Community Forest User Group
DDC	District Development Committee
DDMC	District Disaster Management Committee
DDPRP	District Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan
DEOC	District Emergency Operation Centre
DISCO	District Soil Convervation Office
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECARDS	Ecology, Agriculture, and Rural Development Society Nepal
GLOF	Glacier Lake Outburst Flood
GoN	Government of Nepal
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
LDRMC	Local Disaster Risk Management Committee
LDRMP	Local Disaster Risk Management Plan
MOFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
NAPA	National Adaptation Plan of Action
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NRRC	Nepal Risk Reduction Consortiun
NSDRM	National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management
RCRRP	Regional Climate Risk Reduction Project
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISDR	United Nation International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
VDC	Village Development Committee

1. Introduction

Arranged around the room in the village house was a set of equipment. Some of the items were hanging on the wall and others were placed on shelves. They included life jackets, torches, a hand held megaphone, a first aid kit, a stretcher, rubber boots, safety helmets, gloves, tents and raincoats. All of them carried a United Nation Development Program (UNDP) logo marking their provenance, all shiny in their newness and some were still in their original wrappings unopened since they were received. The room on the first floor had been rented with project funds that had provided the equipment. The project, part of a disaster risk reduction (DRR) programme had recently ended and the village would now have to find the funds to continue to rent the room. Sitting in the room with us in early April, 2014 were a group of villagers who had been formed into a committee to manage the equipment and its use.

We asked the committee members their views and experience on disasters due to climate related risks in the village. We also asked how the activities of the project that had set the committee up and equipped the room fitted with these. They told us that the village was located by the Tamakoshi River in a narrow valley with steep slopes. They reported that they had experienced frequent small landslides and flash floods, which had damaged their crops, houses and other properties. They thought that the occurrence of such small flashflood and landslides had increased in recent years. They also said that they had experienced more frequent failure of their agricultural crops which in their view was due to the prolonged drought in winter and spring.

With respect to the project, they said that the organization that had set it up helped the formation of the committee at the village and had undertaken the following activities. The organization had held a workshop to discuss the possible climate related risks and hazards. It had also held different training activities including a three days training on early warning systems. In this training workshop they were told about how they should communicate with neighbours in the case of disaster. The search and rescue training focused on how to undertake search and rescue operations and the first aid training enabled them to provide first aid treatment to the injured people. There was also one day training on high-value agriculture crops (vegetable farming) in the village. The organization has also helped set up an emergency fund at Village Development Committee (VDC) level and contributed NRs 50,000 to this. The VDC in turn had also contributed NRs 50,000 from its own sources to bring the fund to a sum of NRs 100,000 (about $ 1000). It was to be used as an immediate relief for providing support to disaster affected people.

We were told that a house in the village had been destroyed by fire last October (2013). Although the committee members and those who had been trained in the search and rescue procedure could not reach there in time to deal with the fire, they could provide some support to the affected family. They provided some immediate relief and assistance with tent and blankets and NRs 10000 (about $100). They had been helping neighbors affected by any kind of disaster like fire or landslide in the past but what was new for them now was that they had a committee formed under the project, the equipments that they could use in response to disasters and an emergency fund at the VDC to draw on to help the affected neighbours. They also had a sub-committees formed for search and rescue process and also one for first aid whose members had been trained during the project.

We were talking with the members of what was called the Community Disaster Risk Management Committee (CDRMC) in the village of Manthali in ward number 1 of Khare VDC of Dolakha district. The village, located at the banks of the Tamakoshi River lies in the Sure-Khare catchment which contains the Tsho Rolpa Glacier Lake[1] in the north of Dolokha, the area targeted by the project as a disaster risk prone area. It was just one of the 25 villages in the five VDCs[2] covered by the project which had been set up by a Dolokha based NGO called the Ecology, Agriculture and Rural Development Society or ECARDS in short. The 14 month long project, which ran from January 2013 until March 2013 with a total budget of about NRs 7.5 million ($ 80,000) was funded under the UNDP Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Program (CDRMP) to address disaster risk reduction at a village level (ECARDS and UNDP 2011).

The meeting described above with the CDRMC of Manthali village was a part of a broader enquiry which is reported in this paper into the design, assumptions, actions and possible effects of a donor funded project on disaster risk management within Dolokha district. Dolokha is one of the three study districts under the CCRI project in Nepal and comparable studies of a donor funded project will be carried out in Rupandehi and Lamjung under the research. These studies of disaster risk management focused projects not only investigates the interests, motivations and logic that drive each project but also examines the ways in which these projects engage with their targets or subjects, the area and people seen to be at risk, and the district level institutions.

From the evidence from the accounts of the committee members of the CDRMC in Manthali village there are certainly some puzzling aspects of the project, not least its short term and limited focus. On the one hand it is a project funded under a Disaster Risk Reduction Program yet its activities seem entirely focused on disaster risk response and are only short term. How a training on vegetable crop production fits with risk reduction is not entirely self evident; equally a focus on committee formation and training activities do not in themselves link to risk reduction. As we will further discuss the assumption that the risk of a glacier lake outburst flood (GLOF) is the key disaster risk faced by the village, which underpins the logic of the project appears to be countered by a rather different view of risks by the Manthali villagers who spoke more of landslides and drought effects. Self-evidently there is a little that Manthali village or any other villagers in the catchment could do to reduce the risk of a GLOF although an effective early warning system might help them escape should it ever happen. But more importantly the upstream Tamakoshi Hydropower scheme under construction and the Khimti Hydropower Project operating in downstream have a major vested interest in ensuring that a GLOF should not happen otherwise a major infrastructural investment would be washed away.

This paper pursues these puzzles through a more detailed exploration first of what is known of disasters in Dolokha. It then moves on to examine the background to ECARDS as a prelude to looking at the design and logic of the project and the activities that it carried out, drawing on the evidence from a detailed set of interviews within Marbu VDC. Our analysis in this section is

[1] It is reported that the water level in the Tsho Rolpa Glacier Lake has been rising with an increasing risk of GLOF. It was first noticed in mid-1990 and water was siphoned to minimize the GLOF risk in 1997 and sirens were installed along the catchment with support from Norwegian government. That time Khimti hydropower project which is located along the bank of Tamakoshi River was under construction with investment from Norwegian government.

[2] Although study area covers all the five VDCs but the Suri-Khare catchment does not covers all the VDCs area. The Sure-Khare catchment constitutes 230 square kilometers area covering 25 settlements.

based on the interview with ECARDS staff, local people and the review of documents related to ECARDS and disaster related project in concern. This is then situated in relation to the Disaster Risk Management Program and its objectives. We do this based on the review of project documents and interview with a UNDP official working in the project.

