The juniors and youths, gathered from all parts of Nepal in Sindhuli in the 32nd Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) National Junior and Youth (JY) Conference, committed a move for anti-human trafficking and plastic bags use abolishing campaign. The youths also asked the NRCS to carry out more capacity building activities targeted at the youth. About 250 junior students, youths and teacher sponsors from 47 districts were present at the two-day conference, representing over 800 thousands junior and youth members of NRCS. The conference was hosted by Janjyoti Higher Secondary School at Fosretar in Sindhuli in cooperation with local RC sub chapters and RC district chapter Sindhuli.

Inaugurating the conference on 26 February, NRCS chairman Sanjeev Thapa said, "Juniors and youths are the main human resources of NRCS. We promote organization, capacity and leadership development of the youth."

Vim Bikram Thapa, principal of the host school, and Manik Dhakal, chairman of school management committee, welcomed the participants at the conference venue. NRCS Junior and Youth Committee Chairperson Surendra Sing Air, former Chairperson of NRCS Central JY Committee, Hari Neupane, Executive Director Umesh Dhakal, and Junior/Youth Department Director Bishnu Hari Devkota also addressed the conference, focusing on different aspects.

The youth delegates participated in different input sessions on youth volunteer management, sanitation campaign, reproductive and sexual health, social discrimination, and earthquake safety measures. The sessions were facilitated in a participatory way by...
Students and teachers promote disaster preparedness

Indra Adhikari

Teacher Sita Tamang and others at Bhairum School in the South Asian country of Nepal have been working with the Nepal Red Cross Society—along with partners the Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology and the American Red Cross—on a programme to teach disaster preparedness in schools.

More than 200 million people are affected by disasters each year, but small investments can make a significant difference in saving lives, safeguarding homes and protecting personal assets. Nepal, like other mountainous countries, is prone to storms, floods, landslides, fire and water-borne diseases, which threaten the lives and safety of people living in the area.

Nuwakot and Rasuwa, among many other districts have a significant risk of earthquakes, and experience minor quakes quite frequently. It is just one of the world's 33 most disaster-prone countries where the American Red Cross worked in 2011, partnering with Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies to build safer communities through disaster preparedness training and activities.

The Disaster Preparedness for School Safety (DPSS) programme works to minimize those threats by teaching teachers and students how to identify risks and hazards in their schools and communities and what they can do before, during and after disasters.

In addition to preparedness training, volunteers are trained to provide light search and rescue and first aid. The programme is unique because it equips the students and teachers to serve as ambassadors and mobilizers, spreading what they’ve learned to their friends, neighbors and families.

Last September, students put their training into action when a 6.9 earthquake struck eastern Nepal. Phaising Tamang, an eighth grader at Bhairum School and a member of the Junior Red Cross Circle, recalls doing "duck, cover and hold on" during the disaster.

"As soon as my mother felt a quake, amongst six neighbours inside the house, all of them ran away," he said. “But I positioned as a duck, covered my head and tried hard to remain stable at the entrance. Nothing happened."

Because of the DPSS programme, Phaising knew the safest action was not to run away. While the earthquake struck at dusk, meaning students were not in class, it demonstrated how important a culture of school safety is for the community.

Following a teachers' training in Rasuwa, participants of 19 area schools will carry out vulnerability and capacity assessment at schools and mobilize students and teachers to create disaster response plans for both their school and their homes. “This project brings together changes in schools and communities as the children are the best ambassadors,” said Tirtha Joshi, coordinator programme coordinator.

In the first phase of the programme, nearly 8,400 people have been reached. And, by 2014, some 40,000 people and 220 schools will have benefited from disaster preparedness initiatives.

Sita is confident that the programme will continue to develop, bringing more first aiders, and light search and rescue workers to her school in a matter of months. And when the community develops its own preparedness plan, Sita said, “The community gets resilient.”

At the end part of the programme, Red Cross youths issued a Sindhuli declaration in which they have promised to increase J/YRC Fund by collecting Nepali rupees five from each member, promote latrines and proper hand-washing behaviour, among others.

