

## Non-Western Disaster Response during the April 25, 2015, Nepal Earthquake

On the day of the earthquake, I was in the middle of an early history workshop taking place in Patan. There were 35 of us on the first floor of an old building. When the earthquake struck, all of us were able to get out of the building relatively unscathed. Some of us had bruises, but we were lucky that the building had remained intact. I was surprised at how quickly we were able to get out of the building. We went to find an open space. Within the first ten minutes after the earthquake, I got a call from a friend in Delhi. I was surprised that the phones were working, as I had been trying to reach my parents but wasn't able to do so. (I was eventually able to reach my parents, and they were okay.) I received another call from the producer of a news channel whom I had met some time ago. He asked me if I could do a piece on the earthquake. I went live on their channel within the first 20 minutes after the earth had stopped shaking. At that time, the helicopters had already started to fly. While I was fielding phone calls and messages, some people from our group decided that they wanted to go and see if they could help anyone. We were just trying to make sure that everyone was okay. I received photos on Viber depicting the destruction that occurred across Nepal, and I became very upset. The photos of the damage also started to circulate on Facebook and Instagram. The information was spreading very quickly through both social media and visual communication.

The next day, some of my friends and my brother felt the urge to do something. They had just taken their first-aid training courses, and they felt that they could offer their skills and knowledge to help those in need. We made a post on Facebook announcing that our meeting would be at a given place and

that anyone who was interested could join us. In the following days, more and more people who shared our desire to help others joined our meetings, making our efforts a huge success. Hundreds of people started showing up on any given day. There was a massive crowd. So many people had joined our group that, for one day, we could not control the crowd anymore. We eventually had to wonder how we could manage and organize these crowds, but what was certain from the very first day that we assembled this group was that we wanted to create a space so that people who felt compelled to help could do so. We wanted to gather, make plans, and see what we could do to make everyone's recovery a little easier. We discussed the needs of the people and how we could address those needs. We also started to fundraise thanks to two of my friends. One friend was based in New York (USA), and the other friend was based in Belgium. Both of them set up a fundraising platform.

– Participant, Nepal

On April 25, 2015, Nepal experienced one of the biggest disasters in nearly a century. This disaster not only brought devastation to the nation, but also created a humanitarian crisis. Nepal is a small, landlocked country that is very prone to natural disasters. The nation had not experienced such a large earthquake since the 1920s. It was predicted that a big tremor would eventually strike Nepal, though no one knew when. The earthquake that struck in 2015 had a 7.5 magnitude, a convulsion that rattled 14 districts, including that of my hometown, Kathmandu. This disaster killed 8,856 people and injured 22,309. The earthquake created chaos by bringing life to a standstill and by generating a large humanitarian crisis. Many global actors, including various countries, organizations, communities, and individuals, turned their attention to this event. Nepal Flash Appeal for the response to the Nepal Earthquake released by the United Nations reported that 4.2 million people including 1.7 million children required health, water, sanitation, and hygiene related support. Fortunately, the earthquake happened at a time when Nepal was adapting to the current digital age. A section of educated, technology-savvy Nepali people in Nepal and beyond thus had an active presence on the social web. This resulted in a wider engagement with the global actors that were involved in disaster response efforts and in supporting the suffering Nepali communities.

Within three days of the earthquake, the United Nations (UN) sent out a flash appeal to raise 422 million US dollars to meet the needs of countless suffering Nepalis. Out of the total amount of money requested, 48 percent was requested specifically for health, hygiene, and food security (“Nepal Flash Appeal”). This request was publicized using social media channels, including the UN website. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, also set up a fundraiser to help people affected by the earthquake. One week after the earthquake, Zuckerberg, via his Facebook page, announced that “more than 750,000 people from around the world gave over \$15 million to the International Medical Corps relief efforts, and Facebook donated an additional \$2 million on top of that to local recovery efforts.” Jennifer Sano-Franchini argues that “Facebook took up this cause [earthquake], collecting more than \$15 million in donations and deploying its safety check feature to help indicate whom among Facebook users in Nepal were ‘safe’ in the midst of the national crisis” (395). With this generous support pouring in from all around the world, the UN reported that “103,686 injured people received treatment, including 2,088 who had undergone major surgeries, and 26,160 who had received psychosocial support in 14 districts” (“Nepal Flash Appeal”). However, as CNN reported, “[i]n the countryside, not too far from the quake’s epicenter, mountain villages are cut off from almost everything. Landslides block the roads and no significant aid is on the way” (“Nepal Earthquake: Mountain Villagers”). The most marginalized groups in Nepal suffered the most, as is the case everywhere.

I experienced the earthquake and witnessed the devastation that it brought firsthand. I also became a part of the disaster response effort in the capacity of a journalist, communications practitioner. During 2015, mobile and internet technologies were not new to the Nepali people. Many were familiar with assorted technologies, including various digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and blogging. Social media platforms became a space where global interactions could happen among the Nepalis and the international communities who wanted to help and support the Nepalis. Immediately following the earthquake, the Nepalis on Twitter mobilized themselves in responding to the disaster by serving their communities. I argue that this mobilization of local and transnational Nepali communities (who interacted, worked with non-Nepalis communities) is a powerful representation of what the non-Western disaster response looks like, a

response that differs from the very individualistic Western response and focuses on social justice. In effect, during the aftermath of the earthquake, Nepalis in Nepal, the Nepali diaspora, and international communities and organizations became interconnected through a complex transnational assemblage.

Such assemblages also demonstrated that responding to such a large-scale disaster requires multisectoral coalitional actions to address historic injustices. Karma Chávez suggests that the term *coalition* embodies multiple meanings based on various social and political contexts. In the case of disaster, such coalitions are formed spontaneously as the disaster demands urgency of response to save lives. Similarly, coalitions can also be spaces where multiple parties can engage, but often require constant work if that coalition were to endure (Chávez). As I described previously, these transnational assemblages are coalitional networks created among people across national boundaries and are formed by affective interactions mediated via digital media. Within these transnational assemblages, various actors circulate information, data, and knowledge across the border by mobilizing cross-cultural power, language, resources, and people (Hesford and Schell; Potts; Baniya and Potts; Baniya and Chen). As Rebecca Walton, Kristen Moore, and Natasha Jones posit, oppressions cannot be combated alone, which is why joining coalitions, building genuine allyships, and working toward a sustainable practice of activism are necessary and required specifically in the context of a large-scale disaster.

The power of such transnational assemblages to confront injustices was showcased during the Nepal earthquake via *swa-byabasthapan*. I argue that this concept in Nepal, loosely translated as “self-management,” was the non-Western way of building coalitions via transnational assemblages to challenge the traditional disaster response by making such response accessible to marginalized publics. Understanding the formation of transnational assemblages and the coalition building that occurs within those assemblages to resist catastrophic disasters will help in appreciating how people help themselves and their communities in times of chaos. To achieve this understanding, I find it necessary to highlight the ignored survival practices of marginalized communities who have navigated oppressive systems to restore peace and stability in their communities. Highlighting these survival practices that are both local and transnational will help in building/

strengthening community resilience and preparing for eventual future disasters with a grounding of social justice.

