

Threat of quake awakened Nepal: NRCS activated relief mechanism



Earthquake affected women receiving relief material in Bhaktapur

Affected Districts	18
Dead	7
Missing	0
Injured	72
Displaced Families	6,343
Fully Destroyed HHs	6,343
Partially Destroyed HHs	8,324
Total Affected Families	14,667

In fact, earthquake cannot be predicted so probably it was not anticipated by Nepalese people, in particular people living in the eastern Nepal. But no sooner they arrived at home after completing their day-time business on 17 September, a 6.9 Richter scale earthquake struck. It quivered many parts of Nepal and mostly Kathmandu and the eastern Nepal observed heavy effect at 18:25 local time. It claimed 7 lives and left 6,343 families displaced as they lost their houses. At least 72 people were found seriously injured.

Due to the earthquake, 14, 667 families have been affected as it destroyed 6,343 houses fully and 8, 324 houses partially. The impact of earthquake lies in the North Eastern districts of Nepal compared to other areas. Public buildings, especially schools and health facilities, have also been damaged. The estimated loss is 30 million rupees (approx. 384615 USD).

Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) has distributed relief items to the neediest people. Meanwhile, food items were distributed to 90 families and non-food relief items to 4,184 families. The NRCS headquarters has been coordinating with the Government of Nepal, International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC and UN organization for an effective relief operation.

Following the situation, NRCS activated its Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) immediately and the district chapters initiated assessment and distribution of relief materials for the affected people. Teams comprising of technical expertise and relief operation were mobilized in all affected districts for identifying the needs of affected families. Nepal Red Cross Society had deployed eight response teams over the past month.

The teams are made up of First Aiders, Water and Sanitation Volunteers, Light Search and rescue who provided assistance to affected community.

Winter season has direct impact on living condition of affected population although they have already received tarpaulins and blankets. There is a need of reconstruction programme focusing on shelter support, in particular. Relief and reconstruction works are really difficult because of the scattered settlement in hilly areas.

According to the National Seismologic Centre (NSC), the epicentre was eastern Nepal bordering to India. Thus it impacted mainly Taplejung district in Nepal and Sikkim in India.

Annual blood donation and supply increased

Nationwide Blood collection and supply to needy people increased by 9% in 2011. The information was given at a programme on the occasion of 45th National Blood Transfusion Service Day (28th July). This year 170 thousands of unit of blood was collected and supplied to the needy to 230 thousands of people along with blood components.

The supply of blood is always through voluntary blood donation. For collection of blood, 3,268 mobile camps were organized this year. Similarly, the collection and supply were regularly managed by 77 blood transfusion centres or emergency collection centres

located in 54 different districts. Among blood donors, 85 % are male and 15 % are female.

Nepal Red Cross Society is only organization to deliver blood transfusion service, which covers not only blood collection but also testing, cross matching, stockpiling in safe way and distribution. Counselling and donor care activities have been carried out amongst other services.



My blood group is B positive. I started blood donation 30 years back while I was around 22. I used to donate blood four times a year in the initial days when I was young. Nowadays, I donate blood twice a year. It reached 115 times this year. I have no health problem and I have never had experience of the situation that compelled me to admit to hospitals. So, I want to encourage every individual to donate blood regularly to meet the blood transfusion need of Nepal.

Binod Lal Shrestha, Kathmandu.

Nepal Red Cross Society celebrated its 49th Birthday

Nepal Red Cross Society celebrated its 49th Birthday on 5th September with diverse programmes and activities across the country. The slogan for the year was “FIND VOLUNTEER INSIDE YOU.” The NRCS has been providing humanitarian services by multiple mobilizations of volunteers. Currently, over a million members have been affiliated to 75 district chapters, 1,339 sub-chapters and 5,160 junior and youth circles nationwide. Hundreds of volunteers have also got NRCS membership.

Nepal Red Cross, since its establishment in 1963, have been providing regular and development services. It has been operating emergency relief, ambulance, blood, first aid, health, eye care. As well, it has been addressing the issues of water and sanitation, risks reduction and community resilience. This year about 2.6 million persons got benefitted through awareness, capacity building and core services, like blood transfusion, eye care etc.

Local officials committed to respect diversity and gender

Following a training on diversity and gender, 20 field officers and staff members from Palpa, Mygdi, Lamjung, Makwanpur and Sarlahi district chapters committed to reducing discrimination at the local level. Junior/Youth RC Department organized the training about social inclusion, diversity and gender issues.

