



Namaste and greetings!
I'm delighted to bring you the April – June 2015 edition of USAID Nepal's Quarterly Newsletter, featuring updates and stories from our end of the development world. They say a friend in need is a friend indeed. USAID's commitment to Nepal has stood the test of time. In the

aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that have shaken Nepal since April 25, our commitment remains stronger than ever.

On June 25, as the Government of Nepal brought together all of its key development partners for an International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction, we had the opportunity to demonstrate the U.S. Government's leadership and commitment in Nepal's rebuilding and recovery efforts. Our pledge at the conference increases the total amount of U.S. emergency relief and early recovery assistance to \$130 million, and is only the beginning of our contribution to Nepal's earthquake recovery, which will span multiple years.

Earthquake recovery has taken center stage, as you will see from the Newsletter. USAID and our partners are on the ground, reviving livelihoods and mitigating food insecurity with cash-for-work programs, providing agricultural support, addressing trafficking concerns, and helping get children back to school.

Through our Quarterly Newsletters, as well as other communication platforms like Facebook and Twitter, we will continue to highlight and share glimpses of our work and its results. It is our hope that you will stay engaged and inspired, and will stand with Nepal as we help the country to build back better.

USAID is here for the long haul. Thank you for your support.

Best,
Dr. Beth Dunford
Mission Director, USAID/Nepal

SPECIAL EARTHQUAKE EDITION

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY'S STATEMENT:

NEPAL DONOR CONFERENCE

June 25, 2015



Excerpts as read by the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, Peter W. Bodde on June 25, 2015 at the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction.

The past two months have been among the most challenging in Nepal's history. I will never forget the searing images of pain and devastation in the aftermath of the April 25 earthquake and the May 12 aftershock. I know that even today millions of Nepalis are unable to return to their homes and are struggling to plant their crops and send their kids to school. I will also never forget the courage and heroism the Nepali people showed from the moment the earthquake struck as citizens risked their lives to rescue neighbors from the rubble. Using social media, young Nepalis organized as never before to deliver aid to remote communities. We honor and remember all those who died during the earthquakes, as well as the brave United States Marines and Nepalese military personnel who died providing emergency relief.

I am immensely proud of the U.S. response to the earthquake, which represents the best of the American people. Within hours of the earthquake we began to deploy hundreds of search and rescue personnel, emergency responders, and military relief personnel. We contributed \$62 million in humanitarian assistance during the initial emergency response. The U.S. response saved lives and relieved suffering.

Nepal's many friends in the United States have shown their

generosity since the moment the earthquake struck: From bake sales to swim meets, community groups nationwide raised funds for Nepal earthquake relief. U.S. businesses have pledged over \$20 million in cash and in-kind contributions in support of relief and recovery efforts in Nepal. U.S. NGOs have provided assistance worth more than \$150 million. And in a "virtuous circle," resettled Bhutanese refugees – refugees Nepal generously hosted for more than two decades before they immigrated to the United States – came together as a community to raise funds for relief programs in Nepal.

Today, I am pleased to announce a pledge that increases the total amount of U.S. emergency relief and early

longer term needs in the energy and transport sectors, areas critical to sustainable economic growth.

Working in close collaboration with the Government of Nepal, our development partners, and the international community, we will show Nepali citizens how to rebuild seismically-stable houses in affected areas. Where children are learning outside in makeshift tents, we will help build temporary learning centers. We will help Nepalis get back on their feet and rebuild livelihoods by strengthening agricultural systems, the lifeblood of 75 percent of Nepalis who rely on agriculture for livelihoods and food. We will help protect Nepal's most vulnerable, including those susceptible to



PHOTO: RSS NEPAL

recovery assistance to \$130 million. This is only the beginning of our contribution and we, with the support of our Congress, will continue to work with Nepal to support its long-term earthquake recovery needs across multiple years. From relief to recovery to reconstruction, the US Agency for International Development will continue to provide assistance to address critical development needs. And the US Millennium Challenge Corporation will support Nepal's

human trafficking. And we will lay the foundation for a more resilient Nepal by helping build institutions that can respond effectively to future disasters.

The United States has stood by Nepal for decades through development achievements and democratic transitions. And even though I am unable to attend this conference in person, I want to make it clear: the American people will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Nepal through this challenge as well.

EARTHQUAKE BY THE NUMBERS

8,841
ESTIMATED FATALITIES

868,000
HOUSES DAMAGED/ DESTROYED

39
OUT OF 75 AFFECTED

2.8 million
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

14 MOST AFFECTED DISTRICTS

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NEPAL EARTHQUAKE: DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PREPARATION



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

On April 25, 2015, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck central Nepal. Within hours of the earthquake, a USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) was deployed to Nepal to assist with relief and recovery. The DART worked with the local authorities to find survivors and help the displaced. On May 12, a magnitude 7.3 aftershock struck Nepal's Dolakha District, approximately 76 km northeast of Kathmandu, causing further casualties and damage in areas affected by the April 25 earthquake.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: PREPARATION AND IMPACT

In preparation for a potential earthquake disaster, USAID has worked over 20 years supporting disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts in Nepal. USAID's support enabled partners to strengthen earthquake response capacity at the local and national levels in collaboration with the Government of Nepal (GoN), nongovernmental organizations, private companies, and local communities.

KEY EMERGENCY-RELIEF ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

Pre-Positioned Supplies: USAID worked with partners to ensure emergency relief supplies were



PHOTO: USAID PAHAL PROGRAM/MERCY CORP



PHOTO: BIMALA RAI COLAVITO/IDE NEPAL

available in Nepal in the event of a natural disaster. With USAID support, the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) maintains warehouses in 12 strategic locations throughout Nepal, pre-positioning stocks of emergency relief items - including plastic sheeting, blankets, clothes, and kitchen supplies - to enable an immediate response in cases of rapid-onset disasters. The NRCS was immediately able to distribute pre-positioned emergency relief items to approximately 3,000 families in earthquake-affected districts. With Nepal Army helicopter support, USAID partners like Save the Children quickly reached the heavily affected districts and distributed pre-positioned household shelter kits. USAID had also pre-positioned two water treatment systems that are currently being used at full capacity, and helped reduce the impact of water and sanitation-related health problems post-earthquake.

Community-Level Response Training:

Since 1998, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has supported the Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) to promote disaster preparedness through the development of national and regional cadres of professional emergency response instructors. PEER aims to assist local, regional, and national disaster management agencies in organizing and conducting

standardized training in medical first response, community action for disaster response (CADRE), collapsed structure search and rescue (CSSR), and hospital preparedness for emergencies (HOPE). For over a decade, USAID has worked with the Nepal Red Cross Society to train community teams to respond to multi-casualty incidents such as earthquakes and landslides. These volunteers receive training on basic life support, mitigation measures, light search and rescue, and even dead body management. Graduates from the PEER program come from Nepal Police, Nepal Armed Police Force, Nepal Army, Nepal Red Cross Society and various Municipality offices, to name a few, and are part of an existing squadron of over 737 first responders in Nepal. Their efforts proved vital after the April 25 earthquake.

Following the earthquake, Nepal Red Cross immediately deployed 75 CADRE volunteers to provide assistance, while the many other volunteers were themselves affected and using their skills and intuition to assist their immediate family and communities. The Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu, with approximately 400 hospital staff trained by the HOPE program and a seismic-proof blood bank



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

onsite, was able to treat over 700 patients and perform more than 300 surgeries in less than 24 hours immediately following the earthquake.

Read more: <https://usaidpubs.exposure.co/one-doctors-story-of-hope>



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

Preparedness and Management of Open Spaces for Effective Humanitarian Response:

In 2013, USAID supported the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to identify, prepare, and preserve more than 80 open spaces to ensure that the sites were available for displacement camps and other humanitarian purposes—such as distribution centers and warehouses—following a large-scale disaster. In addition, USAID/OFDA support helped IOM raise public awareness, increase the capacity of Government of Nepal authorities to respond to disasters in the region, and ensure sustainable and comprehensive approaches to disaster response. Many of these open spaces in the Kathmandu Valley are still being used for relief distribution and shelter space.

