



GOPEN RAJ

# DATELINE: SINDHUPALCHOK

The 25 April earthquake can now unofficially be renamed the Sindhupalchok Tragedy, such was the scale of death and destruction in this district northeast of Kathmandu. Twelve other districts were devastated by the earthquake, too, but Sindhupalchok's rolling hills, scenic rivers and stupendous mountains were the hardest hit. (page 3)

It is also the district with one of the highest rates of out

migration, which means that in village after village flattened two weeks ago, our reporters saw mostly women, children and the elderly picking up the pieces. This family (pic, above) of only a child and her grandparents retrieves what is left of their food from the ruins of their home in Falping Danda on Monday. (page 14-15)

This 'no-man's land' is now in ruins. Sindhupalchok's migrant workers in Kathmandu, the Gulf and Malaysia were saved in the disaster, and will be sending

home cash to rebuild. But the destruction will also amplify the push factor for more young men and women to leave. (page 13)

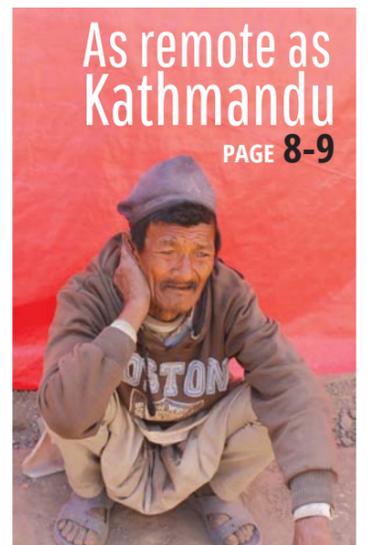
The earthquake also erased the geography, the outskirts of Kathmandu were as remote as northern Gorkha in terms of receiving relief supplies.

**INSIDE Times**  
SINDHUPALCHOK  
FOCUS

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AS REMOTE AS KATHMANDU - A MULTIMEDIA PACKAGE



## What is Drop, Cover, and Hold on ?



Large earthquake may strike any time. If we adopt safe behavior during earthquakes our lives can be saved. "Drop, Cover, and Hold on" is one of the effective ways practiced worldwide to be safe from earthquake while you are inside home, office or school.

Be Prepared. Stay Safe.



For more information on Earthquake Safety  
**National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET)**  
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An initiative under NSET implemented program "Promoting Public Private Partnership for Earthquake Risk Management (3PERM)" supported by USAID/OFDA

# NEEDED: A MARSHALL PLAN

In all the criticism about the slow government response to the 25 April earthquake, what many forget is that governance in Nepal was a disaster zone even before the earthquake. Slow delivery of services, lack of coordination, mismanagement, ad hoc decisions and corruption have been the hallmarks of our soft state. Despite the restoration of democracy and regular elections, accountability has somehow always fallen between the cracks. Leaders who traditionally thrived on patronage have felt no need for performance-based legitimacy.

Although it can't be an excuse, poor management of earthquake relief was a given. Why were we even surprised? How could we expect the Nepali state to become the epitome of efficient management and speedy delivery overnight, just because there was an earthquake? In an ideal state, elected leaders would be forced to be decisive, to prioritise and act to ameliorate the massive suffering caused by this disaster. It would have streamlined procedures to receive maximum assistance instead of creating hurdles, it would have expedited delivery of urgent medical and food supplies to remote areas instead of letting it pile up at the airport, it would have encouraged donations to pour in instead of creating obstacles and obfuscation.

Instead, what we saw were politicians and bureaucrats showing the same inertia and lethargy as they have during 'normal' times. They pushed paper, waited for rubber stamps and 'clearance from higher-up authorities' as if it was just another humdrum day in our banana republic. All right, we'll say it: the bureaucratic delays in the initial days after the quake cost lives. The earthquake killed people, red tape killed many of the survivors.

**SHORT-TERM:** Emergency food, medicine and shelter  
**MEDIUM TERM:** Semi-permanent housing, seeds for planting season  
**LONGTERM:** Reconstruction, jobs



KUNDA DIXIT

Then there are the politicians. There are? We haven't seen them since the earthquake. This would have been a time for the top leaders, ministers, elected members of the Constituent Assembly, to be observed to be doing something. Politicians thrive during times of disasters to demonstrate their crisis management skills. Even cynical politicians will "never let a serious crisis go to waste" as former White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel once notoriously put it. Here in post-earthquake Nepal we didn't even see many examples of leaders exhibiting the energy to even do token relief. The Prime Minister toured Sindhupalchok by air 10 days after the earthquake, Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been holed up in a secluded villa in Man Bhavan for the past week, and only briefly gate-crashed a relief distribution event organised by the Guru Dwara. The President, it must be said, shunned media attention and made low-key personal visits to ruins of Kathmandu's historic heart.

And when the politicians and the government did act decisively, it was to spread even more hopelessness and confusion. Just like the famously absurd sound bite by a palace official after the royal massacre in 2001 about it having been caused by the "accidental discharge of an automatic weapon" this time too, officials were busy shooting themselves in the foot every time they opened their mouths.

The Central Bank issued a dreadful statement that all earthquake aid had to be channeled through the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund ("otherwise they will be seized") that immediately halted most emergency cash donations from abroad. The PMO tried to clarify it was only for NGOs set up after 25 April for earthquake relief, but its interpretation sowed even

## YOUR SAY

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### SHAKING THINGS UP

We need to demand better governance ('Shaking things up', Editorial, #756). We need to be more responsible (like not building houses taller than three storey for starters). We need to educate our children, if they have to be migrant laborers, then why not emigrate as doctors and engineers?

**Namah**

■ Sher Bahadur Deuba was the one who denied local elections 18 years ago when he was the prime minister. It is because of him that people are dying in remote areas, not from the earthquake but due to lack of food and medicine in the absence of local government.

**BK Sharma**

■ We treat politics as a spectator sports. How about running for office, even if just to shake things up, rather than treating it as something dirty and commenting from afar? Maybe if we got involved, even if for few years, with a sense of service, change will happen. If we taught young people that being a politician is about serving people maybe there will be cracks in the attitude of the old guard.

**Krista**

The author's description of the country's power politics, the constant wrangling over who should be the next prime minister, how federalism should be structured, the frequent calling of band is more than 'politics', they are indicators of these people being unfit for the purpose because they lack the cognitive and moral aspects actually needed to be a politician in the first place. Everything including the education system, the healthcare system, and infrastructure has suffered because of these unqualified leaders.

**Brian Metters**

### SLOW START

It is easy to describe, but harder to prescribe, and even harder to implement ('A slow start', David Seddon, #756). You just described what occurred (or is occurring), but what is your prescription? How would you do it better? Please list/suggest. Otherwise, it is merely an arm-chair criticism from your comfy couch in your living room (probably getting all your information from Al Jazeera and internet posts, with all their own biases in reporting), while others are working their butts off in the terrible conditions on ground. A 7.8 quake would have overwhelmed any densely populated area, and Nepali and international relief and aid workers are doing their best under the

circumstances, considering the baseline situation from which they have to operate.

**Criticisms**

■ There are questions to be asked later but wrong to say there were no preps or stockpiles. And it was a huge earthquake.

**Laurie Lee**

### COMING OUT STRONGER

Not sure if we will come out stronger from this earthquake ('Coming out stronger from crisis', Anjana Rajbhandary, #756). In few months, we will go back to living as usual, confined into our comfortable surroundings, caring only about our nearest and dearest ones, and hoping only to get out of the country to find a greener pasture elsewhere. The sense of unity for a common good is inexistent. Otherwise we would have gotten rid of our leaders a long time ago.

**Hurray**

■ Anjana's article seems to console and give some kind of encouragement only, but the fact is without a change in leadership or the attitude of our self-centred politicians, recovering from the disaster is going to take the longest time, if at all.

**Tashi**

■ Nepal also needs psychological help, not just physical and economic help.

**Bhawana Lama**

### KUMARI

It looks as if the author is condoning the Kumari pratha ('Thanking the Living Goddess for life', Min Ratna Bajracharya, #756). Being an atheist, I do understand the value of religion at this important event surrounding us. Religion may give us psychological healing at this time and we need that. But there are limits to where religion can take us. As the famous astronomer Carl Sagan said "It is good to keep an open mind but not so open that your brains fall out".

**Ketan Jung Dulal**

### MAPPING THE AFTERMATH

The incredible power and potential of open source data and technology is illustrated here ('Mapping the aftermath', Ayesha Shakya, #756). The Kathmandu Living Lab - a volunteer initiative - has played an important role in identifying the needs of those affected in the days since the quake.

**Wanda Vivequin**

### PM FUND

The government is not holding any organised and

more confusion. Then some wiseguy in government said we don't need any more aid. Not to be outdone, another smartass told foreign rescue workers "we don't need you anymore we can handle it ourselves". The government is the subject of ridicule across the world, it is squandering the goodwill that Nepal and Nepalis command internationally – testament to which is the tremendous and prompt delivery of relief flights.

To be sure, this was a disaster that would have overwhelmed even the most efficient, best-prepared and well-endowed government. The impact zone is vast and rugged, settlements are widely scattered, you'd need hundreds of helicopters to reach every nook and cranny where there are survivors in dire need of emergency relief. And although it started slow, there are signs that the government is getting its act together in streamlining customs and expediting delivery of supplies. The Army and Armed Police together have 120,000 personnel deployed in the 12 districts, and by all accounts have gone beyond the call of duty, despite their own family tragedies, in search, rescue and ferrying supplies. Civil society, individuals, overseas Nepalis and the private sector have stepped in to fill the gaps.

The Nepal government has got its work cut out. In the short-term there is still the need to get emergency food, medicine and shelter to the areas where they are most needed. In the medium term, we will have to turn our attention to semi-permanent housing as well help with seeds for the planting season as the rainy season approaches. This is of vital importance so subsistence farmers who have lost their granaries have something to eat in the coming year and will not have to depend on outside food aid. Then there is the colossal need for reconstruction of the 300,000 homes and 15,000 schools that have been destroyed.

