

Post Disaster Response April 25
Earthquake in Nepal

Shelter Provision for the Most Vulnerable Households

Before and During the Monsoon



From
the People of Japan

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Shelter Provision for the Most Vulnerable Households: Before and During the Monsoon

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FOREWORD

Disasters are painful to all but, when it comes to deprivations, the poor suffer the most and among them the most vulnerable faces the most severe hardships. The vulnerable groups include women-headed households, single women, people with disabilities, elderly and children, marginalized ethnic groups and Dalits.

After the 25 April 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the Government of Japan provided immediate financial assistance through UN-Habitat. For more than 2,200 very vulnerable households sleeping under open sky and facing a monsoon and a chilling winter thereafter, this assistance brought significant relief.

Tapping from UN-Habitat's ample experience in the region to link emergency assistance with people's driven recovery;

an intervention was set up in 5 districts, both rural and urban. UN-Habitat partnered with highly skilled local organisations and reached out to community representatives and grass roots organisations. Among them were women cooperatives of urban poor and Dalit communities. Linking up with local communities has been vital to achieve the transparent and fair identification of the most vulnerable.

Assistance included materials, technical advice and cash to compensate for local labour. Within the range of financial assistance set by the Government, UN-Habitat and communities worked together to get up shelters with a life time of least two years. In urban communities, rental assistance was provided to displaced and extremely poor households. UN-Habitat also set up early information booths in selected VDCs, where it

provided initial training on safer building. All engagements were coordinated with local authorities and humanitarian partners.

We are grateful to have witnessed the hard work of our partners in the field and our dedicated staff. However, this publication brings witness to the results and the beneficiaries, who brought in their own determination, support and frequent expressions of gratefulness for the progress made in their recovery, with the support from the people of Japan.

We thank all of those who helped to bring lives back on track and restored hope towards a better and safer future.

UN-Habitat Nepal Office



INTRODUCTION

On April 25th, 2015, a 7.8M earthquake and a second one on May 12th measuring 7.3M hit the central part of Nepal sending powerful tremors through most parts of Nepal. Thousands of subsequent aftershocks of varying sizes followed for months. The trail of destruction claimed 8,700 souls and injured more than 60,000. Hundreds of thousands of houses were destroyed leaving millions homeless. Many houses that didn't crumble sustained structural damages and remained standing precariously. For several months after the quake, many people were forced to live in tarpaulin tents and substandard shelters constructed with materials salvaged from their destroyed homes and materials provided by development agencies and the government.

The immediate need and the most urgent demand of the affected families was safe and durable temporary shelter that could protect them from rain, cold, animal and thefts, particularly as the monsoon season which generally starts in the third week

of June was looming. Tarpaulins and tents were would not last a longer period, and it was imminent that proper temporary shelters were urgently required.

In order to provide life-saving shelter support during the 2015 monsoon to the most vulnerable households and to enhance their capacity to engage in community-led recovery, Government of Japan provided support of USD 800,000 to address the immediate needs of the people of 5 of the most affected districts, namely Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. 1780 HHs were supported with temporary shelters. Socially disadvantaged groups that include poor, women-headed households, single women, people with disabilities, elderly and socially marginalized people like ethnic minorities and dalits (so called untouchable caste) were considered. Especially in urban areas, women were given more priority. The activities of these projects were in close coordination with the Government of Nepal and local

communities.

The shelters are temporary and are designed to comfortably last two years. The spacious shelters have CGI sheets for the roof and are airy enough for ventilation. The structure is created with wood while the beneficiaries had the choice to decorate their interiors. Some have used their creativity and imagination to make the interior attractive and partitioned the shelter to their needs. Kitchens in some cases were shifted outside to minimize the problem of smoke and also to make more space inside. Likewise, in initial months, UN-Habitat supported survivors without land or relatives to stay with by funding their rent until they were relocated to new shelters.