2. The Context of climate induced disaster in Dolakha District

Dolakha district has been identified as one of the most 'climate vulnerable districts' by the climate change vulnerability mapping exercise conducted during the development of National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) in 2010 (GoN 2010). This conclusion appears to have been drawn on the basis of the significance attached to GLOF related risks in the vulnerability ranking exercise. The Tsho Rolpa Lake has been a focus of attention of the district as well as the national actors since mid-1990s when the threat of GLOF was first reported. Accordingly the NAPA recommended prioritizing districts such as Dolokha for climate change adaptation planning and response.

In contrast, the District Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan (DDPRP) of Dolakha prepared in 2011 by district stakeholders gave a rather different picture of disaster risk in the district. Providing a timeline of major disaster events that had happened in Dolakha since 1985, the DDPRP identified landslides, epidemics, flood, earthquake, lightening, fire, snowfall, hail, drought and storm as the key disaster risks in the district (see table 1), although not all of these are clearly related to climate change. Of the total 145 people who died during the last 25 years as a result of such disasters, about 80% of them were killed from landslides and flashfloods (DDC 2011). So, landslide and flood were identified, based on their occurrence as the two most significant disaster risks whereas the risk of a GLOF was not even mentioned. The extent to which the frequency of landslides occurrence or their impacts have changed and can be attributed to climate change remains unknown. But as the case study of the Bhirkhot landslide (Khatri et al. 2014) makes it clear that landslides cannot be simply attributed to climate change effects; they are multi-causal events.

A further point can be drawn from the table in relation to the location of landslides. Out of 13 landslides and flash flood events that happened were recorded over 25 years in Dolakha district, and its xx VDCs, 4 of the events were in the five VDCS which the ECARDS project covered. Based on the historical record, these VDCs account for 25 fatalities from landslides and flashfloods out of 114 fatalities from across Dolakha district. While this indicates the significance of landslide and flash flood as a major disaster risk it does not justify the selection of the catchment for the project given the spread of these disasters across the district. Rather as stated by UNDP officials[3] the project sites (catchment including five VDCs) were selected as a part of an expansion of the earlier UNDP funded project focusing on response to the Tsho Rolpa GLOF risk in which ECARDS was involved (as discussed below). So, project history in relation to GLOF risk appears to have been the primary consideration for the selection of this site. The CDRMP expanded the geographical area covering the Sure-Khare catchment and its mandate to work with other disaster risks particularly landslide and flashflood in the selected catchment.

[3] Interviewed in Kathmandu in 17 July 2014

Table 1: Timeline of Disaster events in Dolakha

SN	**Time**	**Specific Disaster**	**Description**
1.	July -1985	Flood-landslide	Suspa Chamawati ward no. 7– 4 people died and many houses were destroyed
2.	August-1985	Flood-landslide	Boch, ward no.1– 13 people died, 50 HHs were displaced and 7 houses were completely destroyed
3.	June-1987	Flood-landslide	Gairimudi ward no.1– 4 died, 1 house destroyed and 26 HHs affected
4.	June-1987	Flood-landslide	Suspa Chamawati ward no.2,5–5 people died and 7 HHs affected
5.	June-1987	Flood-landslide	Malu ward no.3 (Makaibari)–7 people died and 50 meters of road destroyed
6.	May-1992	Lightening	Mali ward no.3– 3 people died
7.	July-1992	Flood-landslide	Lapilang– 15 people died, other information are not available
8.	July-1992	Flood-landslide	LakuriDanda– 6 people died and 2 houses destroyed
9.	May-1996	Epidemic (not specified)	Gairimudi ward no.7,8, and 9– 4 people died and many affected
10.	June-1996	Flood –landslide	Sunkhani ward no.2– 8 people died, crop field and number of houses affected
11.	June-1996	Landslide	Bhakyu– 14 people died,7 people lost and loss of property like houses and crop field
12.	May-1998	Epidemic	Lamabagar – 8 people died
13.	August-2000	Landslide	Thulopatal ward no. 5 (Aahale)– 7 people died, crop field and houses destroyed
14.	June-2001	Landslide	Chankhu– 11 people died, 5 people lost, 18 houses destroyed and 22 cattle died
15.	August 2001	Landslide	Babare– 3 people died, houses and crop field destroyed
16.	August 2002	Epidemic	Laduk 4 Gujipa– 4 people died
17.	June-2004	Epidemic	Khopachangu ward no.1 & 3 –4 people died from dysentery
18.	July-2006	Lightening	Khare ward no.4 and 5– 5 people died
19.	June 2007	Lightening	Chetrapa– 2 people died
20.	July-2010	Flood –landslide	Gaurishankar VDC, Sipring Khola– 11 people died and 5 injured

Source: DDC 2011

The documentary record about the nature of disaster risk included in the DDPRP is supported by evidence from the field. People we talked during our field visit with in Marbu, Khare, and Bhrikot VDCs of Dolakha were saying that landslides and flash flood are the most significant disaster risks they are facing. They have experienced frequent flashfloods and landslides which destroy their crops, damage or destroy their houses and often kill people. Moreover there are many smaller scale landslides and floods that cause damage to crops and property that are regular occurrences, which do not draw the attention of district agencies and are thus not included in the district record (as cited in table 1). These small events are the ones that are affecting lives of people in the sites we visited.

The frequent and often reoccurring landslides in mountain areas of Nepal are caused by multiple factors. The farm land and houses are located either on the steep slopes or on the river banks of the narrow river valley. Heavy monsoon rains cause land slips on the slopes or floods in the

rivers. The relation between the increasing intensity of rainfall events and landslides is unknown. But in recent years, the landslides and flashfloods have often been triggered by poorly planned and executed development infrastructure like roads (Khatri et al. 2013). For example, faulty (on grounds of cost saving) road alignment and use of heavy machines (excavators) triggered a landslide and flashflood in Bhirkot which caused damage to fields, houses and school buildings (ibid). People from those villages as well as the district level agencies are of the view that the extent and frequency of landslide and flashflood have been increasing in recent years. They attribute such increases to climate change particularly changes in rainfall patterns.

However, these small disaster events appear not to have attracted the attention of the experts in Kathmandu (the capital of Nepal) who frame policies and plans and develop programs to deal with climate change related risks. Instead, the bigger threats like GLOF like Tsho Rolpa (Glacier Lake) appear to be more significant to them. Such a framing influences the project priorities and were central to the selection of the location of the ECARDS project and its design. The reason behind the attention given to the potential threat of Tsho Rolpa GLOF may also be linked with the interest of the hydro power projects that are being operated and under construction along the bank of Tamakoshi River. For example, the Khimti Hydropower project which is located in Sahare VDC of Dolakha was built in mid 1990s. Attention to the risk of a Tsho Rolpa GLOF was first drawn in 1996 when it was under construction[4]. Now, Upper Tamakoshi, largest hydro power project in Nepal is under construction just few kilometers upstream from the community we visited. The Upper Tamakoshi, Khmiti and other small hydropower projects along the Tamakoshi River and vicinity are the ones to be affected most from the GLOF if it happen. So they have an evident self interest to minimize the risk of GLOF and thus potentially influence the climate change and disaster related projects like that implemented in Sure-Khare catchment.

