

Third Monthly Forum

EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS & TRACKING OF POST-EARTHQUAKE RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMMES

EVENT REPORT

Kathmandu, 16 August 2017: South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) organized a discussion titled '*Expenditure Analysis and Tracking of Post-Earthquake reconstruction programmes*'. This is the third forum under the project '*Initiating dialogue on Post Disaster Reconstruction Experience*' undertaken by SAWTEE with support from The Asia Foundation (TAF).

Making his presentation on the topic, Mr Kishor Maharjan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Management, Tribhuvan University pointed out that the government resource allocation for reconstruction has increased phenomenally in the past two years but the rate of expenditure is poor. Due to a lack of trained human resources and cumbersome procedures related to grant distribution, among other factors, there has been a low disbursement of housing grants. The beneficiaries would benefit from a waiver of the fee for initial design approval, which comes around Rs 30,000, and is difficult for many poor people to afford, he added.

Referring to the dismal rate of receipt of the second tranche of the housing reconstruction grant, Mr Murari Niraula, Member Secretary, Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Secretariat under Ministry of Finance, said it is necessary to find out whether the beneficiaries that have received the first tranche spent the money on consumption or on laying the foundations of their house.

"If we can track the bank accounts of the beneficiaries who have yet to start construction to see whether the money is still in the account, then we can infer that the procedures related to the fund allocation are indeed a problem," he added. Regarding delayed reconstruction of public buildings such as schools and health posts, he pointed out that many foreign donors did not deliver the pledged amount.

Another discussant of the programme, Ms Padmini Pradhananga, General Secretary at the Transparency International, said that very few houses have been reconstructed and there has been a shortage of labour and engineers to carry out the reconstruction work. She also pointed out the low disbursement of the second tranche of housing grants was only to be expected as there were many cases of fraudulent and duplicitous registration.

Making his closing remarks as the Chair of the programme, Mr Rajendra Prasad Nepal, Financial Comptroller General, Government of Nepal, said that the government is vigilantly tracking the distribution process and rectifying problems whenever necessary.

Some 30 participants from various organizations, including research institutions, experts, activists and development partners, participated in the event.