



## NEPAL EARTHQUAKE 2015: Sorrows to Forget, Lessons to Remember!

*This Special Series covers the activities conducted by HERD in one year of time after the earthquake of April 25, 2015. Through this document, we reflect back the activities that were initiated immediately after the quake. The relief effort and media monitoring was initiated at the beginning. We also share perspectives of HERD staff on how the year has been for them. The document also highlights the projects carried out in the last one year related to the earthquake.*

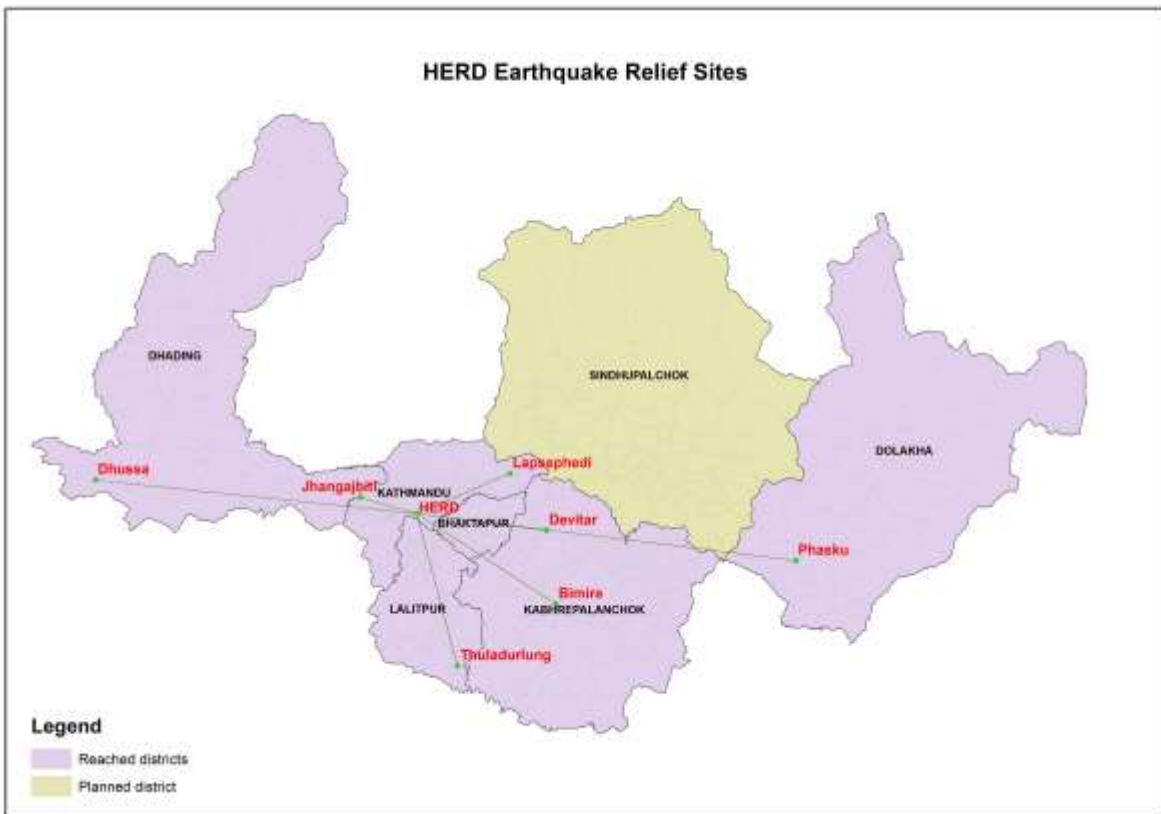
### Introduction

On the afternoon of April 25, 2015, Nepal witnessed one of the biggest disaster in decades a 7.8 magnitude earthquake. One year has passed but aftershocks continue to convulse the country. The day doesn't seem to be a distant memory that took lives of about 9000 people and made more than 20000 people. Still after a year, people are having trouble getting back to the normal life. Wounds have been hidden but the fear remains. Numerous people are in need of psychological support. Normalcy has not yet retained with slow pace of reconstruction but resilience in Nepali people to combat such natural disasters is praise worthy.