This needs a Marshall Plan type movement with seamless coordination between the government, local bodies, the international community, the UN and the multilateral agencies. By now we have plenty of lessons learnt from Haiti to Haiyan about how to best manage the rehabilitation of vast populations. No two countries are alike, but there are red flags about where things went dreadfully wrong elsewhere, and why things worked brilliantly in places.

Minister of Supplies Sunil Thapa has decades of experience handling emergencies around the world for UNHCR. Similarly, we have many Nepalis recently retired from UN relief agencies, or are about to do so, whose expertise and experience we can tap. The legislation to set up a Disaster Management Authority that has been languishing for five years now needs to be speeded up.

But more than anything else, we in Nepal need to turn this tectonic shift into a paradigm shift in the way we govern ourselves, how we plan, move towards a renewable energy economy, be more self-sufficient, enforce urban planning, zoning and safe housing regulations, and decentralise decision-making.

Nepal has turned into a no-man's land because of overseas out migration. Village after village devastated by the earthquake have only women, children and the elderly. Post-earthquake reconstruction will need able-bodied men, and this could be an opportunity to stem the tide of migration by offering well-paying jobs at home, and to make it worthwhile for others already abroad to return.

Nepalis are used to hardships. We have a tremendous sense of national pride and a sense of self-worth. Our community ties bind us together and offer hope and solidarity in this time of great need. Now our national leadership must help the people who elected them so they can get back on their feet again.



ANURAG ACHARYA

# Rising from the rubble

"Come back next year, I promise you we will have rebuilt this place."

Nearly two weeks after the devastating earthquake Bal Sundar Khatri and his father Ramji Khatri are still sifting through the rubble of their house in Sindhupalchok, looking for anything that can be salvaged.

Bal Sundar works for Nepal Police and was posted in Kathmandu when the earth beneath him shook at noon of 25 April. "I was helping with rescue in the capital when my wife called to say that our two-year-old son had been killed when our house collapsed," says Bal Sundar.



**BY THE WAY**  
Anurag Acharya

It was nightfall by the time he reached his home to see that he had lost his child, his home, and most of his livestock.

Gyanu Sapkota, 28, of Khatrihok is among the fortunate few. When the quake hit, she rushed into the house to save her son, but the roof above her fell on her head. She remained conscious and held on to her baby. She was rescued by neighbours several hours later.

Gore Sarki wasn't so lucky. His 4-year-old daughter was killed. His wife had just left him, and no one has seen him after he cremated Bhawana that afternoon.

Kamal Khadka, Suman Khadka and Bishnu Khadka were also mourning the death of their father when I reached the village of Maticchaur. The family was preparing the field for maize when their father went home for lunch. He was in the alley, surrounded by houses when the walls collapsed. For 24 hours, the family and neighbours searched for him in the ruins. The next day four soldiers had come to search for a relative, but they were too exhausted to help. "They said they'd come back, but never did," Kamal said.

In Khatrihok, hundreds of villagers lined up patiently at the village school for food being distributed by Teach for Nepal, which lost one of its teachers, Sujita Chaudhary. She was a science teacher at the local Bhimsen Secondary School and died when her house collapsed.

"It is an emotional moment for us, coming to the village where we lost one of our own," said Siri Hang Rai, one of the volunteers for Teach for Nepal.

At least 12 people were killed in Khatrihok and an unknown number of cattle were lost. Nearly all the 126 houses have been razed to the ground. Karkitar lost 11 people, Maajhi Gaun 60, Mure 6 and four died in Sukute.

Unlike other parts of Sindhupalchok, where locals dumped livestock and even human bodies into the river, here they observed proper last rites for the dead, and dug a mass grave to bury the cattle.

It was getting dark and six families camping in the open offered me to share their tent close to the debris, which was once their home. Two tarpaulin sheets were mounted over a hastily built wooden frame, secured with plastic ropes.

A thunderstorm brought a downpour which seeped in through the plastic roof. Sacks of grain were hastily covered so they wouldn't get wet. But rain wasn't the only worry. The cattle were restless because of wild animals in the forest, and they kept us awake at night. Amazingly, the family still kept their sense of humour and cracked self-deprecating jokes about their plight.

Next afternoon as I said goodbye to the family, a respected elderly figure in Khatrihok, Ram Kumar KC, shook my hand and told me: "We opened motorway tracks in these mountains with our bare hands, we built schools and brought electricity. The earthquake may have stalled our progress. But come back next year, I promise you we will have rebuilt this village again." @AnuragAcharya

Times

THIS WEEK



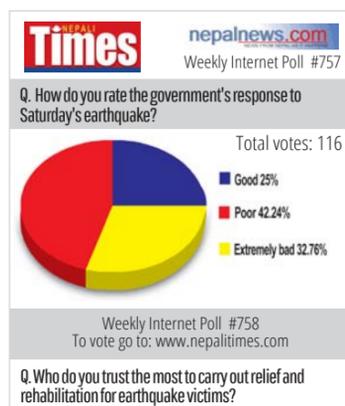
**Most liked on Facebook**  
Aircraft for relief by Bikram Rai (110 likes)

**Most shared on Facebook**  
Mapping the aftermath by Ayesha Shakya (63 shares)

**Most popular on Twitter**  
Two earthquakes in one lifetime by Sonia Awale (135 retweets, 88 favourites)

**Most visited online page**  
Giving to the living (6,565 views)

**Most commented**  
A slow start by David Seddon (13 comments)



regular press conference for the national and international press and its people ('Real story on PM Relief Fund', nepalintimes.com). So instead rumours take over. Press conferences should be held for all matters and most importantly to give updates on relief efforts in all villages. The ministers, who are appearing in TV interviews, are ill-prepared, ill-advised and thus utter words they should not be saying at this time of crisis. The country is going through one of the worst natural, and now a humanitarian disaster, and the government is not giving out proper and accurate information. Schedule a daily or even twice a day press conference and let people know exactly what is happening, how all relief efforts are being coordinated, and so forth including any new policies you introduce.

Jeet Joshee

Agreed!! The Govt must also be held accountable for transparency of the PM Relief Fund, its effective and efficient disbursement (no string attached) to all devastated by the earthquake.

Yalam

BARPAK

Nothing can be made quake proof ('Barpak in ruins', FTNP, #756). If one is close enough, one is vulnerable. Yet I ask this: Did they follow National Building Code and Building Bye-Laws when constructing their houses? Did they have a formal town planner who designed the road widths, sewer canals, etc? Did their official buildings have robust fault tolerant, high availability telecommunication devices? The new Nepal, which must be built, must not be constructed in the same way. Let us brainstorm, come up with a new template for town and city design. That just might save us when the real big one comes around.

NAM

# Learning from disasters

Natural disasters are devastating lives and turning back years of development progress



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VINOD THOMAS

Nepal's earthquake tragedy follows a string of recent catastrophes in Asia and other regions of the world, all underscoring the need to step up efforts to improve responses to disaster relief, recovery, and rehabilitation—and for mitigating future catastrophes.

Recent evaluations of disaster-related interventions by the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and other institutions offer lessons that can be useful in Nepal and future catastrophes. Clearly, each disaster is different in its characteristics, devastation and implications. But a thread that runs through many of these studies is that while the immediate challenge is to respond urgently to relief and rehabilitation needs, this should be done in ways that will help improve future responses.

The typhoon that tore through the Philippines in November 2013 killing more than 6,000 people vividly underscored the need for the swift recovery of damaged medical facilities, with restoring power as a first priority. This is particularly relevant to Nepal, where many injured had to be treated in the open because of unstable hospital buildings and fears of aftershocks. There is a huge payoff, and at relatively little cost, in adding disaster resilience to hospitals and schools, the initial form of shelter in many disasters; studies show the bill for this may involve only 5 per cent of the additional cost of building a new facility.

Transparency and honesty in the use of resources is a concern in emergency recovery operations. The scramble to deliver relief often necessitates by-passing slow but careful processes to account for how these resources were used. It is essential to have transparent criteria for officials above and below local governments to assess local needs, and that the interventions which are supported by funds from international community are monitored.

Speed is at a premium but so is care in the design of rebuilding projects. This was highlighted in disaster responses in Honduras and elsewhere where infrastructure was quickly rebuilt, but not enough was done to prepare for future disasters through, for example, seismic resistant building codes, land use planning and early warning. Despite the massive scale of damage to buildings in Kathmandu and in districts hit by the 7.8-magnitude earthquake, the value of building back better needs to be at the front and center of reconstruction efforts. In short, there is no grace period after a disaster in which anything goes.

Disaster responses from governments and international relief agencies often resemble military operations in their heavy reliance on command and controls. This understandable sense of urgency when lives are at stake can, however, lead to local communities and power structures being bypassed. Evaluations point to the value of involving both in rehabilitation programs, such as the relocation of residences and businesses out of danger areas. In what became a model of its kind, local communities in areas devastated by the 2004 tsunami in Aceh and Nias in Indonesia were involved in designing the building standard of social housing in a way that respected the local culture and tradition.

Assessments of disaster responses show the benefit of involving local communities in many other ways. After earthquakes and floods, loss of civil records such as land rights documents pose serious and potentially lasting problems. There are well-tested interventions to overcome this. Again in Aceh after the 2004 tsunami, the reconstruction of land property rights was conceived as a bottom-up process, with community-driven adjudication processes involving village chiefs and neighbors endorsing some 300,000 parcels of land.

Donor coordination is essential. On an often crowded stage, the performance of relief and reconstruction projects is at risk when each donor or NGO tries to retain a separate role. Just basic information-sharing is an important aspect of disaster coordination, but this isn't always a given.

Evaluations found that coordination during the Mozambique floods of 2007 and 2008 could have been markedly improved if donors had been more open in sharing information, such as on damage assessments. Equally, get out of the way if you can't help. Some development agencies and NGOs are better placed in doing needs assessment and preparing for the reconstruction phase, while others get on with the initial humanitarian response, such as UN agencies, the military, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

Because of population growth, poor land planning, and shoddy structures in many of Asia's poorest countries, earthquakes and other natural disasters are an increasingly devastating threat to lives and livelihoods. They need to be confronted more effectively than ever before through disaster preparedness being integrated in national plans, stepped up investment in prevention and mitigation, and putting lessons of experience to practical use. 🇳🇵

Vinod Thomas is director general of Independent Evaluation at the Asian Development Bank.



