

The Production of Landslides Risks and Local Responses: A Case Study of Bhoje Landslide, Lamjung, Nepal



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CCRI case study 2

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List of Abbreviations

APM	All party mechanism
CDO	Chief District Officer
CF	Community Forestry
CFUG	Community Forest User Group
DDC	District Development Committee
DDMC	District Disaster Management Committee
DDPRP	District Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan
DISCO	District Soil Conservation Office
DRSP	District Road Support Project
GLOF	Glacier Lake Outburst Flood
GoN	Government of Nepal
Km	Kilometer
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan of Action
NAPA	National Adaptation Program of Action
RRN	Rural Reconstruction Nepal

1. Introduction

Bhoje village, located in Bhoje VDC in Lamjung district is a small Gurung village of about 60 households with its stone built houses closely clustered on the ridge of a hill. In July 2013 the slope beneath the southern edge of the village experienced a major landslip bringing the houses on the edge of the settlement to within 50 meters of an advancing landslide cliff edge. The landslide is not new, having, as will be seen at least a 25 year history. In 2011 there was also a major landslip which cracked the walls of the primary school at the top of the slope; the 2013 landslide destroyed half the school which had been relocated to a new building the previous year. No reports were made by the villagers that a particularly heavy storm had been experienced before or during the 2013 landslide. It would appear that the slope is now inherently structurally unstable and has acquired a life of its own, needing little to trigger further activity. The landslide that is about half a kilometre wide and stretches for about half a kilometre up the hillside is easily seen from the other side of the valley about half a mile away: a visible white scar within a landscape of forest and terraced fields. It has destroyed about 200-300 ropani (10-15 ha.) of paddy land but with other agricultural land scattered across a number of different slopes around the village, the loss of the land does not appear to have triggered significant food insecurity for the affected households.

As one of about 100 landslides or more within Lamjung district at first sight it may not be seen to be an event of particular significance, not least because there have been no fatalities and it has a long history. However over the last few years the level of attention that has been given to the Bhoje landslide marks it out as arguably the most well-known landslide within Lamjung district; it has also attracted the attention of the national press (see box 1) as well as brought two visiting teams from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Forestry to study the landslide and structure a response to it. It is clear that the fact that it is a settlement of sixty households under threat is one reason why it has attracted more attention than other landslides that have occurred in forest or agricultural lands. But it is also evident that the villagers have mobilised to seek a response and assistance in dealing with the consequences of the landslide, drawing on political connections stretching up to a Minister in central government

What appears to have driven this response is the politics of patronage rather than any sense of rights or entitlements. One villager talked in terms of their behaviour in terms of ‘a child crying to their parents’ hoping for something and comfort but perhaps not much else. First this is a Gurung village with a very strong sense of collective identity which does not however appear to include the few Dalit households that live on the edge of it. Second the village is well connected to one of the district MPs who comes from nearby and he was influential in guiding the village in what to do, in intervening at the district level and in taking the delegation to the Minister. Third, the Minister himself also comes from the district and is a Gurung. The field work took place at the time the district election results were announced and in which the MP lost his seat; this was a cause of deep concern to the village because of the connections that they might lose. However the man in question also sits on the politburo of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist or CPN(UM)) and is likely to remain an influential figure.

This case study therefore appears to be an example of a landslide where in some respects ‘the response’ has been maximal thus providing an opportunity to explore the nature and extent of disaster response under ‘optimum’ conditions. However the substance of the response actually appears to have been rather little. What was found was evidence of a model of ‘calamity response’ by the authorities and other actors but a very minimalist one which distributes a degree of relief but nothing more. One might talk of an element of social contract in this but not as an individual in relation to the state but more as a ‘community’ in relation to the state. What appears to be much stronger is the more horizontal collective social contract within the village and there is evidence of collective action that offers more than the state does.

Box 1: Landslide victims demand resettlement¹ (Kathmandu Post, August 3rd 2013)

LAMJUNG, AUG 03 - Landslide victims demand resettlement

Local people of Bhoje VDC-4 and 5 in the district, who have been affected by landslides for the past two decades, have reached the district headquarters, demanding that they be relocated to a safer place at the earliest. They met Chief District Officer (CDO) and political party leaders and apprised them of the problem.

Kush Bahadur Gurung, one of the landslide victims, said the landslides swept away a large section of farmland, an irrigation canal and drinking water pipeline in the village. “We will not return until the government addresses our concerns,” he said. Locals said they were facing a shortage of food after a local road was swept away by a landslip. They said out of eight of the total 58 families who are exposed to the landslide threat have already been displaced. Some of the displaced are taking refuge in their relative’s houses while others are living in tents and public buildings.

“The government should rehabilitate us,” said Purna Bahadur Gurung, who is taking shelter with his family in a community building after being displaced by a landslip. The landslides have not been controlled though various government offices such as the District Development Committee and the Water Induced Disaster Prevention Centre (WIDPC) spent around Rs 2 million.