3. ECARDS: A journey of district based NGO - from development delivery to disaster response

ECARDS was established as an NGO in Dolokha in 1996 with a mandate to focus on ecology (primarily related to forests), agriculture and rural development. As reported in the organizational profile (ECARDS 2014), the ECARDS was registered as an NGO (Non-Government Organizations) in Dolakha district following the trend of the time to establish NGOs after the emergence of democracy in Nepal in 1990. As is clear from the following account the expansion of ECARDS has been driven by response to donor funding opportunities and political connections in securing these that have turned it into a significant implementing agency in the district.

The NGO was initiated by some youths from Dolakha district who were active both in politics and interested on the issue of natural resources management and local development. The founding chairperson (who remained chairperson for about 15 years until he stepped down as he was elected as a Member of Parliament in late 2013) is an active politician from one of the major political party and involved in non-timber forest product related business (i.e. Nepali

[4] The Norwegian government which had invested the hydropower development funded to siphon the water from the Glacier Lake and establishment of early warning system (shrine). The equipments were lost during the armed conflict.

handmade paper from Daphne and essential oils). The founding secretary of ECARDs (who remained as a secretary until 2009) worked as chairperson for district FECOFUN and is affiliated with another NGO from Dolakha which works in human right related issues. Some active politicians, forestry officials (three local forest technicians who are affiliated with Department of Forest and two are working outside of government) and community facilitators have served as ECARD board members at various stages. .

During its initial two years (1996-1997) ECARDS was involved in disaster response (i.e. distribution of relief packages in different part of the district) with the support from Caritas Nepal[5] and Lutheran World Foundation[6]. Until ECARDS started working for the Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project–a Swiss funded project working in Dolakha and Ramechhap districts— on institutional strengthening of community forest user groups from 2002, it was involved in different local capacity development activities i.e. trainings related to non-formal education, agriculture, veterinary etc. to local community facilitators. While it was working with the Swiss project, it provided support to the formation of community forest user groups and preparing their management plans. As reported by the ECARDS staff, their role was to help participatory planning in the forest user groups and develop their capacity to manage the organization as well as forest resources. ECARDS officials suggested that though the collaboration with the Swiss funded project that lasted for about 3 years, ECARDS was helped to grow and establish itself as a district based NGO.

ECARDS long-term collaboration with Action Aid International Nepal which started from 2004 to work on the issues related to agriculture and food security was a significant milestone in terms of growth of ECARDS. The collaboration was possible because of networks that ECARDS board members had with national level development organizations. ECARDS is still working with Action Aid on the issue of local rights and agriculture development. Besides this it has also worked for a number of donor organizations and INGOs including UNDP, UNICEF etc on the diverse issues ranging from natural resources management, health and disaster risk reduction.

ECARDS became involved in disaster risk related activities again in 2010 when it entered into contract with UNDP to implement UNDP's disaster response program called Regional Climate Risk Reduction Program (RCRRP) in the Himalayas. It was a seven month project in partnership with Practical Action Nepal[7] to pilot disaster preparedness in the catchment of Tsho Rolpa Glacier Lake. The task was to review the failure of a previous early warning system installed in mid-1990s through Norwegian support and suggest appropriate disaster preparedness plan in the area. Practical Action was responsible for the technical aspects such as assessment of the early warning system and recommendations for a new one. ECARDS on the other hand was responsible for social aspect of disaster preparedness i.e. raising awareness about the disaster risk, formation of disaster risk management committees at village and VDC levels and mobilize the committees to prepare for possible GLOF risk (ECARDS 2014 and

[5] Caritas Nepal is Nepalese chapter of the INGO, a Roman Catholic Church's relief, development and social service organizations operating around the world.

[6] Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. The LWS Nepal is part of LWF working in the areas of humanitarian and development works.

[7] Practical Action is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) sector (leading in Early Warning System (EWS) development).

personal communication with ECARDS officials). The activities were implemented focusing on three major settlements along the catchment of Tsho Rolpa GLOF namely Suridoban (Khare, VDC), Bhorle Bazar (Suri, VDC) and Singati bazer (Lamidanda VDC). Later, ECARDS implemented another disaster risk reeducation related project with UNDP in the catchment that also included these three settlements with slightly extended mandate beyond the GLOF i.e. including other disaster risks particularly landslide and flash flood. This was seen to be the entry point of ECARDS into the climate change and disaster risk management related field.

By 2013 ECARDS was working in 15 VDCs of Dolakha district with 52 full-time staff. It had four major projects which are: a) community based disaster risk management project with UNDP; b) local rights program with Action Aid; c) community health project with World Neighbours and d) local governance and community development program[8] with the District Development Committee. It had partnerships with key district development agencies including major national level key development organizations such as UNDP, Practical Action and others. ECARDS has managed to establish itself as the leading development implementation organization in Dolakha (ECARDS 2014).

ECARDS has achieved this over a period of about 18 years largely because of the network of people who founded and led the organization. As indicated earlier, ECARDS was established by people who were established politicians in the districts and had the ability to develop network with district and national level development actors. The ECARDS leadership used to have prominent political positions at district level. For example, the former chairperson was elected a member of District Development Committee during 1997-2001. He later served as chairperson of one of the two biggest political parties in Dolakha and was elected as a member of parliament in 2013. Connection with such influential persons helped ECARDS to grow faster than many other NGOs[9] and make connections with the national level development organizations.

ECARDS's establishment as the leading district based organization with long experience in development delivery helped them to win the disaster response project with UNDP (the CDRMP). In the following section we examine the disaster risk management project ECARDS implemented with funding from UNDP.

4. Implementation of a climate induced disaster response project in Dolakha

In early 2012 UNDP made a call for proposals to implement climate risk management related activities in the northern part of Dolakha. The task was to form and mobilize local level committees for disaster preparedness at the village level. As reported by the project leader[10] (from ECARDS), ECARDS submitted the proposal and eventually won the bid. He said that "there were many bidders including national level NGOs but ECARDS became successful because of its past experiences of working in the area on similar activities". ECARDS entered into contract with UNDP for the project which was called a 'community based climate risk

[8] Local Governance and Community Develop Program is a multi-donor funded program Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development to support local governments in terms of strengthening planning process.

[9] There are about 6 major NGOs active in the district in terms of involvement in development delivery which include Gramin Bikash Tuki Sangh-Dolakha, Sebak Nepal, HURADEC. The ECARDS officials said that after ECARDS Tuki (an association of lead farmers and active in diverse development project) was the biggest in terms of number and size of the projects.

