

February 20, 2010

ANMF/ASNEng/CAN-USA Joint Initiative

A Position Paper on Earthquake Disaster Relief and Preparedness for Nepal

The devastation that struck Haiti in January 2010 highlights the horrific consequences of a major earthquake on a developing nation, especially one with limited resources, inadequate planning, and dense population centers. Nepal lies in one of the most seismically active regions in the world. Approximately every 75 years, Kathmandu is impacted by an earthquake of magnitude 8.0. A strong scale earthquake is due to strike Nepal anytime.

The destruction witnessed in the densely populated Haiti's capital city of Port- au- Prince is likely to occur in Kathmandu. The areas of infrastructure (building, bridges, roads, water supply, etc.), transportation systems, telecommunication networks, medical and other essential services could be quickly overwhelmed. Kathmandu, therefore, requires unprecedented preparedness to endure the burden of widespread structural destruction and mass casualties resulting from an earthquake. Being a land locked country with a single and small-sized international airport, Nepal will likely suffer greater human casualties than Haiti. Geohazards International, a nonprofit organization that assess earthquake hazards, currently ranks Kathmandu at the highest risk for fatalities than any other city in the world.

An in-depth review and analysis of various relief efforts undertaken in response to past earthquake disasters worldwide can provide valuable lessons in identifying areas of strength as well as areas for further improvement in Nepal's disaster preparations. The Nepali diaspora, having broad expertise and a sincere concern for Nepal, is in a position to provide expert advice and relevant resources to aid Nepal in disaster preparedness. By collaborating with concerned authorities in Nepal on targeted preparation efforts, the Nepali diaspora can have a meaningful impact in saving lives and properties in such disasters.

This initiative, jointly led by the America Nepal Medical Foundation (ANMF), the American Society of Nepalese Engineers (ASNEng), and the Computer Association of Nepal-USA (CAN-USA), will serve as a basis for a general strategy to investigate areas needing improvement in Nepal's earthquake preparedness and to identify interested and willing local partners to assist in implementing targeted solutions. The document will encompass following broad and critical principal areas:

- I. Various infrastructure systems safety and resilience (Engineering, analysis, design, construction, and maintenance)
- II. Telecommunication robustness including disaster telecommunication networks
- III. Medical preparedness
- IV. Short and long term relief operations

To achieve the above goals, a committee will be formed with membership from the lead organizations (ASNEng, CAN-USA, and ANMF), supporting organizations listed below and others joining in the future including concerned institutions/organizations in Nepal such as government and non-governmental agencies, professional engineering, medical and scientific organizations; academic institutions and private industry. The committee will also examine past and present efforts and propose specific mechanisms by which the broader Nepali diaspora may efficiently respond in the event of an earthquake disaster in Nepal, including but not limited to the following specific areas:

- Pre- and post- event establishing relationships with key rescue and relief organizations
- Pre- and post- event establishing information sharing networks amongst diaspora
- Optimal routing to Nepal of critical individuals, information, and resources

- Pre-and post- identifying organizations having emergency funds targeting Nepal
- Pre- and post- event identifying means for reliably sending donations
- Media relations and public safety awareness program

The committee is expected to present a preliminary report by July 2010. It shall then continue on its broader mission of preparing a comprehensive “position paper” in the subject area of earthquake disaster relief and preparedness in Nepal with target date of task completion within 2 years. It is envisioned that this joint initiative will support and enhance any other past or present efforts in this topic and contribute to pave way for new incentives in this area in the future.

Lead Organizations:

The following are signatories representing the lead organizations to launch this joint endeavor:

Sunil Sharma, M.D.
 President, America-Nepal
 Medical Foundation
 (ANMF)

Ramesh B. Malla, Ph.D.
 President, American Society
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Supporting Organizations:

The supporting organizations of the initiative include the following:

Simon Dhungana
 President, Association of Nepalis in Americas
 (ANA)

Suman Timsina
 President, NRN National Coordination Council
 of USA (NRN-NCC of USA),

(More to be added as they become available)