A team led by Mani Kumar Rai, engineer at the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development, that surveyed the incident site last year pointed out that the risk in the village is decreasing and a detailed study of the site is needed. CDO Baburam Bhandari said he informed senior authorities of the villagers’ demand on Friday as the problem could not be resolved in local level.

PREM KUMARI GHALE

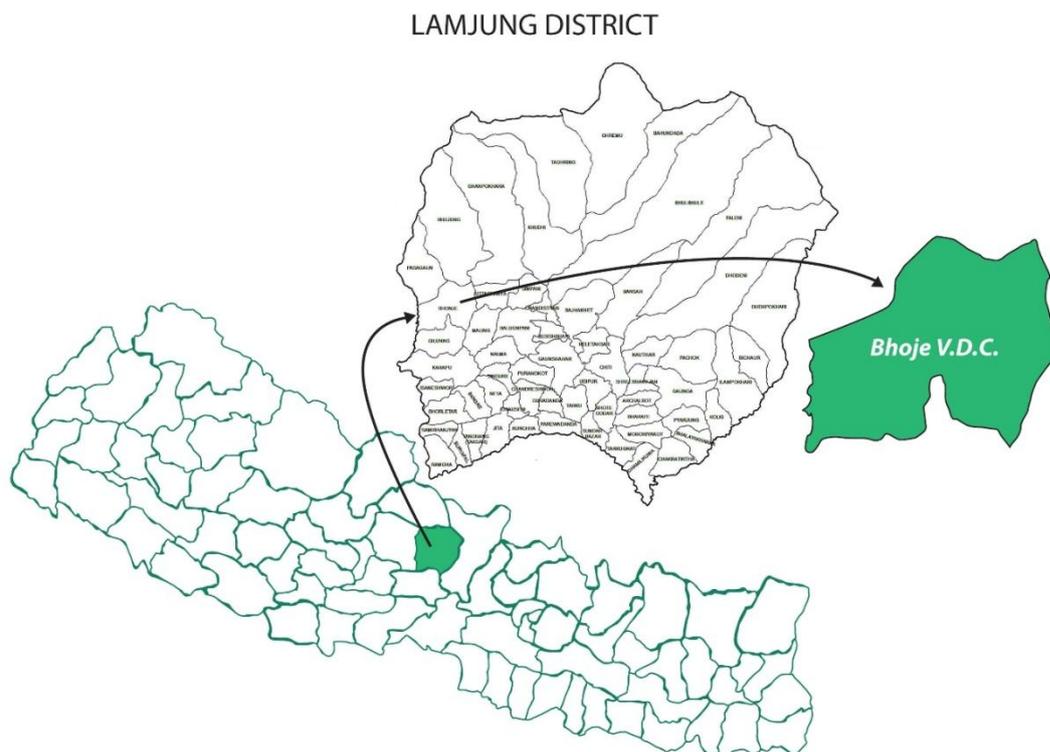
This account of the landslide examines its history and describes the various efforts over the last decade to address it. It draws on a field visit to the village and the landslide and a number of group and individual household interviews in Bhoje village itself (see Annex 1 for informant list) as well as a series of interviews with district level officials and the officers of the Lamjung Nepalese Red Cross. It starts with a brief account of the location of Bhoje within Lamjung district and of its economy. It then elaborates a detailed chronology of the

¹<http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2013/08/03/nation/landslide-victims-demand-resettlement/251934.html>.

landslide and an examination of the response by villagers and the means by which they sought to mobilise action from the authorities both at district and central level. In turn it considers the nature and level of response at district and central level, what has governed that response and the results that it has delivered. As will be seen much of the debate has been structured around on the one hand a narrative of resettlement and on the other engineering solutions to stop the landslide. Neither debate so far have achieved any degree of resolution or conclusion with respect to implementing specific actions. While much discussed this increasingly looks like a case of ‘masterly inaction’.

2. Locating Bhoje in Lamjung

Lamjung district lies in mid-hills, at the western development region of Nepal (about 178km west of Nepal's capital Kathmandu), in the Gandaki river basin. It has altitude variations which range from 385 meter lowest height (Duipepale Bagaicha, Ramgha VDC) to 8162 meter high (Mansalu mountain), due to this varied altitudinal situation the climate of the district varies from sub-tropical to tundra. The district, with Besisahar as its district headquarters, covers an area of 1,692 km² and has a population of 167,724² out of which 48.59% belongs to ethnic community³, 28.74% Hindu Upper caste group⁴, 17.87% belongs to Dalit community⁵ and rest belongs to other groups (CBS, 2013).



Map 1: Map of Nepal showing Lamjung district and Bhoje VDC.

² CBS. 2013. National population and housing census, 2011. Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu.

