

National Reconstruction Authority
Communication and Outreach Strategy (2017-2020)



Government of Nepal

**National Reconstruction
Authority**

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1. Introduction

On April 25 and May 12, 2015 Nepal faced two massive earthquakes that resulted in loss of 8,790 lives and completely damaged more than 750,000 houses predominantly in rural areas but with large pockets of damage in urban areas. The earthquakes prompted a massive humanitarian intervention by the Government of Nepal (GoN), development partners, partner organizations, community based organizations and even individuals.

The NRA was established on 25th December 2015 with a mandate to plan and coordinate implementation of the GoN reconstruction and rehabilitation program. The vision for reconstruction of the NRA is the ‘establishment of well-planned, resilient settlements and a prosperous society.’ The objectives of the NRA are as follows:

- To reconstruct, retrofit and restore partially- and completely-damaged residential, community and government buildings and heritage sites, to make them disaster-resistant using local technologies as needed.
- To reconstruct (restore) damaged cities and ancient villages to their original form, while improving the resilience of the structures;
- To build resilience among people and communities at risk in the earthquake-affected districts;
- To develop new opportunities by revitalizing the productive sector for economic opportunities and livelihoods;
- To study and research the science of earthquakes, their impact including damages and effects, and post-earthquake recovery, including reconstruction, resettlement, rehabilitation and disaster risk reduction; and
- To resettle the affected communities by identifying appropriate sites.

To achieve above objectives, the NRA sees appropriate, timely and effective communication interventions as a key component of the entire reconstruction phase. For this purpose, NRA has developed a Communication Strategy. Communication strategy is the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission. It is the higher-level concerns behind communicative efforts by organizations to advance organizational goals.

A Reconstruction Communication Working Group was formed in light of communication needs. The group included government agencies, as well as development partners and implementing partners. A Communication Strategy Sub-group, made up of reconstruction as well as communication experts, was formed to develop the Communication Strategy directly corresponding to the vision and objectives of the NRA and the 'Build Back Better/Safer spirit as stipulated in Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA). This Communication Strategy seeks to support the attainment of the vision of the NRA that is articulated in the Reconstruction Policy.

2. Communication Strategy

2.1 Vision

“Establishment of well-planned, resilient settlements and a prosperous society” by supporting its activities for attaining its purpose and goals through effective communication.

2.2 Goals and Objectives

This document sets the strategic direction for the National Reconstruction Authority’s internal and external communications in order to accurately reflect the main priorities of NRA work and support NRA’s key function as a reliable and timely information provider. It also guides the NRA’s collaborative partners’ communication planning process.

The main purpose of this Communication Strategy is to be a foundational building block that provides a necessary and organized framework to guide and inform the development of a more detailed communication plan.

I. Strategic Goals

- Inform earthquake-affected communities with appropriate, timely, relevant information about the reconstruction process and how households and their communities can gain access to government/development partners.
- Households have appropriate, timely, and relevant information to make decisions about rebuilding approaches.
- Households and their communities receive appropriate, timely and relevant information to rebuild better/safer.
- Intra-government communications on reconstruction run smoothly between agencies, and from central to district to Gaunpalikas/Municipality level and vice versa.
- Ensure NRA maintains solid public relations and positive networks in media and among other public stakeholders throughout the reconstruction process.

II. Objectives

The Communication Strategy is grounded in a set of core goals that stand as the initial metrics for the desired outcomes of the communications program. The objectives of the Strategy have been identified to support the NRA’s overall objectives in the areas of reconstruction and recovery: Housing (Rural and Urban), Schools/Education Infrastructures, Medical Facilities, Cultural Heritage Sites, Infrastructure (roads, bridges, water supply and sanitation, common structures and government infrastructure), Livelihood, Mitigation/DRR etc.

While certain elements of the Communication Strategy might evolve over the course of the NRA’s five-year effort, the objectives remain consistent and are permanent and reliably instructive to the communications process as it develops. They are as follows:

1. Provide information so that affected households understand the financial process of reconstruction

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2. Provide information so that affected households understand the technical process of safer reconstruction
3. Create an understanding that reconstruction is a citizen and community driven process.
4. Develop resilient society and sustainable livelihood
5. Build trust in the National Reconstruction Authority.