## Immediately after the earthquake

On April 27, HERD made a request through its social media sites for ‘**Pledge for Public Health Action**’ and coordinated with the volunteers with the support HERD staff and thus began the relief campaigns. The team began exploring affected areas for relief distribution and started collecting required materials.

An **emergency earthquake desk communications** was set up at ground floor of the office. A fund raising initiative: **Helping Hands for Humanity** was developed in our website with the slogan, “**every penny raised on relief, community gets 100 percent**”. HERD management made the decision that whatever amount of money comes to the fund, all goes to the needy people and all management costs (transportation, logistics, food for the volunteers and the staff) will be borne by HERD. A total of **19,833 USD** was collected from **64 contributors from 9 countries**: Nepal, UK, USA, The Netherlands, Hong Kong, Australia, Uganda, Thailand and Saudi Arabia for the relief operation.



The **relief operation began from May 2** one week after the disaster. It was carried out in coordination with the District Administration Office, Village Development Committee, Health Officials, Nepal Army as well as local leaders. Basic health facilities were provided by trained health professionals in various places. Other organisations such as UNICEF, UNFPA, DFID, PSI, FNCCI, among others also provided us relief materials. We reached **1768 households in various locations of 7 districts**: Jhangajhiti, Chandragiri Municipality Wards no 5 and 9; Shankharapur, Ward no 4; Lapsipedi, Sankhu; Bimire VDC, Ward no 6, Kavre, Thuladurlung, Ward no 1 to 9, Lalitpur, Devitar, Ward no 1, 2, 3 and 9, Kavrepalanchowk, Dhusa, Dhading and Gairibisauna, Deupur VDC wards no 3, 4 and 5, Kavre.

Meanwhile, Research Uptake and Communications Unit at HERD began **daily real time media monitoring of earthquake related stories** published through mainstream media as well as social media, such as BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, Ekantipur.com, The Himalayan Times, OnlineKhabar, Setopati, Pahilopost, Ratopati, myrepublica.com, swasthyakhabar.com, Indian express, ABC news, Twitter and Facebook. The stories were covered from **April 30 to May 22**. News on various issues was tracked down by the team. A report was also published based on the news tracked down.

HERD's media monitoring team also conducted an observation visit to different areas of Kathmandu – observing the displaced settlements and emergency health services provided by hospitals. HERD team also provided its technical support to Ministry of Health and Population by deploying 2 public health officers for information collection at **Health Emergency Operation Centre (HEOC)**. The HEOC produced a comprehensive Situation Update on a daily basis for 2 months.

Additionally, considering the vulnerability of communicable disease in camps, the TB REACH project of HERD conducted **TB screening programme** (active case finding) at many places. Post-earthquake, the mobile vans have been deployed at some places of Kathmandu targeting group are displaced people living at camps. The screening was conducted at Tundikhel camp where along with the displaced people Nepal Army Officials also did the screening. Total **2600 screenings** were done: 500 at Tundikhel, 1500 at Chucchepati and 500 at Bhaktapur.



## Facing the Fear

HERD staff members share their experience of living with and facing the fear of the earthquake:

### Live your life



Since the earthquake, I have understood the philosophy of 'live today, don't wait for tomorrow'. We do savings and save everything for the future but one disaster takes it away so I think we should enjoy fully today with whatever we want. - **Abriti Arjyal**

### Connecting people

The earthquake has taught me about the importance of teamwork. It has made me realise how the contribution of different individuals can bring smile on people's faces. It has also brought us closer to people with we barely talked earlier at work and in the society. - **Anju Bhatta**



### Supporting staff



The support provided to us by HERD was highly appreciable. Due to the fear, some of us were not able to come to the office. The management was also flexible in terms of our working hours and ensured that we were feeling comfortable coming to office. We were also given choice to work from home. We all suffered from some kind of emotional injuries and at that time, I feel that our organization provided us great support to cope with the situation. - **Deepak Joshi**

### Lesson learnt

The incidents that took place then resulted in many negative consequences but we also had some positive changes. Now, we have started adopting measures to prevent accidents inside the house by considering appropriate place to add or shift things. The concept of go bag is being adopted. Further we have also understood that if we learn about the first aid it will not only be helpful for us but for others as well. - **Pragya Karki**