Building Capacity of Key Nepali

Institutions: One of USAID's most enduring disaster risk reduction partnerships in Asia has been with the Kathmandu-based National Society for



CREDIT : USAID

Earthquake drill in public schools.

Earthquake Technology (NSET). Established in 1993, NSET's mission is to reduce the risks associated with earthquakes in Nepal. USAID's partnership with NSET began in 1997. Since that time, USAID has provided more than \$8 million in support of NSET's activities, helping it evolve into one of the world's

leading organizations on earthquake preparedness and mitigation.

In coordination with the GoN, NSET strengthened earthquake preparedness by working with schools, hospitals, and airport

and transportation authorities to conduct risk assessments and develop earthquake-preparedness plans. NSET assisted several municipalities in Nepal to develop earthquake damage scenarios and management plans for incorporation into periodic municipal development plans. In collaboration with GoN agencies, NSET expanded this process of urban risk assessment to selected urban/urbanizing settlements in Nepal. NSET also raised public awareness of the use of "go bags"—easy-to-carry bags containing medications, non-perishable food, a portable radio, and other items useful in an emergency. The program focused on Kathmandu Valley and other urban areas of Nepal, including four submetropolitan cities, 53 municipalities and 135 small towns. By April 2015, NSET had trained more than 4,000 people, and distributed more than 600 go bags.

Similarly, USAID/OFDA has worked to build the capacity of the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) which is at the forefront of the current response and relief efforts. With USAID/OFDA support, NRCS procured and pre-positioned critical relief supplies to help reduce waterborne disease transmission in the aftermath of a disaster for the benefit of up to 5,000 people in Bhaktapur District. NRCS pre-positioned hygiene promotion kits, emergency latrine construction materials, and two emergency water treatment plants, as well as provided first response training to members of a National Disaster Response Team.

Debris Management Planning: In 2013, USAID/OFDA supported IOM to help the GoN to develop a debris management plan for a post-earthquake scenario. This plan pre-identified nine sites for rubble disposal in Kathmandu. In January 2015, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development formally took ownership of the plan, which provided organizational structure and standardized guidelines for disposal of post-



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

earthquake debris in an environmentally responsible manner.

Building Code Implementation:

For years, USAID partners like NSET have conducted training and awareness-raising on seismically safer construction for municipality staff and technical personnel, including building contractors and masons. This effort established incentive systems for building code implementation.

Integrating DRR into Development

Programs: Over the past several years, USAID/Nepal integrated DRR and preparedness activities into all relevant development projects. For example, USAID's new five-year Community Resilience Program, which operates in many of the most-affected districts, has robust community preparedness components. Additionally, USAID/Nepal's flagship environment program, Hariyo Ban, implements climate change adaptation-related interventions that focus on creating awareness and preparedness for extreme weather events and climate-induced disasters such as floods, landslides, and forest fires.

Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital

Blood Bank: The U.S. Government, through the Department of Defense, helped construct and equip a seismically safe blood bank at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital. After the earthquake, the blood bank remained fully operational, helping to equip not only Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital but also surrounding hospitals with blood. Overall, it distributed over 700 pints of blood to other medical centers immediately after the earthquake.



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

Construction of Deep Tube Wells:

In collaboration with the Department of Defense, USAID helped construct seven new deep tube wells within the Kathmandu Valley to provide water supplies to the population in a major disaster. Two deep tube wells are operational and providing vital water supplies to Kathmandu residents. ●

Many of these open spaces in the Kathmandu Valley are still being used for relief distribution and shelter space.

POST APRIL 25 SNAPSHOT OF USAID ASSISTANCE

USAID had 15 ongoing projects and additional USAID/OFDA supported emergency relief efforts that provided emergency relief to the districts most heavily affected by the earthquake and aftershocks. Below are some highlighted activities in key programmatic sectors:

SHELTER

- Delivered 6,200 rolls of plastic sheeting, providing much-needed shelter and protection for up to 310,000 Nepalis.
- According to the IOM, an estimated 118,000 displaced people were sheltering in approximately 410 displacement sites across 15 districts. With \$2 million in USAID support, IOM continues to gather, analyze, and disseminate information on the number and condition of displaced persons, develop targeted response strategies, and deliver shelter supplies to populations in need.

FOOD AID

- To date, USAID has provided \$6.9 million to support WFP's emergency food assistance operations in Nepal. This contribution is part of a larger effort to provide food and/or cash rations to over 1.9 million people, and will continue to provide assistance to remote communities that are not able to link to markets.



PHOTO: FECOFUN, HARIYO BAN PROGRAM

ACCESS TO WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

- Approximately 1.1 million people do not have access to reliable water supplies or sanitation facilities due to earthquake damage. Water systems may be further damaged in the monsoon. To date, USAID has provided more than \$2.7 million to support water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions in



PHOTO: DEREK BROWN



PHOTO: SURAJ RATNA SHAKYA-USAID

Dhading, Dolakha, Gorkha, Kathmandu, Lamjung, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, and Sindhupalchowk districts. USAID efforts include conducting hygiene promotion activities, repairing water supply infrastructure, assisting with the construction of temporary emergency latrines, and providing safe drinking water and essential WASH supplies.

- USAID's integrated nutrition program, Suaahara, helped build temporary latrines in relief camps to reduce the risk of diseases while promoting healthy behaviors such as hand washing with soap and boiling water or using chlorine solution to treat drinking water. With the help of local communities, 10 temporary latrines were built in relief camps of Betrawati and Gherkhu VDC in Nuwakot, where more than 100 families from Rasuwa have taken refuge.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

- In Nepal's 14 most-affected districts, the April 25 earthquake and aftershocks damaged more than 1,000 health facilities and affected access to health care services for nearly 5.1 million people. Relief agencies are working to increase access to health services in earthquake-affected areas, including access to reproductive and mental health services.
- USAID's integrated nutrition program, Suaahara, led emergency nutrition and WASH efforts in earthquake-affected areas, particularly in Gorkha, Sindhupalchowk, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Lamjung and Dolakha. Suaahara immediately deployed 25 Community Medical Assistants in the six priority districts and supported relief supply distribution (tarpaulins, baby kits, food, and water purification solutions) in 3 districts.
- Suaahara coordinated with UNICEF to distribute nutritional supplies for malnourished children and provided

staff training in Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies and Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition. The program created safe areas for mothers and babies to promote breastfeeding, providing individual and group counseling on nutrition and showcased food demonstrations and distributed mother-baby kits.

- Suaahara continues to provide information on health, hygiene, sanitation, reproductive health, nutrition, and breastfeeding through the BhanchhinAama radio program, a 15-minute radio program in 10 districts on 24 local FM stations as well as Radio Nepal. In this radio program, the Aama (mother) character raises concerns sent in through SMS and toll free numbers to an expert who provides an evidence-informed answer. The radio program receives approximately 600 queries per week.



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

- As of June 9, USAID's partner Handicap International reported supporting medical services for more than 1,150 earthquake-affected people across seven districts—Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, Kavrepalanchowk, Lalitpur, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, and Sindhupalchowk.
- With more women giving birth outside of health facilities with little to no access to health care and services, USAID's Chlorhexidine Navi Care program supplied 42,500 of the life-saving Chlorhexidine gel tubes for inclusion in the Clean Delivery Kits distributed in the most-affected districts.