2.3. Scope

This Communication Strategy links the following aspects of communication to support the national reconstruction process. The Strategy encompasses all aspects of communication in relation to four priority areas of communication as listed below:

- **External Communication:** Communication with affected populations, local governments concerned agencies and various stakeholders of the reconstruction process.
- **Internal Communication:** Internal communication, i.e. communication within the NRA and among various government agencies and line ministries related to the reconstruction process.
- **Outreach** – direct face-to face interactions with communities by those directly assisting communities, i.e. engineers, local officials etc.
- **Public Relations:** Communication with a wide network of media, opinion makers and information disseminators.

2.4 Core Principles

In developing a communications approach for the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), it is important to be guided by a series of outcome-based principles and values as outlined in the Post-Disaster Recovery Framework:

- **Build Trust** – The NRA communications strategy must look to build trust among the most affected, displaced and suffering communities and the government bodies supporting the reconstruction efforts. To do this the NRA will strive to ensure that information provided is trustworthy, and easy to understand for all. The NRA will provide reliable information with high level of integrity.
- **Encourage Participation** – For reconstruction to be a success, engagement and involvement of the affected households and their families and communities is necessary. The NRA will communicate in such a way that encourages national participation and public ownership in the reconstruction process. The NRA believes that effective communication requires teamwork and aspires to work together, inspire and help one another.
- **Create Credibility** – The NRA will take steps to garner the confidence of people toward the effective reconstruction and resilient recovery process led by NRA itself and its implementing agencies..
- **Be Transparent** – To build trust, to encourage participation and to create credibility, the NRA must be transparent in its all activities.

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- **Build Common Understanding** –As the NRA looks to take immediate steps to build trust, there is also a need to build common understanding among government agencies, different level of governments, private sector and the civil society around the proposed path forward.

2.5 Target Audiences

The target audience of the Communication Strategy reflects the objectives of the same and will vary on the basis of the objective being met and the specific communication activity or campaign in question. While all target audiences may be engaged to meet a particular objective or sub-objective, primary target audiences for each objective are outlined below:

Objective 1: Provide information so that affected households understand the financial process of reconstruction

- Homeowners, affected households and families
- Government agencies supporting/directly in charge of the recovery efforts
- Development partners, INGOs and donor community supporting recovery efforts
- Stakeholders including private sector, NGOs, *guthis* and local community groups

Objective 2: Provide information so that affected households understand the technical process of safer reconstruction

- Homeowners, affected households and families
- Masons and engineers
- Development partners, INGOs and donor community supporting recovery efforts
- Stakeholders including private sector, NGOs, *guthis* and local community groups

Objective 3 : Create an understanding that reconstruction is a citizen and community driven process.

- Homeowners, affected households and families
- NGOs, *guthis* and local community and youth groups
- Political Parties and locally elected representatives

Objective 4: Develop resilient society and sustainable livelihood

- Homeowners, affected households and families
- Domestic and International Media
- Development partners, INGOs and donor community and foreign governments
- Political parties and locally elected representatives
- NGOs and Community Organizations

Objective 5. Build trust in the National Reconstruction Authority

- All actors/stakeholder directly or indirectly involved in reconstruction and resilient recovery.

3. Message Development and Dissemination

3.1 One Door Policy

All messages which are communicated must be in line with NRA policies and procedures. The NRA will guide the development and dissemination of information. A process of vetting and approval will be implemented by the NRA for all communication materials.

For information dissemination regarding the reconstruction process, the NRA will serve as the authorized body to disseminate information related to post-earthquake reconstruction and recovery. For external information dissemination, the NRA will guide the process for development partners, partner organizations and affected communities, among other stakeholders.

3.2 Communication Channels

The use of communication channels will largely depend on the objective(s) being met, the target audience and scope of the activity in question. As such, below is a list of main channels which may be used, but which will vary in use according to the need of each objective and activity.

