

## **Stealing from the Poor: A Challenge to Eradicating Poverty**

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**Introduction:** This study presents findings from an ongoing study on poverty in Nepal. In 2015, an earthquake in Nepal killed over 9,000 people and destroyed over a million homes pushing millions of already poor further into destitute. Majority of the victims were native Tamang people and almost all of the devastated areas were their ancestral land Tamsaling. Almost two year has passed since the earthquake, the Nepal government has not responded to the sufferings of the earthquake victims. Nepal government has, in fact, stolen international funds meant for the victims, and blocked local and international rebuilding efforts. This paper examines why governments in poor countries like Nepal tend to be anti-development and anti-poor.

**Method:** Ethnographic data was collected from field visits to the affected Tamang villages of the Himalayas. Participatory-observation and interviews were used to document the lived experiences of the victims of the earthquake. Additionally, quantitative data were collected from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and social media. Geographic Information System (GIS) and regressions were used to analyze the quantitative data.

**Findings:** The primary reason for Nepal government's apathy to the victims of the earthquake was a racial mismatch: the earthquake victims were largely the native Himalayan people (Tamang) while the Nepal government was controlled by the Khas people, a caste migrant group from the low-land. The Khas regime views the native Himalayan people's development as a threat to its own survival and against its self-interest. Stealing from the poor indigenous Himalayan peoples was an effective way of socially controlling the poor masses.