- USAID worked with partners Save the Children and UNICEF to support the establishment of 132 child-friendly spaces in 13 of the 14 districts most affected by the earthquake, providing an estimated 12,600 vulnerable children with safe environments in which to play.
- USAID recently provided WHO nearly \$200,000 to increase access to mental health services and coordinate mental health and psychosocial support services in earthquake-affected areas. WHO plans to establish a network of trained physicians to provide mental health services in the 14 most-affected districts and collaborate with the appropriate health and protection sub-clusters to ensure a coordinated response.
- Following a rapid assessment, USAID's Saath-Saath Project provided services to People Living with HIV in Kathmandu, Kavrepalanchowk, Lalitpur and Nuwakot through Positive Prevention and Community and Home-Based Care services.
- USAID/Nepal supported Nepal Contraceptive Retail Sales Company (CRS) in distributing 72,950 sachets of Nava Jeevan (oral rehydration salts), 8,800 bottles of Piyush (water purification) and 254 Clean Delivery Kits for safe child delivery in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Dhading, Sindhupalchowk, Gorkha, Lamjung, Ramechhap, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dolakha, Okaldhunga, Solukhumbu and Tanahu.
- CRS also coordinated with the Army Police Hospital and distributed 500 sanitary napkins to displaced persons in these same districts.

LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT AND FOOD SECURITY

- In Khotang, Ramechhap, and Okhaldhunga districts, USAID's community resilience and livelihood program SABAL is implementing cash-for-work to the hardest-hit families, so they can begin the enormous task of rebuilding damaged homes and much-needed infrastructure. Working closely with the local District Disaster Relief Committees, the program is providing immediate employment income to 600 households, whose efforts have been vital in salvaging debris for temporary shelters, restoring infrastructure such as health posts, schools, and government offices, repairing damaged trails, and helping rehabilitate irrigation canals and mini-



PHOTO: BIMALA RAI COLAVITO

hydro systems. The SABAL program's cash-for-work activity will soon expand to Makawanpur and Sindhuli districts, reaching a total of 20 Village Development Committees (VDC) in the five districts.

- Also through a cash-for-work program in Sindhupalchowk's Chautara Municipality, USAID's partner, IOM, has supported the removal of approximately 10,500 cubic meters of debris – improving safety and providing essential employment income.
- USAID released \$1 million to the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center to meet the immediate needs of farm communities in the earthquake-affected districts through the Cereal System Initiative for South Asia Nepal (CSISA-NP) program. CSISA-NP is partnering with Save the Children and Hellen Keller International to provide essential agricultural supplies and technical expertise – including 50,000 grain storage bags, 40 soft plastic cocoons for community grain storage, 400 mini-tillers and other modern agriculture power tools (reapers, maize shellers, mill machines, seeders, etc.), training for local mechanics on maintenance and repairs of those tools, community garden kits, and advice on agronomy support.
- Another USAID-funded program, the Integrated Pest Management – Innovation Lab, is providing agriculture relief and rehabilitation to help minimize the suffering and economic shocks in Kavre and Lalitpur districts. The program's support includes access to supplies like seeds and seedlings, durable shelter materials, and trainings.
- Similarly, USAID's integrated nutrition program, Suaahara, is supporting the re-establishment of vegetable gardens and poultry farms in six earthquake-affected districts – Rasuwa, Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Nuwakot, Gorkha and Lamjung. The program is coordinating closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Development and other development partners in developing its response and recovery plan. Suaahara is providing vegetable seeds and helping set up community resource nurseries for village model farmers so that they can supply seeds/seedlings to households with pregnant and lactating women and children under two years of age.
- USAID's Hariyo Ban (Green Forest) Program aims to promote safer, better and green recovery in Nepal. This early-recovery initiative will include, support to local communities and GoN to restore lives, livelihoods and biodiversity with resilient practices. These interventions will help to conserve water supplies, reduce risk of landslides and floods, and promote a sustainable supply of natural resources, including building materials for local communities.

EDUCATION

- USAID signed a new award with UNICEF to support the Government of Nepal's priorities in the education sector. With \$5.1 million in assistance, USAID established over 1,000 Temporary Learning Centers and provided teaching and learning materials in the earthquake-affected



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

districts. The assistance incorporates gender-sensitive psychological support, positive care, life-saving messages, and access to separate water and sanitation facilities for girls and boys.

PROTECTION

- To increase protection against human trafficking, within the first few weeks after the April 25 earthquake, USAID's Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) program oversaw vulnerability assessments in five districts. These assessments highlighted the increased risk of exploitation, trafficking, sexual abuse, and gender-based violence (GBV) post-earthquake in already vulnerable districts.
- Then USAID/OFDA provided additional funding to expand activities of the six-year CTIP program to six additional districts (Nuwakot, Dhading, Rasuwa, Lalitpur, Ramechhap, and Dolakha) associated with an increase in risk factors for GBV, unsafe migration, and human trafficking as a result of the disaster. The interventions focus on community rehabilitation through psychosocial support, increased awareness of TIP and GBV, promotion and creation of economic/livelihood opportunities to help victims rebuild their lives, provision of legal support, and increased access to rehabilitation services and resources available from the Nepali government.
- Facilitating protection and rehabilitation, the CTIP program also began providing mobile counseling services to those in need of immediate psychosocial care in Sindhupalchowk, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, in coordination with the District Health Office. CTIP also provided immediate medical treatment and psychological first aid to the earthquake affected people in Sindhupalchowk.
- CTIP provided legal aid to four under-aged girls from Sindhupalchowk who were being taken to India with false promise of employment in Dubai.
- CTIP supported the Ministry of Women and Children's Welfare to conduct a 2-day Indo-Nepal anti-TIP workshop in Jhapa - the first in a series of four cross-border workshops in Nepal. The workshop assembled 100 state and non-state actors from the border to discuss an operational framework for addressing post-disaster challenges to TIP.
- CTIP also recently released an awareness leaflet on safeguarding oneself and family members from potential threats. The leaflet was jointly released by USAID and the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare.

GOVERNANCE

- Sajhedari Bikaas, USAID's five-year Partnership for Local Development program, recorded three public service announcements (PSAs) in mid-June on GBV prevention in emergency situations. The PSAs were aired in the 14 most affected districts through 50 FM stations.
- Also with support from the Sajhedari Bikaas project, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development issued operational guidelines on April 30 for immediate relief through local bodies in districts highly affected by the earthquake. The guidelines established a short-term committee in each VDC of the 14 most-affected earthquake districts. The mandate of the committees is allocation, mobilization, and monitoring of the disaster relief funds that were announced in each district. At the expiry of the committees in late July, Sajhedari Bikaas worked with the Ministry to renew/extend the mandate of the Authority and facilitate planning in target VDCs.
- USAID's five-year Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes (SPPELP) project prepared a radio PSA aimed at raising awareness on disability in the post-earthquake humanitarian agenda.
- The SPPELP project also supported civil society to monitor budget allocation and spending, as well as the situation of vulnerable groups in camps. The program will also complement the Nepali-led reconstruction process based on principles of decentralization of the population and resources; inclusivity of assistance programs;

transparency and accountability for aid delivery; specific methods for implementation of the plan; and extensive communication to citizens for input. Over the next 12 months, SPPELP will work closely with relevant parliamentary committees to organize reconstruction planning forums in four or five districts to gather input and suggestions from citizens, political party district-level representatives, Future Leadership Academy members, media, and local organizations.

- USAID's Singha Durbar multi-media project to promote leadership and good governance, aired several radio episodes on its show GaunGaun Ma Singha Durbar (GGSD) regarding the local government's earthquake response, as well as psycho-social concerns experienced by victims.

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

- In coordination with the GoN, USAID/OFDA continues to support UN and NGO partners to develop contingency plans and pre-position emergency relief commodities for earthquake-affected populations, as well as populations in areas at risk of flooding. To date, USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$9.8 million to strengthen logistical capacity in Nepal and provide emergency relief items to earthquake-affected households.
- USAID programs are distributing disaster risk management public service announcements through partner FM stations, including messages to 'build back better' approved by the National Society for Earthquake Technology in Nepal. ●



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

ONE DOCTOR'S STORY OF HOPE

HOW PREPAREDNESS SAVED LIVES IN NEPAL



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

For years, Dr. Pradeep Vaidya, Director of the Department of Information and Technology at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Nepal, has been a staunch supporter of disaster-preparedness. A graduate of the USAID-supported Program for the Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER), his planning and foresight helped ensure the hospital had a disaster plan in place, and was prepared to accommodate the large number of patients that needed care after the magnitude 7.8 earthquake on April 25, 2015.