In the detailed case study which follows, I provide an overview of how Nepalis and global actors responded to this disaster within social media spaces and physical communities. The results I present are based on 14 interviews I conducted with the Nepalis and non-Nepalis who contributed to disaster relief efforts during the Nepal earthquake, and the social network analysis of the Twitter data collected from the first week after the earthquake. I specifically focus on articulating how the local actors collaborated, challenged, and resisted the official response with their own local, non-Western ways of knowledge-making during the disaster. I believe my findings will demonstrate that transnational assemblages conduct activism and engagement in disaster response that leads to the discovery and accentuation of social justice issues within marginalized spaces that may otherwise remain hidden. Such a revelation is largely made possible by using assorted internet-based technologies and social media platforms. As such, as I introduce the non-Western ways of disaster response grounded in *swa-byabasthapan*, I argue that, while larger formal global disaster response happens, various local contexts and knowledge gets ignored, resulting in the marginalization of vulnerable communities.

#### TRANSNATIONAL ASSEMBLAGES AS NON-WESTERN DISASTER RESPONSE STRATEGIES

In the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake, the activists representing global communities from transnational spaces responded to the calamity by going beyond the state-oriented or formal organizations' disaster response protocols that often left many communities ignored. In fact, the efforts of unofficial actors resulted in quick actions that arose from the establishment of coalitions via networked collaborations supported by digital platforms. These quick actions, in turn, served Nepali communities residing in remote areas who are marginalized and vulnerable due to their gender, caste, education, and geographical locations, and who would have otherwise been overlooked by the government or because events like landslides and road blockages hindered delivery of aid. The earthquake in Nepal came at a time when Nepal was already vulnerable due to its own concurrent issues of small-scale disasters, social discrimination, political turmoil, and geopolitics. For example, soon after the Nepal earthquake there was a border blockade

orchestrated by India which the Nepali prime minister at that time described as “more inhumane than war” (“Nepal Border Blockade”). However, India has vehemently denied orchestrating the standoff that created another level of crisis in Nepal (“Nepal Border Blockade”).

Even though Nepal has eradicated the caste system and has changed a lot of rules and regulations on gender, there are still people, particularly women, who are on the margins, specifically those who belong to Madhesi and Dalit communities. While in terms of representation there are women who fill leadership seats, they are still from privileged caste groups. Kalpana Jha argues that “women [in Nepal] with intersectional identities still have a minimal presence in all spheres of public and private institutions with Madhesi and Dalit women almost nonexistent in most leadership positions” (n.p.). And certain communities are always at a disadvantage because of race, caste, gender, and the geographical location where they reside. In the aftermath of the earthquake, those disadvantages were more apparent than ever. Nearly two months after the Nepal earthquake, Amnesty International’s Asia Pacific director said in a briefing that “survivors report that in some communities the aid effort has been politically manipulated. Those with muscle—political connections—end up claiming desperately needed supplies meant for everyone” (“Nepal: End”). Unfortunately, this was a very common practice post-Nepal earthquake which often the transnational assemblages criticized publicly as they acted to support the communities in need.

Furthermore, like other countries’ governments, there was no way the Nepali government was prepared for such a large-scale disaster. Nepal does have a lot of international support from the world’s humanitarian organizations, like the United Nations, the European Union, the Red Cross, and Care International, among others. These organizations are criticized time and again for lack of work; however, they are/were still better equipped to handle disasters. Unfortunately, due to bureaucracy and strict protocols, these organizations ended up not being able to handle the entirety of the Nepal community’s needs in the wake of the earthquake. That is because one organization or entity can never handle the aftereffects of such a catastrophic disaster, hence, the requirement of transnational assemblages. Most of the time, the Western disaster response comes in the form of large amounts of money or volunteers from all over the world. Often, disaster response leaders have little or no context of the

Nepal communities. Such disaster response is also launched by official organizations such as governments that have bureaucratic protocols to follow. In the case of Nepal, then, such a Western disaster response was available but was not fulfilling the needs of the entire community. The Western-centric organizational approach, challenged by language and cultural differences, hindered the disaster response process.

In the wake of the Nepal earthquake, then, many of the official transnational organizational networks that were designed to help in organizing larger-scale disaster response efforts were either influenced by Western disaster practices or, like the government, were too overwhelmed. The Nepali government organized a “donor conference,” where leaders from differing countries pledged monetary assistance to Nepal to respond to the earthquake. Similarly, networks of international nongovernmental/humanitarian organizations, like the United Nations, the European Union, and the Red Cross, also helped in the disaster response efforts. When I interviewed my research participants, nine of them noted that they had been a part of official networks that allowed them to become involved in disaster response. A participant who represents a network of international humanitarian organizations working in Nepal shared that, soon after the earthquake, there was an upsurge in international organizations who came to Nepal to support Nepali communities. She recounts the following:

I think it [disaster response] was from 36 countries altogether. There are a lot of members in our country too. Some are from America and other places. Everybody from all over the world has done at least something from their side. Everybody helped and we also collected some amount of money from members. (Participant from Nepal)

As the participant noted, many organizations from around the world came to Nepal to provide support. During the earthquake, the Nepal government eased governmental policies and welcomed both smaller and larger organizations that offered aid and support to Nepalis. Sadly, however, the support coming from these organizations was often very haphazard and not well maintained. Other issues that these organizations encountered involved cultural, language, and contextual differences. Thus, even though a lot of organizations

came together to “support” the suffering Nepali communities, they presented their resources without having community knowledge, which turned out to be a major issue. A lack of community knowledge combined with the government’s relief mismanagement would have resulted in many communities never receiving the aid they desperately needed. However, they had an alternative: the transnational assemblages.

The alternative, grassroots-level disaster response performed by individuals within transnational assemblages who did not wait for the government or any official organizations for help in the context of the Nepal earthquake could be considered the “non-Western” response. The non-Western disaster response is grounded in *swa-byabasthapan*, which allows the disaster responders—whose actions are gauged by the sense of collaborative actions necessary to address the injustices these individual communities must face—to understand the community and its needs. This effort is typically localized and acts as an alternative way of responding to a disaster. The non-Western disaster response praxis allows for immediate actions that are not restricted by formal protocols. It allows individual actors to support each other throughout the disaster, network across the diasporic communities, and decentralize aid. With the emergence of transnational assemblages within local areas, online spaces, and beyond where people meet in alternative spaces to discuss disaster response efforts, this way of disaster response provides immediate relief to the communities that the government and other organizations did not reach. This response is not influenced by the official organizations’ protocols, however; it is self-managed. The non-Western ways of disaster response are instead localized in the community while their networks are established within transnational communities composed of people who might be affected by the disaster, might be less affected by the immediate consequences of the disaster, or might not be affected at all (e.g., residing in other countries).

Aside from providing aid to marginalized communities, the Nepalis’ transnational assemblages also worked toward revealing the unethical practices of the government, media, and the larger humanitarian organizations by bringing to light the irregularities and misconduct these entities took part in when they should have been responding to the disaster. One of the major issues identified by Nepali participants was that the government and humanitarian



organizations were too focused on their official protocols and not on the lives of people. They were seen by my participants as more invested in writing reports than organizing relief. Even the discourses related to the disaster were exposed for their unjust representation by highlighting the difference between what was said and what was happening. For instance, Nepali activists on Twitter revealed that the United Nations World Food Program distributed rotten food to marginalized communities (“WFP to Destroy”). This issue was denied by the WFP; however, there was photographic evidence that was made public on Twitter which told otherwise. While disaster response might have been done in good faith, such negligence and distribution of the rotten food was unacceptable.

