

Relief & Survey Report of Rukum & Jajarkot 2023: A Concise Overview



Executive Summary

In response to the catastrophic 6.4 rector scale earthquake that hit Rukum and Jajarkot of mid-western region of Nepal on 3rd November, the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) held an emergency meeting on 5th November, 2023 to discuss and raise support for the relief and rehabilitation operations. The meeting was also graced by the presence of the past president, past chief patron of NRNA and founding president of MITGF, Dr Shesh Ghale. Dr Ghale noted the providing immediate relief was the need of the hour but advised that a field visit would be more appropriate in assessing the actual needs through discussion with victims, local representatives and the local government officials before finalizing the package of support.

As decided in the 20th ICC meeting representatives of NRNA through its humanitarian wing the Global NRN Foundation (GNRNF) and MIT Group Foundation (MITGF) launched a swift and significant relief and survey operation. This report outlines the strategic planning, execution, and outcomes of this mission.

Key Highlights:

1. **Strategic Planning:** Led by Dr. Shesh Ghale, the team promptly formulated a response plan, focusing on logistics, resource allocation, and immediate relief strategies.
2. **Team Deployment:** Two teams were deployed, with Mr. Dipesh Khatri leading the land team and Dr. Shesh Ghale leading the air team. Overcoming challenging terrains and logistical hurdles, they reached the affected areas.
3. **Relief Efforts:** The operation prioritized providing essential supplies, such as food and blankets, to the earthquake victims. Detailed damage assessments were conducted in various wards of Athbiskot Municipality and Rauth Gaun in Jajarkot, in consultation with the victims and local political and administrative representatives.
4. **Impact and Observations:** The report outlines the extensive destruction witnessed, the emotional toll on the victims and the relief team, and the urgent needs of the earthquake victims.
5. **Recommendations:** An imperative recommendation is made for the collaborative reconstruction of Rauth village, emphasizing a united effort to rebuild and support the community

This operation exemplifies the power of prompt, coordinated response in disaster management and underscores the critical role of humanitarian aid in times of crisis.

Introduction

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the relief operations undertaken in response to the devastating earthquake in Rukum and Jajarkot, Nepal. Its purpose is to apprise our esteemed donors and stakeholders about the damage caused, efforts undertaken, challenges encountered, and the impact of the team's coordinated intervention.

Context

Nepal, known for its seismic vulnerability, has experienced several catastrophic earthquakes over the years, notably in 1989 and 2015. The 2015 earthquake proved to be very devastating, setting back the nation's development and infrastructures by decades. During such times of crisis, the NRNA and the MITGF have always played a pivotal role in the relief and rehabilitation efforts during these times of crisis.

The earthquake of November 3, 2023, with its epicenter in Ramidanda of Barekot Rural Municipality, Jajarkot, Karnali Province, was another such calamity. This 6.4 magnitude earthquake claimed over 157 lives and equal number have been injured but what is equally disturbing is that more than 35,000 houses and many rural community infrastructures such as school buildings and primary health care centers have been destroyed leaving many homeless. All these need to be rebuilt and the locals have been forced to spend nights under the open sky with the harsh winter approaching under reigniting fears and trauma.



Strategic Response of GNRNF & MIT Group Foundation

In response to the earthquake, several organizations, including individuals unaffiliated with any group, expressed their willingness to provide immediate aid. The MITGF & NRNA team, under the leadership of Dr. Shesh Ghale, swiftly gathered to develop a rescue and relief strategy. The meeting focused on following key areas:

1. Identifying the most affected areas and planning access routes.
2. Determining the timing and logistics of the operation.
3. Allocating responsibilities among team members:
 - a. Dr. Shesh Ghale, as the coordinator, oversaw strategic planning for the entire project.
 - b. Mr. Rajesh Rana, CEO of NRNA, coordinated with NRNs in Nepal and abroad for fundraising and obtaining approval from relevant authorities.
 - c. B.A. Dipesh Khatri was responsible for route planning, public engagement, assessing the needs of victims, and delivering relief materials.
 - d. MITGF Director Suresh Chitrakar assumed procurement responsibilities.
 - e. Advisor Shyam Tamang coordinated with the Chief District Officer, Mayor, and local authorities.
 - f. Mr. AC Sherpa, advisor of NRNA, took charge of air transport, logistics, and accommodation.

