

## NEPAL EARTHQUAKE UPDATE

October 2015

"Oxfam's Humanitarian response provided life saving supplies to individuals and communities in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Looking forward, the response presents a chance to support people to be directly involved in improving their own wellbeing and that of their communities, to foster solidarity and social cohesion, and to reconstruct in a safer and more sustainable way."

John Augsburger, Humanitarian Programme Director, Nepal

### Situation Overview

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015 an earthquake struck Nepal, measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale, bringing devastation to one of the poorest countries in the world. Just over two weeks later, a second earthquake of similar magnitude struck. Nearly **9,000** people were killed, with over **22,000** injured. More than **600,000** houses were totally destroyed, and a further **290,000** were damaged, leaving hundreds of thousands of families without shelter and with the monsoon season fast-approaching.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, getting basic, life-saving supplies to individuals and communities was the first priority. Although the humanitarian situation has improved over the past three months, providing those affected with shelter, food and livelihoods support, water and sanitation and protection remains paramount. The cold and damp monsoon weather has made survivors even more vulnerable and reaching those in need of help is a continuing challenge. With Nepal's winter approaching, the delivery of winterization kits to those living in the mountains is a key concern.

As of the end of September, 530,000 people are still acutely food insecure, while 81,000 households (400,000 people) living in high altitude areas need durable shelter and winterisation NFIs before the winter.

Oxfam has so far been able to reach over 445,000 people: over 54,000 emergency and improved shelter kits have been distributed; more than 35,000 people have benefitted from chlorinated water distribution; almost 8,000 latrines have been constructed, reaching over 116,000 people; and around 17,000 farmers have been helped with accessing rice seeds, to replenish supplies that were destroyed.

We are now transitioning from immediate emergency relief to longer-term recovery, making sure that the recovery work meets people's needs, both now and in the future.



Junkiri Roka (75) of Ghairung VDC in Gorkha shares about the struggles and difficulties that she faced post earthquake.

Junkiri is one of the 94,109 beneficiaries (47,005 women and 47,104 men) in Gorkha district who received essential support from Oxfam.

Photo: Deependra Bajracharya / Oxfam

## How we are responding

Both in the immediate emergency phase of our response, and the transition to the recovery phase, we are working in four key programme areas: Shelter; Food and Livelihoods; Gender; and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).

## Shelter

Figures show that more than 600,000 houses were totally destroyed, and a further 290,000 were damaged; women, the elderly, people living with disabilities and female headed households are likely to find rebuilding their houses more challenging.

After conducting rapid assessments to establish the needs of the affected communities, Oxfam started providing shelter kits three days after the earthquake. Areas with extensive shelter damage were selected for Oxfam's Improved Shelter Programme, and distribution of improved shelter kits began in early July. Emergency shelter kits comprise tarpaulins and ropes, while improved temporary shelter kits include corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) sheets and roofing accessories, along with toolkits.

Oxfam partners provided training to carpenters, masons and local women to construct improved temporary shelters. Safe shelter awareness sessions have also been run, to increase knowledge of safe construction techniques among members of the community. On the basis of need and availability of materials, we have also provided cash instead of CGI sheets and toolkits in some areas.

The immediate priority was to provide a roof for families before the rainy season. To move towards more permanent shelter in the longer-term, and with a focus on the approaching winter, we plan to provide items to insulate shelter such as thermal floor mats and groundsheets, blankets, mattresses and hot water bottles, as well as sheeting to help waterproof shelters. Shelter for livestock and household granaries are also planned where applicable, in addition to training on seismic resistant building methods.



**Eighteen-year-old Sangita Thami has already built 26 improved temporary shelters. “On one hand I can do something productive for earthquake affected community people in my area. On the other, it’s a unique skill I have gathered as I can construct a house whenever there’s a need,” she says. In Nepal, it is usually men who are involved in construction works. Around 20 women have been trained in shelter construction in Sindupalchowk district alone.**