Bhuyu Maharjan



Chirmai Awale



Purna Lal Awale

PICS: SONIA AWALE

## Two earthquakes in one lifetime

"I survived a big earthquake twice, but it was more frightening this time"

SONIA AWALE

Bhuyu Maharjan, 89, was peeling garlic on his balcony on Saturday 25 April when there was a loud noise and his house in Patan started swaying violently. He grabbed the railing, and held on tight. When the tremor got milder, he went down to his daughter's room. He was in shock, and couldn't move.

"There is no one at my house in Patan but I'm scared to go there. What if another big one comes?" he says in a shaky voice.

Unlike Maharjan, Chirmai Awale who was just 12 when she survived the 1934 earthquake, says she quite enjoyed this one. "It was like riding in a car," she said, laughing, from a shelter in the royal garden behind the Patan Darbar.

Awale was playing with her siblings near a Ganesh Temple

In 1934 Awale was working at a brick kiln in Koteswor when the ground started shaking, and he remembers seeing fountains of water gushing out of the fields as he ran home to his family. "I wasn't frightened then, and I wasn't frightened this time," he said in a soft voice, "I was on the fifth floor terrace when it started shaking. I just sat on the steps quietly, and held on to the bannister. We didn't go out because there is no place to run."

### "There was so much dust it became dark"

BHUYU MAHARJAN, 89	PURNA LAL AWALE, 91	INDRA NATH ARYAL, 94	KAMAL MANI DIXIT, 85	CHIRMAI AWALE, 95
 I was playing marbles with one of my friends right there (points across the square). My pants were washing clothes at that well. Had the house fall on top of the well, and we would have been killed. There was dust everywhere. I covered the cat and a suddenly went dark. Everyone came running to the left because it was the only open space, and it was made with terraces. My grandfather's leg was trapped under one of the side buildings. Another man's leg was crushed by a wooden pillar, and he was getting help to get the pillar to the side.	 I was only seven but was working at the brick kiln in Koteswor. Everything started shaking, and I ran out. I could see a great cloud of brown dust rising over the city. Many houses were being destroyed. I was worried about my family in Patan. I sat at the well home crying. "Bhayan, bhayan!" I started many buildings that had collapsed. Along the way, there was water and sand going out of the ground. Surprisingly, our house was intact. A neighbour had been looking up at the window when the quake struck, and the building collapsed around him. He miraculously survived. We stayed in a tent, but I don't remember how long. There were many aftershocks.	 I was ten years old and was working at the brick kiln in Koteswor. Everything started shaking, and I ran out. I could see a great cloud of brown dust rising over the city. Many houses were being destroyed. I was worried about my family in Patan. I sat at the well home crying. "Bhayan, bhayan!" I started many buildings that had collapsed. Along the way, there was water and sand going out of the ground. Surprisingly, our house was intact. A neighbour had been looking up at the window when the quake struck, and the building collapsed around him. He miraculously survived. We stayed in a tent, but I don't remember how long. There were many aftershocks.	 I was ten years old and still remember it was a school holiday, so all of our children were in the house in Koteswor. It was a busy afternoon, and I was playing with my cousins, Anjan, and the ground started shaking. Suddenly, we heard our aunt shouting at us to get down, and to run to some place to go down the staircase. We had a corner escape. Ten months after we got out of the house a part of it came crashing down. We lived in tents for weeks after the members of a family in one tent. For some reason, I remember a flower growing on the ruins of a collapsed house. I would sit outside the tent and look at the stars. Someone asked me what I was doing, I said I was counting the stars. I still remember him telling me: "There are 100,000, you don't need to count them. How do you sleep?"	 I was 12, and we were playing near the Ganesh Temple that afternoon with children from the neighbourhood. Suddenly, everyone started shouting "Bhai, bhai!" I thought they were going to save me from the quake, but it was to warn people to get out of their houses. Some of us started crying for our mothers. One shopkeeper narrowly escaped his collapsing house when he rushed out to help us. There was dust everywhere. It was like a fog, we couldn't see anything at all. The houses on our street had collapsed, some were leaning on each other. Our parents really scared us, and they cried and played with us. I can't imagine what would have happened if our parents had died. After the earthquake, we couldn't even find our house. Everything had collapsed. We lived in tents for months. There was no food because the food stored in our house was buried. Despite all this my pre-arranged marriage went ahead four days after the earthquake. I never saw a lot, suffered a lot. Every time there is a tremor, I get very scared.

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Maharjan was six years old in the 1934 earthquake. And although that one was 8.4 magnitude, he said last week's quake was much more frightening, and lasted longer. When we interviewed him four months ago on the occasion of National Earthquake Safety Day he said he was lucky to be alive.

"I survived a big earthquake twice, but it was more frightening this time," Maharjan told us this week. "I couldn't even take a step, couldn't stand straight."

Maharjan and his family spent the night in an open space near his house and next day moved to his son's house on the Ring Road. But even there, the continuous aftershocks and the panic of the neighbours scared him more than the earthquake 81 years ago, as he spent two nights out in the open in the rain.

in Patan while their parents were away. When the quake struck, a passerby covered them in a shawl and carried them to safety while houses collapsed nearby. She recalls that a mighty cloud of dust rose into the air and it went dark. Four days later, she was married.

For Awale, there was a sense of déjà vu, as if she has seen it all before which made her less frightened. However, she did get nightmares when she returned to her home where she would imagine another aftershock.

Purna Lal Awale, 91, is known as a playful person in the neighbourhood, always joking, and teasing people around him. Last week's earthquake, however, was a shocking experience and he still hasn't got over it. He looked tired and somber, was not his usual jocular self.

From his demeanour, it is clear the experience this time has shaken him.

That evening, Awale and his wife, Dhanmaya went to a neighbourhood shelter where they stayed for three days. Dhanmaya who was born one month after the 1934 quake, is feisty and looks younger than her 81 years. She has a bruise in her right eye from jostling for sleeping space for herself and her husband when it started raining in the shelter.

Says Dhanmaya: "I wasn't even born in the 1934 earthquake, but this one was very strong, it went on and on, and the ground wouldn't stop shaking for days." 🇳🇵

 Watch video interviews with survivors  
Preparing to be prepared, #740

# Earning back the people's trust

Public misgivings about the government were confirmed by its unhurried response to the earthquake.

The death and destruction caused by the earthquake of 25 April was so vast that it overwhelmed Nepal and its people. It didn't just kill thousands of people, destroy homes and temples, but it also put out on full display just how badly governed the country is. Not that we didn't know it here.



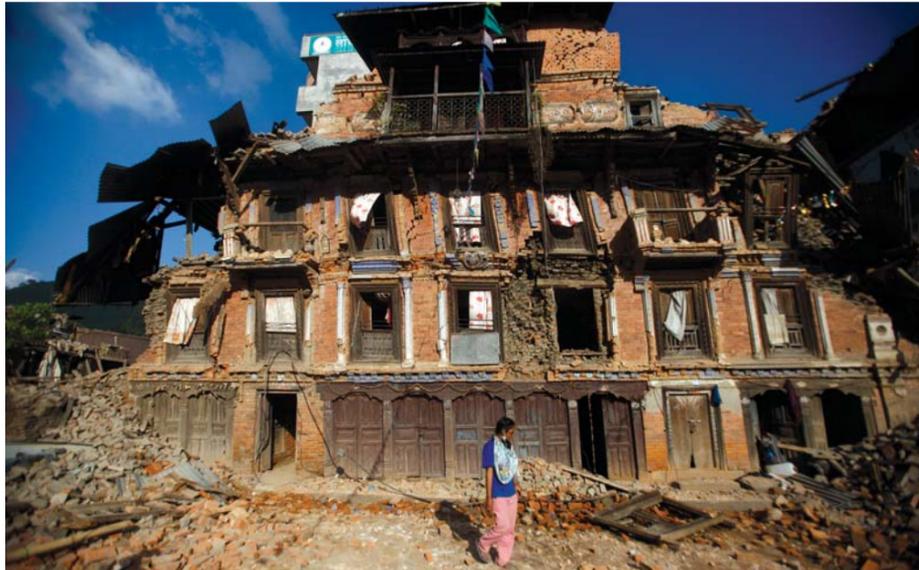
## BETWEEN THE LINES

Tsering Dolker Gurung

A decade after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and two Constituent Assembly elections and multiple deadline extensions later, a new constitution is still in limbo. By now, all Nepalis know that the bickering among the leaders was not so much over the contentious issues of the new constitution, but over power.

If Nepalis distrusted their government before the great earthquake, the state's delayed response to the disaster, lack of coordination among its entities for rescue and relief, followed by reports of all earthquake relief funds coming into the country being automatically directed to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund only deepened it. Citizens joined up on social media to raise a hue and cry.

Despite the strong backlash from the public as well as international community, no official from the Central Bank made



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an effort to clear the confusion about its directive. Finally, National Planning Commission member Swornim Wagle had to go on Facebook to clarify.

Wagle wrote: 'I have been swamped with queries on what the recent Central Bank directive on transfer of funds after the April 25 earthquake means. I share your concerns. But it only affects bank accounts that were opened in the last 6 days under the direct subject of "quake relief". People, agencies, NGOs, donors with established bank accounts before April 25 can continue to receive and mobilise funds just as they used to in the past.'

He went on to explain the structure, accessibility and transparent nature of the fund consoling everyone, there was no way

the fund could be misused by any officials.

Wagle's post helped donors and individuals who had sent money to the country breathe a collective sigh of relief. However, the damage had already been done. It is unlikely that people around the world will feel the urge to donate when there is so much uncertainty, and so much distrust of the government.

While the civil society has done a great job coming forward to help others in need: forming volunteer groups, arranging supplies, and transporting relief to areas which haven't received government aid, in the long run it will be the state's responsibility to provide rehabilitation to survivors and support rebuilding of lives. That means the government needs all the

support it can get.

The first few weeks after a disaster are considered to be the most crucial days for aid collection. This is also the period when aid pours from all over the world. But soon the world's attention will move towards some other country afflicted by another disaster, public's energy and enthusiasm will fade just as the international media's interest in Nepal has already started to.