Experience sharing and group discussions over case studies have facilitated participants learn about those issues to a deeper level. Nepal Red Cross Society in participation with the Norwegian Red Cross has been implementing a youth focused programme that addresses HIV/AIDS, girls-trafficking and social discrimination issues at community level.



“The organizational strength lies in the joint efforts of members, volunteers and staff for a common goal to reduce human suffering,” said Sanjeev Thapa, Chairman of NRCS. “We must have common understanding of Red Cross values and positive attitude to achieve our goals.”

The role of the volunteers and staff was recognized for their contribution in making the NRCS the greatest humanitarian organization in the country. The NRCS declared that it would observe golden anniversary with diverse programmes next year.

“We see the needs are much bigger than our resources”.

- Anders Skjelmose



Anders Skjelmose has been working as Danish Red Cross Representative in Nepal over a year. Indra Adhikari, Director for Communications and Humanitarian Values has interviewed him at his office recently. Here is an excerpt of the interview.

Indra : First of all, what are the present humanitarian challenges you observe in Nepal?

Anders: I believe that there are a range of issues that are to be addressed. The obvious ones are how to move forward after the seven point agreement between the government and the national political parties. It's not only to ensure reintegration of former combatant but also look at victims of the conflict. So, there are certain psycho-social needs, etc. as a part of them.

Then there will be whole range of development related issues, poverty related issues in terms of health and disaster risk reduction. We have one issue at hand with September 18th earthquake in the eastern part of Nepal. There are still some unfinished businesses, I have given the highlight of the issues.

Indra: You've identified the issues of conflict aftermath, Natural disaster and development. How do you think RCRC Movement can address those issues?

Anders : Different components of RCRC Movement are addressing these issues: ICRC in cooperation with NRCS, obviously for conflict related issues; Natural disasters, NRCS is quite strong under response part with support from the Federation and also other National Societies. I think, it is mainly in using the NRCS network which really presents throughout the country.

Regarding international context, the NRCS has been very popular National Society with many partners. It is able to mobilize quite important resources. Obviously, Red Cross is not working in isolation. It works with other stakeholders of Nepal government, government agencies and UN and other NGOs and INGOs. So, it is also a matter of coordinating our efforts closely with those government and other agencies.

Indra : In a context, like Nepal, where all components of the RCRC movement have a presence, how important it is to work together and speak one voice?

Anders: Obviously it is important. I think a tremendous job is done in dissemination of RC principles and our modus operandi, how we work. It is crucial for us to be able to gain access and to offer support to those most in need. The experience in Nepal where NRCS and other parts of the RC Movement are respected by all sides tells me that dissemination has been quite successful here. But since you raise the issue it may indicate that there is confusion, and we still have a job to do here.

Indra: Currently, what are roles and activities of DRC in Nepal?

Anders : DRC is supporting NRCS activities in two main fields- Health and disaster management/disaster risk reduction. On top of that, we have cross cutting issues. We are supporting capacity building and organizational development of NRCS both at central and district level where we work. The supports for the time being are in four different programmes. We have one health programme and three separate DM, DR programmes or projects.

We have one additional activity this year, It is a support to NRCS warehouses. We have supported around 2,400 Non-food relief Items both to central warehouses and also in selected regional warehouses to enable NRCS to respond quickly to disasters whenever and wherever they happen - be it floods earthquakes, landslides, etc. So those have been the main areas of support and cooperation this year.

Indra: Over the years, NRCS has been involved in response to the conflict and other situations of violence. Also, there natural disasters recur at times. How do you assess the capacity of NRCS?

Anders: NRCS is carrying out a lot of operations. Obviously, one disaster or emergency is always different from the next. Generally, NRCS is a strong National society. It's very well known. They respond quickly and timely in most cases.

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International Day of the Disappeared: "the Right to Know" highlighted

The “Day of the Disappeared” or 30 August was commemorated with diverse programmes. It was observed mainly to acknowledge the plight of the families and relatives, who still don't know the fate and whereabouts of their family members who went missing during the 10-year conflict in Nepal. The ICRC in Nepal and NRCS worked hand in hand with family members in activities including lighting in temple premises, afforestation programme, and interaction programmes with different stakeholders.



