This study is interested in how implementing reconstruction politically impacted a group of brokers and mediators who connected rebuilding households to information and resources and verified the progress of reconstruction according to international guidelines. This group were often young people from urban areas and included engineers, contractors and NGO staff. How did their social and political status change? How did their ideas about the state and politics change? How did their role in reconstruction impact Nepal’s political settlement?

**A Political Earthquake:**

The impact of post-earthquake reconstruction on Nepali politics

My research is focused on Nepal and looks at the aftermath of the 2015 7.8 magnitude earthquake. In particular this study focuses on the political impact of a large government-run project to reconstruct over 800,000 houses damaged or destroyed by the earthquake.

This study will focus on ‘Building Back Better’ policies, a globally influential set of disaster management guidelines that promote responses to disasters that reduce future risk. These policies formed the basis of Nepal’s ‘owner-driven’ housing reconstruction programme from 2016 to 2021.

This study will examine the political impact of these guidelines on the distribution of power in Nepal. How did the ways in which reconstruction guidelines were implemented impact Nepali politics?

**Introduction**

The study aims to encourage international actors who are involved in housing reconstruction after disasters (e.g. NGOs and UN agencies) to consider the political impact of seemingly technical choices in reconstruction.

**Methodology**

- Planned fieldwork will involve qualitative methods including ethnography, use of social media, documentary and archive analysis, and interviews.
- The study will draw on a political settlements framework as a way of analysing changes in the distribution of power after the earthquake.
- Focus is on one field site heavily affected by the earthquake and in Nepal’s capital city, Kathmandu.

**Study Focus**

This study is interested in how implementing reconstruction politically impacted a group of brokers and mediators who connected rebuilding households to information and resources and verified the progress of reconstruction according to international guidelines.

This group were often young people from urban areas and included engineers, contractors and NGO staff. How did their social and political status change? How did their ideas about the state and politics change? How did their role in reconstruction impact Nepal’s political settlement?

**Objectives**

The study aims to encourage international actors who are involved in housing reconstruction after disasters (e.g. NGOs and UN agencies) to consider the political impact of seemingly technical choices in reconstruction.

**Implications**

As part of range of other changes taking place in Nepal – outward labour migration, urbanisation – reconstruction processes helped provide the space, platform and impetus for reinforcing some parts of older politics (e.g. the role of contractors) while allowing the entrance of new actors, many of whom took part in rebuilding (pictured).

The central implication of this ongoing study is that understanding politics and the distribution of power in a country affected by disaster is messy but vital in understanding and also improving disaster outcomes.

**Study Focus**

- Success of new, young independent politicians with reconstruction experience
- Strengthening of the role of contractors in Nepali politics
- As part of range of other changes taking place in Nepal – outward labour migration, urbanisation – reconstruction processes helped provide the space, platform and impetus for reinforcing some parts of older politics (e.g. the role of contractors) while allowing the entrance of new actors, many of whom took part in rebuilding (pictured).