³ Major ethnic community of the district=Gurung (31.25%), Tamang (7.23%), Newar(3.71%), Garti/Bhujel (2.28%), Magar(2.24%), Dura (1.88%)

⁴ Barhmin (12.75%) and Chhetri (15.99%)

⁵ Kami(8.63%), Sarki(5.31%) and Damai (3.93%)

Administratively, the district is divided into 2 Municipality, and 52 VDCs. There are five campuses, 15 higher secondary schools and 268 schools have been established to advance the education sector. Post offices are present in all 52 V.D.Cs. There is only one hospital in the district but at least one health post in all the 52 V.D.Cs. The district is neighboured by the districts of Gorkha, Manang, Kaski and Tanahu. Its abundance of natural resources goes untapped due to a lack in proper road infrastructure. Both, water and forest resources, have not been properly and wisely utilized. Most of the villages has electricity. The district has largest population of Gurung (one of the ethnic groups of Nepal). Majority of district population is involved in subsistence agriculture, growing cereals like maize, millet, and paddy. In recent years there is also increasing trend of growing cash crops like vegetables, oil seeds, potato etc. There are quite a number of Gurung men served/serving in British army and Indian army.

The district is particularly known for rivers that flow in high gradient, so that they offer the good opportunity for development of hydropower. This is particularly evident in Marsyangdi River, which partly owing to this gradient, is poised to have hydropower projects in a continuous chain, creating a situation that for the most part the river will be moving through hydropower tunnels of one or the other project in the next ten years or so. More steeply flow of the river, on the other hand, has greater potential of side-cutting, creating landslides on both sides of the river.

Major source of income and livelihood of populace is agriculture, tourism, and remittance. The major crops grown in the district are paddy, maize, wheat and millet while vegetables are potato, legumes and green vegetables. The agricultural practices in the district are traditional with subsistence farming practices. However, due to the development of tourism in the district and awareness about new techniques crop diversifications are introduced in limited areas⁶. The district is one of the major trekking routes of Nepal that belong to the Annapurna Conservation Area hence tourism is an additional source of income for people who lives at the northern part of the district. In addition, foreign employments have helped to boost the economy and change the livelihood pattern of the district, a total of 12,920 people migrated for foreign employment in the year 2003/04-2009/10⁷ from the district).

Lamjung is one of famous tourist location which is located in western region of Nepal. Situated between Gorkha and Kaski districts. Besisarhar is the district headquarter of Lamjung. Lamjung is at the distance of 178 km from the west of Kathmandu. Lamjung is important destination among both internal and foreign visitors, district is rich and popular for cultural, natural and biological diversity. All the lakes and ponds, rivers, waterfalls and tradition and culture of Gurung are located in this district. The amazing and wonderful sight of the Himalayan ranges of Mt. Annapurna and Manaslu and trekking areas and dense forest are the attractions. It is interesting to observe the beautiful Gurung community. From the

⁶ Lamjung District irrigation master plan Draft plan, 2068. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/78854943/Lamjung-District-Irrigation-Master-Plan-2068-Nepal-Draft> (cited on 28th December 2013)

⁷IOM. 2010. A Rapid Situation Assessment on Agriculture and Migration in Nepal. International Organization for Migration and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

headquarter Besisahar we can trek to places like Puma, bimda, siurung, Ghalegaun, Khansur, Hotwater spots, Pasgaun, Bhujung. There is a good facility of lodging and meal in the hotels. The popular places to visit in Lamjung Districts are historical Lanjung Palace which is an old historical place located on the top of Besishar in the VDC of Gaunsahar. By the view of historians the palace is the birthplace of Shah Dynasty. The palace is popular for viewing natural beauty in addition. Tourist can enjoy the sunrise and the stunning view of mountains like Annapurna, Manaslu and Buddha Himal. To reach palace it takes distance of 9 km of road by bus from Besishar. Hot water pond is famous place situated in the north at a distance of 20km from Besishar, lies at the base of Bahundanda and on the bank of Marsyangdi River, people believe that the pond cure the skin diseases. The popular guring village, Ghanpokhara is located at an altitude of 2150m on a high Himalayas, famous for Gurung culture. The largest settlement of guring people in Lamjung district is the beautiful Bhujung Village located in the high altitude of 1600 meter, tourist can enjoy and observe the traditional Gurung life-style and culture. Hydropower project is nearby river supplies electricity to village, hotels and home stay facilities are available. Sirurung is one of the famous tourist destination of lamjung district located on the foot of Manaslu himal. In the ward no 8 and 9 of Khudi VDC of Lamjung. Situated at an altitude of 1900m from the sea level. Traditional Gurung dance and the stone house with thatched roofs are the attractions for tourists. Home stay facilities are available for visitors, from this village trekking can start to Tangting of Kaski district.

70 Megawatt Mid-Marshyangdi Hydroelectricity Project (MMHEP), the second largest hydropower project in the country has started operation from December 14, 2008. PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal had inaugurated the project. The project was started in June 2001 with joint investments of the government of Nepal and Germany and Nepal Electricity Authority, Lamjung is connected with GSM, CDMA connection by Nepal Telecom and Spice Nepal. Land lanes are common in town areas. Almost each VDC is provided with one land line or CDMA phone. CDMA and GSM mobile phones are common in many villages and towns due to easily available.

Lamjung is recently connected with ADSL which is much faster as compared to dial up. Recently, wifi has been made available by Broadlink in Besisahar. Lamjung has print Medias Lamjung highlights, Antarang etc to name a few. At present lamjung has two stations Marshyangdi 95 MHz and Radio Lamjung 88.4 MHz.

