This research was carried out for the Fondation de France. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the Fondation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Groupe URD research team would like to thank all the individuals and institutions who accepted to speak to us during the different field trips to Nepal. We would particularly like to thank the representatives of Nepalese NGOs who took part in the different presentation workshops and shared their views openly and creatively. And thanks, finally, to the Fondation de France for entrusting us with this extremely interesting lesson learning exercise.

GROUPE URD
RELIEF . REHABILITATION . DEVELOPMENT

Created in 1993, Groupe URD is an independent think tank that is specialised in the analysis of aid practices and the development of policies for humanitarian action and fragility management. Its multi-disciplinary expertise, based on regular field visits to crisis and post-crisis contexts. It believes in sharing knowledge and collective learning, and helps organisations to improve the quality of their operations.

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MAP OF THE PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY FONDATION DE FRANCE
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<thead>
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFD</td>
<td>Agence Française de Développement</td>
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<td>ARSOW</td>
<td>Association for Rural Social Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSRC</td>
<td>Community Self Reliance Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTFC</td>
<td>Central Tea Cooperative Federation limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRM</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>NACCFL</td>
<td>Nepal Agricultural Cooperative Central Federation Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFN</td>
<td>NGO Federation of Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRA</td>
<td>National Reconstruction Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSDRM</td>
<td>National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>TGH</td>
<td>Triangle Generation Humanitaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSO</td>
<td>Technical Support Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The Fondation de France has been involved in the response to major humanitarian crises since 1998, following hurricane Mitch. Since then, it has supported actors involved in the responses to the 2004 Tsunami in Southeast Asia, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the 2013 cyclone in the Philippines and earthquakes in Nepal in April and May 2015. In order to gradually improve its contribution to these responses, it decided to support lesson learning exercises. After the response to hurricane Mitch, it contributed significantly to Groupe URD’s evaluation and learning activities and after the earthquake in Haiti, it asked Groupe URD to evaluate the first part of its response. A similar lesson-learning exercise began a few weeks after the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. Workshops were organized systematically after each mission to discuss with the Fondation de France and its partners.

THE FONDATION DE FRANCE’S INVOLVEMENT AFTER THE 2015 EARTHQUAKES IN NEPAL

Immediately after the earthquake in April, the Fondation de France sent a team to Nepal and launched a fundraising campaign in the French media. It raised a significant amount of money (5.6 million €) due no doubt to the positive image that many French citizens have of Nepal.

One of the original features of the Fondation de France’s approach was to engage first and foremost with Nepalese civil society organisations. After initial involvement in the relief phase, it engaged in building reconstruction and agriculture projects, and contributed to strengthening civil society in this complex context that is not very well known by French organisations, with its different castes and ethnic groups, its unstable political situation, with a recent civil war, and its new democratic institutions and mechanisms.

A wide range of projects were funded during the emergency period (shelter construction, support for the rural economy, support for cooperatives, strengthening of women’s associations, support for collective civil society mechanisms, etc.). These are all very relevant, but their disparate nature made it difficult to identify the coherence in the Fondation’s strategy. Very quickly, the need for a territorial approach became apparent. A multi-sector project was designed and implemented in the Thangpal Valley. It proved to be rather complicated to create synergy between the different components of the project because most NGOs are more used to working using a ‘silo’ approach, without cooperation between different technical sectors.

It is in this context that the Fondation de France asked Groupe URD to facilitate a lesson-learning and knowledge management exercise. Below are some of the key lessons learnt, some which apply specifically to Nepal, and others that could be applied more broadly to the Fondation de France’s engagement in post-crisis contexts.

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2 http://www.nepaldemocracy.org/ethnicity/ethnic_demography.htm
3 www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/nepal/
LESSONS LEARNT REGARDING FONDATION DE FRANCE’S INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCIES AND ITS PARTNERS IN NEPAL

TIME IS THE ESSENCE OF APPROPRIATNESS: HOW TO ARTICULATE SHORT- AND LONGER-TERM PERSPECTIVES

Post-disaster responses have consistently shown that timely emergency interventions and longer-term engagement are both needed to support the affected population. Nepali NGOs were fast in dispatching assistance to the most affected areas, despite very significant logistical difficulties. However, the limited financial resources soon became a constraint.

As proven once again in Nepal, the rapid deployment of Fondation de France staff was essential to improve understanding of the context and the articulation between acute needs and longer-term perspectives. Their involvement during these early stages are more linked to partner identification and understanding of what are the most critical issues that should be targeted by the early funding allocations. Very early, better building techniques were prioritised at a time when government policy on “building back better” was still unclear.

The Fondation de France should be clear in its communications that it is committed to avoiding the « cliff effect » at the end of the humanitarian phase and that it will accompany the population and local actors over a longer period. Multi-year projects should continue to be supported, if feasible financially and administratively, by the Fondation de France.

There needs to be more analysis of the links between the economic situation, the vulnerability levels of disaster-affected people, the requirements of ‘building safer’/resilience building and government policies.

The FdF’s collaboration with other donors and foundations in order to raise more funds was relevant and effective and should be repeated in other contexts

WORKING WITH AND SUPPORTING LOCAL ACTORS

KEY LESSONS FOR THE FONDATION DE FRANCE

As aid organisations in Nepal increasingly have to work with and through Nepali institutions, it is essential to develop a more refined methodology to identify which NGOs to choose to support and how to engage in dialogue with them during all the programme phases. It is important to note that this is in keeping with the approach the Fondation has adopted since the 2004 Tsunami in South-East Asia.

The Fondation de France will have to continue to invest resources and time to develop its capacity to analyse contexts (institutions, government policies, etc.) to ensure that it can deploy appropriate advocacy mechanisms in coordination with or through local NGO networks.

It is important that the Fondation de France engages more with the Authorities at the national and local levels as this will help to increase confidence between its local partners and the different Authorities. The collective NGO advocacy mechanisms at the national level, in particular through the channel of the Nepal NGO Federation, have the means to effectively carry out their role as “civil society loud speakers”, but they could also be helped more.
KEY LESSONS FOR THE FONDATION’S NGO PARTNERS
These recommendations are aimed at strengthening the Fondation de France’s Nepali partners in order to:

- Reinforce the dialogue with the Authorities on disaster management, from preparedness to recovery.
- Reinforce CSO presence in committees at the local and national levels to support and strengthen local coordination mechanisms.
- Advocate in favour of an “Umbrella Act” to facilitate the work of Civil Society Organisations.

QUALITY OF AID

KEY LESSONS FOR THE FONDATION DE FRANCE
The Fondation de France should continue to:

➢ Exchange with its partners through regular visits and other kinds of support missions;
➢ Facilitate the inclusive and collaborative development of specific programmes for technical support, involving national institutions (from the Kathmandu level down to the district level in order to ensure that they are relevant in terms of technical matters (propose solutions adapted to the area)), but also in terms of acceptability at these different levels.
➢ The issue of flexibility and agility is central to the quality of emergency and post-disaster recovery. During the Nepal response, the Fondation de France demonstrated once again that it wants to be a flexible and supportive, but demanding donor. This may need to be explained more from the onset of the response, so that NGOs supported by the Fondation understand what to expect from the Fondation and what is expected of them beyond financial and activity reporting.