### Rooted fear



We all learnt the reality of life at that time that something as scary can happen. It was very dreadful I feel like no one faces the same fear. I had never felt that our life will come back to normalcy in the way that it has become now. However, after a certain time we realized that life can be normal, natural disaster takes place but we cannot take it as the end. - **Shophika Regmi**

## Fear in family

Although having no fear, failure in convincing other members of the family, we were forced to sleep outside the house for almost two weeks. The fear opened the gate for many negative activities then. We cannot predict what will happen now or what disaster will occur but we can surely be prepared for such situations. This cannot be done individually all of us will have to support each other.- **Shyam Kandel**



## Getting Opportunities



It was terrible at the time, we had many troubles where to stay. It was also difficult to communicate with the family. During the disaster I was jobless, after a while there were many job openings and I got opportunity. Then I started working it did make a difference. The earthquake helped people unite; many who needed help were given hands. I feel that we have learnt how to tackle with such situations. - **Sudip Jung Karki**

## Counselling efforts

We all were traumatised and psychologically affected. I took a counselling session with some of my colleagues. Then I realised that we were safe and all we had to do was to console ourselves. HERD too organized a couple of counselling sessions that had positive impact in many of us. After participating at the session I even shared my experience in my community, it felt good as everyone took it positively. - **Sushila Moktan**



## Exploring potential



Initially everyone was scared as it was first such experience for most of us. After ensuring self and my family members' safety, it occurred to me and my co-workers that we should do something. We took initiative and began exploring ideas. We conducted relief work and conducted the media monitoring. At that time, I became involved in all kinds of work. I feel that if it wasn't for the earthquake I would have never known my true potential.-**Santosh Giri**

## How we supported each other

### Positive Thinking and Group Counselling

HERD organized a session on 'Positive Thinking and Group Counselling' on May 20. 110 participants including HERD board members, staff as well as their family members attended the event. The event was organised with the motive of sharing our pain and struggles and relieving ourselves from the mental stress caused by the earthquake and subsequent aftershocks. Facilitating the event, Nar Bahadur Karki, psychosocial counsellor and life



skills coach rendered a message for new hope and meaning to life. His session helped the participants to see life in a different way, which was lost somewhere, amidst fear, anxiety and helplessness. In the counselling session when Mr. Karki started speaking, it was worth all our time and attention. Most of us did not take life that way. He showed a new light, and made us realise how lucky we are to be surviving. All the participants benefitted from the session with renewed courage and positivity to consider our lives as worth living to be cherished. The session definitely inspired all of us in various ways and we are thankful to Mr. Karki for the opportunity.

### Rewinding Ourselves for Rejuvenation

On June 1, 2015 when the clock struck 10 in the morning with our Executive Director calling for the usual weekly staff meeting, we had no expectations of it being a different one. After the usual project specific summaries by project leads and operations unit, it was the turn of Sushil Sir (HERD's Executive Chairperson) with a surprise in store for us when he uttered, "Let's play a game". Everyone was confused, could be football or some musical games as he is fond of singing and dancing. However, it was something else, a mind game. He asked us to get a paper and express five inspirational messages - anything that pops up in our mind. We had to paste the paper on the walls of our partly damaged office building to rewind and rejuvenate ourselves from the earthquake aftermath. In no time the walls of HERD office were filled with people's emotions. It was an art of expression which didn't just inspire one but many. With these messages now displayed in our office wall, it brings smiles in everyone's face and also takes away the fear of the devastating earthquake.



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### Earthquake related projects conducted by HERD

#### School assessment in earthquake affected districts



Following the devastation from the strong earthquake of 7.8 magnitude in which struck in 25th April, 2015, Ministry of Education announced that the schools will be reopened. In order to see whether the schools are safe or unsafe to be reopened, MoE, with support from UNICEF, assessed the structural damage in school buildings. HERD was contracted to manage the overall assessment process including collecting data from the various schools. The objective of the project was to assess physical conditions of school buildings in hard hit districts and ensure whether schools are safe to use. After inspection, the team used green flag in the building which was assessed to be safe and red to the building which was assessed unsafe. HERD carried out the assessment of schools for 11 districts in three phases where ten teams, each with three persons, resource person from DEO, engineer/sub engineer and one district coordinator were deployed. The 1st phase was carried out at 3

districts Nuwakot, Kavre and Dhading, 2nd phase at Sindhuli, Ramechhap Makwanpur and Okhaldhunga and the last phase at Dolakha, Rasuwa, Gorkha, Sindhupalchowk.