Composition and Deployment of the Teams

Airborne Humanitarian Assessment Force (AHAF):

- Dr. Shesh Ghale, Chairperson, M.I.T. Group Foundation
- Mr. Suresh, M.I.T. Group Foundation
- Mr. Shyam Tamang, Advisor, NRNA & M.I.T. Foundation
- Mr. AC Sherpa, Advisor, NRNA



Land Relief Team:

- Mr. Dipesh Khatri, NRNA B.A.
- Mr. Tshring Sherpa, a social volunteer



Control Room Kathmandu:

- Mr. Rajesh Rana and,
- NRNA office Team

The Land Journey and the Initial Response

On November 5, 2023, the team departed from the headquarters in Baluwatar. The land team, led by Mr. Khatri, conducted a comprehensive assessment along the way. They procured and packed essential supplies for delivery to the affected areas and proceeded towards their destination.

Detailed Mission Report: Jajarkot and Rukum

November 6, 2023: (Day 1)

Kathmandu - Pokhara

The team's first destination was Rukum, specifically targeting wards 9 through 14 in Athbiskot Municipality for a detailed assessment. Aware of the grim statistics of 45 fatalities and destruction of 80% of the houses, the team, under Mr. Dipesh Khatri's leadership and accompanied by Mr. Tshring Sherpa, embarked on their mission with essential relief supplies. They departed Kathmandu at 15:00 and reached Pokhara by 23:30, where they halted due to travel constraints.

November 7, 2023 (Day 2)

Arrival at Atbiskot, Rukum

The team resumed their journey to Rukum and left Pokhara at 4:00 am and reached Baglung Kalika Temple at 5:00 am.

After a brief tea break, the team proceeded forward, facing numerous challenges due to unfamiliar terrains. However, it was necessary to make stops along the way. The team sought assistance from local individuals to navigate the correct path, eventually arriving at Burthiband at 12:00 noon. Even during



the brunch hour, the team remained in constant communication with locals from Rukum, Athbiskot. These locals informed the team of the shortage of food, prompting them to acquire additional supplies en route to address the immediate needs of the victims. In Burthiband, supplies worth rupees 1,47,500 were purchased, and two trucks were utilized for transportation. The land team was informed that they would reach Rukum in 3 hours.

The air team was communicated to depart from Kathmandu so that they could be on field for relief operations together. However, the team was not informed that Rukum was further demarcated as East Rukum and Far West Rukum. This definitely led to some confusion in figuring out the destination. However, through the cooperation of locals on the way and those from Athbiskot helped resolve this ambiguity. Upon reaching Rukumkot at 15:00 hrs., the team coordinated with local contacts and proceeded to Athbiskot.

- Mr. Ramesh BK (Atbiskot Local)
- Mr. Shankar Bista (Atbiskot Local)
- Mr. Gana Bahadur BK (Atbiskot Local)

The above-mentioned locals were the ones who had been communicating with the land team during the journey from Kathmandu to Rukum. By the time the land team reached Rukumkot, the air team was already there. The land team had a break at Rukumkot and requested Mr. Ramesh BK to join the food truck, Mr. Shankar Bista and Mr. Gana Bahadur BK to join blanket truck so that they could be properly guided to Athbiskot. The land team moved to meet air team but were unable to meet them.



By the time the land team reached Rukumkot, the air team had already arrived. The land team took a break at Rukumkot and requested Mr. Ramesh BK to accompany the food truck, while Mr. Shankar Bista and Mr. Gana Bahadur BK joined the blanket truck, ensuring proper guidance to Athbiskot. Although the land team attempted to meet the air team, they were unable to do so.

The land team reached Athbiskot ward no. 13 at around 4:00 pm and had go on foot for about 90 minutes to reach the area that was massively destroyed.

The devastation in the village was profound, with almost no structures left standing. The team distributed blankets and food items, spending the night with the victims under the open sky in solidarity.



Airborne Humanitarian Assessment Force (AHAF)

November 6th & 7th, 2023



On a clear morning of 6th November, 2023 the EQ2023 team consisting representatives from the MIT Group Foundation and Global NRN Foundation embarked on a crucial mission to Rukum and Jajarkot, two districts heavily affected by the devastating earthquake. Led by the esteemed Coordinator Dr Shesh Ghale and AC Sherpa, advisor NRNA & Consular General Seattle Washington, the team also included Shyam Tamang Advisor NRNA & MIT, Suresh Chitrakar, director of MIT Group Foundation, and other dedicated individuals.