KEY LESSONS FOR THE FONDATION’S PARTNERS
➢ Improve project design through the use of ‘systemic approaches’. As such, it is important to test innovative approaches linking housing reconstruction and economic recovery (construction sector, handicrafts, agro-sylvo-pastoral sector - production, processing, trading, etc.)
➢ Systematically carry out feasibility studies and develop learning capacities. Specific training might be needed.
➢ Prepare the exit strategy and the capacity to deal with reduction of resources (cliff effect) when international/emergency resources will be reduced.
REPORT
1. BACKGROUND

On Saturday 25 April 2015 Nepal was struck by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake. After a series of aftershocks (including a 6.7 magnitude earthquake and, on 2 May 2015, another 5.0 magnitude quake near Pokhara), another significant tremor of 7.3 magnitude affected another area west of Kathmandu, the Sindhupalchok region, on 12 May 2015. This caused further damage, and increased levels of fear and anxiety. Aftershocks continued for many months. It is estimated that around eight million people have been affected overall. It was in this context that the Fondation de France, a French private philanthropic institution, decided to collect and distribute funds for the response, as it had done for a number of other humanitarian crises (2004 Asia tsunami, 2010 Haiti earthquake, 2015 Philippines cyclone). For the Nepal response, the Fondation de France opted for a series of strategic orientations:

➢ To support a variety of national actors at different geographical levels (from the field to the national advocacy network) and in the different affected areas (Kathmandu valley, Sindhupalchok and Gorkha areas);
➢ To adopt a long-term response approach from the outset and not focus solely on the emergency relief phase but also the rehabilitation phase;
➢ To ensure that technical support is available to build skills for earthquake-resistant construction;
➢ To apply a multi-dimensional, inter-sectoral, and "integrated" strategy in given territories;
➢ To accept that projects should be flexible and agile to ensure that they remain relevant;
➢ To ensure that there is learning and accountability, based on frequent field visits by the Fondation's staff and a knowledge management system (evaluation-like missions and lesson learning workshops).

Some of these choices were made very quickly, during the first field visits to Nepal. Others were the result of dialogue with actors in the field. The "knowledge management" mission that the Fondation de France has given Groupe URD is very much about learning from these choices and their short-term and longer-term impacts. The aim is to process information and lessons learnt that can be used for other situations in the future.

How were previous experiences of the Fondation de France used in Nepal? Did these decisions make sense in terms of strategic analysis and funding strategy in Nepal? How difficult was it to implement them in the Nepali context? What were their impacts in the response both during the emergency phase and the recovery period? Are there any good practices to extract from the case of Nepal and to keep in mind for the next disasters that the Fondation de France is involved in? These are some of the questions Groupe URD tried to answer.

The approach adopted by the Fondation de France is in keeping with current ideas about the localisation of aid, the humanitarian-development nexus, and donor flexibility to allow programmes to be adapted to changing contexts. These came to the fore at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, but the Fondation de France is already a few steps ahead. Of course, the response did not take place in a vacuum, but in a fast-evolving political context. A number of important events took place during the two years after the earthquakes which had an impact on post-earthquake efforts. Significant progress was made on some of the key points of the Peace Agreement (including the promulgation of the new constitution, several key elections and the

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implementation of some of the measures promoted by the Trust and Justice Commission\(^5\). The complexity of the post-earthquake political situation held up programme implementation to some extent as local Village Development Committees (VDC) and other coordination mechanisms were not prepared for such a huge disaster and the amount of aid that subsequently arrived. A blockade at the Indian border, which lasted several months, had a significant impact both on the population's socio-economic conditions and on project implementation (high price of fuel, difficulty importing relief goods from India, etc.). In addition, floods in several areas of the country diverted resources and attention from earthquake-affected areas.

It is important to take stock of the key lessons learnt from previous post-disaster programmes supported by the Fondation de France

| **Post Mitch (1998):** The main lesson learnt is that the repercussions of a disaster can be felt long after the event takes place. The risk is that most of the resources will have been spent and very little remains to cope with these longer-term needs. |
| **Asian Tsunami (2004):** The main lessons learnt are: 1) It is possible to specifically target local agencies; 2) Even the initial reconstruction process can take time as issues such as land tenure or new land policies by the government, etc. can slow it down significantly. Specific communication is therefore needed with private donors and the National Court of Auditors (Cour des Comptes) to explain how the funds, which have been collected for the humanitarian response to urgent needs, are being used. During the post-tsunami reconstruction, the Fondation de France hired an architect to provide it with technical support. |
| **Haiti earthquake (2010):** Again, there was a lot of debate about how humanitarian resources should be spent in relation to the longer-term effects of the earthquake. During the initial phase of the response, the Fondation de France generally funded international NGOs. It also funded technical support for the production of a “construction manual”. Support missions and real-time evaluations supported by the Fondation were very much appreciated. It explored how to work with the NGOs already supported by AFD in the country. These efforts were pursued in the context of the response to hurricane Matthew in 2016. In addition, the Fondation de France tried to support local structures with varying success. |
| **Philippines cyclone (2015):** The Fondation de France mobilised very quickly. Even though it is difficult to resist the emotion that these human tragedies provoke and the challenges of the emergency response, once again it became obvious that it would make more sense for the Fondation de France to fund projects that would contribute to the reconstruction. At the same time, this meant that it was necessary to inform the donors, who, for the most part, give donations in an emotional response to the situation, and in order to contribute to emergency solutions. Similarly, all the aid should not be concentrated in the same place, especially if it is the focus of a great deal of media attention. Working with local associations when they exist was key to the Fondation’s strategy. There are a lot in the Philippines. They know what people’s real needs are and they respect their expectations. They also know how to report back and it is easier to inform the donors. Whenever possible, a sustainable development approach should be adopted (e.g. for the building materials), as should a disaster risk prevention approach. Lastly, it is essential to support the quality of the reconstruction work and a construction manual was produced to help the different partners in their activities. |

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2. METHODOLOGY

This report is part of a multi-disciplinary lesson-learning exercise to help the Fondation de France to continuously improve its approach in crisis and post-crisis interventions. The Fondation de France started to engage in disaster response after Hurricane Mitch in Central America, and subsequently raised funds for the response to the 2004 South East Asia tsunami, the 2010 earthquake and 2016 hurricane in Haiti, the 2011 Japan tsunami and nuclear crisis and the cyclones in the Philippines in 2013.

The report is based on specific reports on housing reconstruction by Anne Burlat, Groupe URD's urban specialist, and on socio-economic and agricultural aspects by François Grunewald. As part of this process, a series of visits to the Kathmandu Valley (Khokana), Thangpal Valley in Sindhupalchok district, Gorkha district and in several other affected areas were organized in 2016, 2017 and 2018. During these visits, interviews were conducted with staff from the Fondation de France’s NGO partners, local Authorities and newly elected members of local councils (at district and VDC levels) as well as with inhabitants of villages, some of whom had received assistance from the Fondation de France’s partners (individual and focus group meetings).

From the beginning of Groupe URD's involvement in this lesson-learning exercise, each field visit was concluded by a workshop that brought together staff from the Fondation de France Paris HQ and NGOs funded by the Fondation. A video has also been produced to illustrate some of the findings: (https://www.urd.org/fr/video/video-sur-la-reconstruction-post-seisme-2015-au-nepal-et-les-actions-finacees-par-la-fdf/).

The lesson-learning process was made difficult by staff turnover at the Fondation resulting in regularly changing demands, and a dedicated steering committee was only created late on in the process. It was also difficult, due to all these unclear demands, to find the right balance between the Fondation's request to improve its own processes and the expectation that the missions and the reports would be useful for the Fondation's partners in Nepal.