We recently met to hear about his experience, learn from his methods, and gain insight into how investing in hospital staff's disaster preparedness can have a ripple effect across an organization, across a country.

With these safeguards against an emergency in place, the 300-bed Tribhuvan Teaching Hospital remained fully operational throughout the crisis.

Before beginning his presentation Dr. Pradeep excuses himself and asks someone about their family, answers a staff question, and takes a quick phone call. He firmly shakes the hand of a student, and carefully takes time to provide insight into a chart a nurse hands him. He exudes calm, despite the many agenda items he is working with this morning—a trait which undoubtedly shone during April 25th and the following weeks.

He begins, and informatively walks through Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital's Disaster Preparedness Plan, which he helped develop, illustrating the measures the hospital would take in the case of a disaster. He then transitions into how and why the plan worked following the earthquake.

He stops for a moment. The room is quiet. Participants seemingly begin reflecting on the events of April 25th.

"A lot of people were saved because of this plan," he says.

And he continues the presentation. He tells us that the Hospital Preparedness for Emergencies (HOPE) project prepares hospitals for mass casualty incidents. Before the HOPE program began, hospitals were without comprehensive disaster plans. Since the HOPE course, 11 hospitals now have a disaster plan, with Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital being one such hospital. With more than 24 areas of specialized treatment, Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital is Nepal's largest medical facility, making it strategically positioned to assist in the event of a disaster.

And the HOPE course is less than two decades old.

Since 1998, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has supported PEER to promote disaster preparedness through the development of national and regional cadres of professional emergency response instructors. PEER aims to assist local, regional, and national disaster management agencies in organizing and conducting standardized training in medical first response, community action for disaster response, collapsed structure search and rescue, and HOPE.

As Dr. Pradeep learned, during a disaster, healthcare centers can often become incapacitated due to infrastructural damage and overwhelmed facilities.

Enter the HOPE training course, which consists of 26 interactive lectures and seven exercises, targeted at medical professionals, teaching them how to handle emergencies involving mass casualties—such as those sustained in disasters.

HOPE graduates are able to design facility-specific plans to maximize their ability to manage emergency situations. The course includes but is not limited to instruction in hospital emergency incident command systems, hospital disaster planning, hospital evacuation, and management of the deceased. And Dr. Pradeep worked to implement these skills, back at his hospital.

With these safeguards against an emergency in place, the 300-bed Tribhuvan Teaching Hospital remained fully operational throughout the crisis. During the first 24 hours after the disaster, doctors and nurses treated approximately 700 patients and performed 300 surgeries at the hospital.

Dr. Pradeep looks at his watch, and gets up quickly—it's time to visit a patient. We follow him through the halls, outside, and into another building where we stop to check in at a nurses' station.

He pauses for a moment and points



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

into a supply closet—"Not one of those glass medicine bottles fell during the earthquake," he smiles, and a nurse nods in agreement.

To prepare for a natural disaster like the magnitude 7.8 earthquake, Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital improved its physical infrastructure and resiliency by fastening furniture to walls, laminating windows, and stockpiling supplies in strategic locations. These simple steps helped the hospital remain safe and functional after the earthquake. They also inspired many healthcare workers to take similar steps in their own homes.

Dr. Pradeep introduces us to Urmila, a head nurse at the hospital. She sees us looking in the supply closet, and excitedly



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

tells us how she had implemented in her own home the structural safety practices she learned from Dr. Pradeep. In a typical Nepali home, there are often several large wooden cupboards and chests that contain various family heirlooms. She reinforced these in her home by securing the furniture to the walls. And when the earthquake finally struck, she was prepared. Not one of them fell.

Many other hospital staff made similar structural reinforcements in their own homes—at Dr. Pradeep's encouragement.

We walk over to a large grey building, with a plaque on the outside crediting support of the construction to the U.S. Government. The building, Dr. Pradeep explains, houses the hospital's seismic-proof bloodbank. Finished in 2014, it was vital during the earthquake, collecting over 700 pints of blood, and distributing blood to other hospitals. Upon entering the building, Dr. Pradeep mentions to

us that the administrative team is now housed in the same building as the blood bank. As administrative offices sustained damage during the earthquake, the finance department and other support



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

staff quickly moved into the blood bank building so they could continue their administrative tasks and ensure operations ran smoothly. "Earthquake heroes, all of them," he said, stopping to shake hands and offer words of encouragement.

Even as reconstruction begins, Dr. Pradeep has not stopped spreading the word about the value of the HOPE Course, and the overall PEER program. Before the earthquake, he had taught its principles in several countries. After the earthquake, he is being asked to present on the hospital's disaster-preparedness model and emergency response at conferences.

As Nepal looks to recovery efforts, strengthening health systems by establishing emergency response and disaster plans will only help boost its future resiliency.

Just ask Dr. Pradeep—or any of his staff. ●

To read the complete photo story on USAID's Exposure site: <https://usaidpubs.exposure.col/one-doctors-story-of-hope>

EDUCATION CAN'T WAIT:

GETTING CHILDREN BACK TO SCHOOL IN NEPAL

Anjila Maharjan, age 10 and in sixth grade, confidently climbs atop the steps and takes position. A band of young boys with traditional instruments waits. As the sun steadily climbs up the sky, gentle breezes serve as a cool respite. On cue, Anjila stretches her arms out, lifts it up, back down again. The rest of the students below, lined up and spread over several rows, mimic her. The band provides steady percussion. At the Shree Rudrayanee Secondary school in Khokana village on the outskirts of Kathmandu Valley, the young student leads the morning assembly's physical training session. She is among the 150 students in Khokana who were able to get back to school in May after a five week hiatus caused by the multiple earthquakes to hit Nepal in April 2015.

Rich in cultural heritage and steeped in the Valley's traditional way of life and festivals, Khokana, like many villages across Nepal, is a small, closely-knit, agrarian community. One month after the earthquake, Khokana is slowly picking up the pieces; its main temple, a classic three-story pagoda structure, is held up with wooden beam reinforcements. The Khokana Museum, "first house with electric light" is held up with similar support and closed indefinitely. All around, homes and walls, built with mud bricks held together by mud, have crumbled. Yet, farmers prepare for the monsoon plantation season days away, artisans craft traditional metal statues, the butcher shop and the local grocery store are all bustling.

Anjila understands her good fortune. Here, close to one hundred students from her school are still largely out of contact – Many lost their homes, some their family members, and others their lives.

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake on April 25 imposed widespread physical damage and a large human toll on the Himalayan country – including the damage of over 32,000 classrooms in public and private schools. The subsequent quakes caused additional deaths and damage as well as continuing trauma. Nepal's Ministry of Education estimates that education for nearly 5 million Nepali children and youth was disrupted. The official death toll in Nepal, one of the most densely populated mountain countries in the world, currently stands more than 8,800. Another 22,000 are injured. More than 800,000 homes have been damaged or destroyed.

Last week, many schools in Kathmandu reopened their doors using newly constructed temporary classroom structures – many

Many schools in Kathmandu reopened their doors using newly constructed temporary classroom structures.



PHOTOS: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

made of indigenous material to Nepal such as bamboo – and original structures approved as "safe to use" by the Government of Nepal. Far too many children across the 14 most-affected districts, however, have no schools to return to. In Sindhupalchowk district, one of the hardest-hit areas, only 34 of the 591 schools, were able to open. Those that did open were in the form of tents and sheds where children could come to play and engage in recreational activities, all the more important after a disaster of this scale. The rest still have no structure of any kind, and many are holding class outside under the sun.