Finally, Ashok shrestha, president of Sindhuli RC chapter, thanked Beni Madhav Pandey, the Chief District Officer, leaders of political parties, other local stakeholders, NRCS central office and the participants for their outstanding support to make the conference a success.
Cooperation between NRCS and the ICRC continues

Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reached to a cooperation agreement for carrying out activities with regard to capacity building and conflict preparedness for the year 2012. The activities will focus on emergency first aid, communications, legal issues, emergency response, restoring family links and mine risk education. The ICRC will support NRCS with 24.1 million Nepali rupees under this cooperation.

"The joint cooperation activities, between the ICRC and the NRCS, to strengthen NRCS units to respond to emergencies caused by conflict and other sorts of violence have already achieved better access to the communities in need of us”, Said Dev Ratna Dhakhwa, the Secretary General of NRCS.

Following the agreement Jerome Fontana, Deputy Head of ICRC Delegation Kathmandu said "Nepal Red Cross Society is growing to be a strong National Society, and we are happy to be partner with it." The signing programme was held at NRCS headquarters. Cooperation activities between NRCS and the ICRC have been continued ever since 1998.

Humanitarian support to fire-affected people

As temperature grew up and fire incidents increased, NRCS district chapters in March have reported supports were offered to the fire-affected people locally. NRCS Siraha, Saptari, Dhading, Dhanwuta and Banke chapters have offered food and non-food items to the affected 311 families. The support included the provision of cooking oil, rice, salt, lentils, utensils, blanket, water bucket, children set, etc. according to local needs and available resources. Additionally, local government, and other organizations such as Save the Children in close coordination with District Disaster Management Committee have supported the families with cash and kind.

NRCS chapters have deployed five District Disaster Response Team (DDRT) for immediate response in putting out fire and rescue.

Humanitarian support to fire-affected people

Five people were found dead and 3 houses were destroyed in Rajarani village of Dhankuta. According to district chapter Siraha, 11 houses were gutted when fire broke out in Naraha VDC and 24 houses fully destroyed at Khorkai village.

Separately, twenty two houses were reduced to ashes when a fire engulfed in Kandi village of Bankey district.

NRCS enhances capacity of Chapter Officers

Sixteen officers from NRCS district chapters enhanced basic communication skills in preparing news, features, press release as well as capturing a good photograph during a communication capacity building training organized in Chitwan from 14 to 16 March. "I can take better photographs and choose the best one," Said Ashok Yadav, officer of NRCS Siraha in a feedback session. The participants also committed to follow newly endorsed NRCS visibility guideline.

NRCS is implementing communication strategy which keeps improving media relation; strengthening communication capacity and making consistent visibility of the NRCS in priority as a preparation of better response in emergencies.
British Red Cross expands support to DRR

British Red Cross (BRC) has expanded its support to Kathmandu-based Disaster Risk Reduction Project, considering the potential earthquake risks in the capital city. David Peppiatt, Director of International Division of BRC observed disaster risk reduction interventions at Chulachuli and Panchgachhi village of Ilam and Jhapa districts and interacted with local people about how they are better prepared for seasonal food grain collection, non-food relief items, and light search and rescue kit pre-positioning.

In a briefing session before field visit, David participated a session with NRCS officials at the headquarters, which was followed by a presentation on NRCS by NRCS Executive Director, Umesh Dhakal. He had an interaction with the directors, about the challenges ahead and strategies set to meet them.

Mr. Peppiatt also held courtesy meetings with district chapter executives and NRCS Chairperson Sanjeev Thapa as well as Secretary General Dev Ratna Dhakhwa at their offices. During the meeting he appreciated the community mobilization approaches of NRCS.

The BRC-supported DRR projects have benefitted 8700 people and the new project in Kathmandu valley will have benefitted 1.6 million people by 2015.

BRC has been supporting NRCS to improve community preparedness in rural areas and conduct organizational capacity building activities since 2000.