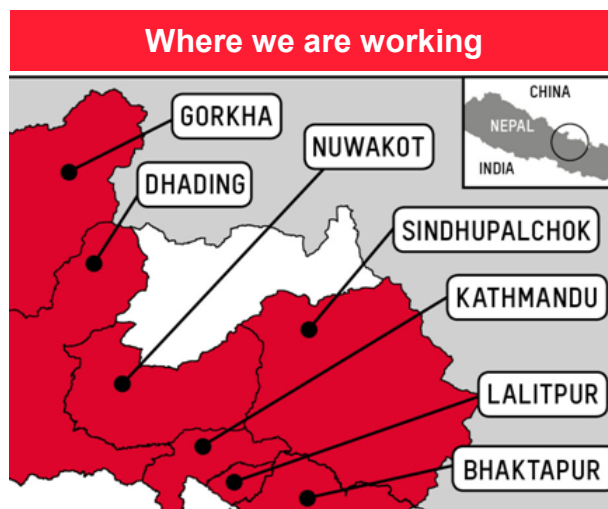
*Photo: Catherine Mahony / Oxfam*

## Food and Livelihoods

The earthquake impacted the livelihoods of around 2.3 million households and 5.6 million workers across the affected districts. The food security (having access to and control over enough food to live a healthy and active life) of many was severely disrupted, with an estimated 530,000 people still acutely food insecure.

Oxfam has been working on helping people recover their livelihoods, by restarting economic activities for individuals and communities. During the emergency phase of the response, distributions of staple food supplies took place, alongside rice seeds and agricultural tools for farmers whose own supplies were lost or damaged in the earthquake. Cash for work programmes were also run to engage people with debris clearance.

In the recovery phase, there will be an increase of cash-based programmes, seeking to also support non-agriculture-based livelihoods. These programmes will focus on a number of areas: trader grants to provide capital and training for people who want to restart or rehabilitate existing businesses (which in turn will also help to restart employment opportunities for wage-labourers); the regeneration and maintenance of community infrastructure; and support to market and financial systems as a means of livelihood recovery.



After the earthquake Dil Badhur Nuwakoti was able to buy 5 kg of rice seed, fertiliser and pesticides through Oxfam's agri-input voucher programme. He said, "Now my level of stress has reduced because I don't have to worry about food and I can cultivate my own farm." The support from Oxfam will allow him to concentrate on rebuilding a home for his family, and to try and build back stronger in the long term.

Photo: Oxfam

## Gender

Of the total houses damaged by the earthquake, 26% belong to female-headed households. Not only that, but women own only around 19% of housing and land, which puts them at risk of being excluded from the housing reconstruction programmes. In response, Oxfam has been looking at how all areas of our work affect vulnerable women and men, ensuring that they are not put at further risk, and have equal access to facilities and goods.

For women who have been displaced or otherwise affected by the earthquake, we have provided items and amenities specifically aimed at ensuring their security and dignity, such as gender friendly hygiene kits, separate toilets for women, safe bathing spaces, and awareness raising activities to help women get relevant legal documents. In particular, these activities have been aimed at supporting single and elderly women, women with disabilities, pregnant women, and those at risk of domestic or gender based violence.

As we move into the recovery phase of the response, there is a focus on providing women with targeted support through counselling and referral services, reactivating and strengthening existing women's groups, and empowering women through life skills training and activities to strengthen their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Of the 11,288 water supply systems in the 14 most affected districts, 1,570 (14%) sustained major damage, and 3,663 (32%) were partially damaged. Approximately 220,000 toilets were partially or totally destroyed. This has significantly reduced access to suitable sanitation facilities and compromised access to safe, clean water.

In order to reduce the risks of WASH-related diseases, and promote better community health, Oxfam has been repairing and rehabilitating water sources and restoring access to potable water in hard-to-reach areas. Latrines have been constructed or repaired, and hygiene kits containing essential items have been distributed. In camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), we have been distributing chlorinated water, and more widely radio programmes have been utilised for disseminating public health messages.

During the first phase of the emergency response, Oxfam teams sought to reach the most vulnerable and remote communities. We were able to set up strategic bases in areas that would be inaccessible during the monsoon season, with local teams and contingency stocks in place.

We are now working towards sustainable water and sanitation provision, including water rehabilitation in schools, and major repair and rehabilitation of damaged water supplies in the hill districts. We also plan to achieve sustainable sanitation in alignment with the Government of Nepal's policies for Open Defecation Free (ODF) Nepal, which include semi-permanent latrine construction at the household level, and the safe and hygienic disposal of waste. Re-establishing Water User Committees will also form part of our ongoing WASH work.



Sushila Lama, 23, and Deepak, 12, take water from a tank installed by Oxfam. The tank supplies ten temporary houses in the village of Burunchili, Kathmandu.

Over two thirds of the houses in the village were destroyed by the earthquake. Oxfam has helped the residents of Burunchili by supplying them with water storage, toilets and hygiene kits.

*Photo: Sam Tarling / Oxfam*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR WORK.**