Departing at 11.30 am, the team made a brief stop in Pokhara for refueling before continuing the journey. The team's first destination was Aathbiskot Municipality-13 in Rukum, where we had scheduled meetings with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Wada President, political party representatives, and the former Home Minister. These meetings aimed to gather valuable insights and perspectives on the current situation, as well as discuss potential strategies for the future. There were 518 houses in Aathbiskot Municipality out of which 442 were damaged and in Lata village 28 houses we fully damaged.





After the meetings, an interaction program was organized with earthquake survivors and house owners who had experienced significant losses. It was a poignant and eye-opening experience, allowing the team to witness firsthand the impact of the disaster on their lives of the victims. Additionally, visits were also made to the village to observe the damage to houses and livestock, which helped provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the community. The teams next destination was Rautgaon in Jajarkot, where the team met with local residents and paid tribute to the families who had lost their loved ones. The village consisted of 63 households, with approximately 80% of the houses severely damaged. It was a heartbreaking sight, but it further reinforced our determination to provide assistance and support to the affected individuals and communities.



Upon landing at the Jajarkot CDO office, we engaged in discussions with the Chief District Officer, local residents, and cabinet Minister Honorable Shakti Basnet. These conversations focused on various aspects, including rescue operations, relief efforts, rehabilitation plans, and the crucial process of reconstruction. It was essential to collaborate and strategize with key stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and effective approach for recovery.

After completing our mission in Jajarkot, we returned to Pokhara before heading to Kathmandu the following day. The visit to Rukum and Jajarkot were both humbling and enlightening. It highlighted the resilience and the spirit of the Nepalese people while emphasizing the urgent need for sustainable support and resources to rebuild these communities.



As the team departed, their hearts were filled with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that our efforts had the potential to make a significant difference in the lives of those affected by the earthquake. The team remains committed to the ongoing EQ2023 initiatives, working tirelessly to ensure a brighter and a more secure future for the victims of Rukum and Jajarkot, and all the regions impacted by this earthquake.

November 8, 2023 (Day 3)

At 6:00 AM, the team gathered to distribute rations to the victims of the earthquake.

Dipesh Khatri, the team leader, conducted a thorough inspection of the area, which had been severely impacted by the extensive damage. Efforts were made to provide comfort to the affected residents before departing at 11:00 AM.



Under the guidance of Dr Ghale and Shyam Tamang the team then proceeded to Rauth Gaun, Jajarkot, a journey of approximately 1.5 hours from Athbiskot. The devastation in Jajarkot was overwhelming, particularly upon discovering a two-month-old infant, Ashvi BK, who had been trapped under debris for 12 hours. Her rescue was a poignant moment; her mother was severely injured and her grandmother had perished in the disaster.

The team also met Chandra Kami, who had suffered the loss of his mother and grandmother, underscoring the profound human toll of the earthquake.

Around 16:00 hrs the land team left from Rauth Village, Jajarkot to Pokhara.

November 9, 2023 (Day 4)

Around 10:00 am the land team headed to Kathmandu from Pokhara and reached Kathmandu at 19:00 hrs.

Matrix Displaying Total Houses and Damages in Athbiskot, Rukum

SN	Name of Village	Total Number of Houses Damaged
1	Gaun Volma	20
2	Gaun Dhara	4
3	Gau Kuridhara	30
4	Gau Bari	9
5	Lata	20
6	Hampa	22
7	Bhairajya	130
8	Kafaldhara	55
9	Rata Mare	21
10	Royl Gaun	33
11	Dadi	22
12	Sota	13
13	Total No. of Schools:40	



RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

- **Collaborative Effort for Reconstruction:** It is advised that the Global NRN Foundation and MIT Foundation work together to reconstruct Raut Village, Jajarkot, and Lata Village, Rukum.
- **United Approach for Effective Rebuilding:** Emphasizing the need for a collective effort, the task, although daunting for an individual organization, becomes achievable with combined resources and a shared vision.
- **Reconstruction of Rauth Village Jajarkot & Lata Village Rukum:** Recommending an initial focus on Rauth Village, which consists of 63 houses, and Lata Village in Rukum, which has 28 damaged houses, as a manageable and strategic starting point.



Field Report by Dipesh Khatri

AHAF Report by Shyam Tamang

End of Report