Initiating malaria prevention

Dr. Shalani Mishra

Nepal Red Cross Society volunteers visited more than 48,000 households of Makwanpur, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Sindhupalchowk, Dang, Doti and Surkhet districts with malaria messaging and distributed about 300 thousands of insecticide-treated mosquito nets. NRCS has adopted communication approaches such as street drama, malaria fair, FM radio message to make local people aware about Malaria.

“I can now save my newborn from mosquitoes and malaria when it is born,” said Kamala Thapa after receiving insecticide treated net at Shankarnagar, Rupendehi.

The NRCS intends to expand the household visits, awareness activities and nets distribution to upto 6 more districts of plain and low hills. With its rapid scale-up of life-saving interventions, NRCS has contributed to a consistent reduction in malaria cases. These interventions will not only save lives, but also help advance progress towards increased maternal and child survival that leads reduced morbidity and poverty.

“My face has become very clean after I started sleeping inside the treated net,” said Mr. Revati Sharma happily, responding to a NRCS team on a follow up visit to Chailahi, Dang. “I used to sleep in normal nets, and have many mosquito bites and rashes over my face.”

Malaria is endemic in 65 districts of Nepal and continues to be one of the national priority public health programmes. There is currently no malaria vaccine approved for human use. NRCS is working in partnership with Population Services International, Nepal (PSI/N), and government of Nepal in this regards.

Kamala Thapa receives the net
World Water Day: NRCS launches 30-year report


"The report is valuable because it reflects an exemplary work of NRCS experiences and lessons learned, while serving over three million people through the Drinking Water and Sanitation Programme (DWSP) in the past three decades," said Umesh Dhakal, Executive Director of NRCS.

The DWSP has benefited 3.7 million people in rural communities of Nepal in the past three decades. It has contributed about 15% to the national achievements in drinking water and sanitation.

At the ceremony, Secretary General of NRCS, Dev Ratna Dhakhwa, highlighted the achievements as well as organizational and community empowerment that backed up sustainability of the services in rural areas. He also acknowledged great work of community people, Government of Nepal, UN-Habitat, UNICEF as well as national Red Cross Societies of Japan, Korea, Australia, Belgium and Germany for the cooperation in different modalities.

"Our joint endeavors undoubtedly demonstrate a good example of an ideal partnership of the RC Movement," says Tadateru Konoe, President of the International Federation, in his capacity as President of the Japanese Red Cross Society. "The Nepal Red Cross society, supported by contributions from the Japanese Red Cross Society and other partners, produced outstanding results in the provision of safe drinking water," he added.

NRCS Secretary General (left), NRCS chairman- in the centre and NRCS Treasure General (in the right) are launching the report

Health care in danger: a matter of life and death

Violence against health-care workers, facilities and patients is one of the most serious humanitarian challenges in the world today. Many civilians and fighters die from injuries because they are prevented from receiving timely medical assistance. In this context, seeking to protect the sick and wounded, and safeguard the delivery of effective and impartial health care during armed conflicts and other situations of violence, the ICRC launched 'Health Care in Danger' campaign in August 2011. The campaign is carried out with support of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, health care communities for governments, military forces and armed groups around the world. The campaign says – Violence against health care must end. It's a matter of life and death.

In order that the issues raised by the campaign are shared well among the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners, an interaction meeting was held at NRCS premises on 12 February 2012. NRCS executives and key officials participated in the meeting where Robin Waudo, Communication Delegate of ICRC Nepal Delegation highlighted various aspects of the campaign.

During the interaction, Robin Waudo informed the NRCS officials about the various communication materials that the ICRC has developed as a part of the campaign. Some of the materials include—publications such as 'Health care in danger: making the case' which is a study of violence against health care workers, facilities and patients in 16 countries; posters illustrating destruction of medical facilities and patients deprived of health care; and audio visuals highlighting the efforts of health workers to save lives and the dangers they face while doing so. These campaign materials draw on the reports of incidents collected from a variety of sources, including health organizations, Red Cross and Red Crescent staff, and the media.

Violence against health care is a complex of multiple aspects ranging from direct attacks against health-care workers or patients or health facilities to obstruction of medical transport and general insecurity affecting access to health care of the wounded or sick in any condition.