[10] Interviewed in Kathnadu in 13 July 2014

management initiative' in Dolakha. As stated in the project completion report the objectives of the 14 month long project with the budget of about 7 million Nepalese rupees were:

- conducting disaster risk assessment in the project site (Sure-Khare catchment),
- developing a disaster response plan called an 'integrated watershed management plan',
- raising awareness among local community about disaster risk and preparedness,
- establishing local level committees to respond to disaster risks,
- developing the capacity of those organizations and
- providing support for small infrastructure for disaster risk management.

Project site:

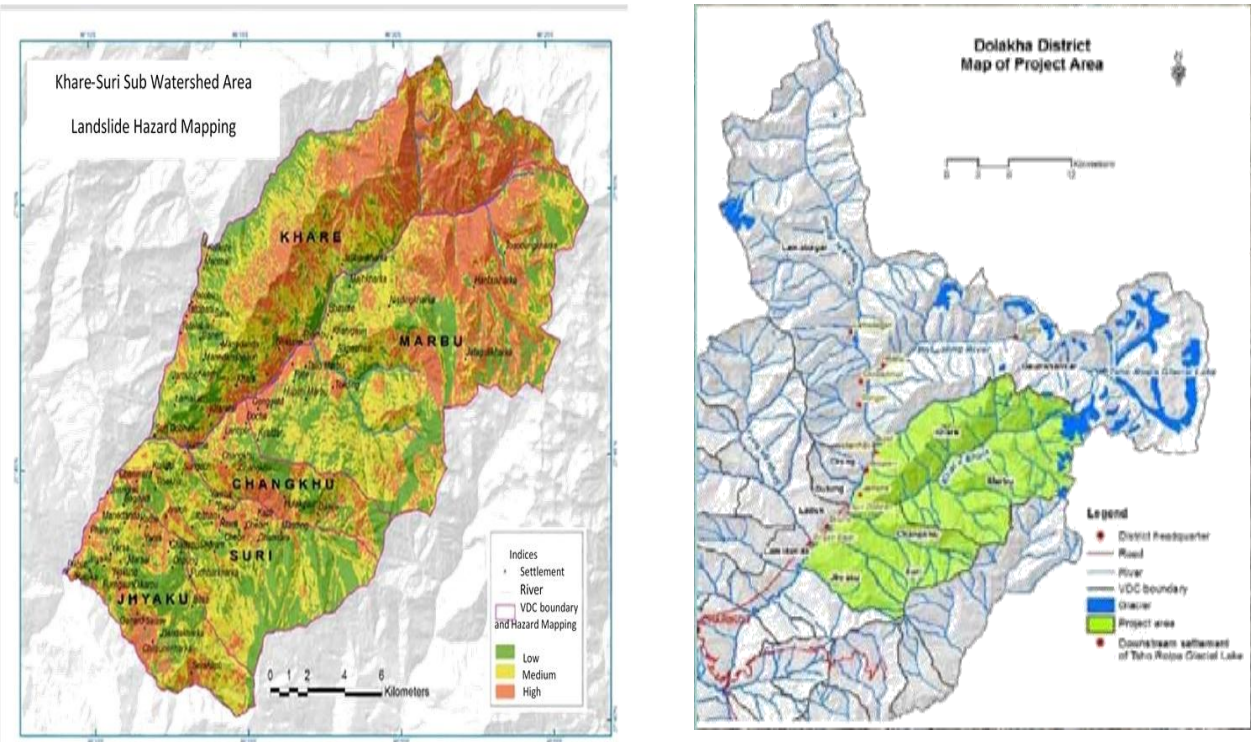
The project was implemented in the northern part of Dolakha district which included the catchment of Tsho Rolpa Glacier Lake. The site included the Sure-Khare catchment of Dolakha district which covers five VDCs namely Khare, Marbu, Chankhu, Suri and Jhanku and some other settlements along the catchment of Tshorolpa Lake (settlement along the Rolwaling and Tamakoshi river which are Jagat, Gongar, Chhotchhot, Lamabagar, Rigu, Simigaun, Beding and Nagaun) (see map).

The UNDP's call for proposal document (Reference?) clearly indicated the possible project sites (Sure-Khare catchment and some settlements along the Tamakoshi and Rolwaling River). When we asked about the selection of project sites in Dolakha, UNDP officer told us[11] that the site selection was done by the district stakeholders particularly DDC and District Administration Office in consultation with other stakeholders. It is evident that the ECARDS was not directly involved in the selection of the project site.

The UNDP officer added that the contract with ECARDS for implementation of the CDRMP was an expansion of RCRRP project implemented earlier and this had focused on three settlements along the Tsho Rolpa catchment. He said, that "for the implementation of the CDRMP related activities both the geographical coverage and the scope of intervention were expanded. Considering other reoccurring hazards like landslide and flashflood in the area we went beyond the Tsho Rolpa catchment and took a catchment covering five VDCs. Tsho Rolpa catchment is part of the bigger catchment and therefore included diverse activities that address different types of disaster risks". He further added that, "in this phase, they have tried to mainstream the disaster preparedness with the local development planning - with local government so they covered a catchment with 5 VDCs". This confirms that Tsho-Rolpa was the key consideration for the selection of project site but with extended mandate to include other disaster risks relevant in the project site.

[11] Interview in Kathmandu in 17 July 2014

Figure 1: ECARDS project sites in map of Dolakha



Source: (ECARDS and UNDP 2013)

Project activities:

The project, despite its short time frame and small budget of about US$ 80,000, included a diverse range of activities. The end of project report (ECARDS and UNDP 2013) shows four different categories of activities which included hazard risk assessment and planning, establishment and strengthening of institutions, capacity development, sensitization and awareness raising and small infrastructure development. Activities under those categories are presented in table 2. We provide a summary description of those activities in this sub-section.

Table 2: Key activities undertaken by ECARDS

Assessment, analysis and development of plans	Capacity development and awareness	Institutional development
• Multi-hazard assessment and development of 'integrated watershed development plan' • Local disaster risk management plan • Development of guidelines for local infrastructure	• Orientation of local disaster risk management plan preparation guidelines • Institutional capacity development training • First aid training • Search and rescue training • Training on early warning system • Entrepreneurship training for youths • Awareness training for different stakeholders • High-altitude cash crop training • Radio program for public awareness	• Consultation and inception workshop at VDC and district level • Formation of local disaster risk management committee (at VDC level) • Formation of community disaster risk management committee (at community level) • Formation of eco-DRR club in schools • Coordination meetings
Small infrastructure development		
• Plantation • Gabion wire and bio-engineering work		

Source: Adapted from booklet and project contract (ECARDS and UNDP 2013)

'Multi-hazard assessment and integrated watershed development plan': The first assignment for ECARDs under the UNDP contract was to conduct a risk assessment in the project site (Khare-Suri catchment) which they called a 'multi-hazard assessment' which was published as a report (ECARDS Dolakha 2012). The study identified the most 'vulnerable sites' in the catchment and suggested measures for disaster risk management which turned out to constitute the major project activities. ECARDS as well as UNDP used this report to justify the activities to be demand driven. The ECARDS staff argued that the project activities were determined after the assessment. However, the project objectives and activities were already agreed when ECARDS signed the project with UNDP.