The report is organised as follows:

- Analysis of the context in which the Fondation and its NGO partners were active.
- A description of the complex range of activities and NGOs targeted by the Fondation.
- Thoughts on integrating reconstruction and socio-economic recovery
- Key lessons for the Fondation and the NGOs it supported.
- Conclusion
3. NEPAL: POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE MIDST OF AN EARTHQUAKE AND ITS AFTERMATH

3.1. GEOPOLITICS

After a decade of civil war, from 1996 to 2006, and after the abolition of the Rana monarchy in 2008, the political situation in Nepal has become progressively more stable. Establishing an effective coalition government remains a challenge\(^6\) due to the tensions between the main parties (the Congress Party, the Maoist Party, who were the flag bearers of the insurrection at the time of the civil war, and the Marxist-Leninist Party, which was created following a split in the Maoist Party)\(^7\). Establishing confidence between the population, the Armed Forces, the Police, and the administration remains a challenge and social unrest, strikes and (street demonstrations) are frequent.

The drafting of the new constitution has been held up even though a second constituent assembly has been formed. The blockages are the result not only of the tensions between the main political parties, but also disagreements about the type of federalism to put in place, with the choice between a system based purely on territories or taking into account ethnic-religious considerations\(^8\). The organisation of the Legislative elections in two phases on 26 November and 7 December 2017 to elect the 275 members of the fourth House of Representatives, the lower house of the Federal Parliament of Nepal was a key milestone. Presidential and National Assembly elections took place in 2018.

Nepal’s economy is fragile. The country is landlocked, with no industrial sector and very limited resources apart from its agriculture and the manpower it exports to the Gulf countries. It therefore faces many challenges. Due to its location in a complex political landscape surrounded by China and India, Nepal has found itself in the middle of a geostrategic equation that has resulted in a great deal of aid being allocated (International Crisis Group, 2013).

3.2. RISK PROFILE

Nepal is exposed to several types of natural and man-made hazards (Government of Nepal, 2011). A wide variety of physiographical, geological, ecological and hydro-meteorological factors contribute to the high levels of hazards faced. Other factors, such as rapid population growth, slow economic development, high levels of poverty, lack of awareness of mitigation measures, and a lack of political and social commitment also contribute to making the country extremely prone to disasters. The greatest risk of disaster is linked to the geological and climatic features of the country. The seismic record suggested that the risk of a strong intensity earthquake on the Modified Mercalli Intensity Scale (MMI X6) was high. This was seen as a major issue in Kathmandu and other larger cities of the country. In rural Nepal, many extreme events,

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\(^6\) This is the 7th government since the end of the civil war.
\(^7\) Of the 601 members of parliament, 185 represent the Congress Party, 160 the Marxist-Leninists and 127 the Maoists, and there are about 15 small parties.
\(^8\) Indo-Nepalese (Hindu), Tibetans (Buddhists) and Tibetan-Burmese (mixture of Hindu, Buddhist and animism).
leading to floods and landslides, are caused by the Monsoon rains. The related hazards are presented in the table below.
Nepal: learning from earthquake response

Nepal drew up its National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (NSDRM) based on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA). This aimed to implement Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in Nepal in line with current international understanding, scientific progress and regional initiatives.

The Disaster Management Bill, 2009 aims to promote effective management of risk reduction throughout the disaster management cycle - preparedness, mitigation, rescue and relief, rehabilitation and recovery. The proposed Disaster Management Bill, 2009 is due to replace the existing Natural Calamity (Relief) Act, 1982. The principal features of the proposed DM Bill are:

- Disasters are defined distinctly as natural and human-induced;
- Provision for National Council for Disaster Management (NCDM) to be chaired by Prime Minister of Nepal with clear mandate and functions, duties, responsibilities and authority of the Council;
- Proposal to set up National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the NCDM, to act as the focal point for disaster management functions in Nepal from formulation of appropriate strategies and plans to implementation and supervision of disaster management activities;
- It clarifies the role, responsibility and functions of the security forces including the Nepal Army, the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force, institutions, the industrial sector and private organisations. These institutions are the key responders in the first 48 hours of a crisis – the military are the most competent of all the trained forces (trained by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the US Pacific Command).

The draft text of the Disaster Bill promoted the constitution of Regional, District and local level Disaster Management Committees (DMC). It is very urgent for the Disaster Management Bill to be passed to support the implementation of the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (including the creation of the NDMA) in order to help the country to prepare for the challenges ahead. The Disaster Bill has two main objectives:

- To reinforce inter-ministerial coordination for overall disaster management (to increase the involvement of the Ministries of Defence, Interior, Health, Foreign Affairs, Urban construction, Land Management, etc. in addition to the Ministry of Home Affairs);
- To streamline operational procedures by having a strong NDMA that is directly controlled by the highest levels of the state.

On 25th June, exactly two months after the earthquake, the Government of Nepal organised the International Conference of Nepal's Reconstruction 2015. The Prime Minister announced the government's decision to establish “a high level National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) under the Prime Minister for carrying out the tasks of sustained, durable and planned reconstruction”.

The Government of Nepal declared that the humanitarian phase was over so that recovery funds could be channelled through the Ministries. Many donors, UN agencies and NGOs did not fully agree with this process, due the risks for aid integrity. The difficulties encountered in setting up the NRA have shown that concerns about political stability were largely founded. The Reconstruction Bill permitting the creation of the Reconstruction Agency was only adopted a few days before Christmas, nearly 8 months after the disaster. It took a significant amount of time for the Agency to become operational.
4. A FASCINATING JIGSAW PUZZLE

4.1. DIVERSITY OF THE ACTORS AND PROJECT DYNAMICS

In this complex context, where civil society is developing fast after the difficult years of the civil war, the Fondation de France opted to operate with a wide range of civil society organizations: some very large and well-established NGOs with a country-wide mandate and much smaller ones with a very local area of activity. Some are part of the social economy (cooperatives) while others are involved in civil society coordination and advocacy. As such, the projects that they implement are quite different in scope, content and approach.

By May-June, based on the strategic decisions made by the Nepal Committee within its International Solidarity Division, on the basis of previous experiences, situation analysis, first field missions and the expertise available with the members of the Committee, the Fondation de France had established that it would:

- continue to fund activities beyond the relief phase;
- concentrate its resources in a geographical area to ensure that there was optimal impact (Sindhupalchok);
- prioritise working with local actors while remaining open to French NGOs who had strong partnerships with Nepali NGOs or were able to bring in specific know-how that was missing in Nepal;
- ensure that there was continuity between the temporary shelter phase and an approach looking beyond the first 2 years based on sustainable, earthquake-resistant and affordable techniques.