The campaign aims at making a crucial difference for people affected on the ground and will continue for the next four years, raising awareness of this pressing issue, and mobilizing a community of concern. The ICRC and the NRCS are conducting actions relevant to the local situation in Nepal.
We are very much benefitted from the friendship with NRCS

- David Peppiatt

David Peppiatt, International Division Director British Red Cross (BRC), paid a visit to Nepal from February 20 to 24 to observe Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects and reach to an understanding with NRCS about launching project in Kathmandu as a part of Flagship-4 programme. Indra Adhikari, Director for Communications and Humanitarian Values Department, NRCS talked with David after his field visit to eastern Nepal. The excerpts:

Indra: Can you tell us about the upcoming project being launched in Kathmandu?

David Peppiatt: The new project is a very ambitious development of both community preparedness and organizational preparedness for earthquake and other risks and hazards in the Kathmandu valley.

This would be an incredibly ambitious programme to address some of the huge challenges and vulnerabilities people living in Kathmandu valley face. It’s a big focus on urban preparedness much above our work. Red Cross, both here in Nepal and many other countries, is based more on rural community settings. This project in actual sense focuses around urban risk reduction activities. It is a part of a major nationwide programmeme which the UK government is funding with other partners. Red Cross is one of the major partners of what we call Flagship programmeme.

So, in this programmeme we are hopeful of learning lessons. More widely, learning for not just for Nepal but also for other countries dealing with similar urban risks, and how to strengthen the resilience of the community living in the urban context today with many risks. Some of those are from the major earthquake. But others may be more everyday risks like fire and other household risk community faces. We want this programmeme to result in.

It’s a new programmeme that will continue for next few years working across the whole range of communities at the local in Kathmandu valley. It’s an exciting adventure for the NRCS, and British Red Cross is very pleased to be in partnership in this new programmeme.

Indra: The BRC supported a project in the countryside. What learning can be adopted for Kathmandu?

David: There are a couple of lessons. One is the importance of community ownership of the project activities that leads towards success. If the Red Cross just comes, implements and manages the projects without that level of community involvement, there will be less chances of sustaining deliverables. So, in this programme in rural areas the approaches of the vulnerabilities and capacity assessment, in particular helped undertake the responsibilities of the programme components from the very beginning where the communities themselves identified their priorities, their risks, their concerns, they are dealing with.

And while the Red Cross cannot, may be, address all of those risks and vulnerabilities, certainly that process can help advocate and promote the needs of both communities and whole range of other stakeholders, other organizations and local government.

But I think, one lesson learnt is that vulnerability and capacity assessment with community leading approaches is so important to ensure that the communities, as the key stakeholder, only drive the programmeme we are working in rural area today.

Indra: Coming to the partnership, why do you think British Red Cross and other donors should partner with NRCS?

David: It’s a very easy question to answer on the face of it because NRCS is a strong National Society committed to community work and making a real difference in the lives of vulnerable people in Nepal.

We have a very strong partnership that goes back many years with NRCS—that starts from very leadership of the organization down to the very grassroots level.

And we are impressed with the commitment, the drive of local volunteers to work effectively with their communities as a member of their communities. We are impressed with the NRCS’ willingness to develop and continue to strengthen its own performances and organizational challenges itself, and the organization is willing to be transparent and accountable, and also open about challenges and difficulties and to work together in partnership to address those issues.
In February, 2012, as the humanitarian situation in Syria, including Damascus, the capital city, worsened, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Jakob Kellenberger visited Syria to advocate for increased access for humanitarian workers. Earlier, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) was repeatedly alleged in various media that the organization is “not to be trusted” as neutral, impartial and independent.