Bhoje VDC [900 – 2600 m.asl] the case study site is 15 Km by road south and downhill from Besisahar (District Headquarter of Lamjung, 1300 m.asl) on the outskirts of Lamjung district and lies on a south facing slope on the eastern banks of the Bhoje stream. A track road reached upto the lower parts of the VDC and from there it is an hour walk away on the top of the hill. About 476 households live in the VDC, the majority of whom are from the so called higher caste (12.75% Brahmin caste, 15.99% Chettri caste). 21 percent of the population are dalit (low caste) and 19 % come from ethnic groups. The major ethnic groups in the VDC are Gurung,

The main occupation of the village dwellers is agriculture (60%) and livestock is an integral part of this. Other major income sources are wage labor (33%), service (13%) and business (3%). A total of 405 people are working outside the village, of which 80 people are working abroad and remitting income to their households.

Bhoje VDC has eight schools, a Health post for primary health care, three cooperatives who are playing the role of rural banks and three CFUGs.

The main landslide affected areas of the VDC were ward 4 and 5 which resides at the top of the landslide affected hill. It consists of 65 HHs most of them belongs to Gurung ethnic community and around 14 HHs were of Dalit (Nepali and BK caste group). The major occupation of the villagers was agriculture. They mainly produce paddy, millet and wheat. Other people do sharecropping, wage labour within the village, some of the males were in British and Indian army and some went for foreign employment to earn money. In most cases the villagers were self-sufficient in case of food security.

3. The history of the Bhoje landslide

There is general agreement that the origins of the Bhoje landslide can be traced back to at least 25 years ago. Before being destroyed the hillside was terraced with paddy fields fed by two springs irrigating about 200-300 ropani of land. While most of the accounts that could be collected from the villages tended to focus on the recent activity of the landslide and to discount the past, there were short references to that fact that twenty five years ago the base of the hill suffered its first small scale landslips. The slope is not exposed to any undercutting by river flowing laterally across its base. However there is a valley below the slope from which drainage from the slope feeds into the lower Ghimar river which is seasonal in its flow. Thus, and as suggested by the comments of the District Soil Conservation Officer (DISCO), the origins of the early landslips may be related to the management of the irrigation water on the slope itself and issues of poor drainage. The underlying geology of the area (primarily quartzite and phyllite) according to the DISCO, is not very stable but it is not atypical of the Mahabbarat hill range within which the VDC lies. Thus drawing from this, it is likely that an inherently weak geological structure combined with an irrigation management system on the slope that did not pay sufficient attention to drainage management may be a primary reason why the landslide has developed over time. The VDC secretary commented that in his view the villagers had not taken the matter seriously when the landslide started. But the springs have continued to feed the slope instability triggering an ever increasing scale of landslides.

Be that as it may concern for the effects of the landslide began to grow about ten years ago as it slowly expanded up the slope. The first attempt to address it appears to have come from an outside contractor, a Brahmin from Chisung according to the informants. He made a proposal and got funding from Pokhara's Department of Water Induced Disaster Office (Jal Utpana Prokoa Nyantran?) to install 70 – 80 gabion walls at the base of the landslide in an attempt to control it. It was suggested that he received about 1- 1.2 million Nepalese Rupees (NPR or about US\$100,000) for the construction work. The chronology is not entirely clear and it is possible that at the same time the villagers were drawn in to do some planting of Amriso

(broom grass) and bamboo provided by the then DISCO to help stabilise the slope. However what is clear is that none of these interventions had any effect in terms of controlling the landslide and it continued to develop.

The next significant event was in 2011 when there was a further major landslip, linked to a heavy rainstorm (Interview Group 2) that not only destroyed agricultural land but advanced the cliff edge closer to the village. This led to structural damage of the village primary school constructed on the plateau above the slope. At this stage there also seems to have been some involvement of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) in drawing the attention of the district authorities and the DISCO to the problem and on the recommendation of the All Party Mechanism⁸ (APM), the District Development Office contributed a further 5.5 lakhs Nepali rupees for further engineering works (again stone filled wire gabions) to help stabilize the slope.

Two further actions also took place. The first concerned the raising of funds to relocate the primary school to a new site and rebuild it. Here the village drew on connections with their local MP, Prithvi Subba Gurung who comes from Salme village close to Bhoje to obtain funding 5 lakhs NPR from central government and 5.5-6.6 Lakhs NPR from the district education office to help with the school reconstruction. In addition the VDC contributed 3 lakhs NPR (US\$30,000) from its own budget. The second appears to be that the district authorities raised the issue with the Home Ministry who sent a visiting team under the leadership of the joint secretary of Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (as noted in the newspaper account in box 1). The DISCO joined the team and after a month they provided a report essentially stating that this was a major landslide that required a detailed study to determine the underlying causes of the landslide. However according to the comments made by the VDC secretary the report had also suggested that the damage was now done and that it was unlikely to cause further harm. The report also made recommendations about some preventative measures that should be followed to prevent exacerbating the problem. These included drainage activities and improved water management on the upper part of the slope and the cessation of paddy cultivation. According to the DISCO, these measures were not followed although the villagers made no reference to these recommendations being communicated to them.