Rather than saying 'don't give us more money', it is perhaps in everybody's best interest to stay vigilant, scrutinise the government's use of the money and ensure that transparency is maintained.

The government's lax attitude in the aftermath of the earthquake also showed just how disconnected Nepal's rulers are with the people. Few parliamentarians made an effort to visit their constituencies and check up on the people who voted for them. Seasoned leaders of political parties would do well to learn a thing or two from young political force Bibeksheel Nepali whose members have been proactive and working at grassroots, filling the space left by major political forces and earning appreciation and possible votes of a disgruntled public.

For too long, Nepali people's resilience has been tested by its government's inefficiency. Successive governments led by three major political parties have failed to keep promises. While Nepalis forgave them for a decade long war, and another decade wasted in constitution-writing, they may not find it in themselves to forgive their rulers for not helping enough in their hour of need. 🇳🇵

@Chenreeyang

## Cleaning instead of climbing



PICS: RITESH GOEL



After a series of avalanches triggered by the earthquake on 25 April swept down Everest Base Camp, killing 19 and leaving hundreds stranded on the mountain: a multinational group of climbers decided that even if they couldn't climb the mountain, they would clean it up.

Led by Major R S Jamwal of the Indian Army, the team included 35 Indian army soldiers, Melanie Southworth from Britain, Damien Francois of Belgium, Abeh Pour Ali from Iran and Americans David Breashers and Svati Narula. The group worked for four days to clean up the eastern side of the Khumbu

Glacier. A large amount of debris was blown over the glacier to the base of Nuptse by the avalanche blast and would probably have remained there forever.

"Our team spent four days collecting over 3,000 kg of garbage, which was handed over to the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee," said Ritesh Goel who was part of the Indian army expedition. SPCC Chairman, Ang Dorje, thanked the group for their contribution.

Although the Nepal government did not officially close the mountain to climbing after the earthquake, there was no one to make the route up after the icefall. Without this, it was impossible for the expeditions to make their way up the mountain. The international cleanup team was the last to leave Everest Base Camp this week. 🇳🇵  
Damien Francois

## prabhu BANK BIZ BRIEFS



### Relief fund

Khetan Group and Gorkha Brewery handed over Rs 100 million to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund in support of the efforts of the government for the rescue and relief of the earthquake victims.

### Assistance

Prabhu Bank has distributed relief materials to various earthquake affected areas in the country. Prabhu Group has also announced an aid of more than Rs 10 million to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund.



### IME Free remittance

IME has decided to continue its offer of free remittance service for inward remittance to Nepal from 29 April. It has also set up a relief fund named 'IME Earthquake Relief Fund' and started the first phase of its relief mission.

### Temp housing

Nepal Investment Bank has announced aid of metal sheets worth Rs 10 million to build temporary houses for the victims of the earthquake.



### Helping hand

Operation Relief Nepal, a joint initiative of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) and 22 different organisations, is working to distribute food and non-food relief to people of various affected areas. Over 1500 volunteers and six different groups of medical doctors have been mobilised in various parts of the country.

prabhu BANK

# But faith is alive

The collapse of Kapan Church exposed the vulnerability of places of worship in Nepal

OM ASTHA RAI

When a deadly earthquake struck central Nepal, just before noon on 25 April, nearly 80 Christians had congregated at a protestant church in Kapan on the northern outskirts of the capital.

Arun Moktan, a 30-year-old taxi driver and member of the congregation, was kneeling down quietly when the church started shaking violently. Everyone got up and started crying and screaming, but there was no escape since the church was on the sixth floor of a seven-storey building.

"We realised that we would not be able to escape unhurt from a high-rise building," he says, "and our pastor was also asking us to stay calm."

The iconic building of the Kapan area swatted, teetered and collapsed, killing 26 and wounding 49 worshippers. Moktan was holding on to the door, praying to God to save his life. "We were all buried under the rubble," he says, "I was lucky to survive."

Moktan's right arm is broken and he has livid bruises all over his body. He had parked his taxi near the church, and it was crushed by the falling building. Even after witnessing the horrific death of his congregation, Moktan has not lost his faith.

"Those who died were taken to heaven by God," he says. "God left me to struggle on this earth. My survival has a purpose and it is to continue serving God."

The earthquake demolished the Kapan Church but could not deter its faithful from gathering one week after the disaster under a shed nearby to pray. Many churches in Nepal have prayer meetings on Saturday because Sunday is a working day.



**CHURCH FALLS:** Picture of the seven-storey building housing a church taken minutes after it toppled on 25 April, killing nearly 70 people, 26 of them members of the congregation. Churches in Nepal hold their prayers on Saturdays because Sundays are working days.

GUNARAJ LUITEL

"Our bodies are mortal but souls are immortal," says Moktan. "But our souls die the day we lose faith in God."

The church was an extension of Cannan Prayer House, a protestant church in Buddhanagar, and Moktan had been going there every Saturday and on other religious occasions.

Cannan Prayer House has branches in Thali and Gwarko of Kathmandu, Chilankha and Laduk of Dolakha and Peepal Chaur of Kavre as well. Its Kapan and Gwarko extensions were also completely destroyed. More than 300 members of the congregation have been affected by the earthquake.

The National Council of Churches Nepal (NCCN) and Christian Federation of Nepal (CFN) have just started assessing the extent of loss, but there is concern about the vulnerability of church buildings in Nepal.

Radha Krishna Baral, pastor of Cannan Prayer House, says they knew that Kapan's

seven-storey building was not earthquake resistant but he could not find any other place.

"Though Nepal is now a secular country, the state still doubts our activities and it is difficult for us to find a perfect place to build our church," he says. "So we set up churches in any space we get." 🇳🇵

## Monitoring the aftershocks

STÉPHANE HUËT

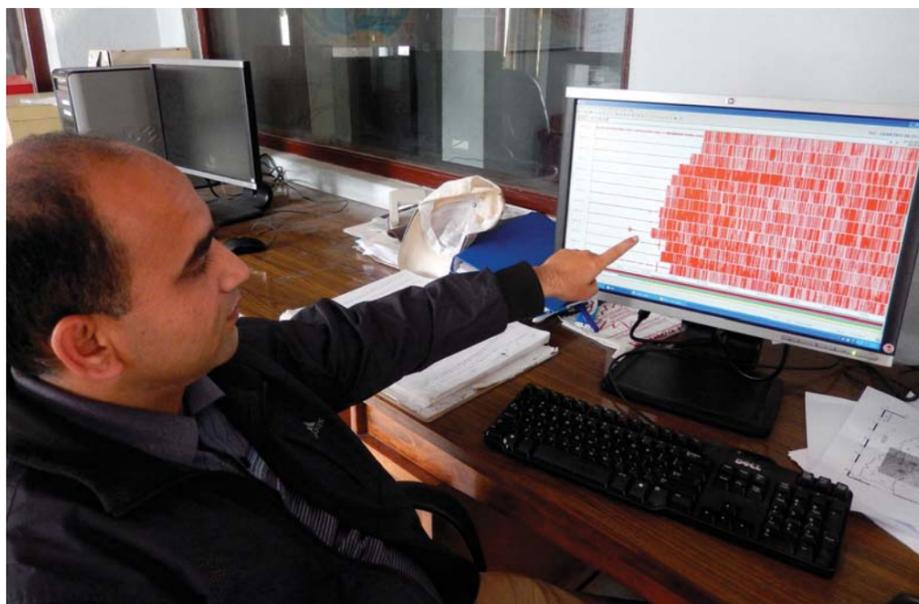
Lock Bijaya Adhikari (*pic, right*) hasn't slept much these last six nights. Like all the members of his team, the chief of National Seismological Centre has been busy since the earthquake of 7.8 magnitude that shook Nepal last week.

Adhikari was in his house with his family when the ground started shaking at 11.56am this 25 April. "Nobody was at the office, as it was Saturday," he says.

After checking if his children and wife were safe, he jumped on his cousin's bike heading to Lainchaur. "Duty first," he says. "I could have monitored the earthquake from home, but the network wasn't working."

The chief of National Seismological Centre was soon joined by seismologists, Umesh Gautam, Ratnamani Gupta and Bharat Koirala, as well as system engineer, Eric Sauvage. Later, the deputy director general of Department of Mines and Geology completed the team.

The National Seismological Centre had a difficult time after the first earthquake. One of the two computers was down. The



STÉPHANE HUËT

signals received at the laboratory were saturated, so the magnitude couldn't be determined. "We had to wait for Surkhet's centre to send the data," says Adhikari. They received it right before the 6.6 aftershock.

The conditions were terrible. There

had been 38 aftershocks higher than a magnitude of 4, after the first earthquake till midnight. There were 11 more till 3am the next day. However, the team had to stay in the building to process the data that would be immediately sent to the authorities. "We stayed here 24-hours a day, taking shifts,"

says Gupta. "Some of us went home only on 1 May."

The role of the National Seismological Centre is to monitor earthquakes in Nepal and pass on the information to the Home Ministry. But it has been doing much more since 25 April.

In addition, the chief of the centre had to talk to media and work on some crisis management – which are the responsibilities of the Home Ministry. Adhikari specifies, "It seems that people don't trust the administration. They want to talk to someone with a technical background."

Things got worse when there were rumours about a potential bigger earthquake. Adhikari says a seismological centre can estimate the magnitude and the approximate region of a coming earthquake. "But it's impossible to predict when it will happen," he insists.

Ten days after the Gorkha earthquake, the workers of the National Seismological Centre seem relieved, but tired.

"There will be lesser aftershocks of lower intensity now," says Adhikari. Nevertheless, the team stays alert. Mattresses are still lying on the floor where some of them will sleep tonight. 🇳🇵



After that unseasonably wet and cold spring, an enormous high pressure system is now sitting over northern India. This has pulled up the temperatures to Kathmandu Valley finally witnessing the mercury to cross 30 degrees. However, with the heat come the updrafts along the mountains and we can expect scattered thunderstorms across the mountains on the weekend. The simulations of the El Nino effect warn that the monsoon will be delayed, so we need to hunker down for a long dry season.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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PICS: STÉPHANE HUËT



## With a little help

International missions support Nepalis in the aftermath of the earthquake.

