

## SADED NEPAL UDHAB PYAKUREL REPORT

A devastating earthquake of 7.8 in magnitude, with its epicentre in Western Hill of Nepal, struck the country on Saturday at around 11.56 AM, hit 38 districts in Nepal. According to the government and as of 30th April, the earthquake caused 6166 deaths, most of them in Sindhupalchowk, Kathmandu and Nuwakot. Over 13232 people have been injured. These figures are expected to increase as more areas are yet to be reached and information becomes unavailable. Based on the preliminary records provided from disaster-hit districts, the Home Ministry estimates that some 600,000 houses have been destroyed in the 13 districts (Dhading, Gorkha, Rasuwa, Sindhupalchowk, Kavre, Nuwakot, Dolakha, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Ramechhap) displacing 2.8 million people, and the number of homeless families is bound to increase once estimates from remaining 16 districts are added up. According to our own observation in Nuwakot, all mud-bonded houses in rural areas are either destroyed or severely cracked. If we take a case of Nuwakot district, Census (2011) data states that there are 59,194 households out of which only 1155 houses are made of with RCC with pillar system whereas the rest of the houses are having mud-bonded bricks/stone. In other words, hardly 2% houses can be used in rural areas after the earthquakes as most of the severely cracked houses will be collapsed along with the upcoming rainy season (see photographs of the houses which are yet to fall down but severely cracked).

A series of strong aftershocks continued to jolt the country until Thursday (May 1, 2-11) in the afternoon, prompting people to leave their houses in search of open spaces. After the main shock that was felt for a minute, followed by a series of aftershocks. As for Thursday in the evening, hundreds of aftershocks measuring more than four in magnitude were felt across the country following the main tremor on last Saturday out of which over more than two dozen aftershocks were measured above 5 in magnitude. The tremor and its aftershocks were felt throughout the country, along the Himalayas.

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala who was supposed to undergo a health check-up in Thailand before returning home on April 28 landed at the Kathmandu airport at 11 am. Koirala, who was on a visit to Indonesia, decided to cut short his visit and return home. An emergency Cabinet meeting of Nepal declared a national emergency in earthquake-hit areas, declaring the national crisis and urged all to engage in rescue efforts, decided to mobilise all state agencies including bureaucracy and security bodies at this moment of national crisis and urged the international community to extend all possible help to facilitate rescue and rehabilitation works. However, the slow pace of the Nepalese government's relief operations has witnessed resulting anger and frustration among the residents of the country's earthquake-struck areas. The government on Thursday issued a press release and stated that it has distributed 32,826 tents, 2,520 solar lights, 649 blankets till the date in the country that is less than the need of a district. It indicates the inefficiency of the government to reach the sufferers. Once I visited my own village (Gerku, Nuwakot which is some 7 KM far away from District Headquarter), I came to know that it took 22 hours for police to reach even after villagers repeatedly requested the police to come and complete formalities which was mandatory before funeral of dead bodies. No government official was there till Friday to observe the situation of the village. The government on Thursday has announced Rs. 20 Billion trust to use for resettlement of people rendered homeless, with an aim to collect Rs. 200 Billion. Once we observe the slow mechanism and the closely coming monsoon (rainy

season), it seems impossible for sufferers to access these kinds fund before December 2015. The most urgent need of rural village is to have a temporary shelter to survive in the rainy season that will be started shortly. Here, villagers state that tents will not be helpful in hilly areas due to the nature of landscape. "Neither tent is durable so that we can reuse next year nor it will save us from heavy rain. It is useful only if there is light rain without wind" they state. Rather, they suggest to distribute Corrugated galvanised iron or steel (CGI sheets) as an alternative to tent so that it can be used while constructing their house in the future. According to our estimation, a small family can survive from rain if they are provided Rs. 25000 to buy CGI sheets, which can be used both as wall and roof. For that they need some raw woods which are available locally.

As a short-term plan, I could think of only my own village development committee-Gerkhu of Nuwakot district. It is the VDC with 1421 households (Census 2011) and 6400 people. The largest residents of this VDC is Tamang with 2130 people followed by 2016 Brahmins, 1064 Chhetree, 439 Newar and 274 Dalits. The earthquake caused 32 deaths along with dozens of people have been injured. Though it is one of the neighboring VDC of the District Headquarter, the settlement is by-and-large rural settlement. That is why the Census 2011 reported that this VDC had only 4 houses with RCC with pillar system. As per our observations, it is difficult to find out 10 houses in whole VDC which are safe to stay. Given the limitation, we cannot mobilise yourself to help a village. That is why, we have discussed with the community and they have discussed how to reach small assistance up to the most needy. According to the discussion:

☐ Firstly support should be to those single women without job/pension and earning siblings.

☐ 2nd priority should be to those households without anyone in job/pension and foreign employment.

While doing so, the marginal identity i.e. Dalits, and underprivileged social category will be given preference.

If we follow these criteria, we can minimize households and bring it upto 70 households to support in Gerkhu. Since we the support 200\$ per household, the total assistance for the time being will come around US\$14000, and it will be a significant and visible amount in locality.

\*\*\*\*\*