Here is a presentation of some of the Nepali NGO supported by the Fondation, in order to give a glance of the diversity of the options chosen:

NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN): Having been pre-identified as a possible partner through national platform connections, the NFN was met during the first mission a few days after the earthquake. It was seen as key actor in terms of advocacy towards the Government, and was targeted for the support it could provide to civil society to campaign for social equity and state resource mobilization to respond to the needs of the population. The Fondation de France initially supported the NFN for the "Strengthening Multi-stakeholder Coordination for Post-earthquake Initiatives in Nepal (SMCP)" project, from June 2015-December 2016. The objective of this project was to build functional relations with the government and international agencies, help NGOs to work effectively, and establish an information base. The project was very successful in terms of policy advocacy and building coordination among the agencies at local and central level. This was followed by a flagship programme, which was supported from 2017 onwards, "Promoting Roles of NGOs on Disaster Management in Nepal' (PRDM-Project). This project involves the development of an NGO-friendly Disaster Management Policy, a civic monitoring process on post-earthquake management, and enhancing the capacities of local NGOs to work on post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction. Basically, NFN spent its time helping NGOs to perform better and in an accountable manner. It is interesting to note that thanks to this project, the NFN was able to build strategic relations with the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), and, as a result, was able to invite a high-level NRA member of staff to come to one of the Fondation/Groupe URD workshops.
Enfance Nepal: This organisation is present in the neighbourhood of Kathmandu, in Khohana valley, where it runs an orphanage which is partly funded by a little guest house for tourists. Its local staff are well integrated into the population and know many of the families in the areas that were particularly affected by the earthquake. Most of the traditional houses in these areas either collapsed or were structurally weakened. As many of the families involved were farmers, they were equally concerned about finding shelter rapidly and preparing their fields for the next monsoon season. Enfance Nepal adopted an original approach, both in terms of the shelter design and the use of bamboo as a building material. They also implemented appropriate solutions for energy (solar) and water (reservoirs).

The Association for Rural Social Welfare, ARSOW Nepal: ARSOW was rapidly identified as a possible mechanism to target some of the worst affected areas in Sindhupalchok district. The first field mission by the Fondation de France was carried out (on foot and by motorbike) in the Thangpal Valley to assess the situation and ARSOW's capacity to deliver assistance. This was the start of a lengthy collaboration, with all the constraints and potential that working with a well-established local NGO brings. This initially involved support to relief activities but then developed into a complex “reconstruction-recovery” operation which is still ongoing. A partnership was established between Triangle Génération Humanitaire (TGH) and ARSOW which helped ARSOW to improve its tools and capacities. This was not necessarily easy, as TGH had to engage in complex activities in finance, human resources, general administrative management and food security. Great care was taken by TGH to provide support in an appropriate manner. TGH maintained a supportive approach and a relationship of trust has now been established. It is important however to note that TGH’s focus has been agriculture while, at times, the Fondation has focused more on the reconstruction sector. From the initial project supported by the Fondation de France just after the earthquake to its 6-year extension (2016-2021), supported by the Fondation, the Agence Française de Développement and the Carasso Foundation, key milestones have been reached and ARSOW can explore new avenues for the development of the Sindhupalchok area and its own development (including the avoidance of the financial cliff effect).

NACCFL the Nepali cooperative system: In Nepal, the cooperative movement is the result of traditional village-level solidarity and a new collective ideology that aims to create solidarity between different castes and social groups. The Nepal Agricultural Cooperative Central Federation Limited (NACCFL) is the main federation of Nepalese agricultural cooperatives. The Fondation de France provided the NACCFL with emergency support in order to assist the most vulnerable members of 8 cooperatives to re-establish their agricultural assets and help them to return to basic self-sufficiency. In addition, vocational training was provided to strengthen and diversify income-generating activities (micro-enterprises, small livestock, market gardening, electricity, etc.) with the aim of supporting economic recovery and developing sources of livelihoods. But the most strategic support to NACCFL was the rehabilitation of three community centres to meet the needs of its members: temporary housing for the neediest families, storage of foodstuffs, and a location for community meetings and solidarity. However, the NACCFL is an umbrella organisation which depends on the commitment of its members. During the visits to two of these centres, the engagement of female cooperative members was impressive. The fact that many men are away from the villages is both a burden and a source of motivation.

Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC): The Fondation de France decided to fund CSRC, an NGO that assists poor and landless farmers. The Fondation initially supported the construction of two permanent community centres that were built after the monsoon in Halde village in Helambu VDC and Kharkadanda village in Kiul VDC. The Fondation also allocated funds for livelihoods support: 100 households (HHS) received a grant of Rs 15,000 each. In 2018, considering the settlement of 40 families near one of the community center, the ground has been consolidated and latrines and kitchen built, to facilitate the integration process and develop the socio-cultural activities of this centre.
**TEWA:** Tewa is an impressive Nepali civil society organization. It receives a lot of funding from large-scale donors but also local fund-raising efforts, gives grants to women’s groups all over Nepal, and runs capacity building programmes. Its name means, “support” in Nepali and refers to the building sector: the type of prop up used to reinforce leaning walls and buildings before they are rebuilt. In many areas visited, its vision; “A country without discrimination and injustice, in which all women enjoy their rights, freedom and peace”, was clear from its work with low caste women’s groups. It was also clear that, through its different programmes, including the one supported by the Fondation de France, women acquired new levels of freedom and the capacity to raise their voices. Following the earthquakes, Tewa implemented programmes in keeping with its principles of action: empowering the beneficiaries and strengthening local organisations in order to make the programmes sustainable. Just after the earthquake, Tewa first provided support to vulnerable women and their communities by distributing hygiene kits, food, water, etc., while, at the same time, offering those assisted the chance to contribute to solidarity towards other affected people. It also conducted psycho-social support activities. But its main focus was to support long-term socio-economic recovery. Tewa volunteers trained many local women volunteers to provide tailor-made support to communities: sewing training to generate income, childcare to enable work in the fields, setting up women’s groups for microcredit projects, etc. This approach, based on strengthening the participation of vulnerable and often marginalised women, contributed greatly not only to improving their socio-economic situation, but also to their capacity to speak out, and to get out of their houses.

**Planète Enfants et développement:** The association has contributed to the psychological well-being and economic reconstruction of the affected populations in 8 villages in Nuwakot district, including the prevention of human trafficking. Already active on this subject before the earthquake, the association, on the basis of the lessons learned from Haiti and the post-earthquake trafficking that had developed there, has put in place a whole strategy to ensure the protection of children, and especially young girls, in particular to prevent them from falling into prostitution and exploitation networks. The objectives were: psychological post-earthquake reconstruction, access to quality education, reconstruction of safe educational environments and restoration of a decent standard of living for the most vulnerable families.

**Mother Infant in Nepal Association (MOINA):** The project carried out by MOINA in Lapsibot has enabled the construction of a shelter that complies with seismic recommendations. To do this, students of architecture in Lyon analysed the destroyed buildings, devised more solid construction methods and involved the inhabitants in the construction. At the same time, the association distributed plywood panels to help families rebuild their own homes.

**Central Tea Cooperative Federation (CTCF):** CTCF worked with the populations affected by the earthquake to develop tea cultivation and various other agro-economic activities (livestock, vegetables, etc.). In order to develop entrepreneurship in the tea sector, the association financed the construction of offices for cooperatives and organized training on the process of processing tea plants, etc.

**Jagaran:** The association, which specializes in women’s rights, has paid particular attention to the most vulnerable people (women, seniors and children): psychosocial support, donations of specialized kits (female hygiene, infants, etc.) to heal the wounds of the painful memory of the earthquake. Several days were devoted to the training of psycho-social support counsellors and to the prevention of violence against women.
4.2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE DIVERSITY OF INTERVENTIONS

The first year of Fondation de France’s involvement in the response was largely devoted to the most urgent activities: some emergency relief distribution, putting in place temporary shelter solutions with reusable materials, rehabilitating several schools to ensure that children were able to rapidly return to a form of normality, and supporting the agricultural sector to ensure that the monsoon season after the earthquake was not totally missed.