### STÉPHANE HUËT

Immediately after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Nepal on 25 April, the international community sprung into action -- sending relief and rescue teams.

In coordination with the Multinational Military Coordination Centre (MNMCC) of the Nepal Army, rescue and relief teams from 34 countries pulled dozens of people alive who were buried under collapsed houses and debris, dug out thousands of bodies and transported relief materials to some of the most remote and badly affected areas of the quake.

After an epic rescue mission, some international missions have already left Nepal and some are heading home in the next few

days. The first phase of the search and rescue (SAR) operation is gradually ending in accordance with international practices.

"Rescue is really effective within the golden period of 96 hours," said Colonel Sahadev Khadka, head of planning desk at MNMCC. "Although rescue work is still going on, we will now focus more on relief operations and medical treatment."

For the civilian organisations, the international response is being coordinated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Till Wednesday, 102 foreign organisations had registered with OCHA for 12 operating clusters.

As medical support tops the priority list in the first few weeks of any natural calamity, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) set a field hospital in Chhauni on 29 April to

provide free care to the people affected by the earthquake. Over 900 patients have been treated and over 50 surgeries have been performed in the hospital since its installation.

Lt. Libby Weiss, IDF's spokesperson, said seven babies were born there. "It's painful to see how the country has suffered," she told *Nepali Times*, "but these deliveries gave a new surge of hope."

Another important aspect in the health sector that needs immediate attention is the availability of clean drinking water and sanitation. Leszek Barczak, Public Information Officer at OCHA, said, "At this point, our priority is shelter and sanitation."

Organisations involved in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) cluster are among the most solicited, as there is deficit

of clean drinking water in most areas and the price of bottled water has gone up.

Keeping this in mind, the French Home Ministry's General Directorate for Civil Protection has installed a water purification plant at Alliance française of Kathmandu (AfK) in Tripureshwor, which can provide 200,000 litres of drinking water every day.

Sujan Shrestha, 21, is a construction engineer who lives in Tripureshwor. Last Tuesday he got two jars of drinking water for his home from AfK. "As we have stopped working since the earthquake hit, this helps us save money when we get free drinking water," he said.

Guillaume Jean, in charge of the treatment plant, said the purified water will also be provided to people at Khokana and Sankhu. "People from these areas

wanted to purify their water," he said. "AfK will provide the service of purifying their truckloads of water on the spot."

Anchored International Relief will also use this purified water for their relief operations. Maverick Aaron, who coordinates the American organisation in Nepal, said: "We first assessed the needs and now we will operate in some regions that haven't been reached yet." Aaron and his team are heading to Kerabari to provide water, food and temporary shelter to its population.

The main challenge in the relief operations is the transportation of food, sanitation and health accesses in remote areas. Hence, World Food Programme (WFP) is coordinating the logistics with 30 organisations like Red Cross and International Organisation for Migrants (IOM). 🇷🇺

# 1 NALA

A sleepy and scenic little village in Kavre was one of the lucky places in the earthquake on 25 April that devastated Central Nepal — no one was killed and many of its houses survived.

Which is also why it is not getting any relief material or help, even though there

are people here who lost everything.

Compared to other villages in the outskirts of the valley, Nala is easily accessible through Bhaktapur and Banepa, and doesn't show much signs of damage from the outside. A few houses collapsed, roofs have caved in others, damaging the houses from the inside while the exterior looks fine, others have cracks and are inhabitable.

Bhai Kaji Shrestha (*pic*) looks at the heap of debris where his two and a half storey

house once stood. "It is completely gone and nearly took my wife with it," he says. Shrestha's wife Bhakti Maya was buried under the rubble while trying to get out of the house. After hours of relentless digging Bhai Kaji along with few others pulled her out. Bhakti Maya complains of severe ache in her body but was fortunate enough not to incur any broken bones.

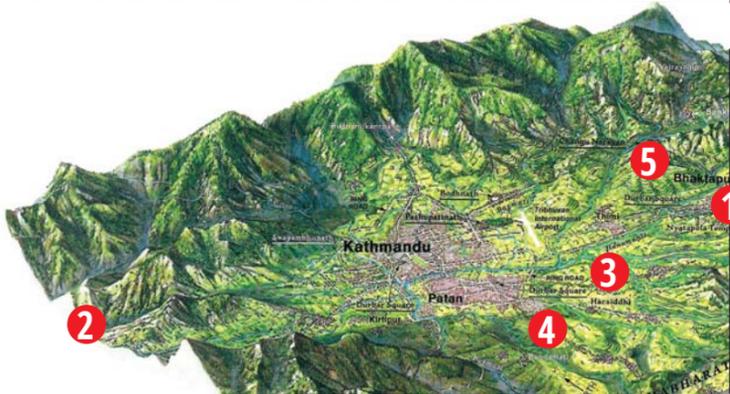
The family is living in a makeshift structure constructed from the materials

they retrieved from the old house. Living with them in the cramped space are Bhai Kaji's brothers Janak Lal and Gopi Lal's families. Janak Lal too lost his house while Gopi Lal's has sustained cracks.

For now the extended family is living on the potatoes and rice harvested from the family farm but is unsure how long that will last. "There is no one coming in to help us. What else can we do but wait," says Bhai Kaji. *Sahina Shrestha*



SAHINA SHRESTHA



# As remote



STÉPHANE HUËT

# 3 HARSIDDHI

Upendra Maharjan (*pic*) stands on the debris of his house in Harsiddhi, with a helmet and gloves on. It's been one week since the Gorkha earthquake devastated many parts of Nepal. Maharjan sweats in the excruciatingly hot sun as he looks at the

bricks he has to clear, where his house once stood.

Other villagers, like Maharjan, started digging for belongings in the debris two days after the earthquake. About 450 houses collapsed, but Maharjan fears the ones still barely standing. "These old houses are full of cracks and we wonder when they will fall," he says.

Habitat for Humanity came to help the

people of Harsiddhi on Saturday. "We are lucky we have enough food and water here," says Maharjan. "What we needed was technical support to clear the rubble."

Sushma Shrestha, program development manager at Habitat for Humanity, is coordinating the operation in Harsiddhi. "We have 120 volunteers from scout groups and youth clubs," she told *Nepali Times*.

To be on the safer side, some slanting buildings of this small Newari village of Kathmandu Valley are being demolished by a bulldozer. Geno Teofilo, disaster communications manager at Habitat for Humanity, says they have been working closely with the community in this operation.

"We don't want to throw everything away," he says. "We will save the bricks and wood so that the community can reuse it for rebuilding." Habitat for Humanity is also considering helping in the reconstruction process when the area is cleared. "It will depend on the funding," Teofilo adds.

Eighty per cent of the traditional houses in Harsiddhi have collapsed. Next to them, modern houses made of concrete are still standing. "These old houses made of old bricks don't have the structural columns and beams that would prevent them from collapsing," explains Tripti Mahesith, architect at Habitat for Humanity.

In the narrow alleys strewn with bricks and broken wood pillars, there is a woman making a census of the remaining population. "We'll be able to know who is missing from our village," she says, "but there were a few here who came from outside, and we don't even know their names."

*Stéphane Huët*



# 4 BUNGAMATI

Proximity to the capital is not helping residents in receiving adequate and timely relief aid after the deadly 7.8 magnitude earthquake that devastated central Nepal on 25 April.

Despite being only 20 minutes out of the city by car, residents of Bungamati are struggling to house families in temporary shelters. The town has only 60 tents for 700 families whose brick and mud homes have been completely destroyed.

"By our estimate, each family needs at least three tents because they need to store their belongings as well as food salvaged from their damaged houses," says Ram Khadgi of Bungamati. Cases of people hogging tents have been a major problem: residents whose houses are intact are refusing to go

2

## CHHATRE DEURALI

No aid had reached the people of Chhatre Deurali, VDC Ward No. 3, in Dhading even eight days after the earthquake.

Last Friday Jeet Bahadur Moktan (*pic, below*), the village elderly, led a group of eight to Majhuwa Gaun in Kathmandu with the hope that they could bring back some relief materials. They had heard it was being distributed at the Tamang village.

Moktan and his group, which included his daughter-in-law, neighbours and grandchildren, hiked an hour from Gairabari

to reach Majhuwa. They are still angry at being left out of the distribution route, by both the government and the private sector.

"Villages located above and below us have all received some form of relief but we haven't received anything," says Moktan who is in his seventies.

The VDC did provide each family with 2kg rice bags but as Bishnu Prasad Luitel, another villager told me: "It was a one-time thing."

When a truck carrying meal packets and water arrived at Majhuwa in the afternoon,

Moktan and his villagers were careful not to rush ahead.

"The villagers here will get angry if we receive anything before them. They have the first right to everything that comes here," he says while waiting for the crowd to clear so he can go collect his share. Luckily, there was enough for everybody.

An hour later, four cars loaded with blankets reached Majhuwa.

As before, the villagers from Gairabari stand at the end of the queue. This time they are not so lucky. Halfway through the line, the supply runs out and the cars head back.

Chhatre Deurali is not an isolated, inaccessible village. It is situated right on the outskirts of Kathmandu, leaving one to think: if there are villages here not receiving aid, how must the villagers further away be faring?

*Tsering Dolker Gurung*



TSERING DOLKER GURUNG

# as Kathmandu



GOPEN RAI



AYESHA SHAKYA

back due to recurring aftershocks.

"Even if certain houses are liveable, people are scared. If they could move back, there would be more space for people who desperately need shelter," adds Khadgi, who himself lost two of his old houses in the earthquake. He is living in a third one even though it has cracks.

"A friend of mine gave me Rs 200,000 the other day to buy tents. I went all around Kathmandu and Bhaktapur and couldn't get anything. It is not even a matter of money anymore," says Khadgi. He has been trying to order tents from as far off as Banaras in India but it has been difficult.

Resources are distributed based on the ward number and a token system is employed where families can track the amount of food and water they have been receiving. While the tokens are an effort to enable equal distribution of relief aid it is not working in most areas.