### **Recruitment for Reconstruction: Engaging Engineers for Household Disaster Assessment**

HERD International collaborated with National Planning Commission (NPC), Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), The World Bank, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Kathmandu Living Labs (KLL) and National Reconstruction Agency (NRA) to implement a Household Registration for Housing Reconstruction Programme (Survey) - 2072 from December, 2015. The project has been envisaged to conduct a comprehensive assessment of all households in the districts highly affected by the earthquake in order to identify the extent of damage to the households using uniform engineering criteria. This programme is a follow-up validation survey to the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) study conducted by NPC. HERD is responsible in recruiting human resource, training and logistics and transport management under this project. Around 1700 people have been recruited and deployed in 11 districts. The project will be completed by Mid-May.



### **A Descriptive Analysis of Injuries and Risk Factors in the 25 April, 2015 Nepal Earthquake**



This project is being conducted in coordination with Save the Children and NSET. The main aim of the project is to identify the causes of injuries and deaths caused in the April 25 Earthquake, in order to provide a scientific basis for education and training of the Nepali public in basic disaster preparedness and mitigation. The project will provide a clear picture about the specific risk factors associated with injuries; hazards in the built environment and building typologies with specific risks for human casualties;

specific risk mitigation efforts and behaviours to decrease deaths and injuries. The research will be conducted at Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchowk and Kavrepalanchowk. The field researchers have already been deployed to their respective field.

### **End User's Third Party Monitoring of UNICEF Interventions in the Earthquake affected districts**

Following the massive earthquake United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been providing humanitarian response in the 14 affected districts with key interventions in the favour of children in the sector of health, WASH, education, nutrition and child protection. It has further aimed to conduct independent third party, end user monitoring and provide weekly and monthly monitoring reports of



UNICEF programmes for 6 months to help UNICEF perform better with regular feedback and improvements in the programmes as activities continue to be implemented. HERD is the implementing agency which was responsible in conducting the real time monitoring of the humanitarian response actions conducted by UNICEF through its implementing partners from August, 2015 over a period of 6 months. The project has been completed and the researchers have returned from the respective fields.

### Implementation of Emergency IMNCI in Gorkha

An emergency support project for Integrated Management of Neonatal Childhood Illness (IMNCI) was implemented at Gorkha district from Mid-November to Mid-February. Initiated in coordination with UNICEF and CHD, under the project various orientation programs was organized in the districts where 665 Female Community Health Volunteers FCHVs and health workers from all health posts and district hospitals participated. The orientation was facilitated by district focal persons. After the orientation FCHVs were provided with a motivational package that included 18 materials that included vessels, comb, soap, clothes, nail cutter among others. The orientation was conducted in every health post and the facilitator documented the major issues. After the orientation programme, supervision and monitoring was also done for some issues along with district focal persons.

### Words from Executive Chairperson – Dr Sushil Baral



Nepal Earthquake 2015 was a misfortune for Nepal and all Nepalis. The negative consequences it has invited and the plights it has created are very painful. We also were affected - both personally and professionally. However, looking into the positives, even after such big damage where people lost a lot, there was social unity and willingness to help others. We saw people helping each other, providing support during difficult times, which was fantastic. We observed it in community and at homes, how individuals came out of fear and were resilient in terms of tackling the trauma and the pain. I wish and hope that we continue to support each

other during such difficult times.

### Conclusion

Pain and sufferings come and go. Some incidents shake the nation. The April 25 earthquake shook the entire nation, physically and emotionally with many lives gone and injured, many properties lost and many dreams shattered. We have no option but to look back, reflect on our past, identify our loopholes and then unite together to build back better Nepal with better preparedness and efficient implementation. It is high time that we think of the future and act at present.

#### CONTRIBUTORS:

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