Similarly, activists launched a hashtag trend against the Indian media, which was making inadequate and inaccurate reports regarding the Nepal earthquake. As reported by BBC News, “A reporter seized a wounded survivor and paraded her in front of the cameras rather than putting some cloth to stop the bleeding . . . Yet another kept asking rescue workers what technology they were using at work. In a quake-hit village, a reporter worked up a veritable hysteria, asking affected villagers what their government was actually doing for them” (“Why is Indian Media”). In response to such inhumane behavior showcased by the Indian media outlets, these transnational assemblage members called out Indian media. Hence, the Nepali community went against these practices with the hashtag #GoHomeIndianMedia (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). This hashtag was supported by several communities, such as those in Nepal, India, and Pakistan (“Why is Indian Media”). Non-Western disaster response in the context of Nepal saw the public acting against the traditional norms and holding organizations accountable for what they were communicating and what they were doing in the community. The work of transnational assemblages was important because it highlighted the injustices that were brought about by a lack of proper disaster response or inhumane reporting. By tackling such injustices, the disaster responders and activists within their own spaces, localities, and beyond created transnational coalitional networks or assemblages. These networked actions became a communal force that did not wait for formal mechanisms to respond to the disaster but instead spontaneously fundraised, gathered resources, and formulated disaster management plans and conducted aid-delivery.



Figure 2.1. A tweet by Suchana, which started the conversation on #GoHomeIndianMedia.



Figure 2.2. Another tweet by Prasanna KC adding to the conversation with more retweets and likes.

The individuals in transnational assemblages who were disaster responders and activists helped tremendously in responding to the earthquake by also launching various small-scale efforts. This work was carried out on assorted internet-based platforms such as Google Docs, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger. These transnational assemblages had local networks and connections, and were composed of individuals who were sharing information, news, and requests for resources. Eileen Schell believes that global communities form informal networks of activists across borders to act and respond to specific social, economic, and political issues such as “environment, labor, human rights, human

trafficking, and global trade policies” (589). In collaborating and participating, the activists’ network becomes stronger and stabilizes as the actors contribute their content, curate information, and mobilize others in their network to disseminate knowledge effectively and efficiently (Dadas; Potts). One participant, for example, mentioned that their friends at home and abroad sent them relief materials such as tarpaulins, food, and water supplies. Once the participant received these supplies, they and their network delivered the goods by motorbike to rural places that the government and other international organizations had not reached as aid-delivery trucks or vans couldn’t go due to road conditions. The activists’ spontaneous actions are powered by the speed of the internet in circulating content, information, issue, and affect (Appadurai). In my participant’s case, their network of friends who sent relief materials became aware of the earthquake’s devastation thanks to the information posted on the social media platforms they used. Their friends acted because of their emotional and affective reactions to the information shared and posted online. The affective attunement enabled through digital media presents a way for diverse publics to be part of and emotionally align with the movement and happening (Papacharissi; Yam).

Disaster responders of the Nepal earthquake did not only use digital platforms to communicate, but they also created innovative technologies to gather disaster response data and coordinate relief efforts. One participant shared that they engaged in curating a web-based information platform for the government which later became the national disaster-based information website for Nepal. The government website was launched within a couple of days of the earthquake. Another participant shared that, due to the volume of volunteers and the need for disaster relief, they created their own web-based platform to match volunteers with the communities in need. They felt the need to do this because the official government website could not handle the sheer volume of traffic on its own and the government was overwhelmed. There were also tech-savvy activists in Nepal with organizations like Kathmandu Living Labs or Code for Nepal who created interactive maps by gathering data and information from the communities on the ground, an effort that helped hundreds of volunteers organize disaster response and which the government was unable to achieve as efficiently. Disaster responders and activists thus found new and innovative technological solutions to manage disaster response via proper data collection and management (Potts). These digital tools were created because other tools were not functioning

to meet the requirements of the context, time, and community needs. The notion of not relying on traditional, official platforms to get the job done in times of a disaster is therefore one aspect of the non-Western disaster response where a lot of participants performed *swa-byabasthapan* to address the current needs of the community.

The Nepali diaspora along with the global community also played a significant role in conducting transnational disaster response by connecting to the local communities and engaging their communities abroad. Participants from the Nepali diaspora recounted that social media provided them with an easier means to connect to their communities back home, which in turn allowed them to organize their activism. The diasporic communities were not only connecting to their loved ones, they were also connecting to various other transcultural communities in need by establishing partnerships with local disaster responders. The Nepali communities around the globe organized their counter-public enclaves by sharing diverse embodiments such as oratorical, material, visual, or performative ones, which Chávez recognizes as the center of a social movement and, in this case, transnational activism. The sharing of data, information, and pictures on social media challenged traditional communication systems and created transnational assemblages where people from transnational communities could come together to respond to a disaster. These coalitional networks existed in contrast to the formal entities, like the government or national and international humanitarian organizations. They reached the communities that were ignored by the formal disaster responders. This form of disaster response showcases the diasporic communities' rhetorical practices of creating, curating, and circulating materials and discourses online as well as assembling disaster responders on the ground (Z. Wang).

As discussed earlier, disaster creates feelings of urgency and immediacy, leading to affective interactions among the people who are suffering and the people who are observing that suffering online. Humans use their senses, feelings, and emotions to react to worldwide calamities through non-human objects such as phones, computers, and buildings because they all coexist and are networked within the assemblage itself. The affective reactions, the sense of community in the people experiencing a crisis, whether physically or emotionally, motivate them to connect to others via assorted digital means, further helping to create transnational assemblages via coalitional actions and spontaneous reactions (Papacharissi; Yam). My participants stated that

after the disaster, they were motivated to perform spontaneous actions to save lives, serve communities in need, and reach out to ask for help, creating their own transnational assemblages. The affective response in a disaster is spontaneous, as participants have noted in their narratives, because a post-crisis situation is a perfect time to act and help the community that needs instant support. Participants believed that their actions were oriented toward immediate relief and rescue to help in saving the lives of the people who were suffering.

For a non-Western community, this sense of supporting your neighbor or community is not new. These sentiments are grounded in the daily life praxis that is filled with various rituals and festivals that require the community to be together to celebrate, perform, and support each other. Such rituals allow people to be a part of the community and maintain their relationships, ties, and networks. Because of this deeply rooted sense of community, when the Nepal earthquake happened, there was this reliance on local efforts as opposed to the efforts of official organizations. (Here it is important to also note that many Nepalis do not live in Nepal as there is a lot of migration to the Gulf countries and to the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, among others.) The transnational assemblages that spontaneously emerged in response to the earthquake upheld the non-Western sentiment of community which is part of the Nepali identity despite actors being far from home or the love and dedication to Nepal, a sentiment that my participants all seemed to share. This identity created an opportunity for people affected by the catastrophe to depend on the transnational assemblages that prioritized their needs. My participants confirmed that they would rather depend on their networks of friends, family members, or even strangers whom they met online to conduct disaster response as opposed to entrusting official entities with that task. The activists and disaster responders on the ground, therefore, depended on the transnational assemblages formed via diasporic networks involving people from multiple countries, nationalities, communities, and transcultural contexts. These transnational activists are affectively connected with less emphasis on personal differences and an increase in conformity in belief that they are working for the community (Delanda). This change in priorities leads toward collaboration as everyone in the assembly has a shared mission of supporting communities in need. Community gathering and supporting each other are therefore embedded in the non-Western culture.