Establishment of institutional structures at local and community level: One of the core activities of the project was to form and mobilize committees at the local level. At the VDC level, the project helped to form a committee called the Local Disaster Risk Management Committee (LDRMC). The committee which was formed in all five VDCS was said to be formed following the Local Disaster Risk Management Plan preparation guidelines (2068) of Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development [GoN 2011]. The UNDP official claimed that "one of the objectives of CDRMP is to mainstream disaster planning in local government planning process"[12]. An emergency fund was established in each VDCS with seed money from the project (NRs 50000 for each VDC) and their contribution VDCs. As mentioned in the project report, the LDRMC was allowed to use the fund to help disaster affected people within the VDC area.

[12] Interviewed in Kathmandu in 17 July 2014

In addition to these VDC level committees, the project also formed village level committees in the 13 settlements located along the bank of Tsho Rolpa catchment. Those committees are called Community level Disaster Risk Management Committees (CDRMC) and were given responsibilities for directly response such as search and rescue in relation to disasters. The committee described in the introduction in Manthali was one such committee.

Capacity development and awareness: As noted in the end of the project report and reported by the ECARDS staff, the project carried out a five day workshop (Orientation Workshop on Local Disaster Management Plan Preparation) for the representatives of LDRMC and CDRMC of the five VDCs. The objective was to teach the committee representatives on possible disaster risks and measures to address such risks. Posters and radio programs were also used to raise public awareness. Besides those awareness raising activities, the project also provided training to members of committees they formed (both CDRMC and LDRMC). The training activities included:

a) ECARDS organized two events of three-day trainings on early warning system. The training facilitated by an expert from Practical Action focused on the significance of early warning system in disaster preparedness and communication among neighboring settlements in the case of GLOF related disaster.

b) Search and rescue training for three days was given to about 60 people (for the members of search and rescue committee team within the local disaster risk management committees) focusing on the technique and procedures of search and rescue in case of disaster events. Experts from Nepal Army were the trainers.

c) Similarly First Aid trainings were provided for three days to about 60 people to train them first aid treatment to the injured people. The first aid trainings were provided by the Dolakha Red Cross.

The CDRMCs were also provided with tools and equipment as described in the introduction.

Small infrastructure development: The project also supported the development of small infrastructures which were seen to mitigate disaster risks such as landslides. These included bio-engineering, gabion check dams, conservation ponds etc. According to the project report some 15000 seedlings were planted and two small bio-engineering schemes with gabion wire with plantation of boom grass seedlings were supported. The activities were undertaken with the District Soil Conservation Office in Charikot.

Besides those activities the project also conducted a training in each VDC on vegetable farming which about 125 people attended. The project also conducted training on entrepreneurship development for 23 local people.

An analysis of the budget spent in each category of activities shows that the project was more focused on disaster preparedness with only a small component for mitigation of disaster risks. Of the total activity budget 72% (about $45000) of the budget was spent on activities related to disaster preparedness which include disaster risk assessment, awareness and capacity development and formation and mobilization of local disaster related institutions. About 28% ($12000) budget was spent on small disaster risk mitigation i.e. bio-engineering work including

plantation and small infrastructure particularly gabion boxes. It is claimed in the project completion report that small structures are meant for disaster risk mitigation. However, the effort in terms of budget volume is insignificant considering the landslide and flood risk the five VDCs are exposed to.

Besides the disaster preparedness program (i.e. risk assessment, formation of organizations, awareness etc) the activities assigned to ECARDS had a specific focus on immediate response i.e. relief. There were trainings and workshops to develop local capacity for immediate disaster response i.e. search and rescue, first aid treatment etc. The community disaster risk management committees were also provided with the equipments and tools for rescue and immediate relief.

On the other hand, it was far from clear that how the training on the vegetable farming and entrepreneurship were related to disaster risk reduction. The ECARDS staff asserted that the increased income helped reduce vulnerability of people to climate induced disaster. However evidence of income increases as a result of this activity and effects on reducing vulnerability to climate change risks were available to support this claim.

All the above mentioned activities implemented by ECARDS were not determined by ECARDS. Rather they were pre-determined by the UNDP and included in the tender document provided by UNDP in announcing the call for proposal (see terms of reference attached in agreement between UNDP and ECARDS). The contract also mentions that the implementing agency (i.e. ECARDS) need UNDP approval about the contents of the trainings and experts to be used to deliver the events. This indicates that the ECARDS as an implementing agency had limited involvement in the substantive issues of the contract or project design.

Project implementation in the ground:

We visited the local disaster committee members from two villages (LDRMC of Marbu VDC and CDRMC of Manthali village of Khare VDC). We met a secretary of LDRMC of Marbu VDC and members of CDRMC of Manthali settlement (Khare VDC). In this sub-section we present a short description of how the ECARDS supported committee works in case of disaster event taking the case of LDRMC of Marbu.

ECARDS formed LDRMC in each VDCs primarily to coordinate with the VDC on disaster response. ECARDS also helped to establish an emergency fund at VDC level with the contribution of NRs 50,000 where VDC topped up with NRs 100,000.

The secretary of LDRMC in Marbu reported about how the LDRMC members worked during a landslide that happened in the village in August of 2013. Mr. Acharya said.

> We informed the district administration office and Red Cross in the morning and started search and rescue operation. We also evacuated some of the houses which were at risk. We found the people who had lost their life were from a single family. Only a girl of age about 13 survived from the family as she was out in the neighboring village for her education. [13]

He added that the training provided by ECARDs and equipments provided by UNDP were useful for them in the search and rescue process.

[13] Interview conducted in 17 March 2014.

The LDRMC members informed the district officials in Charikot (district headquarter and they arrived at about mid-day with a search and rescue team and some relief materials. The DDC through District Disaster Risk Management Committee provided NRs 5000 for the 7 affected households as a relief grant. The Red Cross provided the usual relief materials such as tents, clothes and utensils. The LDRMC also provided NRs 2000 for each affected family and NRs 5000 for the girl who lost all her family members. The funds were provided from the emergency fund established in the VDC.

He compared the landslide with similar event that had happened about 12 years before. In 2001 there was a landslide in the neighboring village. The team from Charikot (district headquarter) arrived with roughly the same relief package the third day after the landslide. At that time, there was no telephone facility in the village and villagers sent a messenger to district headquarter. The District Administration Office provided NRs 3000 (about $ 30) as a relief grant to 7 affected households and Red Cross provided the same relief materials such as tents, utensils, clothes and some food. He remembers that there were no support from the district and other development agencies for the affected household to rebuild their house and recover their farm land. Some of the households became landless as they could not recover their farm land.