*Ayesha Shakya*

5

## SANKHU

In Sankhu, where 800-900 houses were destroyed, dozens of residents were seen queuing up for 30 blankets. While they lined up in single file, the distributors had to continuously prevent members of the same family from queuing together to ensure every family got at least one blanket.

Up the hill in Changu Narayan, residents are venting their frustration in

public about random distribution of relief aid. This Lichhavi-era temple complex is the oldest known settlement in Kathmandu Valley and situated on a hilltop from where one can look down at the airport where international relief planes are landing and taking off.

"Our entire ward received only four bags of rice. We haven't taken our share of rice yet because it is not enough," says Hari Devi Shrestha, who lost her home and is now sleeping in a tent. "They should keep record of family members and distribute accordingly. Right now only people who can speak up are receiving aid, people like us are helpless."

On the other hand, other residents

stated that most of the relief aid was going to people who lost their homes.

"They are prioritising those without houses when they don't understand that most houses have cracks and are not livable. We want the army to demolish the higher floors of our houses so that we can at least live inside the ground floor of our house but they say they don't have orders to do that," a local resident was overheard saying.

*Ayesha Shakya*

[nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

■ Multimedia package with video and photo gallery

# Crisis into opportunity

Editorial, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 3-9 May

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

Tragic as the loss of life was on 25 April, we were lucky it wasn't as bad as the worst case scenario for Kathmandu. It was Saturday just before noon, which meant many schools were closed. Any other day the city's shops would have been open, the streets and alleys would have been crammed with people.

Five years ago, this magazine marked national Earthquake Safety Day with a special coverage in which seismologists warned of a catastrophic loss of life in case of an 8 magnitude earthquake in Kathmandu with 100,000 killed, 200,000 wounded, 1.5 million homeless, no electricity, water or medical care. The 1934 earthquake destroyed 80 per cent of the homes in Kathmandu Valley, 8,000 people lost their lives, survivors lived in the open for a month in the freezing January cold.

Prime Minister Juddha Sumshere was in Bardiya on a hunting trip. It took him 20 days to get back to Kathmandu on foot. This time, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala got back in two days from Indonesia. Only British India and Japan came to the rescue then, this time there are 34 countries assisting.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Even though the 25 April earthquake was much smaller than the 1934 one, the destruction has been great. Even so, it could have been worse. Come to think of it, the recent quake was a slap in the wrist, a warning to be better prepared in future. This earthquake was not a surprise, but there was very little preparedness. Even though the Army and Police reacted immediately, there was government inertia in response. Medicines and other relief supplies were piled up at the airport, the government was so confused it asked the international community to stop aid. The result was that many hard-hit areas didn't get relief, the wounded couldn't be immediately rescued. Those trapped under Kathmandu's concrete got the priority while those in remote areas were left out. The rain made things worse for those in shelters and for rescue flights. If the government's preparedness had been more streamlined, Nepali rescue teams would have been able to be deployed much faster. The political parties came out as utter failures in deploying their cadre for rescue and relief work.

Countries rise from the ruins of crises like these, but that needs courage and hard work. In that respect, the government's response so far does not elicit much confidence. When he returned to Kathmandu after 20 days in 1934, Juddha Sumshere stood in front of the survivors at Tundikhel and gave a rousing speech. Koirala, on his return, addressed the nation three days later and spoke in platitudes. The Home Minister, which has a central role in relief delivery, is in nay-saying mode: "don't have", "no", or "not allowed".

The whole world is willing to help us. But our government does not have the capacity to help its own citizens. The government now needs the courage and vision to reconstruct and rehabilitate. It has the chance to turn this crisis into an opportunity to rebuild Nepal's future.

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## Bye-bye baba

Raju Adhikari in *Nagarik*, 4 May

नागरिक

It was a happy day for ten-year-old Nishma Khadka (*pic, above*). On Saturday morning, her father Krishna Bahadur had taken her to Charikot, from there the duo along with the teachers of Galaxy Public School headed to Khasa. Her mother, Parvati, and her

younger brother were supposed to accompany them, but since Parvati wasn't feeling well only father and daughter went for the outings.

While the teachers headed to the Chinese side, Nishma and Krishna Bahadur waited on the bus. "We couldn't go because *baba* forgot his citizenship card," said Khadka. While they were waiting,

the bus started shaking. Once outside the bus, they felt the earth trembling and saw the rocks falling from the slopes. Khadka held on tight to her father as they ran for cover.

Just as the duo tripped on a water pipe and fell down, a rock hit her father's head. Unable to get up, he urged his daughter to run. "I ran and when I turned back I could see him waving at me. Then suddenly he was gone," said Khadka. That image still haunts her.

"I thought he was injured in the earthquake but when my daughter-in-law and grandchildren came without him, I knew," said Man Maya Khadka, 72, Krishna Bahadur's mother.

Dil Bahadur Khadka, Krishna's 82-year-old father, remembers the last time Krishna and his family were home. "He had promised to come home during Dasain," said Dil Bahadur "but he will never return now."



## The fall of Kasthamandap

*Nepal Samacharpatra*, 6 May

नेपाल  
समाचारपत्र

On 25 April 2015, the day of the earthquake, Nimbus Savings and Credit Cooperative had organised a blood donation camp at Kasthamandap in Basantapur. Fifty-four people including employees and shareholders had participated in the program and were preparing to take a group photograph when

the ground beneath them started shaking and brought down the Kasthamandap temple, killing ten.

"For a second I had no idea what was going on. I didn't know whether to run or sit, everything and everyone seemed to be moving. Bricks and mud started falling down on us and nearby temples began going down one by one," recalls Amit Awale who was able to run before the Kasthamandap temple collapsed and rescued three others including a nurse, a colleague and a blood donation participant. Among the dead are cooperative employees: Kalpana Shrestha, Nima Singh, Nilu Chitrakar, Manju Nepali, and shareholders Prakash Manandhar, Ramesh Lal Shrestha and Anurag Kumar Makhariya.

## India-China bhai-bhai

*Kantipur*, 4 May

कान्तिपुर

Ever since international rescue teams started coming into Nepal, news about a competition between the Chinese and Indian rescuers has regularly filled the media. However, contrary to reports, these teams are actually working together. The Chinese team flew to Sindhupalchok on an Indian Army helicopter to rescue 17 trekkers from the district. Ten of them were foreign tourists.

The Indian Army said: "The only helicopters available belong to the Nepal Army and the Indian Army. We are working in



coordination with other rescue teams as well". The Chinese Embassy confirmed the statement.

Spokesperson for Nepal Army, Jagadish Chandra Pokharel said: "All rescue teams are working in conjunction with the Nepal Army.

They all work together, we don't split them up."

The Multinational Military Coordination Centre has been working together with the foreign rescue teams. All the rescue teams are not working at one particular place at a time but are working together in groups in various areas.

"We have been sending troops based on orders. It is less relevant what team goes where, our main focus is search and rescue," said Abhay Kumar, spokesperson for the Indian Embassy.

The Government stated that the search and rescue work is almost over and it is now time to focus on relief.

# Bright lights on a dark day

From a health post in Melamchi to the Health Ministry in Kathmandu there was compassion, competence and commitment in treating those injured in the quake



#### EMERGENCY TREATMENT:

An international volunteer helps a patient get on a stretcher bed at a makeshift clinic in the open field of Chhauni Hospital on Friday.

GOPEN RAI

#### MARK ZIMMERMAN in SINDHUPALCHOK

Amidst all the criticism of Nepal's earthquake relief effort, there are some acts of selflessness and generosity. This isn't to say that the overall effort has been perfect or even optimum, disasters like this create mayhem even in the most organised societies.

On the day after Nepal's earthquake, I visited the Health Ministry to ask how our organisation might help. Officials briefly interrupted their meeting to connect me with Khem Karki who asked if we would be willing to assess the medical situation in the village of Ichok in Sindhupalchok. He phoned the local chairperson and told him to expect us, and then moved on to more pressing matters.

The next day, we drove through the devastated town of Sankhu and descended into the Helambu Valley. There was destruction everywhere, 80 per cent of the buildings were either flattened or rendered uninhabitable by fallen walls. We found communities in groups of 5-20 clustered under makeshift roof shelters from pieces scavenged from their destroyed houses. Cooking fires smoked.

The scene was eerily quiet. There was the smell of bodies trapped in the rubble.

Further north at the Melamchi Primary Health Center (PHC) there were patients lying on the grassy field in front. Wearing yellow masks were two physicians treating a man who hobbled up with his arm over the shoulder of a friend. A woman sat on the steps while a health assistant scrubbed antiseptic on a wound on her leg. Another woman lay nearby on a tarp while a doctor injected local anesthetic before suturing a gaping wound. Over on the side, patients who'd already been treated lay under three tarps suspended by ropes.

The place looked busy enough and there were some patients with bone fractures. The previous day, they saw 600 patients here some 200 of them so sick that they had to be transferred to Kathmandu – in ambulances, trucks, whatever could be found. Fifty-three were sent to specialist hospitals by helicopter.

Given the severity of the trauma and the immediate rush of patients, these numbers would challenge the staff of even a large city hospital. In this case, an inspired group of a few junior government doctors and paramedics performed their assessments and first aid with

rapid efficiency. There are a number of people living today because of this heroic service. On top of which, the government's capacity to evacuate so many patients by helicopter was impressive.

Back in Kathmandu, there was another encouraging sight. In a hall of the Ministry of Health and Population where there were a bewildering collection of concerned foreigners – wearing colourful shirts and hats with organisation names emblazoned on them, some paramedics in their full work uniforms, speaking many different languages. They had recently landed at the airport and crowded into the hall, straining to hear their first briefing. We counted ten countries among the group of 200 people. It looked like medical chaos was about to break out in Nepal.

That afternoon, there was a second meeting with a smaller group of the foreigners at the Health Ministry. Khem Karki represented the Nepal government and Ian Norton the WHO. Karki gave a clear briefing about the health status and standing facilities of Nepal's five worst-hit districts. Both doctors then began to sort the various international volunteers by their capability to help. Some of those in the room

had come to Nepal with fully sufficient mobile hospitals – with surgeons, nurses, equipments, and field provisions to feed and house their teams. Others were specialised – such as a group of physiotherapists or a lone emergency room doctor. A woman reported that her team had been turned back by a landslide blocking the road. Karki took note and said that a helicopter would be arranged, how much did the team weigh? "17 tons," was the reply.