Transnational assemblages were formed via networked connections and communications in the aftermath of the earthquake. The social web helped actors create, enhance, and maintain those connections. All 14 participants revealed their dependencies on interpersonal networks, professional networks, and networks created via the social web. Collectively, the participants stated that they a) reached out to their family, friends, and friends of friends; b) instituted professional networked participation through the organizations that they were a part of; c) established stronger networks through the use of social media; d) reached out to their respective diaspora network; and e) expanded networks by joining or leaving the various disaster relief groups. The formation of the diverse kinds of networks helped Nepal respond to the calamity in a quicker and more efficient manner.

Many of the networks that formed on social media platforms in the wake of the Nepal earthquake were motivated by the Nepali people's sense of community, as discussed above, particularly their affective response toward the situation of disaster. From what I could gather, my participants described similar experiences as they confronted the calamity. Some of them, for example, were physically present in Nepal when the earthquake struck; others, on the other hand, were far away from their home country. What united the two was the way they experienced the disaster on the social web and their willingness to join a community that worked to support their home country or their local town. Actors, therefore, experienced a common sentiment of fear, which evolved into a desire and a drive to be involved in spontaneous actions. By allowing actors to spontaneously respond to a disaster, the social web provides a platform for people to quickly organize their efforts. A participant shared the following:

It was because that [disaster response] was very immediate at that time. Like, you would post one thing on the internet, on Facebook, and they [friends] would reach out to me. And then we would carry it [disaster response] from there. So, that was very instant. If you had a tarp at home, you would go, just . . . bring it [to someone who needed it]. (Participant from Nepal)

Similarly, another participant noted:

For example, if a man is trapped . . . nearby, people did not wait for the government, they immediately went there and pulled

him out to save his life whether they were experts or not. (Participant from Nepal)

In these narratives, we see three common themes: urgency, using available means of communication, and acting immediately without waiting for the government. Participants used their Facebook accounts to bring attention to the dire situation, to request help, and to act instantly, thus motivating others who read the distraught status to become involved. The spontaneous actions that led to the affective response were mediated via social media platforms, which resulted in a networked and collective response. The desire to act immediately further helped in the formation of smaller assemblages that responded to the disaster. Transnational assemblages created via social media allowed the affective reactions to develop into a very substantive disaster response effort. These affective reactions are based on the sentiment of being Nepali or part of the Nepali community, which is deeply rooted within non-Western values of care and community support. These feelings and emotions are magnified during a time of disaster thanks to social media, where such feelings of care, community need, and motivations are shared and amplified. These values are non-Western with a sense of grounding within Nepali culture, traditional values, and/or caring for the Nepali community.

All the participants also demonstrated a sense of commitment toward their community that led them to create, be part of, or even leave, transnational assemblages. This joining or forming of informal networks during the disaster was supported by technology. Participants suggested that the reason why they would leave an assemblage was because they kept a focus on specific communities and its needs. If the assemblage got too big, they worried that the community's needs would not be satisfied, thus they would split off into smaller assemblages so that they could divide the work and so that they could support more communities. A prime example of this phenomenon can be found in one of my participant's experiences:

Then we decided we were just an emergency responder, so we were not going to do long-term recruiting, we were only doing it in terms of immediate relief and emergency relief. The tarps were only temporary relief. It lasted a month, I guess. Before the second earthquake came, we were going to wrap up all these. But then we continued it for another two weeks. (Participant from Nepal)

In this narrative, we can see how the participant shared how they had been emergency responders but now their self-organizing efforts needed to come to an end. They had created communities that worked within their transnational assemblages. And, as the participant shares, there was a moment when they had to pause as they were only meant to do emergency response. While this assemblage came into existence and kept on growing, as the participants shared, there were some who would later decide to leave the network, or in this case, the network ceased to exist, while participants moved to other roles. Sometimes, the people who left the network would form their own separate disaster relief groups, their own smaller assemblages. For instance, another participant recounted that they first went to the Yellow House, a gathering space, as a volunteer to offer their support, but since there was a massive turnout and a lot of people were already involved, they decided to create their own relief group that focused specifically on helping the communities in Rasuwa, one of the worst-hit districts. This demonstrates how the informal transnational assemblages started to grow laterally and organically. What's more, these assemblages also started to reach beyond Nepal's borders and beyond the Nepali diaspora. A participant shared:

We realized in less than one day that the issue was not money at that time because the Nepali people from abroad, and . . . foreigners who loved Nepal, were raising funds within two or three days. (Participant from Nepal)

This narrative suggests that people in Nepal were not networking exclusively among each other within the vicinity of their own country or region, but they were creating connections beyond their country's borders. Such a realization comforted many Nepalis who realized that the government would not come to their aid. Thus, the sense of commitment toward the community helped the participants and other Nepali people connect with those who felt similarly, working together to respond to the crisis without waiting for government aid that would never come. The Nepali people's resolve to serve and help themselves led to holding space in which new "articulations were being forged[, thus] constituting a new assemblage or territory" (Slack and Wise 158). This communal reliance is yet another component of the non-Western praxis.

As we can see, there is a lot of *swa-byabasthapan*, which I argue is a survival praxis of the non-Western communities as they need to self-organize and manage to get out of the situation of disaster. We saw



this in examples among the Nepalis within Nepal and abroad. Like a lot of participants mentioned, money wasn't a problem—it was coming from all over the world—and human resources weren't a problem, as the transnational assemblages were already in action. The narratives also share a communal practice and a sense that I am alive, or I am a Nepali, and I need to support my community when they are in need. Moreover, this disaster response also acts as a resistance against the governmental practice as well as the Western practice.

#### VISUALIZATION OF TRANSNATIONAL ASSEMBLAGES DURING THE NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

While the interviews provided in-depth stories of people who were actively working during the disaster, a social network analysis (SNA) of the Twitter data set allowed me to track networks across the world. This large quantitative data set supported the stories and amplified actors' experiences, visually portraying how people like my participants were engaged in disaster response efforts for Nepal across the world. Such actions were mobilized when larger transnational networks, which had their own affordances, formed. The participants in my study regularly stated that responding to the Nepal earthquake challenged them to communicate beyond language and cultural barriers. In going beyond those barriers, the participants' flexibility, and social media, made communications easier and more accessible, especially since most of them used the English language. Because the transnational assemblages were comprised of people in different locations and time zones, the work distribution was adjusted according to those diverse conditions. The SNA can portray such interactions, showcasing how these networks were formed and tracking the networks as they evolved over time. It is then possible to analyze these networks and their strength in organizing disaster relief efforts. Jordan Frith argues that "by drawing from SNA to map and conceptualize the social networks in which technical communicators operate, researchers will be able to understand the roles technical communicators play in organizations, the multiple audiences as they connect" (289). SNA helped in contextualizing the networks that transnational assemblages were part of as they connect to multiple audiences, organizations by performing communication-related tasks such as sharing information during the earthquake.