4. The events of 2013 and immediate response

In June/July 2013 a further major landslide took place although this was not, in the view of the informants, associated with a major storm – as they put it ‘before landslides occur when the rainfall was big ...but now landslides also occur in small rains’. The effects were however dramatic. Not only did the cliff edge of the landslide advance to within 50 metres of the first house on the edge of the village but it undermined half of the now abandoned primary school which fell into the landslide and caused structural cracks in six houses closest to the edge of the landslide. As noted in the report by the District Red Cross society (box 2) messages were sent to the district headquarters leading to an emergency meeting of the

⁸ The APM set up to address the absence of elected local government was formally abolished in Jan 3, 2012 but in most districts it appears to continue to function and be influential in district and VDC decisions.

District Disaster Risk Committee (DDRC) and the deployment of a response team to assess the effects of the disaster and provide relief.

There are certain discrepancies or inconsistencies in the various accounts of how many people were affected and what the consequences have been. For example the interviews in the village indicated that there were at least 60 households in the village while the Red Cross reported only 58 households. The evidence from the village does not support the claim in the Red Cross report that all families were equally affected or that all six households had lost all their farm land or that the school was still at risk (it had been re-located earlier to an entirely different place). For a start the landslide slope as noted earlier is only one of several locations on which the village lands are located. An area called Baysi for example that appears to be the location of the larger portion of the village agricultural lands was entirely unaffected by the landslide. Interviews with the specific households confirmed that they had only lost a portion of their lands and that their food security had not been unduly affected by the land loss. This it should be remembered is a largely food secure village that in addition has a significant level of remittance income – about 10 members from the village were working in the middle east, another 10 or so were in the army or police and 2-3 ex Gurkhas had settled in the UK. That said there is no doubt that the six households with their houses closely to the edge of the landslide are directly under threat and feeling acutely insecure and the physical threat to the village as a whole is not to be questioned.

Box 2: The Response by the DDRC to the Bhoje Landslide in 2013

The response by DDRC in June 2013

The landslide occurred in June 2013 has affected 58 families in Bhoje VDC, which is located at remote area in west of district headquarter and out of road access in rainy season. Out of them 6 families were displaced due to their houses and farm lands were washed away. Besides this, one school and 58 families are still living under high risk of potential landslides and they need to be evacuated immediately. The agriculture lands are being covered with debris almost every year that has adversely affected livelihood of people living in that area.

When landslide occurred, local community was involved in sending early notification to other community people and DDRC immediately. The DDRC called emergency meeting and the DDRC deployed a team for conducting assessment, search and rescue and distributing relief materials. The DDRC distributed NPR 20,000 for each of the displaced families. Being DDRC member, the Local Red Cross distributed non-food relief items. In accordance with the District Preparedness and Response Plan, the DDRC has called emergency meeting, deployed response team comprising of assessment, search/rescue and relief, immediately to the field and rendered relief services to the beneficiaries. In order to provide humanitarian services for the families living in high risk area to protect them from potential landslide and to support their livelihood, the cluster leads as mentioned in DP/R plan has to be seen more proactive. However, the response services to the affected families were bit delayed due to remoteness. The VDC has been highly vulnerable in terms of landslides from the hill and the mitigation of risk is beyond the control. A joint team, formed by DDRC, has conducted the assessment and the district level resources are not adequate to solve the problem so the DDRC has made recommendation to CNDRC to explore further actions.

Source: Lamjung District Red Cross Report

As noted in Box 2, each of the six households were allocated by the DDRC NPR 20,000 (US\$ 20) through the District Administration from the Home Ministry natural disaster fund and also the standard relief package of tents, utensils and clothes by the Red Cross. The DISCO expressed some scepticism as to whether the Red Cross had indeed distributed this since, and as noted in Box 2 they had some difficulty in actually getting to Bhoje through lack of transport but the six households confirmed that they had received this relief. As to what exact function the allocation of NPR 20,000 (US\$200) or the relief goods was intended to achieve is more unclear. The relief package, according to the DISCO was to help them move to a place of safety although the households had simply shifted to relatives for the night, returning to their houses during the day. The cash on the other hand was seen to be a contribution to the construction of a new house in a safer place although as one informant noted, a new house would cost at least 2 lakhs NPR (US\$ 2000) to build. At best the relief provided was a gesture towards a response but as the next section will argue, it manifestly fails to address, as the villagers were very clear, the longer term viability of the community. That, in the view of the village, could only be gained with nothing less than re-settlement although as will be seen there are strongly divergent positions within the village as to what exactly resettlement means.

5. Action and responses since June 2013:

There are two major strands to the account of what has happened since the landslide of June 2013. On the one hand the villagers from Bhoje have attempted to generate a response from the district and national level government to address their predicament using political connections and the media. On the other both district and central government have responded by mounting enquiries and site visits which appear to have generated demands for further studies but no explicit action beyond that. The district appears to be deeply constrained by funding and capabilities to offer more than other resources.