Relatives of the missing persons lighting 100,000 threaded oil lamp.

The ICRC and NRCS jointly published the names of 1,383 people who went missing during Nepal's 10-year internal armed conflict. The publication, "The Missing persons in Nepal; the Right to Know" contains an updated list of cases of missing persons which remain unresolved. The publication aims to acknowledge the suffering of 1,383 families in Nepal and to draw attention on their need to know what happened to their missing relatives. The list shows that behind each of those names there is a mother, a father, a son, a husband or a wife waiting to know what happened. Similar lists were published in past years; 2007, 2008 and 2009.

“Shadows of Hope”, a documentary highlighting the psychological, economic, social and legal consequences for family members in their daily lives, was broadcasted through two popular television channels. It shows despair of the families at the loss of their loved ones and hope that he or she may, against all odds, reappear. Similarly, Naya Bihani (New Morning) radio drama was aired in two parts.

More than 50 Red Cross local district chapters observed the day with different activities under the slogan “The Missing persons in Nepal; the Right to know”.

The ICRC and NRCS are working closely with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction and several other organisations to address the needs of thousands of relatives of missing persons. Through its extensive network, NRCS supported by the ICRC greatly contribute to maintaining contact with the families of missing persons in 70 districts across Nepal.

Healthy baby competition held

Mugu chapter of NRCS organized a competition of healthy baby, for the first time in the remote district of Nepal, on the occasion of National Breast feeding Week. Over 100 infants, under a year, were in the competition, of which parents of 28 healthy infants were given prizes.

Weight of the baby, vaccination status, sanitation status of the baby and mother as well as parents' knowledge about child care and importance of breast feeding were considered for evaluation indicators in the competition.



World First Aid Day Observed

Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) observed the World First Aid Day on 10th September in Chitwan district. The slogan for this year was “First Aid for all.” The programme aimed at disseminating importance of first aid service among general public, motivate volunteers towards first aid and get volunteers recognized for their humanitarian services.

“First Aid Volunteers are not only providing pre-hospital treatment in emergency they are also contributing to build the image of Nepal Red Cross Society”, said Sanjeev Thapa, Chairman of NRCS.

During a week, the day was observed with first aid simulation, first aid training, learn first aid in 15 minutes, quiz context, rally, presentation and mass meeting.

The first aid service has been integrated into other programmes such as disaster preparedness, Junior and Youth Red Cross activities, organizational development, volunteer management and emergency water and sanitation. By now, school based first aid course has been finalized and its field level test has been completed. On top of that, the Government of Nepal has approved NRCS first aid curriculum.

The NRCS has been providing first aid services mainly to the wounded in road accidents, conflict, violence and other emergencies. The services have been provided from all 75 district chapters when the situation demands. There are 675

first aid trainers and 14,684 first aid volunteers across the country. It is noted that the first aiders provided emergency services to 95,000 injured/wounded people merely in the last decade.

The organization deserves good number of human resources for the basic first aid with CPR capacity. Mobilizing this resource, NRCS has been conducting trainings for individuals and different institutions. Efforts are made towards achieving the goal of developing ‘one first aider one household.’

The World First Aid Day programme was participated in by the representatives of NRCS, the ICRC, the IFRC, UNICEF, students, religious communities, and the Government officials from Chitwan district.

Ambulance drivers trained on First aid

NRCS has trained 46 ambulance drivers about basic first aid skills in July as a part of the campaign “Basic first aid training skills to all ambulance drivers”. The Government policy and rules have directed ambulance service operators to ensure trained driver and first aid kit in the ambulance vehicle on compulsory basis. It has become a responsibility of the ambulance operators.

Ambulance drivers in public hospitals, private nursing homes and police hospital took part the basic first aid training. Participants were provided knowledge and practical skills on how to care patient, how to make safe transportation in addition to the first aid for fracture, bleeding as well as safety measures they have to adopt.

Nepal Red Cross...

“Integrity to Fundamental Principles, respect to diversity, and capacity for managing complexity have extended NRCS as a humanitarian organization across the country,” said Dev Ratna Dhakhwa, Secretary General, and NRCS.

Representatives of the Red Cross Movement partners- the ICRC, IFRC and Partner National Society, appreciated the quality services NRCS has been delivering to the vulnerable people and communities. “Every day more than a thousand of NRCS volunteers are facilitating needy communities,” said Anders Skjelmose, Country Representative of Danish Red Cross in Nepal.