Consider the job of patching together medical assistance for remote areas, using teams of different size and capacity, from different countries, many of whom had never been to Nepal before – it looked daunting. Working as a complementary pair, Norton and Karki gave the guidelines for the volunteers' work in Nepal. Everyone had to first register and receive temporary medical licenses. Once in the field, they had to fully document all patients treated, particularly those undergoing operations, and these reports were to be sent weekly to the Health Ministry.

There were protocols for handling of bodies, management of medical waste, and for referral centers in Kathmandu, such as for neurosurgery or complicated

orthopedics. Eventually, the Health Ministry coordinated the deployment of more than 100 foreign medical teams, which came after the immediate response by the Nepali medical system.

The scene in the tidy hall of the Health Ministry was far different from the dusty field in front of the Melamchi Primary Health Center – but in both, I saw compassion and competence. And in both, genuine commitment. For both groups the leadership came from Nepal's Health Ministry.

The healing of the 25 April earthquake will require months and years. Many people will suffer for long periods. Along the way, there will be ample confusion, mistakes, and neglect. You may hear stories about lack of coordination or unfulfilled expectations of those who came to help. But there will also be some bright lights of heroism. I hope we can hold these up in the darkness. 🇳🇵



Mark Zimmerman is the Director of the Kathmandu-based Nick Simons Institute and has worked as a physician in Nepal for the past 29 years.

# Addressing posttraumatic stress

Hi everyone, I hope you are all doing better and taking care of each other in this difficult time. The disaster has passed, yet we are left with the aftermath and many fields of life will need attention. Self care is extremely important because you cannot take care of anyone or anything else if you, yourself, need help. It is



**ASK ANJANA ANYTHING**  
Anjana Rajbhandary

normal and common for people to have posttraumatic stress after an earthquake. This feeling might last for days, weeks or even longer, but it needs to be addressed so it does not get worse. It is extremely important to have support of family and/or friends and to learn some simple methods of de-stressing: basically trying to get back to your usual routine as soon as possible. If you feel like you need help, please ask because asking

for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Take care of yourselves and each other.

Email more questions to:  
[askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com](mailto:askanjanaanything@nepalitimes.com)  
or @AnjyRajy

**I am a forty-year-old woman working as a teacher. Ever since the earthquake last week, I am having trouble stepping outside the house. Yesterday when I went to the school, the entire time I kept thinking about reaching home as fast as possible. I feel safe only when I am at my house these days and this is not helping me. I tried to go out again today with my son for a walk, just to feel normal but I started getting anxious within ten minutes and rushed back home. Is there anything you can suggest I do or try so I can get rid of this fear?**

**-Bindu Tamang**

**AR-** I can imagine how hard this must be for you but acknowledging the concern is the first step to recovery. Even if the worst is behind us: many people will have trouble sleeping, some may feel more irritable or become more numb, and fear that the incident may repeat again like in your case.

It's natural to keep thinking about the earthquake as it was a major event that destroyed many lives, however, it is also necessary to try to treat that feeling so it does not become a long-term problem. Your feelings of fear and anxiety are normal but continuing to live in fear of the past will have a negative effect on your present and your future. You can try some relaxation exercises such as taking deep breaths or meditation. I think it is crucial to express how you feel to someone, either a family or a friend. You may also benefit from psychosocial first aid. If talking to a loved one and home relaxation methods do not help, you can seek support from a mental health professional, who can help you with counselling and medication, in a more severe case. Just remember that it is also possible to treat this feeling and get back to (almost) how you used to be. Have faith and stay positive. Good luck. 🇺🇸

*Anjana is a certified mental health rehabilitation technician and has four years of experience in adult mental health in Maine, USA.*



We express our deepest condolences to the victims, and their families, of the Nepal earthquake.



## HAPPENINGS



NEPAL ARMY

**DAMAGE ASSESSMENT:** Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, UCPN Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal with Chief of Army Gaurav Shumsher Rana at Rasuwa on Wednesday.



BIKRAM RAJ

**SENDING IN THE MARINES:** US Ambassador to Nepal, Peter Bodde with Bill Berger of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance during the arrival of UH-1Y Huey and Osprey aircraft at Kathmandu airport on Sunday.



TWITTER

**HELPING HANDS:** Former prime minister Baburam Bhattarai poses for a photo with Chinese volunteers in Gorkha on Sunday.



GOPEN RAJ

**HALTED:** The chariot of the Rato Machhindranath has stopped at Chasikot because of the earthquake. The god is in the chariot, but the Machhindranath temple in Bungamati has been destroyed.

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MALLIKA ARYAL

# Aftershocks in a migrant economy

Villages without men struggle to cope with the aftermath of the earthquake

**MALLIKA ARYAL**  
in SINDHUPALCHOK

Sabita Danwar was washing dishes at the hotel where she works when the 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April. Her first thought was for the safety of her two sons on the other side of Kathmandu. Her second was to try to call her husband, much further away in Dubai.

After several hours battling through streets full of panic-stricken survivors, she finally reached her boys. But when she tried to call her husband to tell him they were all still alive, she couldn't: the phone lines were jammed.

Danwar's husband left Nepal two years ago in search of work.

The family secured loans to pay for his travel. They borrowed more money to build a house, confident that his remittances would enable them to pay it all back.

"With my husband in Dubai and a regular income, we really thought we would be fine," Danwar said.

Unfortunately, their house was in the village of Thailchok in Sindhupalchok, one of the districts hit hardest by the earthquake. Their home, along with everything else the family had worked so hard to build, is now a useless pile of rubble.

"Our house is gone, our cow sheds are gone, our grains are gone, we have nothing left," Danwar said.

More than 3,500 people are confirmed dead in

Sindhupalchok, and up to 90 per cent of the houses in the district have been destroyed.

The room Danwar and her two sons had been renting to allow her to work in Kathmandu is too badly damaged to be safe to live in any longer. Like hundreds of thousands of Nepalis, they have been forced to eke out an existence in one of the many tent camps in the capital. They huddle together under the shelter of an orange tarpaulin, their dreams shattered.

"The women staying in temporary camps are vulnerable to abuse, disease and neglect and have no emotional or moral support—most have to take care of their children and aging in-laws," said Manju Gurung, who heads Pourakhi, an NGO that helps migrant workers.

"These are (effectively) single women in Nepal. Their husbands are stuck working abroad and the women have to play the role of men."

More than 2.2 million Nepalis work overseas, the vast majority of them men. Their combined remittances totalled \$4 billion last year, accounting for more than 20 per cent of Nepal's GDP.

Benju Rai's husband works in a factory in Malaysia. "Coming back means he will lose his daily wage, which is more important to us now than ever," she said. Rai's house in Mahadevsthan village, east of Kathmandu, was also built using money borrowed on the strength of her husband's expat pay packet. The earthquake destroyed it too.

"One way the government and financial institutions can help

**PICKING UP THE PIECES:** Benju Rai's husband works in Malaysia. She says: "Coming back means he will lose his daily wage, which is more important to us now than ever."

(families of migrant workers) is by lowering the transaction fees (on money transfers from abroad) or waiving them," said Pravina Gurung, Nepal programme coordinator for labour migration and development at the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Western Union has already heeded the call, announcing it will waive transaction fees for money sent to Nepal. Official banks here will not provide loans to migrant workers without proper paperwork and collateral, so people like Rai and Danwar, are forced to access informal channels – private lenders who charge interest rates as high as 35 per cent and are unlikely to waive them, even in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake.

"If the government announces a scheme to waive interests or loans, we will not qualify," Rai acknowledged. She, and so many others like her, are now homeless and saddled with debts they only have a chance of repaying if their husbands stay abroad, rather than returning to help.

Without their menfolk, the wives of migrant workers are at a distinct disadvantage. At lunchtime in a makeshift camp in Kathmandu, survivors line up for free food – men first, then children and finally women.

"This is the way our society is. It is always men who get priority, even in times like these," said Ashmita Sapokta from the local NGO Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC). "Women eat at the end, usually whatever is left after men and children eat. There's discrimination even in a time of crisis."

"Until now, I hadn't fully reflected on what it means to have the kind of physical strength that men do," Danwar said. "When they (aid agencies) drop relief materials such as rice sacks, women can't lift them and take them away like men do. It is a constant struggle."

But she doesn't want her husband to leave his job in Dubai and come home to help.

"My husband wants to come back, but what is the point?" she said. "There's nothing left. It is better he stays there and earns money so we can repay our loans."  (IRIN)

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# Sindhupalchok's sorrow

The hard-hit district is losing hope despite being so close to the capital

**BHRIKUTI RAI**

The Arniko Highway coils eastwards from Kathmandu towards the Chinese border at Kodari. Every settlement, every bazar, every village along the way has been flattened.

In town after town, even ten days after the earthquake hit, people are moving about as if in a daze – trying to dig for dead relatives and belongings. The prosperous and once thriving highway markets have been reduced to mounds of bricks and timber.

Sindhupalchok is the worst hit district, with 3,360 fatalities reported so far, almost half of the official casualty. Sanga Chok is one of the worst hit areas in the district with 160 deaths reported just there alone so far.

"I was saved last Saturday because I managed to run to the field behind my house," says Prabina Shrestha, standing in front of the debris of her collapsed home. Her friend and her baby were among the five people trapped under her collapsed house. "I don't see any hope now, we haven't heard any voices from underneath the rubble," says Shrestha glancing at the wreckage of her home.

The shaking was so strong at Sanga Chok that both concrete and mud houses have fallen. Further up the street Rama Giri (*pic, right*), 32, is climbing up a rickety wooden ladder to get her belongings. "We were fortunate to be outside that day, or else we would have all died," says Giri watching her elderly mother-in-law throwing fallen bricks outside their room.

Giri was treated at Dhulikhel Hospital for minor head injury while her seven-year-old son, Samir, youngest of three children, received several stitches on his head after a brick struck him on the head.