The actions of the village are discussed first. In response, according to the informants, to a suggestion by a Police officer at the neighbouring police post and their then MP (Prithvi Subba Gurung), a delegation was formed by the village to go to the district to press their case. The delegation consisted of according to the VDC secretary, who was part of it, of at least one member from each household including the dalit households. This representation of each household appears to be a norm within the village with a compulsory element in that there is in principle a fine system (of about NPR 50-60 per household) for households that fail to send a representative. At their own expense the delegation travelled to the district headquarters in Besishahar to meet with the authorities.

From the accounts of the informants, and consistent with the newspaper report cited in Box 1, the primary demand of the delegation was that they should be resettled⁹ to a safe place. In their view the village was no longer a safe place in which to live. Further this resettlement should consist not only of support for house reconstruction but also provision of public goods such as a road, a school and drinking water. The idea of 'resettlement' draws from a longer history in the hills of government supported resettlement as a response to major flood or

⁹ The term consistently used in interviews and reports was rehabilitate but this has been taken to mean resettle.

landslide events. The VDC secretary for example quoted the case of a major landslide on the border between Lamjung and Kaski districts 15 to 20 years previously with a large number of fatalities. The government provided relief and a resettlement packages to the survivors who then relocated to near Pokhara.

But although subscribing to resettlement as an idea, it was clear both from the accounts by the village informants and the observations made by the VDC secretary and the DISCO, there were widely different views and disagreements within the village as to what the details of the resettlement might mean. As one of the informants put it 'we have not discussed about this jointly but some want to live nearby, some say that they will be rehabilitated as per the government decision. We don't have any reservation about the place but now we can't live here with this problem'. Thus for some resettlement meant relocating to the area of the village lands known as Baysi where many of the households already had land. Thus this amounted to relocating within the village territory. For these households there is an undoubted attachment to the village of Bhoje – it is where they belong and have lived with a community and it is unthinkable that they should move from here. But for others they would be willing to accept land anywhere else so that they could resettle or be provided with cash so that they could make the decision as to where to go.

Part of the reason for the divided opinion is that not all households have land in Baysi. Then there are households that receive significant income from remittances (or pensions and salaries) and so the need for land is less. In addition there are those who have houses outside the village in either Kathmandu or Pokhara so they are less tied to the village and its material resources. For the landless dalit households on the other hand who work as sharecroppers and wage labour within the village, and with few income sources from outside the village the loss of land in itself from the landslide has been a direct threat to their livelihood security. A move to Baysi offers little for them.

Despite the mixed views and uncertainty as to what it might achieved, there was agreement that some form of action was required. As one informant put it:

the government may or may not help us, but as you know that whole village is becoming unsafe so if we continuously raised our voice that means the whole village together raised the voice regarding this problem then we expect that government will do something for us. But then also we are not sure, the government may do or may not.

As to the consequences of a lack of response from the government there was also a degree of realism: "we are just expecting that the government will listen our demand. If government did then that's very good for us, if not then we will manage like this only but it's very unsafe".

Nevertheless with this demand for resettlement a 35 member delegation visited the district and met with Chief District Officer (CDO) late in early August 2013. According to one of the delegates it was not particularly fruitful "nothing much happened in the CDO office ... we discussed about the landslide problem and the officer promised that some things will be distributed as immediate relief"

According to the VDC secretary, who was a member of the delegation, the CDO also said he would report the village's problem to the Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee (CNDRC) under the Home Ministry. This department is responsible for the authorisation of cash relief and its name 'Daibi Prakop' or 'Divinely Caused Disaster' reflects an enduring legacy of how disasters are still viewed by some.

The village delegation then decided that they would take their demand to the central government, guided by the advice of their MP and local leaders of the congress party as well. It was recognised, according to the VDC Secretary, that the district authorities had done all that was in their power to do and the limitations of district budget and it was also acknowledged that they had done as much as they were able to do. This was a problem that could not be solved at the district level.

So the local leader of the Congress Party, Gum Prasad Gurung, then accompanied them, along with the VDC Secretary and the DISCO to Kathmandu where they gained access to the Minister of Forest and Soil Conservation, Tek Bahadur Gharti Magar. The choice of Minister and Ministry is interesting in that it is the Home Ministry that has the actual responsibility for resettlement and the technical mandate of the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation does not cover settlement issues but soil conservation ones. Thus it was likely that if the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation was to respond, it would be around issues of landslide management rather than resettlement issues which as will be seen was the case. Yet as box 1 makes clear at least at the district level the demand of the delegation was for resettlement. However the view of one of the village informants was that the Home Ministry would only respond on the recommendation of the Forest and Soil Conservation Ministry.