In an effort to help get children back to school as soon as possible, USAID is supporting the establishment of around 1,000 temporary learning centers. USAID is also distributing supplemental reading material and orienting teachers and school management on

life-saving messages and psychological support to students.

Coming out of two catastrophic, magnitude 7.8 and 7.3, earthquakes, Nepal needs all the support available to help build back better and build back differently. As Nepal's longest standing development partner, USAID remains firmly committed to lending support. As recovery efforts continue, aid and investments from the U.S. Government will support efforts to get the most impacted people back on their feet and to create a Nepal that is more resilient in the future. Although earthquake memories may be slow to fade away, a return to the classroom gives youth hope for a return to normal in their lives. ●

To read the complete photo story on USAID's Exposure site: <https://usaidpubs.exposure.co/education-cant-wait>

CAMP HOPE

THE START OF A NEW FUTURE



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

A young girl plays with her doll outside her family's tent at Camp Hope. More than 330 families from the Sindhupalchowk district are taking temporary shelter at the camp.

The summer sun is scorching the ground beneath our feet, and it is barely past 7:30 in the morning.

We move to a perch on an elevated platform, shaded by a large old tree. From here, we see a sweeping, yet jarring view. A horizon line of neat concrete houses, dotted with seasonal potted plants on their roofs, stands in stark contrast to fabric roofs covered in plastic tarp that dot the landscape in the foreground.

This is Camp Hope—a one square kilometer tent city in Jorpati, Kathmandu that serves as a temporary home to 330 households from five villages in the Sindhupalchowk district, just north of Kathmandu. The earthquake damaged or destroyed approximately 88 percent of houses in the district.

“We had to move,” said Sukra Tamang, an 18-year-old who now lives at Camp Hope with his family. “With all the debris and the ground shaking constantly, there was no space to even rest our feet.”

The April 25 earthquake and aftershocks displaced more than 500,000 families, uprooting the foundations of their homes and turning the hill terrain that supported their villages into rubble. Camp Hope demonstrates the positive outcomes that are possible when private and public sector partners work together.

WELCOME TO CAMP HOPE



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA-USAID

Tents made of materials strong enough to withstand monsoon season are built at Camp Hope for families displaced from their homes by the April 25 earthquake.

At the camp's main gate, young volunteers check and register all visitors before they are allowed to enter. Inside, a group of senior citizens, already freshened up and

dressed for the day, bask in the morning sun. Chickens cluck as they scurry past.

Camp Hope is alive and teeming with activities. It looks, feels, and even sounds like a village. Murmurs of conversation fill the air, people line up at the hand water pump, and children fill open spaces with laughter and play. A group of women wash clothes as the din of construction echoes in the background.

Built on a community football ground, Camp Hope is an exemplary model of private-sector led humanitarian assistance – a clear demonstration of the impact that is possible when the private sector engages with other partners.

“When we wanted to start a camp for these communities, we couldn't get any government land,” says Sangeeta Shrestha, camp founder and operator of Dwarika's, a boutique heritage hotel, owned by her family. “A local youth club came offering their football ground, so here we are.”

USAID soon stepped in with additional support. Heavy-duty plastic sheeting provided by USAID was utilized to create shelters that are strong enough to endure the monsoon season. In addition to building temporary homes for displaced families at Camp Hope, USAID provided shelter and protection for approximately 310,000 Nepalis across earthquake-affected districts.

A PARTNERSHIP OF HOSPITALITY



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

Full-stocked kitchen offers three meals a day for residents of Camp Hope.

There are many advantages when a world-class hotel owner steps in to lead and manage a shelter like Camp Hope.

“We always have a lot of resources at our disposal, and I am lucky to have my hotel team of engineers and technicians whom I could call on to help set up the camp,” said Sangeeta, who now manages the camp full-time.

Adding a bit of comfort to the lives of displaced villagers, the camp offers a fully stocked kitchen and store room tent that is maintained by Sangeeta's hotel. Camp residents are offered chicken once a week and eggs twice a week during their meals.

While shelter, food, and basic medical services address the physical needs of residents, their social and emotional needs are also important. Camp Hope offers a variety of programs and spaces to help residents as they heal. A prayer tent allows the community to continue their spiritual rituals in a minimalist manner. In the afternoon, women in the camp engage in sewing, knitting and other crafts in a facility that has been set up for training. The camp also enrolled 83 children in a local school and

regularly schedules field trips for youth.

“The plan, we hope, is to build back their villages so they can return to their communities,” said Sangeeta as she discusses what the future might hold for Camp Hope.

LOOKING AHEAD: CHARTING A ROADMAP TO REBUILD A BETTER NEPAL



PHOTO: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA-USAID

Camp Hope is designed to be a safe and comfortable space for residents.

Returning home for many of the residents of Camp Hope will be a challenge. Questions remain, about when, if, and how rebuilding of some villages may happen. Massive landslides during the April 25 earthquake completely destroyed many communities.

A discussion about the road forward—for vulnerable villages in the most affected regions and across the country—was at the forefront as the Government of Nepal convened key donors and development stakeholders together at the June 25 International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction.

As Nepal's longest standing development partner, The U.S. Government's commitment to Nepal has stood the test of time. Our pledge at the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction increases the total amount of U.S. emergency relief and early recovery assistance to \$130 million, and is only the beginning of our contribution to Nepal's earthquake recovery, which will span multiple years.

As recovery efforts continue, aid and investments from the U.S. Government will support efforts to get the most impacted people back on their feet and to create a Nepal that is more resilient in the future.

We will train Nepalis to rebuild seismically-stable houses in affected areas.

We will help build temporary learning centers for children who are learning outside in makeshift tents. Efforts are underway to establish approximately 1,000 Temporary Learning Centers in earthquake affected districts.

We are helping people rebuild livelihoods by injecting cash and strengthening agricultural systems, the economic lifeblood for nearly 75 percent of the population of Nepal. USAID jump-started early recovery—our resilience and livelihood program began cash-for-work programs within weeks of the earthquake, helping the hardest-hit families, so they can begin the enormous task of rebuilding damaged homes and much-needed infrastructure.

We will continue to protect Nepal's most vulnerable, including those susceptible to human trafficking.

We will lay the foundations for a more resilient Nepal by building institutions that can respond effectively to future disasters.

All of these efforts, along with support leveraged from the private sector, can and will help build back a better Nepal.

Those in Camp Hope know that this dream is possible. ●

To read the full story on USAID's IMPACT blog: <http://blog.usaid.gov/2015/06/setting-an-example-emblematic-of-recovery-possible-in-nepal>

INVESTING IN NUTRITION TO REDUCE POVERTY

Excerpts from USAID/Nepal Mission Director Beth Dunford's remarks at a panel discussion on "Programming to End Extreme Poverty: Evidence and Experience to Guide the Way Forward" at USAID's Extreme Poverty Summit, Washington DC in May 2015.

The most commonly accepted measure of extreme poverty is monetary – namely minimal daily individual consumption after adjustment for purchasing power. But we know that poverty is more complicated than that, and as is recognized in the Agency's definition of extreme poverty, it often entails hunger and malnutrition as well.

UNDERNUTRITION IS A LEADING GLOBAL KILLER THAT MAKES NATIONS POORER.

- Poor nutrition during a **child's first 1,000 days can have a lifelong impact, resulting in 20 percent lower lifetime earnings** and the unexpected costs of care, which divert savings from productive investments.
- Undernutrition **reduces a nation's economic advancement by at least eight percent** because of losses in direct productivity, poorer cognition, and via reduced schooling.

Given the direct impact of malnutrition on earnings, nutrition needs to be a critical component of any poverty reduction effort. The Agency has recognized the multi-dimensional aspect of poverty, and nutrition is one of the dimensions. But the importance of nutrition when addressing poverty is often overlooked. And malnutrition is a difficult problem to tackle.

