

Khumbu (Everest Region) is not just home to high-altitude mountains but also to the ethnic Sherpas. Sherpas are renowned as early explorers of higher Himalayas and still serving as a guide to most of the mountaineering expedition owing to their expertise, experience and genetic adaptation to the high-altitude environment.

Besides mountaineering, Buddhism is central to the socio-cultural life of Sherpas. Almost every village has its Gomba (Monastery), a Mani-hang (Prayer Wheel temple) and a Chhorten (Stupa-Shrine) that occasionally serves as both religious and social infrastructure that brings together people both in feast and famine.

Khunde Manilhang is important socio-religious structure centrally located in Khunde village of Khumbu. Its significance can be attributed not only to its religious importance as the prayer-wheel temple but also due to the inclusion of additional space for the community gatherings.

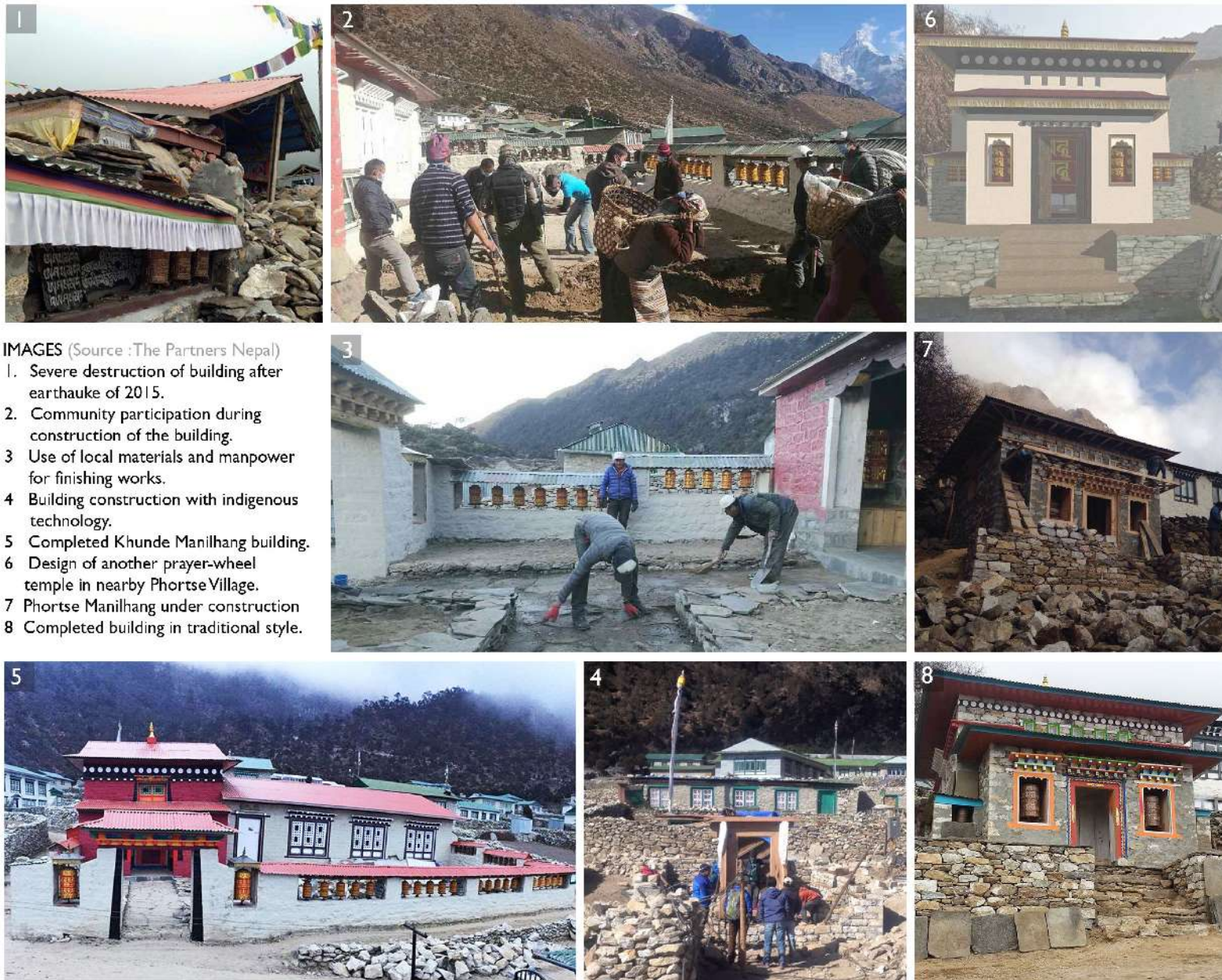
Being severely destroyed by 2015 earthquake, Khunde Manilhang reconstruction initiative was launched by Khunde Community Club and Khunde Mothers group in association with various other INGOs/NGOs.