In the second year, the projects adopted a longer-term approach. Activities included:

- training in traditional masonry and earthquake techniques to limit damage in the event of new earthquakes;
- the rehabilitation of roads to open up hilly and mountainous areas to stimulate economic activities, to improve access to health systems and to facilitate cultural and social exchanges;
- the reconstruction of irrigation canals, with attempts to improve their design and protection against landslides;
- the rehabilitation of potable water systems (pipes, reservoirs, distribution systems) to secure sources of drinking water;
- training in agricultural and craft techniques to diversify family incomes (new techniques, such as beekeeping, goat farming, pig farming and lake fish farming were promoted);
- The construction/reconstruction of double purpose community buildings (the main purpose being for economic/social activities, but designed so that they can also be used as disaster shelters).

It is important to keep in mind the diversity of areas where the Fondation de France and its partners provided assistance:

- Gorkha valley, for instance, was the first to receive support from the Indian Army due to “Gurkha soldier solidarity”. Similarly, UK support to the same areas was quite significant. The remittances sent by overseas Gurkha soldiers to their families in Gorkha district were significant and the recovery process was consequently much faster.
- This was not the case for Thangpal valley in Sindhupalchok district, which is much poorer, suffered the highest loss in human lives and a rate of 90% of houses destructed.
- For the projects in Kathmandu Valley, such as in Khokana, the context was quite different. This is a poor peri-urban area where poor people arriving from rural areas have settled because of the relatively cheap housing compared to the urbanized areas of the Capital.

The Fondation de France tried to test and develop different types of integrated approaches:

- Integrating different support mechanisms around one sector. This was the case of the construction sector where technical support was provided in addition to financing the reconstruction itself;
- Integrating different sectors in one given area: this was the case in Helumbu and Thangpal valleys where there was an integrated project with actions covering reconstruction with economic recovery; or economic recovery with psychosocial as it was done de facto by TEWA, Planète Enfants et Développement as well as Jagaran.
- Integrating support to NGOs with support to collective structures (village halls, cooperative centers): this is the case of the operations via NACCFL, CTCF in the productive sector and NFN in the coordination and advocacy area.

A few other actions were initially more “stand alone operations”, such as the housing rehabilitation project in Khokana with Enfance Nepal, and model house construction and waste management with MOINA for exemple.
4.3. THE PRIORITY OF RECONSTRUCTION IN THE POST-EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

The impact of the earthquake was very visible in many areas with the destruction of all kinds of buildings. The first key activities were search and rescue activities (in which the Fondation de France was not involved) and the delivery of initial relief (some Fondation de France partners were involved in this domain, but experienced a great deal of difficulty due to the top-down approach and the intrusive and badly-coordinated engagement of many international NGOs). As the climate can be very harsh (heavy rains during the monsoon, cold weather during winter), the reconstruction of destroyed buildings was a clear and urgent priority. In an earthquake-prone context, it was essential to ensure that rehabilitated or newly-constructed buildings would be earthquake-resistant.

Destruction in Khokana (Photo Groupe URD)

4.3.1. RATIONALE ON THE QUALITY ISSUE

By getting involved in the reconstruction sector, the Fondation de France exposed itself. What would be the impact if a house that was rebuilt with its funds were to collapse, killing several people? The quality of the construction in the projects it funded was therefore very important from the beginning of the “Solidarité Népal” operations.

The quality of the construction work included several aspects:

➢ earthquake resistance, and resistance to other risks (mainly landslides),
➢ its durability (in connection with its maintenance) and its accessibility for people with reduced mobility.
➢ characteristics that were adapted to the context: a subjective quality in terms of landscape and heritage was also sometimes aimed for.

The main take away from these efforts was that technical support can be established at several levels. Though these are complementary, each of these support mechanisms uses different working methods, and therefore achieved different types of legitimacy depending on the actor in charge:

➢ NGO’s: advocacy vis-à-vis the national institutions in charge of the reconstruction is essential and must not just be left to local actors. The Fondation might have to play a role, especially during the initial phases, when policies are still in the making.
➢ Humanitarian organisations: providing support to a construction project may be crucial, especially when many local actors have little or no experience in reconstruction.
➢ Techniques promoted: choices made based on possible environmental and health impacts, people's wishes and the national reconstruction policy.
➢ Reconstruction and knowledge transfer: several approaches can be adopted - supporting self-building by the inhabitant, or reinforcing the skills of house builders or building companies. This requires having a good working relationship with “national or local bodies” (here the NRA engineers) responsible for overseeing the reconstruction process.
Nepal: learning from earthquake response

➢ The building materials market: identifying key players and supply chains and guaranteeing that there is a supply that will not collapse due to overwhelming demands. Market surveys are essential but rarely done.

The issue of architectural heritage was approached via the enhancement of the local economic sector. The question of landscape, of the exterior of the buildings, was not addressed head-on in the various projects funded by the Fondation de France, though it was an underlying issue in all the projects.

Quality also involves environmental impact. During construction, the reduction of the environmental impact is mainly linked to the use of materials that are available and supplied locally. However, the wood and bamboo that were used in the projects show that the environmental criterion was not always given prevalence. As such, the Lapsibot project was an exception as its model house included the maximum re-use of the materials that were available and the use of local materials.

Meeting with villagers (Photo Groupe URD)

4.3.2. The Technical Support Options

On the basis of previous experience, and as it was aware that it was difficult to guarantee the level of quality required when working with national NGOs, the Fondation de France decided to:

➢ Financially support reconstruction work by its partner NGOs;
➢ Establish technical support to ensure that the construction work was of good quality and resistant to natural shocks (earthquakes, deluges, landslides, etc.).

In addition to these different levels of technical support are the different technical validations required:

➢ The physical characteristics of Nepal, with mountainous territory that is subject to landslides, requires specific expertise in order to ensure that the land chosen for new constructions is safe. Also, the extremely steep slopes on which human settlements are developed raise questions about accessibility for people with reduced mobility;
➢ The building model: how could the different models in the National Reconstruction Authority catalogue be promoted.
➢ Technical details that need to be designed and calculated.
Examples of technical support with the reconstruction activities

- Training to learn the principles of earthquake resistant construction with local materials through the construction of a model house (Lapsibot);
- Five-day training in earthquake resistant building construction (Thangpal valley);
- Construction of a model house by a qualified company (VDC building in Thangpalkot);
- Technical advice for all houses being rebuilt and provision of aid in the form of materials (either corrugated iron sheets or bags of cement) for 2000 houses (Thangpal valley);
- Support provided to dissemination sessions and campaigns in favor of safe building techniques and the use of monitoring systems to oversee house reconstruction;
- Support provided to local engineers for the validation of land chosen by organisations for the construction of facilities;
- ...

The different types of technical support and validation raises a first question about the type of partnership that should be established between the providers of technical support and the humanitarian organisation in charge of the construction. This question cannot be separated from the objective of the response. As such, the different experiences of the projects funded by the Fondation de France are instructive, highlighting the fact that different types of technical support that are available but need to be selected according to needs.

The different forms of support provided in the projects funded by the Fondation de France were:

- Overseeing of self-building of temporary houses (about 20 m2) as part of the emergency response over three months. Inexpensive and easy to build, they can be lived in for several years, which is the time it takes to rebuild housing in the context: in Khokana (Enfance Nepal), for example, urban buildings of several stories which are too expensive for families to pay for their reconstruction);
- A Technical Support Office (TSO) replaces the contractor in designing the building and producing the related technical drawings. The implementation and monitoring of the construction is then carried out by the organisation in charge of the project.