- Broadcast, electronic, and print media (earned and paid)
- Mobile, digital, and social media
- Direct, person-to-person
- Direct, community meetings and town halls
- Collateral (pamphlets and posters)
- Telephone information lines (live and automated)
- Third Party validators and communicators

4. Risks and Challenges

The following risk and challenges have been identified vis-à-vis the communication strategy:

S. No.	Type of risk and challenges	Mitigation Measures	Risk rating
1	Insufficient financial resources to support communication strategy and plans	The NRA develops a budget plan and makes available financial resources to support the communication strategy and plan.	
2	Insufficient human resource capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The NRA to deploy a full time Government personnel to lead on its communication strategy and plan ● A full time communication team is set up to support the NRA communication lead to deliver on the action plans ● Communication Team members have access to training opportunities to further develop communication skills and capacity 	
3	Insufficient political support for effective communication	The CEO and the Executive Committee continue to form a consensus on importance of communication and made it a	

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		key priority to lead on effective communication of reconstruction related messages	
4	Slow pace of reconstruction in a few sectors owing to untimely and ineffective communication to relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An action plan is developed bearing in mind current context and issues. • The action plan delivers in accordance with set timescales (e.g. timely communication dissemination that is vital pre-construction season) 	
5	Political uncertainty leads to change in leadership	The NRA to enhance internal communication capacity to absorb changes in leadership so there is minimum impact on the effective delivery of the action plan	
6	Incorrect/Misinformation lead to low/no/sub-standard construction of houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Reconstruction actors, governmental and non-governmental, disseminate information that is aligned to NRA, GON policy. • NRA to ensure/put in place robust mechanisms to ensure all its internal/intra-government employees and those deployed to the field understand and can communicate standard information on policies and procedures of the NRA, and are updated regularly on the relevant policies and procedures. • Partner Organisations (POs) field staff to work in collaboration with GoN field staff at household level to ensure common information shared. 	
7	Weak Coordination	The NRA and relevant stakeholders ensure robust coordination mechanisms are put in place to avoid duplication and continue to drive efficiency in use of channels of communication	

5. Monitoring, Evidence and Learning

The NRA communications unit will meet on regular basis for a multi-stakeholder discussion, including with government agencies and development partners, to assess the information needs of various audiences and the impact of the various communication activities. This information will be continuously fed into the communications action plan and into the NRA's Project Monitoring Information System (PMIS).

6. Communications Management

The Communication Team in the NRA will review issues that need immediate responses, consult, and be available for providing information and responding to queries. The main function of this structure would be to coordinate and guide the dissemination of the key messages developed and promoted by NRA, as well as the key information from all relevant policies and procedures. This structure is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this communication and outreach strategy, and the associated action plan. It will also serve as focal point for all communication related activities. The structure will be staffed by GoN employees and supported by external consultants and experts.

In order to ensure its effectiveness, an Information and Communication Section at the central level and information and communication desk at various offices of NRA has been established.

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The main function of this structure would be to disseminate the key messages developed and promoted by NRA. This structure is responsible for ensuring the implementation of communication and outreach strategy. It will also serve as focal point for all communication related activities.

The NRA will establish a professional communication operation. CEO will be the principal communicator. In staffing the communication office, the NRA should look for, at a minimum - a spokesperson (head of the press office), an Information Officer, a communication expert, and technical staff to handle digital data and field level communication. The communication office will be provided access to a content/ production team as necessary.

In addition to this, a Communication Sub Committee led by NRA's Executive Committee Member has been set up to guide the message development and dissemination process at the strategic level. This Committee meets as required. Similarly, a Communication Working Group led by the Spokesperson has been set up to conduct necessary vetting for relevant communication materials and to ensure intra-government communication on reconstruction progresses smoothly. Composition of Communication Sub-Committee and Communication Working Group will be as following:

I. Communication Sub-Committee

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Member, NRA Executive Committee | Chair |
| 2. Member, NRA Executive Committee | Member |
| 3. Secretary, NRA | Member-secretary |

II. Communication Working Group

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Spokesperson, NRA (Joint Secretary) | Chair |
| 2. Head of Policy, Monitoring, Coordination and Social Development Division | Member |
| 3. Experts (as required) appointed by NRA | Member |
| 4. Chief, Communication and Information Section | Member |
| 5. Deputy Spokesperson, NRA (Under Secretary | Member-secretary |
| 6. Media and Communication Team, NRA | Invitees |

7. Linkage with other divisions and functions of NRA

The Information Management Section will work in close coordination with other divisions. A mechanism will be designed in NRA to ensure that Budget and Development Cooperation Coordination Division work as close as possible with the Policy, Monitoring, Coordination and Social Development Division so that affected people are better informed and can easily access the services provided by NRA.