



Executive Board of UN-Women

Briefing on the Operational Response of UN-Women in Nepal

Impact of the earthquakes

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Nepal on 25 May 2015 was followed by a second large earthquake of 7.3 magnitude on 12 May 2015 and hundreds of smaller aftershocks and tremors. Of the 75 districts of Nepal, 14 districts with an estimated population of 5.4 million people were severely affected. The recorded number of deaths stands close to 9,000. Over 600,000 houses have been destroyed and over 280,000 houses damaged. Some 60,000 people remain in 104 displacement sites in 13 affected districts. The current monsoon rains and landslides are exacerbating the humanitarian disaster.¹

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)² estimates the total value of disaster effects (damages and losses) caused by the earthquakes to be approximately USD 7 billion. The estimated value of the total damages and losses is the equivalent to about one third of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product in financial year 2012/13. An international Donor Conference was held on 25 June 2015. As of 31 July 2015, 50 percent of the USD 422 million requested in the Flash Appeal had been funded.

The trauma, grief and loss experienced by the Nepali people comes as the country is still recovering from the effects of the decade-long internal conflict (1996-2006). The country, ranking as a Least Developed Country at 145th place on the Human Development Index, is facing many development challenges, which are now compounded by the humanitarian emergency.

Gender dimensions of the disaster

The PDNA acknowledges that women constitute the single largest disadvantaged group to be adversely affected by the disaster and its aftermath. The inequalities, discrimination, exclusion and poverty women face shapes not only their vulnerability to disasters but also affect how they respond to the disaster as survivors and their resilience to future disasters. According to the 2011 Census figures, the 14 most affected districts include about 327,000 female-headed households (26.5% of all households), 40,000 women and girls with disabilities, and over 163,000 women over the age of 65 years.³ These categories of women face particular vulnerabilities due to their circumstances and are in high need of protection, shelter and livelihoods. However, it is crucial to avoid an exclusive focus on women's victimization and recognize the importance of women's voice, agency and leadership in the humanitarian response, recovery and reconstruction efforts.

¹ Please visit Nepal Earthquake 2015: Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction Information Platform at <http://apps.geoportal.icimod.org/ndrrip/>

² National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal, Nepal Earthquake 2015: Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, available at <http://npc.gov.np/web/ui/index.php/home/pdna>

³ Please note that there may be overlaps in the above category as an individual can be simultaneously included in some of the above categories.

UN-Women's response

In coordination with the UN family, UN-Women is working closely with the Government of Nepal, civil society partners and development partners to ensure an adequate, consistent and sustainable integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in identifying and addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of the crisis-affected population across the humanitarian-development continuum. UN-Women has developed a comprehensive humanitarian strategy for the period 2015-2017, and the outreach to development partners for resource mobilization in partnership with other UN agencies is ongoing.

Evidence base

UN-Women has played a key role in engendering the PDNA process, serving as the lead development partner for the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Chapter and in providing the Government of Nepal with technical support across the other thematic areas, thus helping to ensure women's rights are mainstreamed throughout the PDNA. UN-Women advocated for the inclusion of the commitment to apply the Government's gender-responsive budgeting principles and practices to all recovery and reconstruction programmes, and the commitment has been included in the PDNA report. Preparations are currently underway for a study on the impact of the earthquake on women's livelihoods, housing and property and citizenship rights in collaboration with the National Planning Commission and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.

Coordination

With the endorsement of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal, the Humanitarian Response Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group (GWG) was established five days after the earthquake. Co-chaired by UN-Women and UN OCHA, the GWG has ensured the incorporation of the gender marker in the Flash Appeal, and has prepared Gender Indicators included in the Flash Appeal Monitoring Framework. The GWG has prepared a baseline Gender Profile for Nepal⁴ as well as regular Gender Updates⁵ based on clusters' inputs. The Group is also working closely with the Inter-Agency Communicating with Communities Group to ensure the voices of women are fully captured and their specific needs and priorities identified. UN-Women is moreover represented and playing an active role in the two key decision-making humanitarian mechanisms in Nepal – the Humanitarian Country Team and the Inter Cluster Coordination Group. UN-Women is also a member agency of the protection cluster and gender-based violence (GBV) sub-cluster, and participates regularly in other clusters. The experience has highlighted the importance of inter-agency coordination and representation in various coordination mechanisms to keep the spotlight on gender issues.

Capacity development

Underscoring the importance of national ownership and leadership of the humanitarian response, UN-Women has provided capacity development support to the Government of Nepal and women's civil society organizations. UN-Women provided technical inputs to engender the Government of Nepal's draft bill on the Disaster Management Act, and prepared recommendations for gender mainstreaming in the National Disaster Management Authority. UN-Women has also worked actively with women's organizations, supporting women's groups to develop a Common Charter of Demands by Women's Groups, and a related advocacy agenda and action plan, calling for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the humanitarian response.⁶

Targeted interventions⁷

As part of UN-Women's immediate relief efforts, 5,000 dignity kits and solar lanterns and 19,000 sanitary napkins were distributed to affected women through the Government's Women and Children Offices and women's groups. These efforts contributed towards meeting the essential immediate needs as identified by the Government of Nepal and were coordinated with the UN family to ensure the efforts were complementary –

⁴ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/nepal/document/nepal-gender-profile>

⁵ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/nepal/gender-task-force>

⁶ The Common Charter of Demands can be accessed at <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/nepal/document/common-charter-demands-women%E2%80%99s-groups-nepal-gender-equality-and>

⁷ Please visit <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2015/07/reaching-out-to-survivors-of-violence-in-post-earthquake-nepal>

including in terms of targeted groups and geographical location – and thus ensuring the widest possible outreach to women and girls in need. For instance, while both UN-Women and UNFPA distributed dignity kits as part of the immediate humanitarian response, UNFPA’s focus has been on reaching pregnant and lactating women, while UN-Women has targeted other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of women, including women with disabilities, older women and female-headed households in the distribution of the dignity kits as well as in its overall humanitarian response efforts. Five multipurpose women’s centres have been established in five earthquake-affected districts. The centres are operated by UN-Women’s civil society partners in close coordination with the local government authorities. As of 24 July 2015, 13,918 women had accessed the services of these centres. Three information centres in three districts have been set up through a partnership with a media agency. The information centres have been opened with the consent from the government authorities in the districts and are in some cases are located within the district administration offices. As of 24 July 2015, 805 women had accessed the services of the information centres. Building on UN-Women’s previous psychosocial counselling programming, psychosocial counsellors have been deployed to provide Psychological First Aid training to frontline workers, volunteers and community mobilisers in three districts. As of 24 July 2015, 236 women had received group counselling, 105 individual counselling, and 988 women and their family members had benefitted from group awareness on psycho-social counselling services.