SNA in the study of technical and professional communication (TPC) can help in theorizing how information flows within a network,

recognizing the principal actors in the network, and tracking how the network is mobilized when disseminating information. These relationships are based on individual relationships, organizational relationships, formal and information relationships, and ad hoc relationships. Such relationships are developed via shared interests or affective ties, which are based on network members' feelings toward one another or cognitive awareness (Borgatti; Papacharissi; Scott and Carrington). As such, SNA helps us conceptualize how transnational networks are formed, how people communicate across physical borders, and what roles users, organizations, and governments play in curating information online during a disaster event. SNA visually represents the relationships between points, or nodes, in a network. In the case of a disaster, the nodes in SNA represent actors, while the lines that connect the nodes represent the actors' interactions with each other. The SNA of the Nepal earthquake in Figure 2.3 represents the network formation on Twitter among the users from various countries and continents.

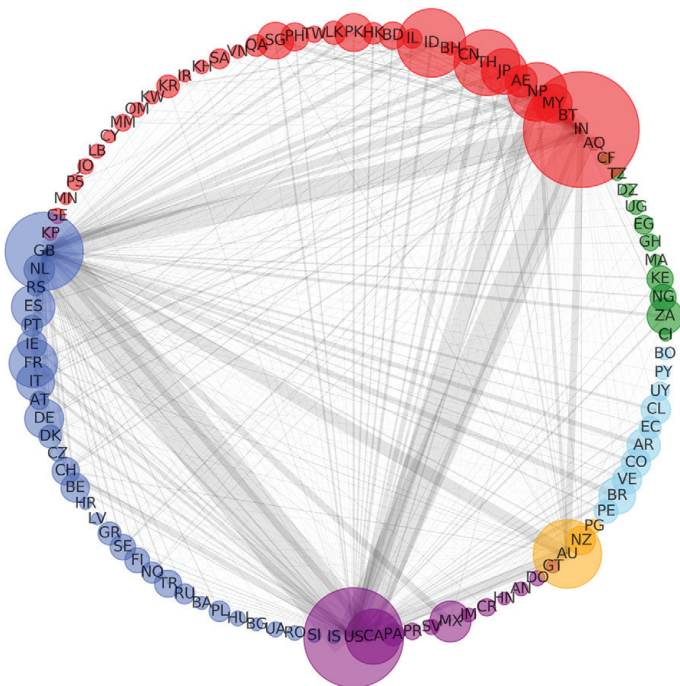


Figure 2.3. SNA among the users residing in various countries in the world during the Nepal earthquake.

In Figure 2.3, the larger nodes represent Asia (red), Africa (green), South America (light blue), Oceania (yellow), North America (purple), and Europe (dark blue). The smaller nodes represent the countries within these continents. The thickness of the lines connecting the nodes represents the strength of the relationships among the nodes. The thicker the lines, the stronger the ties and relationships among users residing in these countries.

As Figure 2.3 demonstrates, there were three prominent network clusters during the Nepal earthquake: Europe-Asia-North America, North America-Asia-Oceania, and Oceania-Europe-Asia. As shown in the figure, the strongest of these three networks was the Europe-Asia-North America network. This means that there was a higher frequency of replies and retweets among actors in this network. The other two major networks (North America-Asia-Oceania and Oceania-Europe-Asia) also revealed stronger relationships based on reply and retweet frequency. Ties among African and Latin American countries were weaker. One reason for such a weak relationship is due to less of a Nepali presence and weaker diplomatic partnerships in African and Latin American countries. Regardless, we can still notice that people tweeted, retweeted, or replied to posts involving the Nepal earthquake from all around the world.

The formation of strong networks was likely the result of three main factors: a) the European, Australian, and US governments and NGOs' investment in Nepal; b) the presence of Nepali populations in these continents; and c) various trade and economic relationships within the countries. All these countries, mainly the UK, US, and Australia, have a stronger connection to Nepal in terms of diplomacy, migration networks, and investment in developmental work in Nepal. However, on a more granular level, these stronger connections are made by the people from the transcultural communities (both Nepalis and non-Nepalis within Nepal and abroad). The visual representation of the relationships Nepal had with actors from other countries further confirms that transnational assemblages during a disaster operate across time zones, locations, and nationalities by creating their own smaller workspaces and territories, and this goes beyond the geopolitics.

An example of such a transnational assemblage is that of The Himalayan Disaster Relief Volunteer Group, which one of my participants founded. The Himalayan Disaster Relief Volunteer Group was formed right after the Nepal earthquake, and it was composed

of numerous Nepalis and nationals from other countries. This comes-as-you-like group would gather, share information, and do whatever the community needed them to do. While some of the members were fundraising and creating connections outside of Nepal, there were volunteers on the ground distributing relief materials to the people affected by the crisis. The Himalayan Disaster Relief Volunteer Group's report, shared openly (see Figure 2.4), depicts the places and communities that they were able to serve during the calamity. This visual showcases how disaster response was happening. While the visualization of SNA showcases how larger networks were formed, this visual shows ground work and action that was happening while funds were raised outside Nepal and were sent for disaster response mobilizations.

The reach represented by Figure 2.4 would not have been possible had the Nepali community on the ground not formed its relations outside of Nepal. As many participants mentioned, and the Himalayan Disaster Relief Volunteer Group leader expressly shared, there were two countries where fundraising was being organized simultaneously: the USA (North America) and Belgium (Europe).

### Himalayan Disaster Relief Volunteer Group - Operations Report

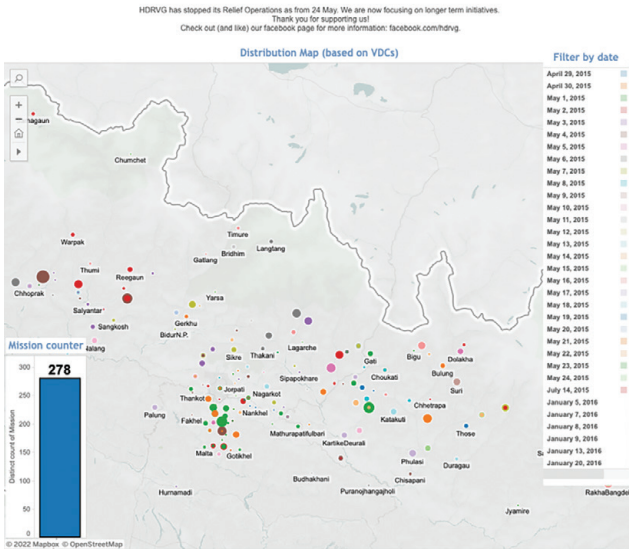


Figure 2.4. Map of relief distribution completed by The Himalayan Disaster Relief Volunteer Group.