"We haven't received any relief material so far and are running out of food supplies we had managed to gather in the last week," says Giri. While she feels fortunate to have been spared from death, she is worried about her husband who was in Kathmandu last Saturday. "I haven't heard from him since the earthquake, our relative who used to work with him has also been unable to find him there," she says with eyes full of tears.

The Giri family has been taking refuge under a tarpaulin sheet near the road leading to the district headquarter of Chautara. Locals have gathered in several villages leading up to Sindhupalchok demanding relief materials and swarming

any vehicle carrying food supplies and tents. Police have had to intervene to bring the situation under control.

"We have only been surviving on meals provided to us by charities, not even a single tent was given to us," says Shanti Kumari Shrestha, 55, who has been taking care of her daughter-in-law who gave birth a day before the earthquake. "I am forced to open our shop here so that we at least have some money to buy rice and ghee for the new mother," says Shrestha, running her frail hands across her seven-year-old grandson's hair. "How will we survive now," she sighs, looking out at a street full of collapsed houses, crushed vehicles and power lines dangling dangerously low.

Those made homeless in Chautara have been sleeping in tents provided by the Red Cross at Tundikhel where they get two meals a day. But they are angry that the state has been slow to respond.

"The CDO has been hiding this whole week," says Kusum Karmacharya whose sister-in-law was buried under their old house. "We were so angry that people took out their angst at the deputy CDO last week and tried hurting him physically, only then did we see some relief effort here, we still don't have power," she says.

The situation in the remote VDCs of Sindhupalchok remain even more dire with people still trapped under the debris in many places. Three people were rescued alive in Sindhupalchok on Monday, nine days after the quake.

"My village Gunsa is completely destroyed, people are still waiting for help sleeping out in the open," says Gyanu Tamang, 28, who sells snacks here to earn some money. "If the situation here is so bleak, you can imagine what it is like in our villages."

Sindhupalchok CDO Krishna Prasad Gyawali however maintains that relief distribution is in full swing although there are never enough tents. "We are doing our best to get relief to all VDCs," he says.

Despite the death and despair all around Chautara residents have shown generosity and resilience by opening doors to neighbours and providing food to the needy.

"I couldn't sit there doing nothing, so I just gave away what I had in my crockery store," says Porum Bahadur Shrestha. 🇳🇵



ALL PICS: BHRIKUTI RAI

## Colour coded in





## Jure's second disaster

A rockfall triggered by Saturday's earthquake destroyed the new house Lanka Tamang (*pic, above*) had built after the massive landslide here in August.

In less than eight months the 21-year-old has seen his life torn asunder twice: first by the Jure landslide in August and now by the earthquake. The landslide killed at least 150 people and displaced hundreds of families who have since been living in makeshift tents and

sought refuge at nearby villages.

Now, the two disasters have collapsed into one. Those living in shelters without much help from the first disaster have to cope with a bigger one.

"Our families have been displaced again and there has been no help from the authorities here," says Tamang whose extended family of 17 has been forced to share few tents with fifty five others along the highway overlooking the large pond created by landslide last monsoon.

Tamang dropped out of school to take care of his family and work as a driver. Now even that job doesn't pay because the highway has been blocked by landslides.

The family has had enough of disasters and is now planning to move permanently to Kathmandu in the coming weeks.

*Bhrikuti Rai*

SINDHUPALCHOK

KATHMANDU

# Dhulikhel

Outside the Dhulikhel Hospital gate in Kavre, Samjhana Shrestha lies on a stretcher as the doctor pastes a piece of paper on her right arm with her name, address and marks her 'orange'. She is then immediately

whisked to the emergency room while the other patients marked 'green' and 'yellow' wait for their turn. The tenth grader from the neighbouring district of Sindhupalchok was brought here on Wednesday to treat

injuries she sustained on her head and back after the massive earthquake on Saturday.

"The colour coding helps us identify which victims need the most immediate treatment and function more efficiently," says Deepak Dahal, administration chief at Dhulikhel Hospital. The limited resources at district hospitals and its proximity to three major highways has made this 300 bed community hospital the default post earthquake care centre for the most badly hit districts like Sindhupalchok, Ramechhap and Dolakha, Sindhuli and even Bhaktapur.

Since Saturday the hospital has received more than 1,000 patients and conducted close to 100 major operations.

"Luckily the hospital wasn't damaged and we have been

able to provide all the essential services from day one despite the three-day power cut," says physician Rajiv Shrestha.

During the power cuts following the earthquake, the hospital was running on solar and diesel powered generators. But with patients overflowing in emergency and post operation units even this efficient community hospital is worried about failing to provide quality service to hundreds of earthquake victims.

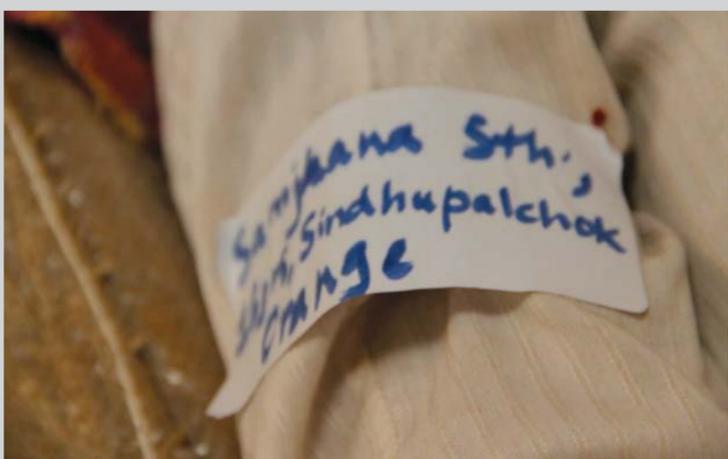
Big hospitals like the 750 bed Nepal Medical College in Kathmandu is turning away patients since it doesn't have enough tents to treat patients outside its cracked building.

"At Dhulikhel we have enough doctors and paramedics but we are running out of stock of essential medicines, surgical

materials, and need to add beds and blankets required for so many patients," adds Shrestha. Volunteer school children in Kathmandu are providing thousands of gauzes for the Dhulikhel Hospital.

Sabina Lama (*pic, left*), 11, complains to her mother Phulmaya about the stitches hurting her head. She was buried under a pile of rubble after the earthquake brought down their house in Helambu. "My daughter luckily survived despite serious head injuries, we know the healing will take time and now I can only hope that she gets the much needed care and medicine in the weeks and months ahead," says Phulmaya Lama with her youngest son still sleeping on her lap.

*Bhrikuti Rai*



# Life after deaths



PICS: OMASTHARAI

**OM ASTHA RAI**  
in SINDHUPALCHOK

**B**ishnu Maya Majhi (*pic, above*), 40, was in her home when the ground started shaking just before noon. The house collapsed on top of her, trapping her under the rubble. She cried out in pain as her husband, Ek Bahadur, tried to frantically clear the debris, and pulled her out alive.

"I thought I was gone," she recalls, gazing at the pile of bricks and timber that was once her home. "But my husband saved my life."

But her happiness, at being alive, soon turned to sorrow: her sister-in-law was dead and her granddaughter was severely injured. And now, her remaining family is challenged with the day-to-day survival.

With no shelter or food, Majhi limps around with a deep wound on her right leg, which is infected and she has not received any medical care.

"Wherever I went, there were too many people and I had to return empty-handed every time," she says. "We have eaten whatever little food was left."

Ek Bahadur Majhi did manage to grab a relief packet with some rice, noodles and biscuits, but that didn't even last them a day. Ten days after the quake, the couple retrieved a bag of rice from under the rubble. It was mixed with dirt, but it was godsend. Says Bishnu Maya: "We would have died if we waited for relief."

Bishnu Maya lives in a settlement of 12 fisherman families in the village of Jyamire opposite Melamchi, the site of one of Nepal's largest projects to bring drinking water through a 27km tunnel to Kathmandu. Nearly 300 people died here. Rescue teams are here with dogs, but they are pulling out mostly bodies.

The capital may be getting back to some normalcy, but the death and destruction in Melamchi is just too severe. Survivors are now resigned to living in their tents for months, perhaps even years. Their houses are unliveable.

The main worry of the survivors, after medical treatment and last rites for relatives killed, is shelter. As in the aftermath of disasters like these, it is the elderly, children, newborns and pregnant women who are most



**"I am barely alive but I wish the earthquake had killed me. Life is just too difficult."**

Risheshwori Chalise

vulnerable. As in most of Nepal, there are fewer young men left here, Sindhupalchok is the district with one of the highest absentee populations in Nepal.

Kumar Katwal has been living out in the open for nearly two weeks now after his house collapsed, killing two members of his family. He says survivors like him just want two things: food and shelter before the rainy season next month.

Nearly 4,000 people were killed in Sindhupalchok, half of the total official death toll from the 25 April quake. The quake destroyed food stores, and people don't have seed for the paddy planting season. If they cannot plant rice, they will be hungry for the rest of the year. Many have lost their livestock, too.

Yadu Nath Chalise, an 83-year-old who survived the 1934 earthquake considers himself lucky to have lived through another one. This time, he is more worried about running out of food. He had set aside 14 bags of rice and millet for seed and to eat. But his mud and stone cowshed also collapsed.

"I could save just this much," he says, spreading out a small quantity of rice on a mat in the

afternoon sun. "I could not save the seeds, I don't know how we will plant, what we will grow and what we will eat."

Yadu Nath was working on the field when his house collapsed, his 80-year-old wife Risheshwori Chalise was feeding buffaloes in the shed and was injured. She says: "I am barely alive but I wish the earthquake had killed me. Life is just too difficult."

Yadu Nath and Risheshwori are living in a makeshift hut, and cannot run after the trucks and helicopters that come to their village every day. "No one comes to ask if we need help," he says. "Only those who can run around are getting relief."

There are tens of thousands of survivors like Bishnu Maya Majhi and the Chalise couple who live in the edges of society, they fall between the cracks and have not received much help.

In the absence of people's elected representatives and a functioning local government, they will have to just get by on their own. Survivors here in Sindhupalchok and other hard-hit districts of Central Nepal are finding that just and equitable relief may be too much to expect for now. 🇳🇵

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