Nepal has achieved one of the world's fastest declines in the prevalence of stunting. In 2001, 57 percent of Nepali children were stunted – the fourth highest rate in the world. By 2011, this was reduced to 41 percent. But this still means that we have over 1/3 of the population in Nepal that is stunted. That means that 1/3 of the population is less productive, less able to reach their full potential, and less able to pull themselves out of poverty. If we are going to contribute to the goal of ending extreme poverty, we will need everyone to be able to achieve their full potential. And thus combatting malnutrition is a big focus for us at USAID/Nepal.

What we have done is take the recommendations from the 2013 groundbreaking Lancet series on nutrition and translate all of the recommended actions – every single one – into one comprehensive, integrated program to improve the health and nutrition status of pregnant and lactating women and children under two years of age – the so-called 1,000-day households – to address the vulnerable points of development which result in stunting.

This program, called *Suaahara* or "good nutrition", is implemented by Save the Children, in conjunction with the Government of Nepal, Helen Keller International, and other partners. It is unique in that it applies the latest evidence-



PHOTO: FINTRAC INC.

based interventions in **health; nutrition; family planning; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); backyard poultry; and homestead food production at scale in over half of the districts in Nepal.**

So, for example, the same families that receive nutritional counseling and support also plant small, diversified gardens; learn about the importance of skilled birth attendance; access animal-source protein through chicken breeding; raise incomes through livestock rearing and homestead gardens; build latrines; learn how to wash hands well and dispose of solid waste; and benefit from messages on the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies. And this integrated approach is working.

But as we look at malnutrition, we have to also focus on social exclusion. Nepal's "layers of exclusion" are deeply entrenched and are primary determinants of a household's level of wealth and nutritional status. In Nepal, traditionally excluded groups include Dalits, who were historically considered an "untouchable" caste, as well as Muslims and Janajatis, or indigenous groups.

While 25% of all Nepalis live below the poverty line of \$1.25/day, this figure is much higher for disadvantaged groups, particularly Dalits. In the hills, 44% of Dalits live below the poverty line. Disadvantaged groups are also more likely to be among the extreme poor; for example, the poverty gap--or average distance below the poverty line--for poor Dalits is more than six times higher than the gap for poor Brahmins (high-caste groups). The rate of stunting among the disadvantaged group population is often as

high as 60 percent.

Thus, if we want to address malnutrition as a key factor in the elimination of extreme poverty, we need to ensure that we are reaching socially excluded groups. However, targeting these groups is not easy, as they are often the poorest of the poor and have historically suffered discrimination through the caste system or are cut off from access to basic services due to social exclusion or to their geographic remoteness. The discrimination they face means that development interventions don't often reach them.

To ensure that all 1,000-days households are reached by the Suaahara program, including the disadvantaged households, the program has fully mapped all 1,000 day households in targeted districts. Once identified, Suaahara uses multiple entry points to bring about behavior change among these households, including:

- **Female Community Health Volunteers**, mother's groups and local community structures.
- It's **Bhanchhin Aama radio serial** and call-in programs. Discussions on the Bhanchhin Aama radio program are facilitated at Citizen Awareness Centers, which are specifically established in disadvantaged communities.
- Suaahara field staff are equipped with **smartphones in order to track coverage of disadvantaged households** and conduct annual surveys to monitor the degree to which it has reached these households with interventions.

And this **deliberate outreach to disadvantaged groups** is working. Data from 2013 and 2014 show that the gap in dietary diversity narrowed. In 2013, 38 percent of Dalit children ate a minimum acceptable diet compared to 52 percent of non-Dalits.

In 2014, that gap had narrowed to two percent, with 52 percent of Dalits eating a minimal acceptable diet compared to 54 percent of non-Dalits. And if we look at data since the beginning of the program three years ago, we have seen an overall increase in those eating a minimum acceptable diet of over 18 percent. These data show that we are on track to see significant reduction in stunting in next year's Demographic Health Survey.

Thus, we are seeing that the two-pronged approach of Suaahara is paying off. It integrates all recommended efforts of the Lancet series into one program and focuses on including disadvantaged groups.

But listen to this. In addition to having a dramatic impact on malnutrition, we have found that incomes have gone up as well! In 2014-15, the sale of excess vegetables and poultry provided by Suaahara have helped Dalit families earn an additional average of \$3,500/year in Suaahara focus districts. This is in addition to their existing income. Data also suggest that beneficiaries are building assets – acquiring insurance, investing in livestock, diversifying crops – that will multiply their wealth and provide security and resilience to shocks and stresses that could push families back into extreme poverty.

The cumulative effect of these interventions through everyday improvements is what can propel extreme poverty reduction at scale, sustainably, over the long run.

WAY FORWARD: MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

And this week, as Nepal and its people marked the first month since the April 25 earthquake that killed almost 9,000 Nepalis and destroyed or damaged over 760,000 homes, our work takes on a new sense of urgency and purpose. As we know, natural disasters of this scale and magnitude have a greater impact on the most vulnerable, typically pushing more people into poverty or deeper into poverty.

The Suaahara program is operating in much of the zone impacted by the earthquake, and used their established networks to immediately deliver emergency assistance to people in need. And as the much larger emergency response has stood up, these established networks that Suaahara has created to reach all 1,000-day mothers and families have worked well. They are proving to be important for all types of assistance delivery, to ensure that disadvantaged groups that are often bypassed by public and community networks also receive urgently needed assistance.

And although it is too soon to tell, our field visits have shown us that the 1,000-day mothers and families supported by the Suaahara program are proving to be more resilient and are starting the long road to recovery. ●

BROKERING PEACE AND STRENGTHENING

NEPAL'S SOCIAL FABRIC WITH GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

The losses from the April 25 earthquake and the multiple aftershocks thereafter are profound and irreparable. Yet, as Nepal and the global community focus on building back a better Nepal, we have an opportunity to also build a more equal, just, and inclusive Nepali society. “Build back better” applies to more than just reconstruction efforts. It implies creating a space to right the gender wrongs in the country.

Nepal had been undergoing a social shift long before the April 25 quake. With men rapidly becoming migrant workers over the last decade, women steadily stepped into social decision-making roles that were never theirs traditionally. Today, this social transformation is visible across Nepal, and women’s contributions and leadership are all the more apparent.

Here, we provide a snapshot of the gender inclusion and empowerment efforts by USAID’s Conflict Mediation and Mitigation Programs.

Bal Kumari (GC), from Kawasoti, Nawalparasi was pregnant when her husband went missing during the armed conflict. Afraid for her own security, she kept quiet about her husband’s disappearance, struggling to provide for herself and her family. Nine years later, she finally found an economic lifeline after the USAID supported SAMBAD: Dialogue for Peace program helped her become a peace volunteer. More confident and optimistic, GC now counsels conflict victims and has helped many conflict-affected children receive scholarships. As a conflict victim herself, she understands their fears and grief, and is diligent and proactive in her efforts. When GC gained access to the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction’s list of conflict-affected people, she worked to identify and help those missing from that list – conflict survivors who are entitled to state benefits but were excluded. GC is also deeply committed to encouraging conflict-affected women to become entrepreneurs. Thanks to her persistence and efforts, 25 such individuals have already begun small businesses in her village. Among those, 15 are women belonging to a broad range of caste and ethnic groups. GC also went on to become a member of the government’s Municipality Level Peace Committee; her able leadership helped ensure 50 percent representation of women and conflict-affected people in the committee, paving the way for people who genuinely understand the issues to participate in decision making.

The SAMBAD: Dialogue for Peace program has worked with hundreds of other conflict-affected Nepalis like Bal Kumari GC. SAMBAD is part of the USAID-funded Conflict Mediation and Mitigation Program (CMM), which supports NGOs and civil society to address the social aspects of conflict using a person-to-person approach. With gender inequality and social exclusion identified as the primary drivers of conflict in Nepal, CMM activities focus on integrating women and disadvantaged groups into community dialogue and peace-building activities.