We can see that those connections might be very macro level, but the larger networks of connections made sure that disaster response was happening on the ground, and Figure 2.4 showcases such possibilities of the work of transnational assemblages.

**AGAINST THE DOMINANT NARRATIVES:  
TRANSNATIONAL ASSEMBLAGES IN ACTION**

The previous visualization of transnational assemblage networks showcases the connections that were created on social media during the Nepal earthquake. One can see how there are stronger relationships among actual people who reside in these various countries. With this visualization of the larger data and very granular stories of *swa-byabasthapan*, we can argue that social media during the Nepal earthquake became a multifaceted platform for digital activism. Activists used these platforms against the dominant narratives that have worked to suppress minority voices and create their own space for discussing and challenging injustices. This kind of activism was not only limited to the use of social media, but it also involved technological innovations such as web-based and phone-based applications, geographic information system (GIS) maps, and a supply chain management apparatus for volunteers and relief supplies. Activists during and after the disaster emerged as a rhizome, or a source (Deleuze and Guattari), that connected with other activists who were part of an existing assemblage or who came together to create new assemblages. While creating or joining these assemblages on Twitter, actors employed several processes such as a) retweeting or replying; b) creating hashtags and using them to express stories, opinions, data, and solidarity; and c) creating direct message chat groups. Similarly, on Facebook, actors a) liked, commented, or shared posts; b) created groups or pages that people could join or like; and c) created message groups. These groups helped in forming coalitions via transnational assemblage by bringing people from different countries, time zones, and disciplines together to respond to the earthquake's damage by going against the dominant narratives and practices of disaster response. These practices were mostly led by the volunteers who launched their disaster response efforts by mainly using social media and by forming coalitions. For example, a conversation on Twitter calls out the World Food Programme for distributing rotten rice (see Figure 2.5).

The actor in this case noticed a problem, recorded it, and chose to post it on Twitter in the hopes of bringing widespread attention to the issue so that it could be quickly and appropriately addressed as people's lives depended on it. Had this actor not had access to Twitter as a tool to conduct his activism, the rotten rice problem would have most likely remained a local issue that the organization would have worked to suppress because it made them look bad. Because the actor had access to Twitter, however, the issue gained widespread attention thanks to others replying to and retweeting his post until it went viral. The World Food Programme was then forced to be held accountable for its actions, resulting in the organization working to mend their mistake.



Figure 2.5. Conversation with photographic evidence of how rotten rice was being distributed in Nepali rural communities.

## Non-Western Disaster Response / 69

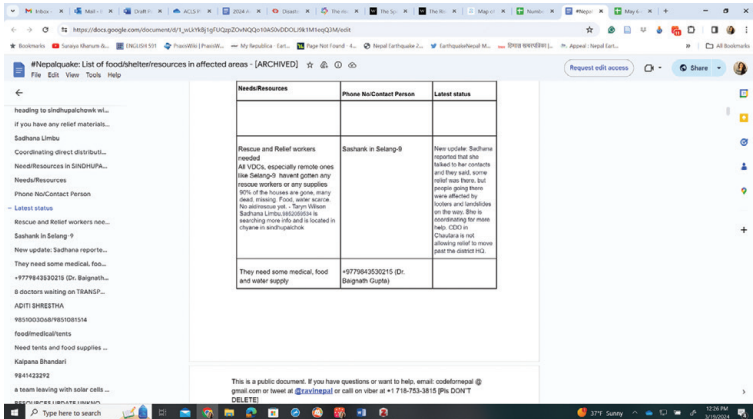


Figure 2.6. Google Doc created by Code for Nepal that acted as a resource for crisis management and communication of needs, resources, and actions in Nepal. The document was managed by Code for Nepal volunteers. (See reference to access the archived document.)

The participants I interviewed shared that they too have used technology to share, seek, validate, and curate information and resources, to organize relief-oriented actions as well as to stand up to the authorities. One of the participants was directly involved with the Nepali government. They were tasked with curating the governmental information website immediately after the disaster. They explained that, after two to three hours of work, they had set up a website to curate official information directly from the government. While they relied on various governmental sources, the participant also used social media platforms to collect and verify the data. After curating this data, the participant would develop governmental responses to support earthquake survivors in need. Similarly, with the help of government data, Code for Nepal, a nonprofit established by a diaspora of young Nepalis in the United States, was curating information in the form of an interactive map. Code for Nepal was also working on a common Google Doc that crowdsourced information about volunteers, relief supplies, emergency services, and communities in need (see Figure 2.6). Such crowdsourced data helped numerous relief organizations and volunteers to accurately locate specific requests for help and to gather accurate data on what was happening in real time. These insights accentuate the idea that, while the government is a good source of information, it is not a good source

for comprehensive information. In other words, social media platforms provided my participant and Code for Nepal with a way to fill the gaps, crowdsource, and gain a holistic idea of how much damage was done and which communities needed support the most because members of these communities were using social media to tell their stories. Because the government is limited by formalities and protocols, it is not possible for all issues to be addressed. That's when other technological tools developed by unofficial disaster responders came into play.

In her article titled "3 Ways Nepalis Are Using Crowdsourcing to Aid in Quake Relief," Shreeya Sinha, a reporter for *The New York Times*, shares the following:

In the wake of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that hit their country over the weekend, many Nepalis at home and abroad have found a new way to help—as digital volunteers, spending hours hunched over their laptops, using crowdsourcing technologies and social platforms to participate in the relief effort. (Sinha, n.p.)

Living up to this assessment, one of my participants noticed a gap in relief supply, so they created a web-based platform to provide supply chain management for relief necessities. Likewise, two Nepali diasporas who had established a non-governmental, volunteer-based organization were using web-based platforms, including Google Docs, Facebook, and Twitter, to organize relief, conduct surveys, and prepare data visualizations. Some of my participants explained that many Nepalis around the world employed Google Docs to coordinate relief-oriented actions. The volunteers achieved this by searching for the communities that the government or other larger organizations had yet to reach. An organization named Kathmandu Living Labs created Humanitarian Open Street Maps (HOT), a service that creates maps of high-vulnerability areas where data is scarce ("Disaster Activation"). Facebook and Google responded to the Nepal earthquake by activating new features during the earthquake. Google activated a technology called People Finder that helped relatives and friends locate their loved ones, and Facebook launched its Safety Check feature to determine whether people in the disaster-affected area were safe. One Nepali participant was contacted by Facebook before the Safety Check was launched:

Google . . . created its Crisis Mark [and] Facebook [has its] Safety Check. [Before Facebook had set up its Safety Check], I talked



to one of the [Facebook] VPs . . . and asked if we could set up the Safety Checks through Facebook. I do not think [the Safety Check] work[ed] much. They [Facebook] got to know about the disaster in Nepal, and I think they did care about that. (Participant from Nepal)

While larger global platforms were creating support systems after the earthquake, people created their own innovative solutions that allowed them to properly curate, manage, and validate information, which aided them in organizing disaster response in an equitable manner, something that the government alone would not have been able to achieve. This is another example of *swa-byabasthapan*, where people were using technologies creatively to manage the large-scale disaster on their own.

