

Preface

On April 25, 2015, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake (“Gorkha Earthquake”) shook the central part of Nepal, including the capital Kathmandu, followed by a magnitude 7.3 aftershock on May 12. More than 8700 people were killed and nearly 800,000 buildings damaged or destroyed, leaving millions of people homeless. The implications of the earthquake reached far beyond the loss of lives and the destruction of buildings. Nepal’s infrastructure was strongly harmed, with wide-ranging effects for many parts of society and country.

The damage or destruction of numerous temples and world heritage monuments directly affected the daily religious worship of the population and the social-economic conditions and cultural identity of the country. Moreover, groups underprivileged already prior to the earthquake, based on gender, ethnicity, or caste, strongly suffered from the impacts of earthquake, and the social cohesion of the society and the society’s feeling of security and a worth living future were affected.

Earthquakes, like other types of larger natural catastrophes, always have multifaceted effects on all parts of a society and a country. Therefore, they should be looked at and studied from an inter- and intra-disciplinary viewpoint. This requires a continuous dialogue between science, politics, administration, public organizations, and the people, with special view to the society’s approach toward recurrent catastrophes.

From this perspective, an interdisciplinary conference (Humboldt Kolleg) was organized in Kathmandu, February 2016, where geoscientific, technical, medical, economic, social, political, and legislative aspects of the Gorkha earthquake were presented and discussed in detail as well as with respect to the special situation of Nepal as a developing country. Particularly, the connections and interactions between these fields were emphasized. Based on panel discussions, suggestions were presented, in which way preparedness of the society on all levels of technical and medical precaution, administration, politics, and, not least, with respect to culture and social structure can be reached and resilience toward future earthquakes and other catastrophes can be increased.

The present book assembles conference contributions from all earthquake-relevant fields and is designed to give an overview on their multi- and

interdisciplinarity. Specifically, it deals with possibilities of earthquake-resistant building and settlement, efforts for restoration of world heritage sites, and questions related to technical and medical relief, and to economy, administration, politics, and public life in a high-risk seismic zone.

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Jörn H. Kruhl
Rameshwar Adhikari
Uwe E. Dorka



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