The secretary explained the role of LDRMC comparing the two landslide events. As he said, the response in 2013 landslide was faster than the previous one. He said,

> the LDRMC members informed the agencies in Charikot about the landslide and coordinated the search and rescue. This made possible for search and rescue and distribution of relief material in the same day of landslide. The LDRMC members used the skill about disaster response provided by ECARDS. In addition to this, the LDRMC also topped up the relief grant[14].

The difference therefore largely seems to be one of speed (due to improved telecommunications) and perhaps coordination, rather than a substantive difference in terms of the nature of the relief response. In both the cases of landslide, there was no support for recovery of the landslide affected family such as rebuilding of a house or recovery of the crop field. The secretary admitted that the committee did not have resources for recovery which requires bigger amount of resources. He said,

> there is no clear policy regarding the recovery of the affected people. The families who lost their house in 2013 landslide have still not been able to manage to construct a new house. They do not have a safer area to construct house in their own land. District officials and LDRMC suggested constructing new house in safer place but they do not have option. There is no mechanism in the government organizations to support the affected people to build new house or provide public land. Rather neighbours and local community institutions like community forest user groups provided some support to build house to those who had land to build new house.[15]

In other words there is a little evidence of interventions to reduce future risks, let alone address longer term recovery. The recovery from the disaster like the landslide that happened in Marbu depends on the capacity of the affected household. Those who do not have capacity to recover on their own either need to get a loan or become destitute like the 13 years old girl who lost all her family members and property. There was some sporadic support to help her education like a

[14] Interview conducted in 17 March 2014
[15] Interview conducted in 17 March 2014

FM radio station in Charikot generated a fund of about 70,000 and District Administration office provided NRs 40,000. But this was only a token contribution in terms of building house and requiring land. So, she became homeless.

The community disaster risk management committee of Manthali (a settlement of Khare VDC which lies along the bank of Tamakoshi river) was also formed by ECARDS. In a meeting with the members of CDRMC of Manthali, the participants reported that the committee was provided with a set of material that committee can use for search and rescue in case of any disaster event in the village. ECARDs organized number of workshops and trainings focusing on disaster related risks in the village and possible measures to minimize such risks. The committee members were also provided with the training related to search and rescue i.e. technique of search and rescue and first aid. ECARDS also provided training on vegetable farming. The chairperson of the committee said: "ECARDS organized training in the village on vegetable cultivation and also provided some vegetable seeds. Some of the villagers started vegetable farming. There is an increased demand of vegetable for labor working in ongoing Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower project construction".[16]

Explaining how the committee was involved in a disaster event, committee members reported that a house in the village was destroyed by fire last October (2013). Although the committee members and those who had been trained in search and rescue process could not reach there in time, the CDRMC provided some support to the affected family. It provided a tent and blankets and NRs 10000 (about $100). There was a rumor about Tsho Rolpa GLOF in August 2013 and CDRMC members told the village households that it was not true. They argued that that small role of CDRMC was significant to make the villages aware.

We also asked the committee members their views regarding the risk villagers are facing. The people in the meeting reported that they had experienced frequent small landslides and flash floods, which had damaged their crops, houses and other property. They thought that the occurrence of such small flashflood and landslides had increased in recent years. They also experience more frequent failure of their agricultural crops that in their view was due to a prolonged drought in winter and spring.

To what extent did project interventions in the Sure-Khare catchment address local disaster risks?

A reading of the project related documents particularly the project completion report (ECARDS and UNDP 2013) and field investigations and observation reveals some interesting assessment about the project implemented in the Sure-Khare catchment and some settlements along the bank of Tamakoshi and Rolwaling rivers. First, the activities implemented in the project sites were predominantly related to disaster preparedness and immediate relief. The purpose was not to assess the effectiveness of the activities, and the interest is more in assessing the relevance of the project activities to the stated goals or purpose of the project – the linkage to disaster risk reduction. Drawing from a reading of the project budget a number of things are clear.

[16] Interview conducted in 18 March 2014.

As noted there are four broad sets of activities: a) disaster risk mitigation which comprised activities related to minimizing disaster risk like stabilization of slope or river control; b) disaster preparedness which include assessment of risk, establishing early warning system and developing awareness about disaster risk ; c) immediate response and recovery from disaster which include activities like search and rescue and relief package and finally d) recovery from the disaster which include activities related to rehabilitation.

However project efforts in our assessment have largely focused on the second and third sets of activities with a limited focus on first one. Comparing the budget put into different categories of work shows that mitigation of disaster risk has got a relatively low weight and the recovery of disaster affected people was not considered at all. It seems that this was not the mandate of the project. Considering the time frame of project and volume of the budget, it seem to have had limited scope. One could not expect many activities that needed relatively bigger investment such as building structure to reduce disaster risk or investing in rebuilding houses or recovery of agriculture land. It appears to have actually done rather little in relation to disaster risk reduction.

Second, the project has formed different committees and even sub-committees as a means to provide disaster response at a local level. Those committees were provided with tools and equipments that they could use to respond the disaster. In our observation, those committees were used in instrumental way implement the project activities most of which were discontinued after the termination of the project. The tools and equipments provided by UNDP are kept in rented office but the committee is striving to pay the rent and waiting for another phase of the project to come so that they can keep paying the rent. This begs the question whether the committees were formed only to meet the project targets or twas this something communities really needed for effective coordination of disaster response at local level, given the evidence of what they have done in the past.

Third, the project also conducted some training on something called 'cultivation of high-value crops' which was in fact vegetable farming. Training was also given on entrepreneurship development to the local youths. The substance and relevance of these trainings to disaster response, let alone to disaster risk reduction remains unclear.

Fourth, informants during the field visit had the perception that small landslides and flashfloods are the most significant risks they are facing. They are also experiencing more frequently crop failures which they think are due to climate change. However, our reading of project reveals that the risk of the Tsho Rolpa GLOF was the primary consideration of the project given the terms selection of project sites and focus of the project activities. ECARDS which implemented the activities in ground had very limited role in selection of the sites and it was done by UNDP through a workshop in the district. It was clear from the UNDP official's reporting that Tsho Rolpa Glacier Lake was the primary consideration for the location of the project.

Fifth, the hydro power projects which are located along the bank of Tamakoshi River are the ones to be affected most if Tsho Rolpa GLOF happens. The hydro power projects which are large investments have an interest to minimize the risk of GLOF. As discussed earlier, the Khimti Hydropower project invested in siphoning off the water from the Tsho Rolpa Lake in mid 1990s and also invested in establishing an early warning system that fell into disuse. The

Upper Tamakoshi hydro power project is which is under construction and it is also likely to be affected from the possible GLOF risk. The interest and influence of these projects are worth exploring in relation to the disaster response in the area but this was not a focus of this study.

The questions we posed for this paper still remained unanswered and it seems that many important aspects were beyond the NGO that implemented project. The selection of the site and and the framing of disaster response in terms of approach and activities were determined by the UNDP's disaster response programme of which the project implemented by ECARDS was only a part. So, we turn our inquiry towards the UNDPs bigger project on disaster response in the following section.