Nepalis at home and abroad were maximizing the use of social media and responding to the disaster by going against the traditional practice of waiting for the government or other organizations to come and support the affected communities and by forming or being part of transnational assemblages. Many of my participants said that they used social media platforms to share pictures and information, disprove fake news, and curate reports on their blogs. Various researchers conducting studies on the role of Twitter during disasters (Cho et al.; Crooks et al.; Potts) have argued that the role of social media during a disaster should be acknowledged because it delivers information to people in a quick and highly efficient way. As with other big disasters, before the public fully recognized the serious damage caused by the earthquake, social media users were already posting their experiences of what was going on in their locality in the digital space (Cho et al.). Curating those personal experiences and sharing them online transformed that knowledge into data that could be used by volunteers to better understand the current state of affairs. This led the Nepali government and other entities to rely on social media platforms so that they could assess the situation and accurately deploy the necessary relief supplies to the affected communities. Transnational assemblages were therefore able to inform the government, media, and other organizations conducting disaster relief about people's needs, and they also helped gather data in a much quicker manner than traditional means. Hence, the transnational assemblages informed by the non-Western disaster response provided a platform for activists to voice suppressed

opinions, for the Nepali diaspora to develop life-saving technologies, and for unofficial actors to fill official relief effort gaps.

#### ENACTING CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE DURING DISASTER

During the crisis created by the Nepal earthquake, communications were mediated by both official organizations and self-organized transnational assemblages on the internet. The formation of transnational assemblages in the digital web facilitated communications by building as Manuel Castells in *The Rise of Network Society* suggests “a series of locality-based activities and organizations around a key function in the network” (443). Transnational assemblages during the Nepal earthquake facilitated crisis communication that embedded social justice actions. Pamela Walaski defines crisis communications as “those messages that are given to audiences during an emergency event that threatens them either immediately or at some foreseeable point in the near future” (9). Transnational assemblages were collecting and sharing the information and sharing these to larger audiences. These kinds of urgent messages help audiences stay informed, become aware of the situation surrounding the disaster, and create precautionary measures. In informing the public, the role of transnational assemblages became greater than that of dominant practices as they challenged the governmental messages, demanded transparency in information, and enacted their own forms of communication.

In conducting such crisis communications, participants organized data collection by mobilizing volunteers on the ground, by translating data, and by curating information on websites in multimodal forms while also putting the major agenda of communicating for social justice at the heart of their efforts. In *Rhetoric of a Global Epidemic*, Huiling Ding argues that technical communicators have a civic responsibility in these kinds of crises to ensure that communication carried out through the necessary outlets is conveyed effectively so that the largest amount of people can benefit from such communication. My participants agreed with this notion and revealed that they shared information via Twitter, curated reports on blogs or in Facebook groups, organized relief, and constructed various data visualizations to provide relief statistics on Google Docs. My participants carefully chose which platform to use depending on the information that they posted, the format this information would take, and the audience they wanted

the information to reach. Formal organizations were not so nimble in crisis communications. As noted earlier in this chapter, the international networks of various humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Red Cross that have a historical presence in Nepal assisted the Nepali government in disaster response and crisis communication. These organizations coordinated with the government, media, and other community-based organizations in Nepal to gather information and share it via their websites and their social media accounts. However, the United Nations, which was a leader of the disaster response effort in Nepal, was criticized for its “situational reports” because their accounts targeted donors and not the community. While the situation reports were one of the communication mechanisms and were very important, one participant shared that they did not represent community voices. The participant stated:

There was always a daily number of coordination meetings, and I [joined them]. At this point, there’s nobody there except the UN and a couple of big organizations. So, I felt that, okay, there was a lot of space for me to inject the communication components. The UN would be thinking, and [all they were worried about were these] situation reports [and they would wonder] how to bring [communication components and the report] together. But I was like, okay, I’m not talking about . . . a situation report. I am talking about talking to the community. So how are we going to do that quickly, and how can we ensure that it’s a . . . meaningful process? (Participant from Nepal who is non-Nepali and based in Nepal)

The participant later mentioned that, in an effort to give the local community a voice, she mobilized her team to reach out to the public and gather data and stories from the local people. After gathering the information, that same participant’s organization aired a show, which had 6.6 million subscribers and viewers, on Facebook, where she told the people’s stories and relayed important information that would keep everyone safe. Hence, the participant’s organization was the first to conduct a need-based survey of that population online and distribute that data to other organizations like the UN to aid in disaster response efforts. Later, the participant’s organization also created a very short narrative-based radio program that discussed disaster response efforts. This program was created under the communications protocol adopted by the participant’s organization, which allowed community members to tell their stories

and provide information on how to respond to disaster-related issues like the water crisis and problems related to open defecation after the earthquake. This community-based program became immensely popular in Nepal after the earthquake as the community could share their knowledge of how to respond to the earthquake. Disaster responders who were in organizational capacities, like my participant, needed to be innovative because the users to whom they were providing information were not only passive listeners, they were also active responders. These organizations also depended on the retweets, responses, shares, and likes of users to whom they were communicating the information.

And as articulated by the participants, even though the government was trying to disseminate information, their efforts were not enough because people needed quick answers and aid to save their lives. Hence, to avoid rumors, to organize relief and rescue efforts, and to reach out to the communities that were ignored by larger organizations, the participants conducted their own crisis communications. Participants shared that since the Nepali government had limited human resources and communication mechanisms to handle the catastrophic disaster, it was slower than local efforts and required a lot of volunteers to enhance such communication. Therefore, Nepali activists relied on social media and the grapevine informational network to access information from the community. One participant shared:

I was answering these questions for one hour, staying up, and feeling like a crazy thing. I was trying to figure out information, trying to share information, trying to locate people and help people feel better, and in some cases trying to share the unfortunate news. (Participant from Nepal who was based in the US)

During the time of the earthquake, the participant created his own relief work and was not affiliated with any organization. He served as a communication point for many other people in his network. Even though there were official mechanisms for people finding, people outside of Nepal needed the information about their loved ones immediately. The participant shared that Nepal is a close-knit society, and information travels from family, friends, and friends of friends, so it was easier to locate information about people from the people without waiting for official mechanisms to intervene. Another participant mentioned that she was involved in translating governmental information from Nepali to English to make information accessible to non-Nepali speakers who were

trying to locate information about their loved ones. Yet another participant collected various reports from sites that were sharing misinformation and addressed those falsities in his blog so that people could get accurate information. Activists in Nepal and beyond conducted crisis communication by mobilizing their resources to get accurate and valid information about the ignored and marginalized communities within the country and shared those via transnational assemblages. A Google Doc from Code for Nepal represents this multiplicity and transnational assemblages very nicely. Communication, coordination, and disaster relief management occur simultaneously in this document where the information is consolidated in one space where people from the US, Nepal, and other countries could work together. The organizer of this Google Doc (see Figure 2.6), Ravi Nepal, and some of his colleagues were in the United States while composing this document. Transnational assemblage actors also curated such information on social media to conduct relief and rescue activities and to hold the government and other disaster-responding organizations accountable. This way of communicating, coordinating, and organizing disaster response is also another example of *swa-byabasthapan*, and in this example's context, it is showcased in communication during the earthquake to manage the consequences of the earthquake.