However there were other considerations in heading for the Forestry Ministry as evidenced by the fact that they quickly got to meet the Forest Minister and he quickly convened a task response to respond to the issue. The Forestry Minister comes from the district and it was the political connections and the calculus of where access could be gained that governed the choice. What was actually discussed with the Minister remains unclear but the result was he immediately appointed a committee of a geologist and an engineer on the same day and shortly afterwards this task force made a visit to the district and village. As the VDC Secretary described it:

I think that he must have observed our pain that we had due to landslide so that Minister forcedly ordered to team member to complete the task quickly that he assigned to them. Some team member said that it was so quick respond that team member were not able to take TADA [field subsistence payments) while moving toward village from Kathmandu. They were mainly investigating about whether the landslide will be controlled or not, if controlled than how much money will be required and whether that money will be more or less than the money that will be required if villagers will have to rehabilitate in the safe area. They were focused in these things in the study.

Forestry Ministry Task Force was led by the senior geologist of the Soil Conservation Officer, and included an official from the Home Ministry and an engineer from Urban Development. The Ministry team was joined by members of the District Administration including the DISCO, someone from the District Forest Office and the DDC and they spent

two days in the field in mid-August 2013. They spent two days in the field doing assessments and held two meetings with the villagers. After they organised a press meeting at the district headquarters to report on their findings before they submitted a preliminary report to the District Administration Office.

The press meeting is worth noting as it was the source of the newspaper report in Box 1. In fact the journalist who submitted the report also originally came from Bhoje village and still has relatives there but the press interest was not confined to this one individual. As the DISCO noted there was a wider media interest in landslide issues and he read about four or five of the national newspapers report on the Bhoje landslide.

In early September the Task Force held, organised meetings through the Department of Soil Conservation in Kathmandu. Not only did they meet with members of other Ministries including the National Agricultural Research Council, Irrigation and others but they also held meetings with people from Bhoje who live in Kathmandu. According to the DISCO, the Kathmandu residents from Bhoje talked mainly about resettlement and alternatives to this while the discussions between the technical staff of the ministries talked more of the technical issues related to engineering and management responses related to cropping pattern changes, land use changes and so forth. The conclusion appears to be a recommendation for a more detailed study on techniques for controlling the landslide but there was also a recommendation on where resettlement might take place. The final report was submitted when & to whom?

On the issues of resettlement the DISCO apparently recommended that Baysi would be a suitable location for resettlement but there was need for some engineering works there to control a river and road access needed to be provided. But as he noted it was unlikely that all the households would be able to resettle in the same area or that additional land would be available in compensation for what they had lost. He saw the key issues as weighing up the relative costs of controlling the landslide or resettling the village, but this would require a more detailed study

The DISCO was of the view that there was an engineering solution to the landslide and made reference to two large landslides, one at Krishnavir that blocked a major transport road to Kathmandu and to Chapamati in Dolokha which had been controlled by engineering bio-engineering. He therefore was trying to raise the funds in order to do a detailed study and finding a suitable person to do the engineering study. The DISCO has already allocated 7 lakhs NPR (US\$ 7,000) to address the landslide, 4 Lakhs for the treatment and 3 Lakhs for the study, drawing in part on an increased budget he has been allocated. However the view is that this would not be enough.

However as he acknowledged some landslides could not be controlled even with major investments and as he explained lack of money and expertise were a major constraint:

We also don't have enough budgets and we also lack good technician, we only have low level expert like engineer, agriculturist, forester but that is not enough. They only do what they know like mass movement controlled by constructing gabion but they don't have enough knowledge about reason behind the landslide, they only do what they know.

