

# BUILDING BACK BETTER

The 2015 Earthquake in Nepal

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# Introduction

- Disasters caused by natural hazards and climate change affect women and girls disproportionately
- Gendered vulnerabilities are further complicated by other factors such as age, language, caste, ethnicity, religion, and marital status
- Climate futures subject women to recurring situations of disaster and crisis

# Introduction

**Example:** 2015 Earthquake in Nepal to explore what can be done in practice to reduce risks, support resilience, and help women in “building back better”



Structural inequalities can be reinforced through reconstruction practices but such vulnerabilities can also inspire opportunities and change

## The 2015 Earthquake in Numbers

- Earthquake struck on April 25, 2015 with a 7.8 magnitude on the Richter scale
- Significant aftershocks over a long period of time (strongest was of 7.3 magnitude three weeks after the main tremor)
- 9,000 people have died and 24,000 people were injured
- More than 500,000 buildings collapsed or were damaged
- Estimated 2.8 million people were rendered homeless and in need of assistance, with 864,000 of them in hard-to-reach and isolated areas

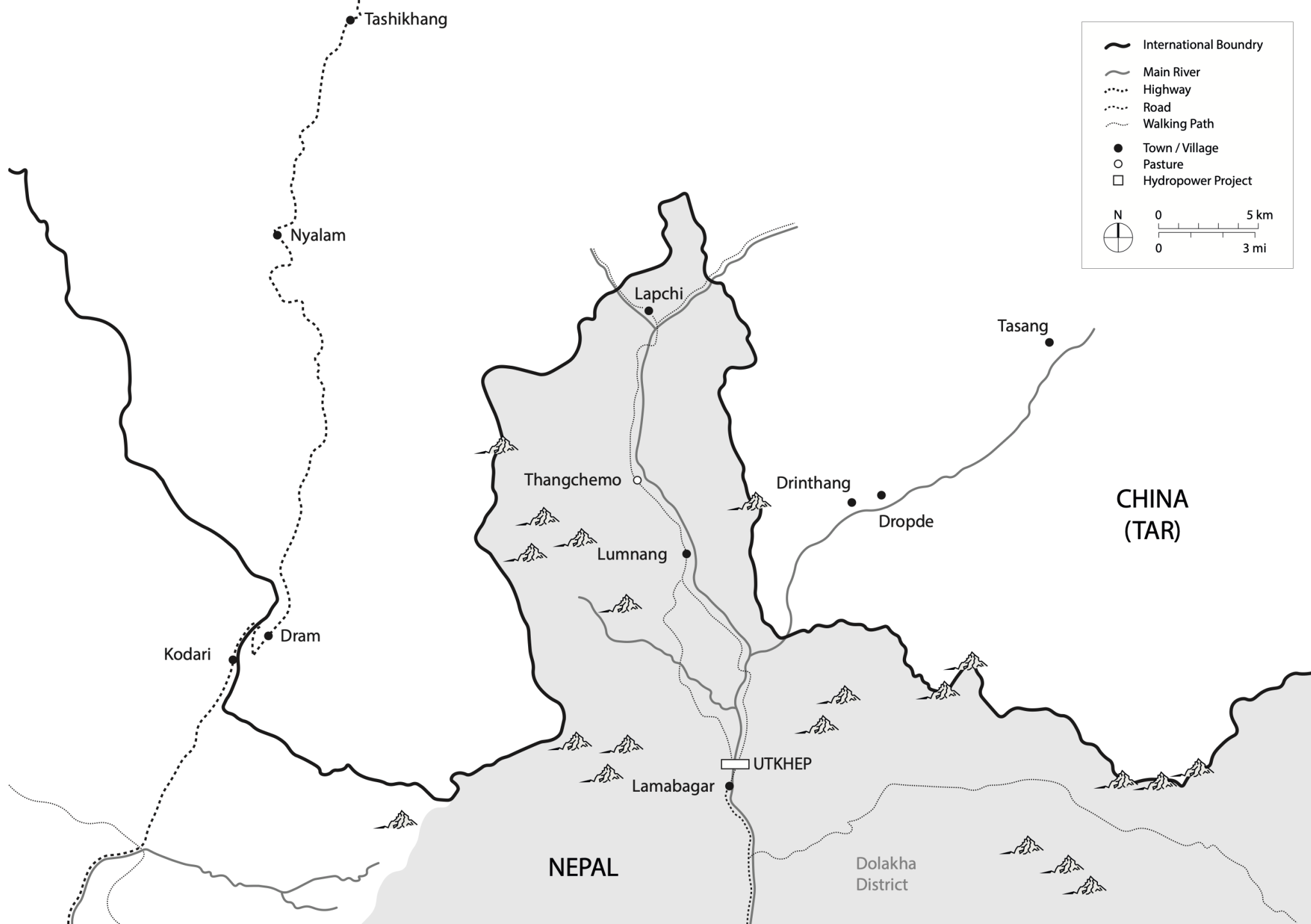
# Disaster Preparedness

- Nepal has long been considered overdue for an earthquake
- The United Nations and the government of the United States had worked extensively with the Nepali state to strengthen infrastructure and institute response programs in the case of an emergency
- Implementation and enforcement often lagged behind ideal practices
- Struggles of everyday life overwhelmed and disempowered citizens

## Political and Social Contexts

- People's Movement ended Maoist Civil War (1996-2006)
- Nepal had been in transition from a constitutional Hindu monarchy to a federal democratic state
- Six different governments could not agree on drafting a new constitution between 2007 and 2015
- No popularly elected local representatives
- Political instability had an enormous effect on earthquake response and reconstruction















## Timeline of Relief and Recovery Efforts

- May 2015: **Emergency Cash Grants**  
NPR 15,000 = ca. US\$ 130
- Jun 2015: International Donor Conference
- Aug 2015: **Post Disaster Needs Assessment**
- Aug 2015: Establishment of National Reconstruction Authority  
(Dissolved and re-established in December)
- Sep 2015: New constitution was promulgated
- Sep 2015: Unofficial Indian Blockade
- Oct 2015: **Winter Relief Grants**  
NPR 10,000 = ca. US\$ 80

# The Rural Housing Reconstruction Program

## Rural Housing Reconstruction Program

NPR 300,000 = ca. US\$ 2,250

- Three tranches tied to building codes and documented progress in reconstruction
- Ownerdriven approach places “households” at the center
  - **But:** What is a household?
- For accessing the reconstruction grants, citizenship, landownership, and marriage documents are needed, in addition to valid bank accounts
- Many citizens in rural Nepal, and most of all women, never made these documents





# Conclusion

- Climate change and extreme weather events are likely to increase the occurrence of disasters for people in the Himalayan region
- In addition, Nepal and surrounding countries face the threat of much stronger earthquakes in the future



Is an increasing level of competing disasters the “new normal”?

**Intersectional identities and experiences of vulnerabilities need to be taken into account to make post-disaster reconstruction processes inclusive and transformative**