ICRC President Kellenberger met Syrian officials in Damascus, including Foreign Minister of Syria, Walid al-Mu‘alem. Following the meeting, the Syrian government agreed to increase humanitarian access for ICRC and the SARC in the country. Kellenberger said he saw this agreement as a sign of trust in the ICRC’s independent and neutral status and expressed his hope that both the ICRC and the SARC could start to do more for those in need. The Syrian Foreign Ministry also agreed on procedures for visits to places of detention, which will begin with an ICRC visit to Aleppo Central Prison. The detention visits have not yet begun. Discussions with the Minister of Health focused entirely on the right of the wounded and sick to have access to medical care.

According to BBC report, more than 11,100 people have been killed in 13 months of unrest in Syria after pro-democracy protests erupted in March 2011. The UN says thousands have been killed in the crackdown, and that many more have been detained and displaced.

Dr. Abdulrahman Attar, the President of Syrian Arab Red Crescent says that SARC volunteers in Homs, alongside the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), have been working around the clock to evacuate wounded and provide medical relief and food aid to people in need in places including Daraa, Idlib, Hama, Homs, Deir al Zour, Madaya, Zahabani, as well as elsewhere. He says, "The repetition of unfounded allegations questioning the neutrality and trustworthiness of the SARC is not only undermining trust in the organization and putting the lives of our staff and volunteers at risk, it is also hampering our efforts to deliver lifesaving aid on the ground, to all people in need."

We are still a learning organization in UK about community driven work and how to work effectively. We are learning on how to address everyday risks of communities we work with in Britain. We have learnt from NRCS approach. So, we value the partnership greatly and we are pleased to grow stronger.

Indra : What is the best thing that you think you can take back home from Nepal?

David: I think, it goes back to the first point that one of the community leaders said when they reflected benefits of the project. They said- NRCS came here and they had lit the fire to mobilize the communities on how they could do something about the risks they face the disaster, the local disaster they deal with. Since then the communities are keen to continue that fire and continued to take forward. That was incredibly positive thing for that community leader to reflect on that. The NRCS played an enabling role, facilitating role. But communities have the real ownership of those problems and with some resources. The management from outside is to take that forward but the commitment came from the community itself. It shows that NRCS, as an organization, not only responds with staff and volunteers at local level but more importantly, it is able to work and mobilize the communities to address their everyday risks.

Indra : Thank you for your time and brilliant ideas.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) provided emergency funds and launched emergency appeals to provide support to more than 15 million people in Niger, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and some parts of Senegal who are facing severe food shortages.

The erratic rainfall, droughts and insect infestations have led to poor harvests and could cause major malnutrition. Over one million children under the age of five are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition. On top of this, rising food price is aggravating an already bad situation. In December 2011, corn prices in the Sahel were 60% to 85% above the five-year average.

As the drought in the Sahel enters a critical stage, the IFRC is hosted a stakeholder forum in Dakar on 25-26 April with the African Union to discuss the best approach to both saving lives this year and prevent a recurrence in future years.
Yeti Airlines supports NRCS

Yeti Airlines, Domestic Pvt. Ltd. signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), promising a continued support to NRCS charity works. As per the MoU, Yeti Airlines will donate NRCS Nepali rupees one per coupon issued for every flown passenger.

Pradeep Bikram Shah, Sales and Marketing Director of Yeti Airlines, and Dev Ratna Dhakhwa, Secretary General of NRCS signed the MoU that will be effective for a year from April 2012. The collected fund will be utilized in the priority areas defined by the sixth development plan of NRCS.

Through this collaboration, Yeti Airlines will also do its best to encourage donations from others for NRCS humanitarian actions.

Yeti Airlines is a popular and leading domestic airlines company in Nepal.

Relief fund collection continues

The validity of Nepal Red Cross Society’s Earthquake Relief account has been extended to the end of September 2012. The donations will be transferred to Japan Red Cross Society (JRCS) for the welfare of the people affected by the East Japan Earthquake and for rebuilding works in Tohoku area.

Earlier NRCS collected 33,000 Swiss francs (about 2.8 million Nepali rupees) from individuals, institutions and district chapters of the NRCS through the account, and transferred to JRCS to join the global solidarity for humanitarian action.

The earthquake and tsunami in North east Japan on 6 March 2011 had claimed over 15,000 lives and displaced over 75,000 people.