The Google document (see Figure 2.6) is an example of transnational assemblages formed during the Nepal earthquake that provided a public voice for communities who were being ignored. Such communications within the transnational assemblages were flexible, adaptive, and did not have any official protocols; as you can see in the photo, there is a Viber number shared (see Figure 2.6). While repurposing such messages with social media functions like sharing, retweeting, liking, or replying, and sometimes rewriting, the crisis communication practices in the wake of the Nepal earthquake blurred the boundaries between the official and unofficial networks. Crisis communications are mostly employed in an organizational context (Walaski); however, my data suggests that, because the context of the world is continuously transforming during a crisis, crisis communication is also always transforming. In this context, catastrophic disasters invite multiple stakeholders, organizations, and various evolving assemblages to communicate about the crisis and aid in the disaster response effort. To manage a successful disaster response, stronger crisis communication mechanisms that involve and highlight the role of the community and the people who are involved in disaster response are required (Coombs and Holladay; Horsley and Barker; Walaski).



Figure 2.7. Tweet by Aakar Anil in which he shares photos of an immediate gathering of people for relief and open space.

Crisis communication has changed over the past 40 years, and it mostly involves responding to crises that are becoming increasingly global as their causes and consequences transcend national and cultural boundaries (Schwarz et al.). A multitude of actors representing governments, NGOs, private organizations, media houses, and local people perform crisis communications. For example, Figure 2.7 showcases information including photos shared by a Kathmandu local right

after the Nepal earthquake. This is an example of how actors within various transnational assemblages who engage in seeking, interpreting, and distributing messages are regarded as crisis publics by various crisis communication scholars (Coombs and Holladay; Frandsen and Johansen; Walaski). These crisis publics engage in disaster communications and are an integral part within the transnational assemblages to respond to a disaster. In doing so, they become a part of various assemblages that are either affected by the crisis or are working to respond to the crisis. In this process, crisis publics establish spaces thanks to the flows created by crisis communication. The actors, or the crisis publics, of the Nepal earthquake are such examples. The disaster brought people from around the globe together, forming the transnational assemblages.

In the case of Nepal, Rajib Subba and Tung Bui found that media engagement not only helped to provide services to marginalized communities, but it also helped hold the Nepal police accountable and transparent. My research demonstrates that during the first weeks after the disaster events, the Nepal earthquake changed the dynamics and the rhetorical nature of crisis communication. The public became not only passive receivers of crisis communication, but they also became active responders, interpreters, and transmitters of information (Coombs and Holladay). These active roles, as my analysis of the actors' narratives suggests, allowed the actors to take on prominent roles, either by initiating their own assemblages or by becoming part of already established assemblages. Even though there were major actors who performed crisis communication immediately following these events, such as the government and media sources, the active crisis publics who posted information on social media platforms became the most critical actors in the crisis communications that emerged. Social media allowed crisis publics to share their affective reactions immediately and join conversations by becoming part of various transnational assemblages via hashtags or using functions like replying or retweeting. The decentralized communications structure in most social media means that these platforms provide different communicative affordances during disasters (Murthy and Gross), such as interpretations of messages, individual expressions, and criticisms of official organizations. During a time of a disaster, digital tools empower people to express themselves and perform crisis communication. Erin Frost, in her analysis of risk communication during the Deepwater Horizon crisis, found that the

persuasive messages written by local communicators were often more helpful than the messages from professional communicators at major media outlets. This is because local communicators witness and experience the consequences of a crisis firsthand; thus, their messages are honest, powerful, and meaningful.

#### CONCLUSION: NON-WESTERN DISASTER RESPONSE

Transnational assemblages that formed during the Nepal earthquake managed the disaster and conducted crisis communication by developing disaster response practices—practices which contained the values of social justice and critiqued Western crisis management strategies. As such, their unique ways of communicating and managing disaster led to the formation of assemblages that prioritized the community's needs. Some of the common themes of non-Western disaster response included a) contextualizing the information based on the audience of the messages, b) involving the community and their local knowledge of resisting disaster and curating that information on social media, c) reusing the information created by the official channels and simplifying it by visualizing the data and information, d) questioning the authorities to provide accurate information, and e) conducting disaster relief on the ground with social justice. Nepal's non-Western ways of communication had one purpose: to achieve social justice for the marginalized population who was suffering and ignored in the process of disaster relief. The transnational assemblages that operated via non-Western methods defined their boundaries based on social justice, and they maintained those boundaries throughout the disaster response effort. The non-Western disaster response described by the Nepalis could be summarized as follows:

- **Swa-byabasthapan:** The Nepali community demonstrated *swa-byabasthapan*, loosely translated to “self-management” in English. Actors self-managed when they spontaneously launched disaster response efforts that targeted the most needy, marginalized, and vulnerable people and conducted disaster management with social justice. As there was a lot of distrust of the government, the people did not wait for someone else to come and rescue them. Instead, through their self-management, Nepalis were able to form transnational assemblages to organize and perform coalitional actions for disaster management. This action, grounded



in the non-Western values of self-reliance and working together with each other, helped mitigate the disaster's challenges with grounding on social justice.

- **Community Values (Being Nepali):** A lot of Nepalis shared that, regardless of location, they were grounded in the community values and beliefs of being Nepali. Nepalis had a sense of responsibility to their community and felt motivated to participate in disaster response efforts without a second thought. In turn, Nepali community values motivated a lot of non-Nepalis to support Nepal in its time of need and non-Nepalis also became part of transnational assemblages in launching disaster response.
- **Resistance and Agency:** Nepalis showcased a strong resistance to the government, international agencies, and media outlets. This agency was a big part of disaster response efforts in Nepal as it allowed the transnational assemblages to decentralize information and expedite aid delivery. While the government and other organizations were doing their best, they were overwhelmed. The transnational assemblages that developed with solidarity at the forefront of their efforts were able to provide actual support to the people who needed the most help. Actors also embodied this resistance when they asked for help from the international community as opposed to their own government.
- **Disaster Activism:** The non-Western disaster response in Nepal was characterized by activism that involved transnational assemblages from across the world focused on social justice for the affected community. This activism showcased how Nepalis could really bring the world together and create space for discussion, empathy, money, and disaster relief. This kind of activism, informed by transparency and social justice, was motivated by affect and organized with assorted technological apparatuses. This allowed the Nepali community to invite the global community to participate in their activism.

In this chapter, I summarized how Nepalis and non-Nepalis responded to the Nepal earthquake in 2015. Nepalis resisted the governmental and international humanitarian organizations' rhetoric while also collaborating with them. The management of crisis as showcased by the transnational assemblages in Nepal demonstrates that crisis management should be understood from a perspective that focuses

on the receiver, not the donor, actively representing the various voices of marginalized populations. Communication in any circumstance should not privilege one single voice, and during the aftermath of a calamity, disaster managers should work toward not privileging one voice. Disaster managers should involve the community in responding to the crisis and performing crisis communication because doing so helps make communication effective and relevant. The aftermath of a disaster requires very sensitive and effective communication because a crisis changes the dynamics, needs, and reactions of the community that is suffering. Crisis communications should therefore incorporate the notion of social justice (Walton et al.) that can support the marginalized and vulnerable communities affected by the disaster.