It was with these issues in mind, and based on previous experiences (such as the tsunami and Haiti) that Fondation de France decided to provide support in the form of "dedicated technical support".

The different types of technical support from the Fondation de France’s headquarters all promoted the idea of architectural heritage. In practice, this took the form of promoting local materials, or even new techniques. Different options were tested:

- The Initial Technical Support Office (TSO) approach was based on a local institution (A&D Nepal), supported by a French specialized NGO (Architects & Development). The notion of 'support', which was understood as 'advice' to Nepali structures, did not really function and the main work of the TSO at that time was validating projects, construction design and contributing to the national clusters rather than advising the NGOs. The TSO functioned as a consultancy office and did not sufficiently engage with the NGOs who were trying to develop alternatives for construction, such as Enfance Népal in Khokana; therefore, it did not contribute to broader learning;
- Things changed when CRATERRE became involved and developed new approaches to doing business with reconstruction actors working with the Fondation de France, in particular with ARSOW-TGH in the Thangpal Valley.

The efforts made by the Fondation de France to facilitate the access of its partners to quality advice and support in the reconstruction were extremely intense and a source of difficulty, tension and frustration, at least during the early period. It improved significantly with the engagement of new stakeholders such as CRATERRE.

Each type of support has its uses and its limits, and certain objectives can be contradictory.
4.3.3. THE CASES OF MODEL HOUSES

Helping Nepal to adopt, understand and disseminate earthquake-resistant architecture does not mean that the houses will not be damaged when the next earthquake takes place, but that fatal accidents will be minimised and, if possible, avoided. When a building collapses, its weight kills. Thus, the huge “lauzes” (heavy flat stones used for roofing) of traditional houses will no longer be used (at least as long as collective memory functions), but the concrete floors of badly built buildings are just as deadly.

The pilot constructions provided a lot of lessons. Two programmes included the construction of model houses and buildings (Thangpal valley and Lapsibot). But they were not properly used to demonstrate building techniques to local builders. One notable exception was the community centre in Kiul, where the project leader reported that its construction had been an important factor in increasing the acceptance of stone as a building material. Its construction (which involved the population) was a good teaching tool to show how reliable stone is and how to build seismic bands. But generally speaking, it seems that the opportunity that was provided by these collective buildings was not fully exploited to explain the rules of earthquake resistant construction which were subsequently to be implemented by the inhabitants in building their houses. The visits also showed that there had never been an explanation of the effects of an earthquake. Only training on earthquake resistant techniques was provided. In
the same way, the construction of a model house in Thangpalkot was designed more for the result than for the learning process that it could have represented. Due to the insistence of the technical support from TGH, an ARSOW engineer was made responsible for the project so that the building could qualify as a model. In this specific case, ARSOW chose to contract a company to build the house. However, as the project was not monitored properly, and the emphasis was on meeting the deadline, the company (which was familiar with stone wall building techniques) sacrificed quality so that it could go faster.

A positive counter example shows that the “pilot project” approach has more potential than was otherwise evident during this response. The construction of the model house in Lapsibot involved a completely different process, which was that of a pedagogical building project. A young and experienced project leader lived in the village for around forty days, the time needed to complete the building, which was carried out by volunteers from the village. In total, about a hundred people took part actively in the project, each person choosing how long they would work on a day-to-day basis and being paid for each day of work based on their qualifications (using a pre-established pay-scale). Before the project, the house was chosen for its central location in the village and the owners had cleared and levelled the plot (the same as that of the old building). They were responsible for supplying the materials, but the reconstruction maximized the reuse of materials from the old building.
Parasismic reconstruction in Thangpal Valley (Photo Groupe URD)
4.4. ASSEMBLING THE PIECES

Integrating reconstruction and socio-economic recovery proved to be a rather difficult task as most agencies operate in silos and families are torn between these two priorities.

4.4.1. WHY AND HOW TO ENGAGE IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY?

In Nepal, many rural households already depend on remittances from relatives working in Kathmandu or in the Gulf States. A disaster like an earthquake tends to aggravate the situation by accelerating rural to urban migration. In addition, although a lot of short-term employment was created in the construction sector, this reduced the workforce that was still available for rural activities and increased the economic burden on women's shoulders, who found themselves under even more pressure as primary caretakers and breadwinners within families. These are the reasons why the aid response included a lot of socio-economic recovery. Even though training in earthquake resistant technologies and Gabion construction can be seen as economic development activities, it is interesting to note that a significant part of the Fondation de France's engagement in economic recovery activities was with national institutions with very limited, if any, engagement in the reconstruction sector.

Many Fondation de France partners invested a significant amount of energy and resources in skills development, and there is no doubt that this is an asset for the future. During the field visit, it was very impressive to see the extent to which the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people were targeted in a strategic manner and included in all programmes. In particular, young women from low castes regularly said that their involvement in these programmes had had an extremely important and positive impact on their daily lives. However, a lot of training was provided without much preliminary analysis of the market and this led to a lot of replication and the risk of saturating local markets with specific skills and products, and thus reducing the impact of the programmes on family livelihoods. This, for example, is the case for sewing.

The sustainability of many activities depends on the global economic recovery of an area, including its connection with Diasporas and whether or not there is an integrated local development plan, which could improve financial resource consolidation (public and private). Sustainability will also depend on the involvement of the population and local Authorities at the district and rural municipality levels. However, some interventions were carried out with only limited feasibility analysis. It is important to ensure that when a need is identified, carrying out a proper and unbiased feasibility study is an essential phase to identify the right option, taking into account the need for sustainability and managing the risk of negative impacts. These feasibility studies are also a very relevant opportunity to test innovations, both technically and in terms of the value chain. For example, there are potential areas for innovation in the Cardamom value chain in terms of processing the fruit (different types of drying) and in terms of trade (exploring new markets – one trader in Kathmandu selling to India).

4.4.2. INTEGRATED SUPPORT TO THANGPAL VALLEY

CONCENTRATING MEANS AND EFFORTS

In order to have a lasting impact, the Fondation de France chose to concentrate most of the funds it collected in a coherent territory, Thangpal Valley, in the district of Sindhupalchok. The Solidarity Nepal Fund supported projects in various affected districts of Nepal, but both earthquakes caused significant damage in this area and long-term reconstruction efforts are still concentrated there. During the initial discussions, the Fondation de France appears to have been more in favour of supporting reconstruction, whereas TGH was more interested in implementing livelihoods recovery programmes. In the end, ARSOW was funded to pursue the implementation of an integrated programme combining reconstruction, economic recovery and community building, and which targeted 17,000 inhabitants in four isolated villages (Tompala Dhap, Tompal Kot, Gunsa Kot, and Bothang).
SUPPORTING THE CAPACITIES OF LOCAL ACTORS

The implementing partners that were chosen were ARSOW and TGH. ARSOW is the main implementing partner and TGH provides all kinds of support: administrative, technical, etc. to ensure that implementation is of high quality and that there is proper accountability. In this valley, collective mechanisms are very strong, such as the irrigation committees which manage the day to day running of the irrigation systems, but also ensure the supervision of the status of the canals and mobilize resources and manpower for maintenance and rehabilitation in the event of a landslide or other kinds of damage. Similarly, community life is based on regular meetings and socio-cultural activities. Ensuring that these vital infrastructures were functioning again was seen as critical in the project.