PHOTO: USAID SAMBAD PROGRAM

In an effort to resolve anger, frustration, isolation, stigma, and dissatisfaction with local authorities and decision making processes, SAMBAD focuses on three key areas:

- empowerment of women and marginalized groups through capacity building, psychosocial counselling and mentoring for economic engagement;
- inclusive structures of power and decision making through representation in all local and community decision making mechanisms such as village-level peace committees, citizen forums and community-based organizations; and
- relationship strengthening in the community through increased attention to sexual- and gender-based violence, and more individual and person-to-person dialogue and reconciliation.

In Kailali district in Far-Western Nepal, women are starting to break social norms for the very first time, stepping out of their households to interact with people outside their immediate family circle. Previously in Kailali district, it wasn’t okay for a woman to even interact with “strangers,” nor was it okay to conduct any activities outside the home. But now women from Durgauli in Kailali have become conflict mediators and are helping resolve disputes in their community. All this was possible in just a few months! USAID’s local governance program, Saajhedari, used inclusive strategies for mediator selection in the 11 Community Mediation Centers operating in Kailali. As a result, 45 percent of the mediators are female, of which 75 percent belong to the traditionally marginalized Terai Janajati group. All mediators were trained, but it is the women mediators who proved more active than their male counterparts; a remarkable 70 percent of the cases registered in Community Mediation Centers were resolved by women mediators.

The women mediators are also actively involved in forest user groups and ward citizen forums. They participate

in Village Development Committee (VDC) council meetings and successfully advocated for VDC budget resources to construct a vaccination center in Durgauli, helping provide better equity and access to vaccination services and cutting down on the distance women from Durgauli and adjoining VDCs must walk to vaccinate their families. “Women’s representation in Community Mediation Centers has truly been an empowering experience,” says Maria Barron, Director of USAID’s Democracy and Governance Office in Nepal. “These women are not only speaking up for their socioeconomic and political rights, but are also actively working to make things better – participating in conflict mediation and mitigation processes, fighting for inclusive local decision making, and making service delivery better.”

In Bardiya district, also in the Terai flatland close to the Indian border, members of the Kotahi Mahila Community Forest User Group (CFUG) of Dhodhari village were frustrated with their Executive Committee, citing non-inclusive and opaque decision-making processes. The Committee meetings were often held in the house of the president, and most members were left unaware of their dates and times. The decisions made were not shared with other members. Users weren’t given financial information, nor were there transparent systems in place to show how funds were used. Audit information and reports were similarly unavailable.

The CFUG members identified these as governance mismanagement and corrupt practices, and demanded a new, inclusive Executive Committee, which was established with support from the USAID-funded Inclusive Resource Management Initiative program in May 2014. The outgoing Committee, however, refused to hand over responsibilities and documents, and continued exercising their powers. Only after six months of consultations and serious involvement of senior district

leadership did the handover finally take place.

Yoga Kumari Gautam, who now heads the Executive Committee, is also the first female chairperson of the CFUG. Under her leadership, the Committee officially updated the bank account signatories. As a result of this restructuring, Kotahi Mahila CFUG has been conducting regular activities as per their own operational plan, including regular, open and participatory monthly meetings.

“We used a self-capacity assessment tool and it reflected the real status of our CFUG like a mirror,” Gautam, said, “After the self-capacity assessment, we’ve been able to make plans to improve how we manage and run our CFUG as per the assessment findings, and that has helped strengthen our CFUG.”

Currently, in coordination with the District Forest Office, the CFUG is implementing a forest animal shelter management program. At the regular CFUG monthly meetings, members discuss their community-endorsed economic and natural resource management initiatives. The Executive Committee is gender-, caste-, and ethnically-diverse. It has also been able to involve user groups in monthly meetings to make participatory, transparent decisions, which they recognize as being critical to trust building.

The new Committee also made a collective decision to open the forest every Saturday for firewood and other forest product collection for daily usage, according to their CFUG policies. Users are now much more aware that the conservation of their forest resources is their collective responsibility. Members of the community at large, as well as of the CFUG, appear to understand that women in leadership roles, can help improve governance and transparency, which together help mitigate conflict.

It is clear that decision-making structures have to be inclusive, participatory and transparent in order to reflect the needs and interests of various stakeholders. Women and marginalized group representation and participation in democratic decision-making has strengthened community ownership. When problems are addressed by a community well represented, with a little bit of external mediation support, they can be resolved creatively and by local actors.

The quake has placed an unprecedented burden and responsibility on Nepali women. In many villages, women have been at the forefront, clearing debris, rebuilding shelters, and providing for their families — all this, at a time when they would be focused on planting for the monsoon season. But when women are empowered, society becomes stronger. At USAID, we are honored to play a part in the lives of so many strong, resilient Nepali women who have so eagerly embraced the opportunity to provide a better future for their families and for their communities.

Learn more about USAID GESI efforts <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment> ●

NEPAL'S WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

RHINO POPULATION INCREASE AND YET ANOTHER 365 DAYS OF ZERO POACHING

Recently, Nepal announced some positive news from the recent rhino census: a 21 percent increase in the population, and zero poaching instances between May 4, 2014 and May 3, 2015.

RHINO POPULATION UP, RHINO POACHING DOWN

According to a press release from Nepal's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), in the last four years, the population of greater one-horned rhinos has increased by 21 percent, from 534 to 645 rhinos, and poaching has dropped even more significantly, with only one rhino killed in 2012 and one in early 2014. These numbers were verified during a recent official census performed by the Government of Nepal, with financial support from USAID through the Hariyo Ban (Green Forest) program.

Counting the number of rhinos in Nepal is a difficult task. According to Dr. Maheshwar Dhakal, Under Secretary of the DNPWC, "Thirty-four elephants and 134 staff were deployed for nearly a month-long census starting from April 7, 2015 to May 2, 2015. Altogether, 1,024 elephant-days and 5,099 man-days were expended to carry out the count." The count continued despite the April 25 earthquake. Elephants are critical for accessing the core of the national parks, which is too difficult and too dangerous to visit on foot due to the large tiger population. Chitwan National Park alone is home to 160 Royal Bengal Tigers, with a total national population of 198 as per the 2013 census. Still, according to Judy

Oglethorpe, Chief of Party of USAID's Hariyo Ban

program, counting has become easier in recent years due to the addition of "ID-based monitoring". In ID-based monitoring, rangers are trained to identify individual rhinos, and track them regularly. This form of

monitoring was introduced in Chitwan National Park two years ago, with support and training by Hariyo Ban staff.

SAVING WILDLIFE REQUIRES TEAMWORK

Mr. Tika Ram Adhikari, Director General of DNPWC, said "Increasing the rhino population is a result of team work." Saving a species requires participation from many different actors, and the success in Nepal is



PHOTOS: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA - USAID

due to the high level of coordination between the Nepal Army, National Park staff, the Nepal Trust for Nature Conservation (a quasi-governmental organization), NGOs like World Wildlife Fund, law enforcement agencies, and local communities. The last piece – gaining the trust and support of communities – is critically important, as community buy-in and pride in their wildlife heritage are necessary to reduce outside threats.

Community-Based Anti-Poaching Units are a relatively new effort in Nepal to engage communities in the management and protection of wildlife in the buffer zones around the parks. Protecting the buffer zone makes protecting the core conservation area much easier for park staff. USAID has been a major supporter in the creation of these units, which rapidly grew from a few dozen to more than a thousand over the past few years. During a recent interaction with a Community-Based Anti-Poaching Unit supported by

USAID, located outside of Annapurna Conservation Area, the USAID Environment Team Leader learned of the group's success and pride in their work. "We coordinate our patrols with the village on the far side of the valley so we can cover all the forests," Mr. Durga Prasad Poudel, the chairperson of the community forest told visitors. "Since we've been patrolling we no longer see lights [of poachers] in the forest at night, and we've noticed a lot more barking deer."