On April 2017, Khunde Manilhang was reconstructed not just with local resources and technology but also with local participation and leadership. It now stands again but with more architectural details of indigenous Sherpa architecture and with flexible community space.



KHUNDE MANILHANG

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IMAGES (Source :The Partners Nepal)

1. Severe destruction of building after earthquake of 2015.
2. Community participation during construction of the building.
3. Use of local materials and manpower for finishing works.
4. Building construction with indigenous technology.
5. Completed Khunde Manilhang building.
6. Design of another prayer-wheel temple in nearby Phortse Village.
7. Phortse Manilhang under construction
8. Completed building in traditional style.

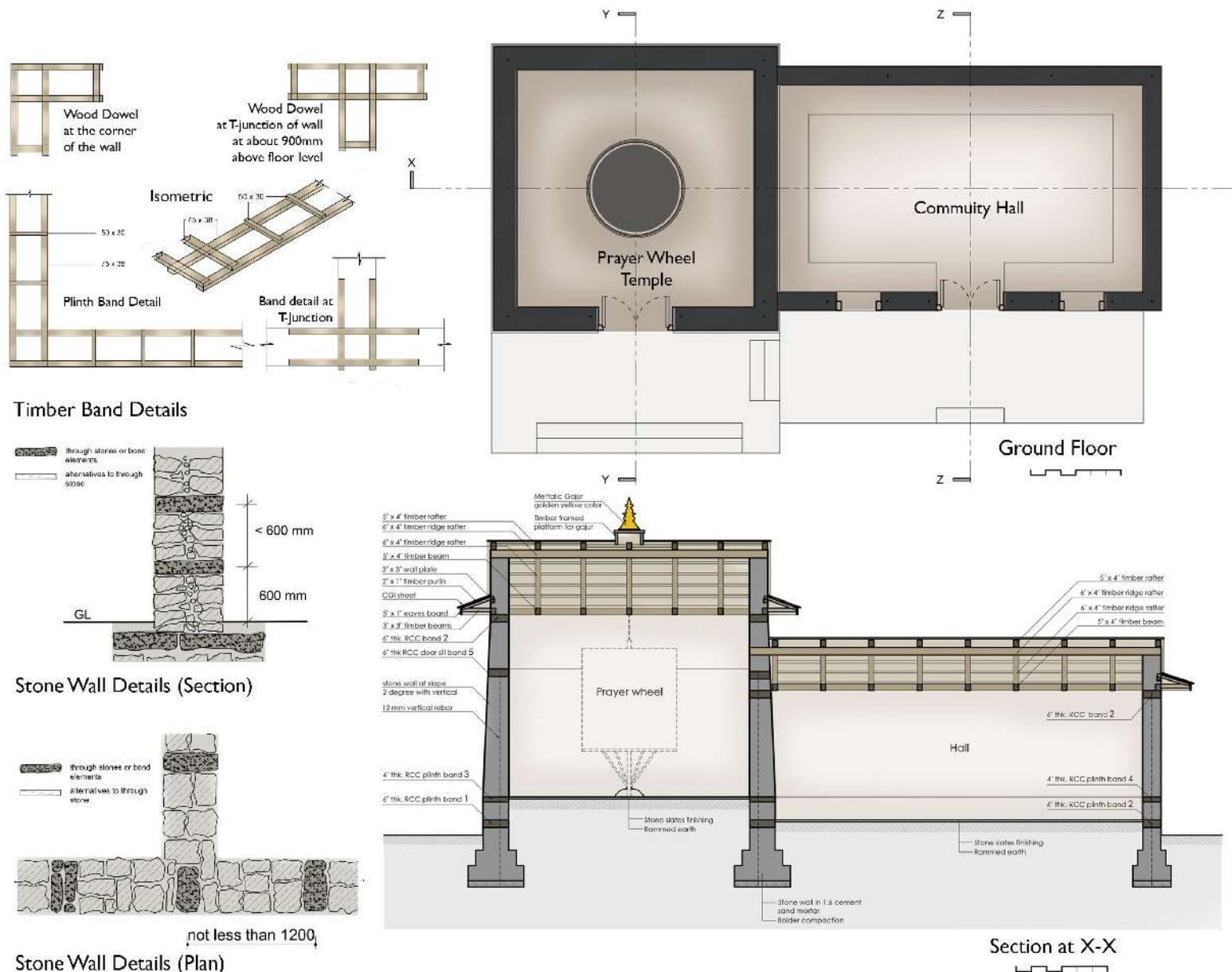
Issue 9

Endorse the integration of post-emergency relief intervention into long-term sustainable development strategies.

Our design proposal intends to go beyond one-off post-earthquake heritage reconstruction and towards building long-term community resilience through the process of rebuilding socio-cultural infrastructure itself. It is important to note that the Sherpa communities have a long history of the building and rebuilding their monasteries and temples by themselves. Even after the influx of foreign aid agencies, the local community actively participated may it be the construction of an airport or in the construction of a hospital in the region.

However, after the earthquake of 2015 and subsequent centralized one-door policy of government authorities, marginalized the community-led reconstruction initiatives to smaller communal buildings while larger buildings required relentless bureaucratic and technical procedures to follow. As we had already seen the ills of both rigid bureaucratic model as well as experimental donor-led model that made local communities merely a passive receiver of 'technical sound' building as a product delivered from above, we envisioned a goal to set an example on how local communities can become active agent of post-disaster recovery by employing their local resources, indigenous technology, and situated knowledge. Evidently, local communities of nearby villages also followed a similar model thereby rebuilding their heritage structures themselves under their leadership.

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Issue 5

Facilitate the use of appropriate technologies, materials, and labor adequate to local values, to the cultural specificity and responsive to the natural environment.

Although it was more convenient to design with for RCC (Reinforced Cement Concrete) framed structure masked with stylistic details from the local vernacular architecture, we intend not to intervene in the local culture of building construction with new construction techniques that requires consistent technical support and more finance. Likewise, the building process in traditional societies involves rituals that adhere to the traditional mode of construction. Moreover, the long term impact of modern materials along with its hidden cost to the environment is another serious concern.

