The Asia Foundation

Independent Impacts and Recovery Monitoring (IRM) Project Nepal

About IRM

The Independent Impacts and Recovery Monitoring (IRM) project, led by The Asia Foundation and funded by the UK Department for International Development and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, was implemented almost immediately after a devastating earthquake hit Nepal on 25 April 2015, followed by another major quake on 12 May 2015. IRM is a longitudinal mixed-methods study developed to systematically monitor social impacts of the disaster and the response over the longer-term, collecting evidence that goes beyond one-off damage and needs assessments. By monitoring patterns of recovery and evolving needs, IRM contributes to making the disaster response more effective and accountable.

The first round of research took place less than two months after the earthquake hit, with subsequent rounds conducted at roughly six-month intervals leading up to the disaster's five-year anniversary in 2020. The specific IRM research rounds are as follows:

- Round 1 (June 2015)
- Round 2 (February-March 2016)
- Round 3 (September 2016)
- Round 4 (April 2017)
- Round 5 (September-October 2019)

The study findings will present a clearer picture of who is recovering, who is not – and the reasons behind these trends, which can both guide the ongoing recovery effort as well as inform future disaster preparedness and emergency responses.

Focus areas

The IRM approach focuses on five areas: (1) *aid effectiveness*—how much and what types of aid people are getting, needs, and shortfalls; (2) *economy and livelihoods*—how socioeconomic conditions are evolving at the local level; (3) *social relations and violence*—the capacity existing for collective action and whether and where violence is emerging; (4) *protection and vulnerability*—what abuses are occurring and security concerns; and (5) *politics and leadership*—how the disaster and aid effort are impacting leadership and institutions.

Study objectives

- Generate, at regular intervals, high quality, methodologically sound research that provides an accurate and useful picture of evolving conditions in earthquake-affected areas;
- Research feeds into policies and programs of the government, donors, and aid agencies—allowing them to better address emerging needs in affected areas;
- Implementation of appropriate responses based on timely identification of emerging issues, including barriers to recovery and groups who are being left out; and
- Aid responses are more conflict-sensitive and less likely to 'do harm.'

Methodology

IRM's monitoring system has four distinct components and utilizes mixed methods, as described below.

- Component 1: Longitudinal Field Monitoring
  Through fieldwork conducted in a sample of locations affected to varying degrees by the earthquake, this component collects standardized, in-depth information (including video interview footage) on the five focus areas at regular intervals. Locations are selected to ensure variation, but due to the small sample size, is not formally representative of the situation across all disaster-affected areas of Nepal.

- Component 2: Representative Surveys
  Conducted in parallel with the first component, this component covers a wider population, capturing less in-depth, but broader representative quantitative information on evolving conditions, needs, and perceptions.

- Component 3: Thematic Studies
  This component is comprised of in-depth studies of thematic issues emerging from earthquake-affected zones from the first two components. While the thematic studies utilize data from components 1 and 2, they collect new, additional primary and secondary information.

- Component 4: Synthesis and Analysis
  This component synthesizes findings from the field monitoring and survey work for each phase of the IRM study —alongside other activities aimed at disseminating the research and encouraging policy uptake.