ADAPTING TO CHANGING LOCAL REALITIES

The scale of the exodus of young men to Kathmandu, India and the Gulf States is creating significant difficulties as the remaining manpower is largely elderly people and women, while the work that needs to be done is physically demanding. After the earthquake, it took two years to be able to rehabilitate at least some segments of the main canal in one village and the work was still not completed at the time of the last field visit in May 2018. Some rice-growing areas had been without proper water control since 2015.

One of the most interesting examples of the multi-dimensional approach that has been adopted is the construction of “multi-use” collective buildings which can be used for economic activities, social dynamics and as shelters. It will be necessary to monitor changes in the use of these buildings over time.

SUPPORTING THE NEWLY-ELECTED AUTHORITIES

Beyond the integration of different technical sectors, the objective now is to support the recently elected local authorities and to strengthen local decision-making mechanisms. This goes much further than the initial support that was given to the Village Development Committee during the early phase of the post-earthquake recovery, venturing into local governance issues.

NEXT STEPS

On the strength of the experience they have acquired, ARSOW and TGH are moving on to the next phase of their activities in the Thangpal Valley. They are also developing new partnerships, some with other Fondation partners, such as the cooperative movement NACCFL, and exploring cooperation with other technical actors, such as CRATERRE.

Gabion making in Thangpal Valley: after the reconstruction, the resilience (Photo Groupe URD)
5. MANAGING KNOWLEDGE

Some lessons learnt from the Fondation’s response to the 2015 Nepal earthquake build on key take-aways from previous operations. Others are more specific to the political and environmental situation in Nepal.

5.1. ENGAGING IN A TIMELY MANNER AND FOR A SUFFICIENT AMOUNT OF TIME

FOR THE FONDATION DE FRANCE

Learning point N°1: Responding rapidly to a diversity of needs across a large territory and the capacity to engage robustly and in a sustained manner are critical. If resources are limited, it may not be possible to both respond rapidly to a diversity of needs across a large territory and respond over a long period of time. This is a strategic decision that needs to be made relatively quickly and will be a key criteria in determining the number and the type of partners with whom the Fondation will engage with.

Learning point N°2: Looking for financial partners to avoid the “cliff effect” after the end of the Fondation de France support. The end of humanitarian funding often means that operations have to scale down or even to terminate while the process of physical and psychological recovery is often only half complete. As the Fondation de France cannot engage for long periods in these post-disaster contexts, it is important that it continues to play an advocacy role in trying to generate interest among other donors (here, in particular, with the French Development Agency), and other foundations (such as the Carasso Foundation). The Fondation de France could proactively develop a network of potential donors ready to contribute to or take over its interventions, with a much longer-term perspective.

5.2. ENGAGING WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

FOR THE FONDATION DE FRANCE

Learning point N°3: Localisation works, but is not always simple as local civil society organisations are diverse in nature and capacities: Since its first experiences after the 2004 Tsunami, the Fondation de France has continued to be involved in the localisation of aid. During the emergency phase in Nepal, all the organisations it funded were either Nepalese (NFN, NACCFL, CTCF, JSRC, Jagaran, ARSOW, and TEWA), specifically dedicated to Nepal (Moina, Enfance Népal) or involved in project co-construction (A&D/ASF). Only one project was developed by an international NGO, previously present in Nepal, in partnership with a Nepalese NGO (TGH & ARSOW). In its approach to localisation, the Fondation de France took the risk of working with organisations that are very diverse in their structures (National Federation of NGOs, Agricultural Cooperatives, national NGOs). Despite a variety of interventions and situations, certain values are common to all the projects. The work done through national and local actors allowed proximity to the beneficiaries, thus helping to ensure that the response was relevant to their expressed needs. This work done through local NGOs allows beneficiaries to quickly recover and facilitate the process by which these local institutions can play their role in better conditions (even if this is often rather complex). All the organisations whose projects have been funded by the Fondation de France have been committed to understanding, learning and developing the skills required for an appropriate response.
Learning point N°4: Aid localisation does not just mean supporting local NGOs; it also means supporting local administrations. It also enabled interaction with territorial institutions. This is particularly important as Nepal is implementing a new deepening of its decentralization strategy. Local organisations’ often long-standing geographical involvement and proximity to populations made it possible to develop area-specific responses.

Bamboo construction: image of complexity and flexibility (Photo Groupe URD)

Learning point N°5: Discussions and experience sharing between the Fondation’s partners proved to be useful and widely accepted. Discussions between organisations were very constructive and fruitful. In addition, the work with and through national and local NGOs significantly facilitated dialogue with national and local public institutions, something that is essential in a country where the government wants to be in the “driver’s seat” but has gone through difficult institutional periods that have delayed key decisions on directives for the reconstruction for more than a year. This delay was particularly harmful and is all the more regrettable given that high quality official technical documents had been produced. It would have been important to disseminate faster. The construction of community centres using earthquake-resistant techniques was an excellent opportunity to raise awareness, but was not fully exploited. In the context of Nepal, the support to the Nepal NGO Federation and the engagement of this collective platform with Fondation de France’s other partners created an interesting opportunity for dialogue with the National Reconstruction Agency and members of Parliament.

Learning point N°6: Flexibility, trust and accountability: For a long time now, the Fondation de France has shown great flexibility to ensure that its programmes remain relevant and it remains accountable to its donors and partners in the field. Trust has been built over time and is based on proven skills. When needed, support has been provided to strengthen certain capacities. For example, Triangle Humanitarian Generation helped to strengthen logistics and financial management within ARSOW. The regular field visits by staff from headquarters, the learning process with Groupe URD and the systematic holding of multi-stakeholder workshops since the start of the response are things that organisations like Fondation de France, who are taking the risk of implementing innovative approaches, need to do.
Learning point N°7: Ensuring that there is strong dialogue with the Reconstruction Authorities. The design of the housing reconstruction process and the definition of technical norms by the Nepali government took a long time. For many families, waiting was difficult and many started to rebuild their houses using their own resources during the first year. These families received only limited technical advice. When the Government revealed the conditions for receiving State subsidies for housing reconstruction (respecting earthquake resistant construction codes and norms), they found themselves excluded from possible support. In addition, the cost of respecting these norms is rather high, and not necessarily affordable by all. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that advocacy continues in favor of technical norms that do not exclude the poorest sections of the population.

Learning point N°8: Strengthening the role of CSO with Government on disaster management
This would require more advocacy for the integration of disaster preparedness in the authorities’ priorities. In addition, training and provision of tools/equipment/local funds for DRR to the local authorities and people would be necessary. The use the existing resources from other organizations on emergencies preparedness and management can be promoted.

5.3. QUALITY MATTERS

Learning point N°9: Technical support can be useful and even necessary, but is not that simple to provide appropriately. It is important to note that the Fondation de France takes its responsibility as a donor to the housing reconstruction sector seriously. The concept of “ensuring proper technical support when reconstruction requires the utilisation of a new set of techniques and compliance with new standards” makes a lot of sense. Yet, as observed in many similar contexts, experts, including the Fondation de France’s technical partners involved in the reconstruction sector, tend to focus too much on technical issues and the promotion of known technical solutions. These technical debates tend to take place at the expense of defining the “big picture” and identifying key challenges that go beyond construction techniques and standards. In Nepal, this led to rather sterile debates rather than developing both an effective advisory role for the population and proper advocacy messages targeting the Authorities. Following experiences in Haiti, the Philippines and Nepal, the Fondation de France should continue to set up technical support mechanisms after disasters to address risk management in the reconstruction efforts, but
this requires a detailed understanding of the context, in-depth knowledge of different techniques and a robust analysis of the local professional construction sector. The notion of support, in the sense of “providing advice to local organisations” is not necessarily easy to implement practically and the Terms of Reference need to be relevant. In particular, the capacity to engage with the Authorities and to ensure a strong advocacy function at the right institutional decision-making level is essential.