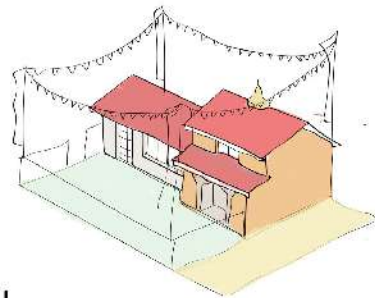
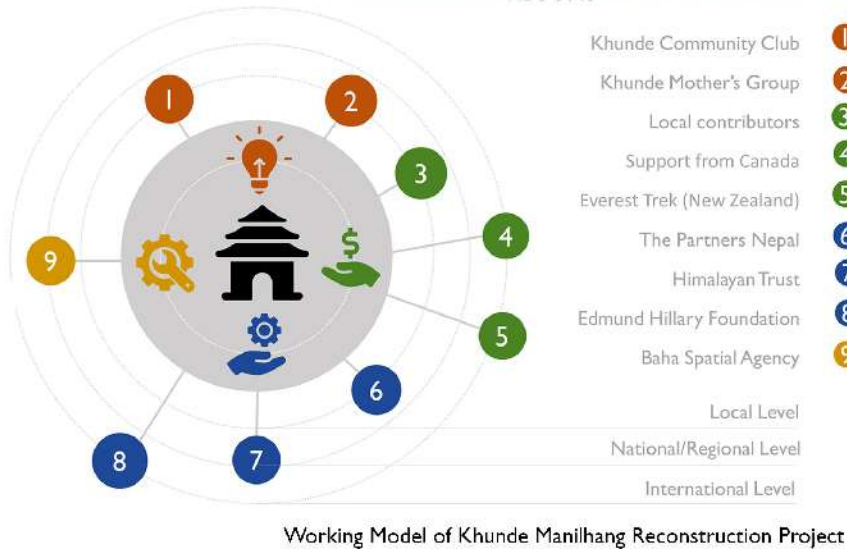
Thus, we painstakingly did research on local construction techniques, indigenous architecture and locally available resources in one hand and also consulted with experts to integrate required structural improvisations in stone-masonry. As local masons and local technicians could easily adapt with the improvisations made on the familiar construction technology, they were empowered to make necessary addition and changes to the design without undermining the structural integrity of the building. For instance, local communities of Khunde were able to change the window positions and add extra space on community hall adhering to the structural system. Interestingly, the local masons also employed the technical improvisations that they learned in the process in other reconstruction projects of the region.



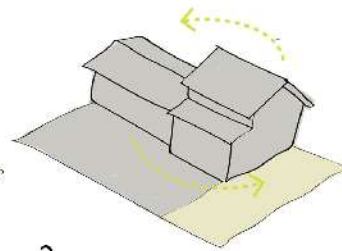
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(Source :The Partners Nepal)

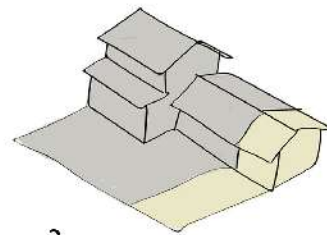
1. Local men gathering and drinking outside Khunde Manilhang
2. Local women gathering outside Khunde Manilhang
3. New larger and flexible community hall that can be also used as museum or library or for gathering purpose.



1
Older Structure (before Earthquake) with additional community hall smaller in size and without indigenous style.



2
An additional space was available on left, the community hall can be extended if its position is switched.



3
After changed position, the larger community hall became possible along with larger outdoor space



4
New Khunde Manilhang building built in indigenous style, technology, material and with larger community hall

Issue |

Cooperate for fair and sustainable development initiatives in active collaboration with disadvantaged people or communities.

Despite being a community-led initiative with the local community as a decisive actor, INGOs/NGOs as supporting actors and the design team as facilitators, there was an inter-disciplinary exchange of ideas that led us to go beyond earlier project vision of reconstructing heritage and more towards building a community platform for the future. For instance, although the local community members sought for technical expertise to materialize their vision of reconstructing their heritage with more unique and sophisticated construction technology, we convinced them to adapt indigenous construction technology with some improvisations. Similarly, NGOs/INGOs played a key role not just in providing support but also in shaping the participatory system and collaborative working mechanism. Additionally, they also insisted on making a flexible community platform that can be a library, gathering space and a museum as and when needed.

Apart from being an exemplary model of community-led reconstruction that can influence other similar initiatives, the building in itself is likely to act as a platform to the vulnerable community to come together with the thoughts and actions to rebuild their locality and livelihood. This platform becomes more relevant for the historically marginalized and geographically disadvantaged communities like Sherpas of the higher Himalayan region.

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