5. The Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Program of UNDP

The Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Program (CDRMP) was developed by UNDP under a broader strategic partnership framework between the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR)[17] and UNDP and the responsibility assigned by Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC) [18] to the UNDP Nepal. The NRRC identified what it terms five key 'flagship' areas for disaster response in Nepal[19] of which UNDP is the leading agency for flagship five —'institutional and legal systems for disaster risk reduction'. According to the CDRMP program document, the program aims to 'develop capable and resourceful national DRM system which can provide effective response to a disaster event, support risk reduction measures across different sectors, and implement socially equitable recovery policy' (UNDP 2011:15). The program has an objective 'to develop institutional capacity at the national and local levels for disaster risk deduction and support the communities in reducing their risk and vulnerability' (ibid). In doing this, the project directly supports to implement the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (GON 2009) developed by the Government of Nepal in 2009 in accordance with the commitment being a part of Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA 2005)[20].

The five year long program (2011-2015) has a total budget of $ 16.55 million but only about (13% from UNDP and 12% from BCPR) 25% of the total budget estimation is allocated from UNDP and rest is finding from multiple donors as stated in the project document and website[21]. The program is being implemented in 39 district of Nepal (6 mountains, 21 hill, and 12 Terai districts) (UNDP 2011) of which Dolakha is one. In terms of partnership, this project works with the government agencies, NGOs and local communities.

The project has six programmatic components. The first and second (which are the major components) are related to the institutional and legal system for DRM. The focus of the component is to make the organizations related to DRM responsible and capable for disaster response and it comprises activities related to strengthening institutional capacity of

[17] BCPR provides expertise on crisis issues to UNDP country offices, regional bureaus, and headquarters. Work of the Bureau bridges the humanitarian phase of a post-crisis response and the long-term development phase following recovery.

[18] NRRC is an institutional arrangement that unites humanitarian and development partners with financial institution in partnership with the government of Nepal in order to reduce Nepal's vulnerability to natural disaster (UNDP 2011).

[19] Programmatically, the NRRC identified five priority areas called flagships, each of which is led by a Government Ministry and coordinated by an international organization.

[20] Hyogo framework for action (2005-2015) is the international framework under UN with the aim of building resilience of national and communities to disaster (ISDR 2005).

[21] Out of the total budget of US$16.5 million, United Nations Development Program-UNDP/BCPR provided 25% and rest come from different donors i.e. DFID, ECHO, World Bank and KOIKA.

organizations, fostering network and relations and help to formulate and implement policy and legal framework related to DRR. This component falls under the UNDP commitment to NRMC.

The third component is related to climate risk management which seeks to contribute on areas identified by NAPA (GoN 2010). The component focuses on assessment of climate risks at the local level and providing support to address such risks i.e. developing local level early warning system particularly focusing on risk of GLOF. The fourth component is related to community based disaster risk management particularly focusing at the local level. The fifth component is on emergency preparedness which focuses on establishment and strengthening emergency operation centers at different levels. The sixth component is related to early recovery with focus on developing capacity of government and UN and developing recovery plans.

As outlined above, the key focus of the program is on strengthening institutional and legislative systems related to DRR and UNDP is the lead agency of flagship area assigned by the National Risk Management Consortium. Under this mandate the program includes a wide range of activities related to 'institutional strengthening' i.e. capacity development of government organizations, fostering coordination among government organizations and other non-government agencies and support to formulate policy and legal framework. Besides the institutional and policy aspect, program has also covered activities related to climate change/disaster risks at the local level i.e. climate risk management, community based disaster risk management, emergency preparedness and response and early recovery. The program seems to include dispersed activities ranging from policy intervention to local practices covering both disaster risk and climate related risks. The UNDP appears to have built a disaster response program pulling together its mandate under the NRMC and pre-existing projects. So, the program document lack coherence in terms of alignment of the activities and components to well though hierarchy of objectives. Also, the program seem muddled in terms of differentiating climate related risks and disaster risks.

In Dolakha, UNDP has been implementing activities related to climate risk management and emergency preparedness and response. Besides the activities implemented by ECARDs as discussed earlier, UNDP has also been working on other aspects. As reported by the UNDP officer[22], UNDP had provided support to prepare the District Disaster Risk Management Plan which was developed under the leadership of District Disaster Risk Management Committee. UNDP has also been providing support to district Emergency Operation Center (DEOC). The program has also provided direct support to the local communities in Surun Khola catchment[23] of Dolakha. The UNDP provided small grant to the community groups for development of small infrastructure to reduce disaster risks and promote income generating activities like cultivation of Cardamom and Boom grass. The District Soil Conservation Office provides the technical support to the local community groups to implement such activities.

[22] Interviewed in Kathmandu in 17 July 2014

[23] The Sorung Khola Sub-Watershed constituting Kalinchok, Babare, Khopachangu, Lamidanda and Lapinalg VDCs lies in western part of Tamakosi. The UNDP intervention was based on the Intergrated Watershed Plan of District Soil Conservation Office. The activities are related to disaster risk mitigation i.e. bioengineering work and promotion of non-timber forest products i.e. boom-grass and cardamom which supports both soil conservation and generating income at local level.

It is clear from a reading of the CDRMP program document (UNDP 2011) that there is a weaker focus on recovery from the disaster. There is a small component called early recovery which is more related to saving lives and providing immediate relief which is what the district disaster response committee and Red Cross are doing. There seem no explicit focus on the long-term recovery and rehabilitation. However, the program document has a complaint that the existing policy and institutional structure related to disaster response is limited to relief and lack focus on recovery and rehabilitation. So, the program document seems somewhat inconsistent in its observations of weaknesses of existing practices and its failure to address them in its own design.

We were also interested in the apparent gap between the local peoples' perception of disaster risks and their needs in responding to them and how the ECARDS project framed it and implemented it on the ground. When asked about how the project sites were selected in Dolakha and what factors and criteria were used the officer commented that, "the project sites are selected through a rigorous process considering different parameters like assessment of disaster risk, socio-economic condition etc. The selection was carried out by local stakeholders particularly DDC and District Administration Office". He added that the Suri-Khare catchment was selected considering the local peoples needs of addressing risk of landslides. However he admitted that the Tsho Rolpa was the main reason for selecting the particular catchment where they implemented another project before this one. In this phase they just expanded the project site to address local needs.