Learning point N°10: More clarity on how the Fondation functions would be useful. During the Nepal response, the Fondation de France demonstrated once again that it wants to be a flexible and supportive - but demanding - donor. This may need to be explained more from the onset of the response, so that NGOs supported by the Fondation understand what to expect from it, and what is expected of them beyond financial and activity reporting.

FOR THE FONDATION’S PARTNERS

Learning point N°11: Quality requires proper technical back-up. Key elements in the technical design of some projects might suffer from insufficient technical safeguards. The rehabilitation of irrigation canals for example requires proper engineering as there continues to be a high risk of landslides and heavy rains in the hilly areas that have been weakened by the earthquake. Badly repaired canals are likely to break again, cancelling the impact of the rehabilitation. Strengthening the lands with gabions for example is also a recurrent practice to ensure the security of buildings and people.

Learning point N°12: Safe buildings and the promotion of diverse earthquake resistant construction techniques: Most of the buildings that have been (re)built by partners supported by the Fondation de France comply with earthquake-resistant construction principles. The fact that the Fondation agreed to support innovative strategies, such as the use of bamboo in Khokana, is a sign of “intelligent risk-taking” which has proven to be very relevant. Advocacy messages may need to be developed if the Government reacts negatively.

5.4. INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABILITY: MYTH, REALITY OR AIM?

The Fondation de France underlines the importance of integrating various components of its programmes in order to ensure better sustainability and social cohesion. However, this may be a little over-ambitious in practice.

FOR THE FONDATION AND ITS PARTNERS

Learning point N°13: Physical reconstruction of housing cannot be a stand-alone sector as it requires the mobilisation of a significant level of resources. As such, in similar operations in the future, it will be very important to facilitate access to financial resources through economic recovery, cash transfer and rapid support to micro-finance institutions, etc., to ensure that the necessary means are available at family level to rebuild houses properly without being obliged to either delay reconstruction, enter into high levels of debt or disturb agricultural activities.

Learning point N°14: Integrated, multi-disciplinary operations are easier said than done: The integration of different operational sectors in one geographic area did not fully take place. The integration of housing reconstruction and economic recovery has not really taken place as expected. Though many ad-hoc jobs, and therefore resource flows, have resulted from reconstruction activities (whether or not these were funded by international aid), this will only have a temporary economic effect, linked to the existence of construction sites. The effect on agriculture was negative as there were fewer workers available. In addition, the sectoral approach that was applied to the integrated Thangpal Valley project proved to be a constraint in the face of the need to strengthen synergies.
FOR THE FONDATION’S PARTNERS

Learning point N°15: Being imaginative and innovative in post-disaster situations can open many new doors. But this requires strategic engagement as conservative options are often the preferred solutions after traumatic experiences. Although many of the Fondation de France’s partners launched economic activities (agricultural activities and special income-generating activities for women) immediately after the relief phase, this was mainly done using well-tested activities such as vegetable growing, bee keeping and cardamom production. There was a missed opportunity to engage in micro-credit activities on a large scale, but also innovative approaches in cardamom drying and trading, etc.

Learning point N°16: Economic sustainability is at stake, even in a post-disaster situation: Feasibility studies should be carried out more systematically, in order to ensure that operations are more sustainable.

Learning point N°17: Prepare early to be able to deal with the reduction of international resources (cliff effect). National NGO should develop new approaches for fund raising to deal with the reduction of earthquake humanitarian and recovery financial resources.

FOR THE FONDATION:

Learning point N°18: Avoiding the financial and structural cliff effect: It is frequently observed that NGOs who have received significant support during the relief/early recovery phases find themselves confronted with a financial and managerial crisis when the flow of financial resources ends. As seen in Haiti, the Fondation can act as a catalyst in facilitating the brokering of agreements between its partners and financial institutions such as the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). This implies that well-tested partners are identified and relevant projects are designed.

6. TO CONCLUDE

6.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF “GOING LOCAL”

The global international emergency relief response was in many aspects relatively messy, and sometimes too massive and insufficiently well targeted. The coordination mechanisms put in place at the central levels and in some key “hubs” were often only loosely coordinated at the lower levels as the local administration was also significantly affected by the earthquake and often lacking all basic means for coordination and communication (no internet, often no computers, and even sometimes no offices). In addition, the prevailing institutional insecurity at the time (still no constitution, still no disaster law, etc.) created an atmosphere where only courageous and dedicated district and VDC officers were able to assert themselves in relation to a massive aid industry. In this context, only a few agencies supported these local institutions.
Things have changed since and everybody has realised how important coordination is for coherence, avoiding gaps and limiting duplication. The local elections in early 2017, the delegation of many responsibilities that were initially held by the NRA to the local levels and the promulgation of the Disaster Law have created a new atmosphere. Newly elected people interviewed during the field visit at both District and Rural Municipality levels clearly stated that they want to be recognized in their responsibilities and do their job properly. They also expressed some confusion in view of the complexity and magnitude of the problem and their own lack of experience and know-how to tackle it. There is therefore great demand for support, and dialogue between civil society and the Government is more open. The Fondation de France supported the efforts of its partners to engage with the local Authorities, and in the specific case of the integrated Thangyal Valley project supported the physical rehabilitation of VDC and municipal buildings and the provision of some equipment to facilitate the work of these local institutions. This proved to be a worthwhile investment and created a level of confidence between the project and the Authorities that was indispensable for the operation.

Yet, the limited level of contact between the Fondation de France and the national institutions (NRA, relevant technical ministries) might represent a missing link in terms of strategic positioning and be able to strengthen its own advocacy capacity as a “donor” in support of its partners. It is not contradictory for the Fondation de France to both help its partners to have a strong voice and to have its own advocacy agenda as a donor.

Working with all generations (Photo Groupe URD)

6.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING THE RIGHT INTERMEDIARIES

The Foundation de France, largely due to the experience of some of its key staff who have been engaged with NGO coordination platforms and other kinds of “local technical support mechanisms”, has a strong attraction towards these “local brokers”, be they federations of NGO, local consultancy structures or others. This approach proved to be both extremely relevant and rather touchy in the context of “post-earthquake Nepal”. This is an area which is not often explored by other donor institutions and where the Fondation is establishing useful experience.
6.3. DIALOGUE, DIALOGUE, DIALOGUE

Operating in a complex and fragile context that is highly politicized, where actors are extremely proud of their sovereignty, requires a significant commitment to engage in dialogue. This is essential in order to manage difficulties, misunderstanding and possible conflicts, in particular when one of the objectives of the programme is to engage in the “localisation debate” in a dynamic, engaging and risk-taking way. The Fondation de France teams in charge of the Nepal response were all highly committed, as was the “knowledge management team”. However, staff turn-over on both sides meant that dialogue had to be continually re-established. It can never be taken for granted that confidence is established and strong.

Being an “activist and accountable donor” has no price, but it has a cost. It is very important that the Fondation de France explains to its partners that it plans so many supervision and evaluation missions to ensure that programmes are of good quality and to establish a high level of accountability towards its French private donors.
ANNEXES
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Landscape of Thangpal Valley (photo Groupe URD)
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