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EVOLVING NARRATIVES OF HAZARD AND RISK

The Gorkha Earthquake,
Nepal, 2015

**Edited by
Louise Bracken,
Hanna A. Ruszczyk
and Tom Robinson**



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Louise Bracken • Hanna A. Ruszczyk
Tom Robinson
Editors

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PREFACE

This volume was born out of a collaboration of scholars and practitioners connected with Nepal and the Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience (IHRR) at Durham University. As editors we are indebted to all of the contributors to this volume; their endeavour and enthusiasm has made this volume possible. Our hearts go out to all those impacted by the Gorkha earthquake and similar events around the world. We hope our contribution can help document the terrible effects, celebrate the amazing strength and capacity of people and organisations who are involved in Nepal and offer a way to view such events in a more comprehensive way.

Publication of this book celebrates the 10th Anniversary of IHRR and is a testament to four key attributes of IHRR: (1) the intellectual scope of the institute and those who collaborate with us, (2) the engagement of practitioners and communities around the world who generously work with us and contribute to our research, (3) the commitment of donors and friends who helped initiate IHRR and continue to support us and (4) the desire of everyone involved with IHRR to support people living with hazard and risk. As we celebrate our 10th anniversary we want to thank you for working with us.

Durham, UK

Louise Bracken
Hanna A. Ruszczyk
Tom Robinson

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PART I

Earthquake Preparedness
and Response

Introduction to the Gorkha Earthquake

Hanna A. Ruszczyk and Tom Robinson

1.1 THE EARTHQUAKE

On 25 April 2015 at 11:56 a.m., the first jolts of a major earthquake were felt in the small town of Gorkha in central Nepal. Almost 9000 people died, over 22,000 injured, 1 million homes either destroyed or damaged (Government of Nepal, Ministry of Home Affairs and Disaster Preparedness Network-Nepal 2015), thus resulting in a further 2.8 million people homeless across 14 districts of Nepal. Although felt in India, China and as far away as Bangladesh, the Gorkha earthquake, as it became known, and the aftershocks that followed, gave the brunt of its devastation in Nepal. The earthquake, with a magnitude of 7.8 (USGS 2015) and the subsequent magnitude 7.3 aftershock in Sindhupalchok district on 12 May, was the largest earthquake and worst natural hazard to strike the country in 81 years. Not since the devastating 1934 Nepal-Bihar earthquake, estimated to have had a magnitude of 8+, had Nepal suffered such a devastating event (Fig. 1.1).

Yet this was not the *big one* that many scientists, humanitarians, politicians and members of the public had feared and discussed in the years before 2015. This was not the feared mega-quake that would unzip several hundreds of kilometres of the main Himalayan Fault and strike the

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