The pride in Mr. Poudel's voice when describing the Community-Based Anti-Poaching Unit's success and the value he places in having wildlife in his forest is another piece of conservation efforts. He feels the loss of a few crops is a small price to pay for the value of having a healthy population of barking deer in his forest. Human-wildlife conflict— which can happen when people encroach on wildlife habitats, or in the case of Nepal, where conservation success

leads to wildlife leaving their protected areas – can undermine conservation efforts because it leads to discontent in local communities over the presence of a protected area. Community discontent can even lead to retaliatory killing or aiding and abetting of poachers. Building community pride in the resource can help lessen the discontent.

Nepal's success in countering poaching and protecting its parks is evident in the increase in wild rhino populations. In January 2015, Nepal marked another success against wildlife crime when the notorious rhino poacher Raj Kumar Praja was arrested in Malaysia and deported to Nepal. This is also a remarkable success for coordinated efforts by INTERPOL, the South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network, and Nepali authorities. With such success comes the risk of increased human-wildlife conflict. For example, earlier this year, on March 30, a rogue rhino made its way into the large town of Hetauda, north of Chitwan National Park. The rhino killed one person before being chased away by DNPWC staff on elephants. However, Nepal, with USAID support, will continue to maintain the teamwork necessary to mitigate that conflict and protect the wildlife. USAID is continuing to support these priorities, especially in the wake of Nepal's recent earthquake.

BUILDING NEPAL BACK GREENER

The USAID-funded Hariyo Ban program, upon the request of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, and with active participation of other sectoral ministries, was actively involved in the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) process and provided technical assistance for a Rapid Environment Assessment. The assessment team, headed by Dr. Shanker Sharma, former Vice-Chairperson of the National Planning Commission and former Ambassador of Nepal to the U.S., drafted 10 principles of Green, Resilient, Recovery and Reconstruction to include in the PDNA process, aiming to ensure that reconstruction and recovery activities help Nepal build back greener.

The Hariyo Ban program was also heavily involved in relief and early recovery activities and reached about 5,000 people (49 percent women) in earthquake-affected communities with relief and temporary recovery items in Lamjung, Gorkha, Rasuwa, Dhading, and Nuwakot districts. USAID's Hariyo Ban program, while essential to protect wildlife and biodiversity, is also committed to Nepal's earthquake relief and recovery. ●

In the last four years, the population of greater one-horned rhinos has increased by 21 percent.

TOWARDS HEALTHIER MOTHERS AND NEWBORNS

TEACHING THE LATEST NEWBORN CARE TECHNIQUES IN NEPAL

GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME

Health care in Nepal has made huge gains in the past two decades, particularly among mothers and children. Since 1990, the infant (child up to 12 months old) mortality rate has fallen by nearly 58 percent, and mortality among children under five has dropped by almost 67 percent.*

Much of this success is thanks to the efforts of the women who work as auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs). Throughout the country, thousands of ANMs provide care to mothers and newborns (children up to 28 days) during labor and teach mothers how to give the best possible care to their children in the days following delivery. Now a newly-revised ANM training curriculum promises to make them even better at improving safe delivery, newborn care and management of complications.

MEET ALINA AND SONU

Alina Panday and Sonu Sherpa are instructors at Om Health Campus in Kathmandu, where they teach first- and second-year ANM students. Because safe delivery remains such a challenge among much of Nepal's population, strengthening health workers' ability to identify and address problems during delivery is a critical issue. USAID's Health for Life project (H4L) works together with the Ministry of Health and Population behind the scenes to improve Nepal's health outcomes, particularly for mothers and children. One of their recent efforts has been a revision of the national ANM curriculum, with the goal of identifying gaps and adding the latest information and techniques.

Sonu and Alina, along with other instructors all over Nepal, are among the first to use the revised curriculum. After attending a series of trainings on new techniques, they are now teaching their students the skills they will need to help deliver healthy newborns. "This curriculum is clearer and more focused," says Alina. "It makes it easier to teach and the students learn better."

BETTER SKILLS, HEALTHIER NEWBORNS

Despite the encouraging gains made in maternal and child health, the newborn mortality rate remains quite high in Nepal, with little to no decline in the last decade.* Almost two-thirds of all deliveries occur at home in generally unhygienic conditions, increasing the risk of maternal death and neonatal infection – which is the leading cause of death among newborn babies. Far too many women in Nepal are dying every day of childbirth-related causes – many of



which are preventable or manageable.

The revised curriculum places special emphasis on the latest skills needed to care for newborns in their first hours of life. "This curriculum includes new content on newborn examination, danger signs and their management," Sonu explains. "This really helps in identifying problems with newborns, and early identification of problems will help to reduce neonatal mortality and morbidity."

Based on new research and global evidence, techniques such as "kangaroo mother care" (immediately swaddling newborns on the mother's chest) and newborn resuscitation have been introduced into the curriculum. Effective innovations like applying Chlorhexidine gel (an antiseptic) after cutting the umbilical cord have also been included. Other parts of the curriculum have been expanded

and clarified to ensure that ANMs have the tools and skills they need for mothers and babies to stay healthy.

After the April 25 earthquake, the life-saving Chlorhexidine antiseptic gel became available in Kathmandu's Maternity Hospital in Thapathali with support from the USAID-supported Chlorhexidine Navi Care Program. The innovative, low-cost gel has been shown to reduce infant mortality by roughly 23 percent, is already available in 56 districts, and is in the process of scaling up to all 75. USAID helped develop the gel and is now working with the Government of Nepal (GON) to make it available to all of the country's mothers free of cost.

In response to the earthquake, as many health facilities were damaged and more women are thought to be giving birth outside of health facilities with little

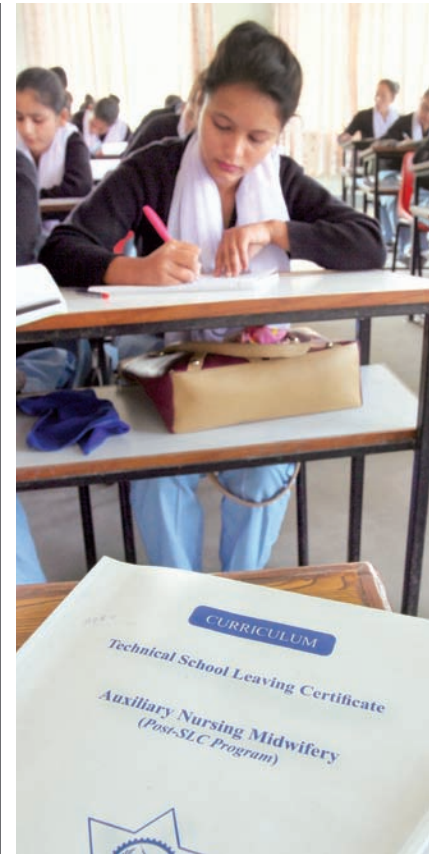


PHOTO: S JACOB KASELL/HEALTH 4 LIFE

to no access to health care and services, the Chlorhexidine Navi Care Program also supplied 42,500 Chlorhexidine gel tubes for inclusion in the Clean Delivery Kits distributed in the most-affected districts.

In addition to continuing its focus on improved curriculum, H4L also provided technical assistance to the GoN in areas of reproductive health, child health and communication in Kathmandu in the aftermath of the quake, as well as promoted supply chain management of emergency health commodities, reaching 54 health facilities.

As more and more instructors use the improved curriculum, the young women who are training to become ANMs today will be better prepared than ever before to provide the best possible care to newborns and their mothers. Over the course of this year, the revised curriculum will be introduced to all 44 ANM schools in Nepal.

"The focus on newborn assessment and the new elements relating to newborn care will make future ANMs more confident in identifying problems," says Sonu. Although the changes to the curriculum have only recently been introduced, both instructors and students seem excited about it. "I feel proud that I can help educate my students," Sonu says. "Through them I am helping to create a healthier Nepal!" ●

*Nepal MDG Progress Report 2013, Government of Nepal/United Nations (Kathmandu, 2013). Story by Jacob Kasell.