6. Discussion and future investigations

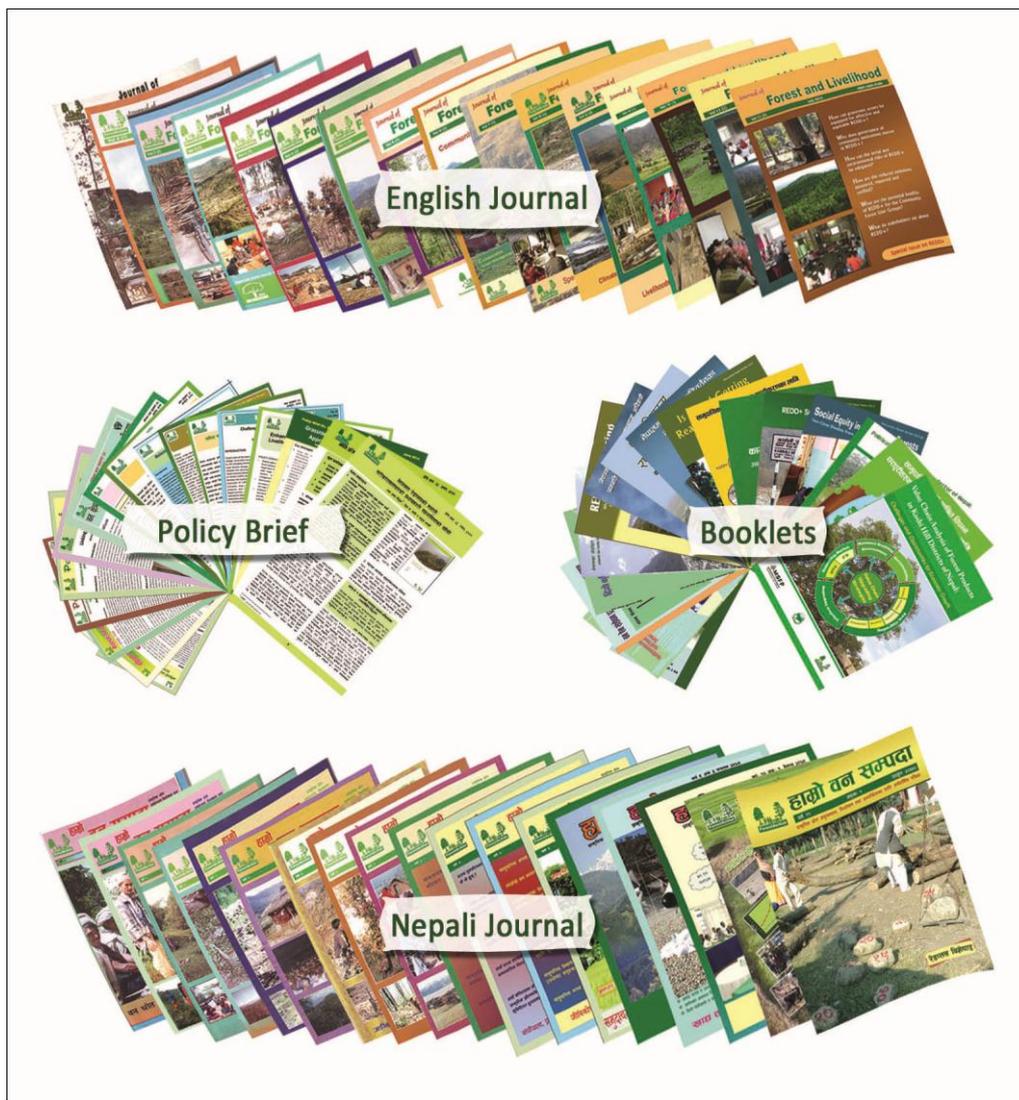
Thus at the time of the field visit in late November 2013, much uncertainty remained in the village caused both by living under physical conditions where many felt they were at risk, what government action if any would be taken to respond to their predicament and what the future might mean. The local MP, Prithvi Subba Gurung, who had been supportive of their demands and had assisted the village in the past in gaining improved road access and planning for electricity supply, lost his seat in the November 2013 district elections. Whether they gain the same patronage from the new MP, who is from the Congress Party remains to be seen.

But the case study points to a number of issues that needs further consideration. The first is the role of patronage connections in mobilising government response. There is no doubt that there is a sense from the ways in which the informants talked that there was seen to be an entitlement and right to make demands on their MP to assist them. Equally there was a realism as to what the district authorities could or could not do for them. The sense of entitlement from the district authorities seemed less explicit. The second is whether the relative homogeneity of the community as Gurungs contributes has contributed to their ability to mobilise and what the implications are of this to those who lives in the community but are not so strongly part of it (the Dalits). The third is a more general examination of the narrative of resettlement and how that is constructed in terms of state- subject relations. In part this is a dimension of 'victimhood' that is evident in both formal government language and the ways in which villagers present themselves. A fourth is the role of the media and how that might have changed and what influence it actually has on the behaviour of various actors. Fifth is the relation between all the above and the planned approach to disaster management which teters on organisational incoherence.

District level district disaster plans, VDC disaster plans and village disaster planning and capacity building are in full swing. The Red Cross which seems to have sufficient funding (from where?) is pursuing its model of planning and disaster response at VDC and village level. This will need to be closely investigated but at first sight it appears highly normative with no evidence that its 'plans' or 'capacity building' efforts have any effects. There is also in Lamjung running in parallel and separate from the DDC and the Red Cross, the Hariyo Ban programme led by WWF with Care International and funded by USAID. This is working in its within a conservation framework (in a conservation 'corridor') in relation to climate change on community adaptation planning, a programme of which the DISCO was highly dismissive. This will also needs to be investigated. What will also be examined closely is the relations between the Red Cross, the Hariyo Ban, the DISCO office and the District Disaster Committee but at first sight there appear to be very limited. The DDC and District work within the very narrow confines of their traditional mandate with very limited funding and despite talk at the national level of what will be done and how, at the district level, very little of this appears to be visible in Lamjung.

Annex 1: Informants List.

1. Group 1 Bhoje Group Discussion with Bhoje VDC, 15/11/2013
2. Group 2 Bhoje Group Discussion, 6 households directly affected by the landslide, 15/11/2013
3. Group 3 Bhoje VDC Dalit Community, 15/11/2013
4. Diwakar Maskey, District Soil Conservation Officer, Lamjung, 17/11/2013
5. Mahesh Adhikari, DDC, Energy and Environment Unit
6. VDC Secretary, Bhoje, 17/11/2013
7. Red Cross Society, Lamjung, 17/11/2013
8. Bhoje VDC Group Discussion with VDC secretary and villagers, 22/12/2014

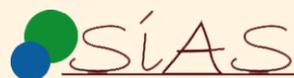


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