The organization recognized the nine staff members who served NRCS for over 25 years and made contribution in achieving organizational goal.

The NRCS Staff Welfare Fund and Staff Association organized programmes such as scholarship distribution and blood donation camp at the headquarters.

Central Executive Committee Convened

The 229th Central Executive Committee (CEC) was convened in July. The meeting has noted that the headquarters would review and update its management and administrative structures at central level as per the NRCS Sixth Development Plan (2011-2015). The plan was endorsed in the beginning of 2011. Similarly, the CEC has formed a task force to collect feedback and get recommendations in order for amending statutes of the organization. Communication Strategy of the NRCS (2011-15), which is supposed to facilitate implementation of the development plan, was also endorsed by the meeting.

Sanjeev Thapa in his capacity of Chairman of NRCS announced the nomination of five vice chairpersons for each region. The newly declared vice chairpersons by development regions are: Hari Niroula (eastern), Dr. Bishow Keshar Maskay (central), Shashi Panthi (western), Ajeet Kumar Sharma (mid-western) and Hemraj Ojha (far-western).

We see...

To be quite honest, the earthquake of 18th September has also been learning exercise for NRCS. Because it is an extremely difficult area to access but despite these obstacles, DRC is quite proud of being a partner to NRCS. We can see again with earthquake, other NGO/INGOs are channeling their support through NRCS. That may be the best indication of the reputation of NRCS being a reliable organization and also a neutral organization that is actually basing its interventions on needs, not involving in any political agenda.

So overall, it has been a positive part of evaluation of NRCS. However, there is always room for improvement. Recently, we had a simulation exercise on the contingency plan of NS to test how well are our systems actually working. We found that some of our systems are okay. But we also learnt that we have to improve some to do better in the future. I think that is a constant obligation to continuously improve rather than lean back in the self satisfaction.

Indra: What key message would you like to pass to the donors and partners who are still with Red Cross despite the fact of global financial crisis to address increased trend of vulnerabilities of all kinds.

Anders: well, first of all, we would always welcome more funds. I think that is always a limitation. It’s always very difficult to make choices we have to make. We see the needs are much bigger than our resources. This forces us to make very hard choices. The battle is we want more money. Another that may be little more technical, it is that back donors often have quite demanding systems or guidelines, etc. It does not facilitate smooth running of operations. After we spent considerable amount of time and actually administrations, the resources we get in order to report back account, etc. Clearly, we have to account for things we do. We have to account the money we spend. But in line with various International declarations, Paris declarations, frameworks, etc. it is to try to ensure higher degree of harmonization between and back donors requirements. We are in this position.

But Danish Red Cross as a PNS with NRCS, with a wide range of partners and donors, is put on the considerable pressure to honor to all these requirements. We would like to spend most of our time on the operations working out there rather than doing administration business here. So message to the donor community at least would be to simplify the process for us.

Capacity to respond earthquake impact tested

Red Cross Movement partners in Nepal tested its capacity to respond to possible earthquake situation based on the scenario of an 8 Richter scale earthquake struck Kathmandu Valley at 7:30 a.m. through two important simulation exercises.

The first exercise was focused on the communication capacity in the organization. The drill exercise tested communication tools such as VHF radio and satellite phones to transmit key information in a situation when normal communication channels, such as mobile phones, are down. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), located at NRCS national headquarters, was on standby position to receive information from Red Cross wardens about the safety and whereabouts of staff, volunteers and family members. That would be gathered from the defined assembly points throughout Kathmandu Valley.

The second exercise was expected to examine the practicality of existing contingency plan with regards to respond to an entire cycle of earthquake.

A total of 162 personnel, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Belgian and Danish Red Cross, involved in the simulation exercise.

“The drill was a practical way to test reliability of our communication equipments and to ensure that all Red Cross Movement Partners in Nepal are familiar with the system” said Victoria Bannon, IFRC Country Representative in Nepal. “The exercise was to make key people know what to do in the first hours of a major disaster”

Following the simulation, a feedback session was organized at the NRCS headquarters to review the exercises and identify areas of improvements.

“Drilling exercises were not only crucial for our organizational purpose, they were equally relevant to all disaster management actors for better preparedness in Nepal.” said Dev Ratna Dhakhwa, Secretary General of NRCS.



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