As discussed earlier, large investment in Dolakha on hydro-power projects may have an interest in this regard. The UNDP officer said that the project is collaborating with Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower project on re-establishing the early warning system in Tsho Rolpa catchment. This is important for the hydro power project because if GLOF happens, it is the one to be affected the most. Such interests have drawn attention of the national actors who frame policies and programs as it happened in 1990. The issue about the risk of Tsho Rolpa was strongly brought out in the mid-1990 when the Khimti Hydropower Project was under construction. The Norwegian government who funded the Khimti hydropower project also funded to establish early warning system (serine) along the catchment at that time. This is the reason why Dolakha was identified as the priority district for addressing disaster from GLOF.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In this paper we examined a disaster risk management project implemented by a district based NGO in Dolakha as part of UNDP's disaster risk management program. Our focus was to explore how the project was designed and implemented to address the disaster risk particularly focusing on how the project engaged with their target (area and people at disaster risk). Further questions emerged after visiting some of the field sites in Northern Dolakha including how the project sites were selected (the relative influence of GLOF risk despite the fact that local people had perceived flashflood and landslide as the major disaster risk) and how the project conceptualized disaster response (it was found that field activities were more related to shorter term response (disaster preparedness and relief). We were also puzzled that level of interest and influence the Hydro-power project had on the disaster response as they are the ones to be affective most in terms of property damage.

We found that the activities assigned to ECARDS in Sure-Khare catchment of Dolakha were only a part of the UNDP program on disaster response focusing on two specific components i.e. 'climate risk management' (among six components discussed earlier). UNDP provided ECARDS a pre-determined sets of activities to be implemented in the site selected by UNDP through a separate process. So, the UNDP had a control over determining the activities and sites and ECARDS had narrow mandate to execute the given activities in the pre-determined sites.

The activities assigned to ECARDS were primarily focused on the immediate response to the disaster i.e. disaster preparedness and relief. It is not only the activities assigned to ECARDS but also the UNDP's CDRMP that has a narrow focus on disaster preparedness and immediate response with limited attention on long-term recovery or rehabilitation. So, the long-term recovery aspect remained unattended to as in the case of existing policy and legal framework of Nepal.

On the other hand, despite the fact that landslide and flashflood are the most locally perceived disaster risk in Dolakha, the ECARDS activities were more driven from the perceived risk of GLOF (Tsho Rolpa). The activities conducted in Sure-Khare catchment were related to the forming committees and mobilizing them for relief and early recovery, raising awareness about disaster risk and supporting for early warning system particularly focusing on Tsho Rolpa GLOF risk. This is also consistent with the assertion made in the CDRMP program document that GLOF risk is more linked with the climate change. So, the priority of the UNDP project was GLOF risk which was determined by the national assessment of climate change risk conducted during preparation of NAPA done by the experts. The assessment was influenced by the larger interests like GLOF which has been considered as a big threat due to melting ice in the Himalayas and increasing the volume of Glacier Lakes that increases the risk of GLOF. Such attention may have been partly influenced by big investments on hydro power projects in the catchment of GLOF risk areas. Such framing does not appear to be consistent with local peoples' priorities and needs to respond the frequently occurring small disaster events like landslide and flash floods.

Our findings also show that the CDRMP has used the local level committees and NGO in more of an instrumental way. The committees were formed at the local level and they were mobilized to respond climate risks. Most of these committees are inactive after the termination of the project. Similarly, the ECARDS was also provided with a narrow mandate for the implementation of project activities and had no role in determining project activities and sites. The disaster response related activities implemented by ECARDS were driven by the UNDP disaster framework and interest in forming its disaster risk management portfolio. The program does not appear to have adequately engaged with disaster or climate change risks the supposed beneficiaries of the project actually face. The implementing agency appears to have simply fulfilled the role of its contract and implementing a pre-designed plan rather than actively engaging in understanding and representing the interests of those at risk.

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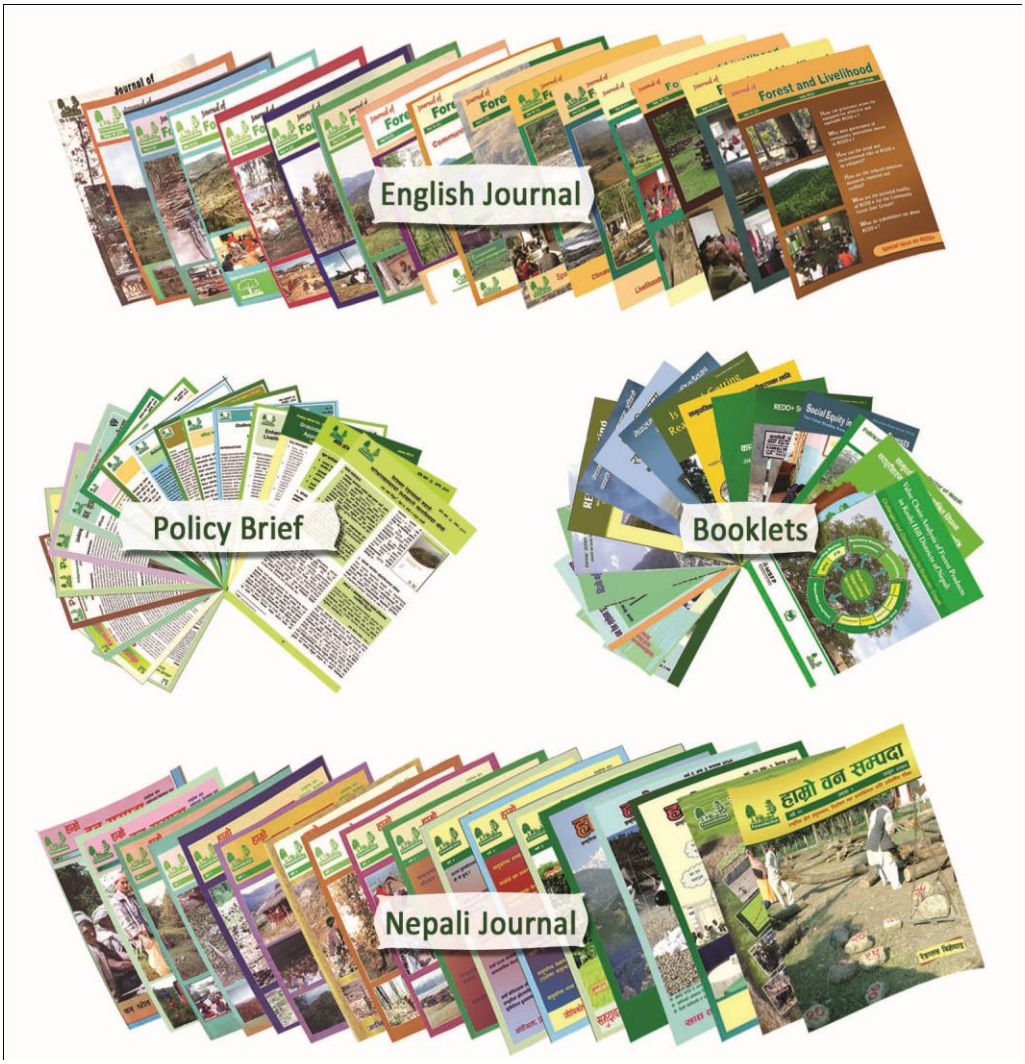

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