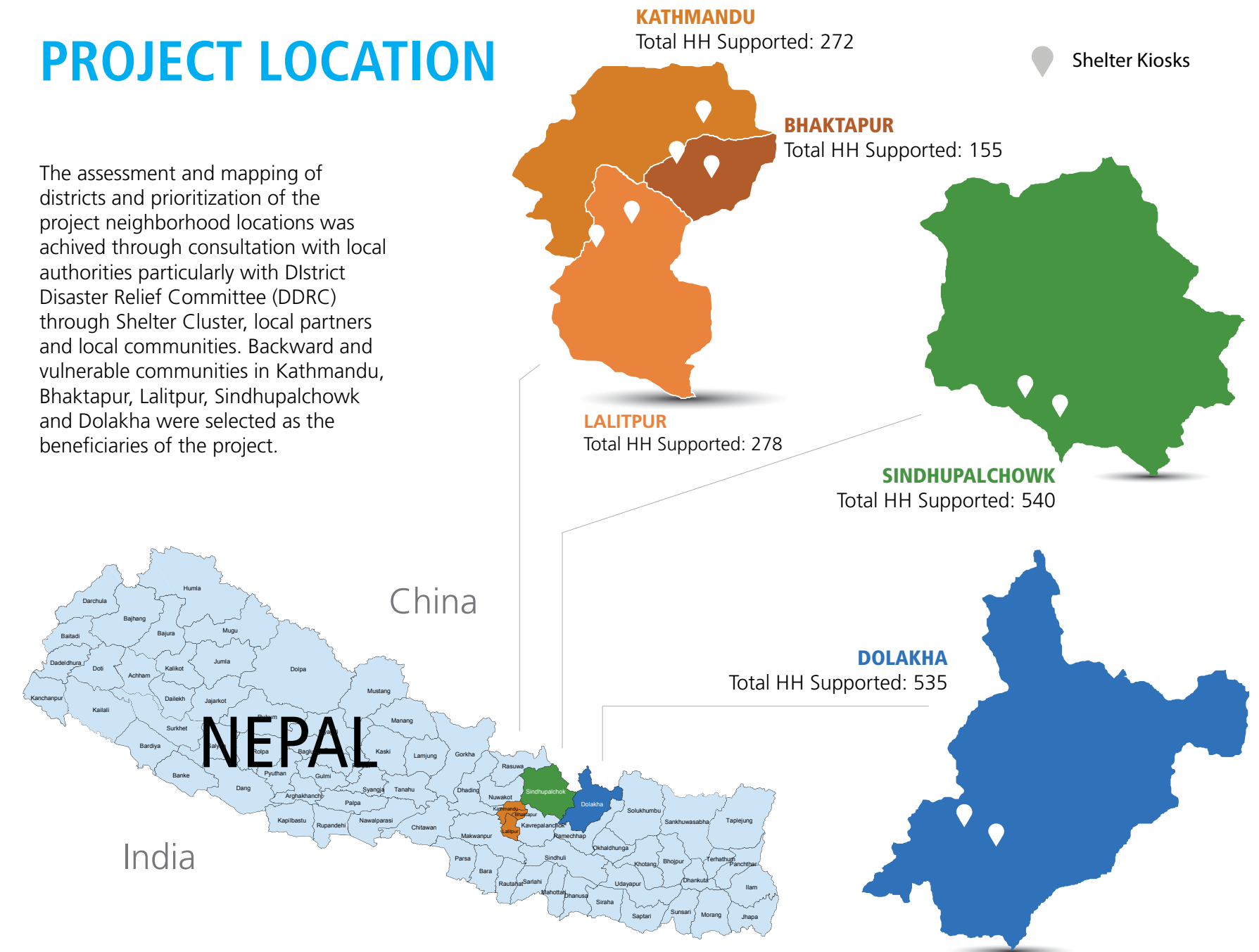
During the course of project implementation, challenges and unforeseen hindrances were aplenty. Due to Nepal's deteriorating political situation in the second half of the year and the ensuing fuel crisis affected supply of materials for shelter construction. Planting

and harvesting of winter crop meant local labor was in short supply and gathering community members on scheduled dates became difficult to organize. Two of the biggest Hindu festivals Dashain and Tihar fell during the project time due to which members were unable to participate in any kind of activities. Likewise, shortage of CGIs due to high demand by earthquake-affected people also led to rescheduling of various project tasks.

More than 9,800 Nepali people of vulnerable and marginalized communities affected by the 2015 earthquakes have directly benefited from UN-Habitat's temporary shelter project funded by the Government of Japan. This publication is a snapshot of the project and showcases the aftermath, the process of construction as well as the lives and personal details of people who are living in shelters they now call home.

PROJECT LOCATION

The assessment and mapping of districts and prioritization of the project neighborhood locations was achieved through consultation with local authorities particularly with District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) through Shelter Cluster, local partners and local communities. Backward and vulnerable communities in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Sindhupalchowk and Dolakha were selected as the beneficiaries of the project.





Rama Chaulagain and her family had been living in a tent after their house was destroyed by the earthquake. Now they are able to live much more comfortably in the new shelter.

BENEFICIARIES

This disaster hit the population through the cross section of the society from rich to poor. With the given limited resources the project prioritized the support to the most vulnerable families and their members, considering most of the families who can afford already started building their temporary shelters leaving the incapable families. Socially disadvantaged groups that include poor, women-headed households, single women, people with disabilities, elderly and socially marginalized people like ethnic minorities and Dalits were considered.

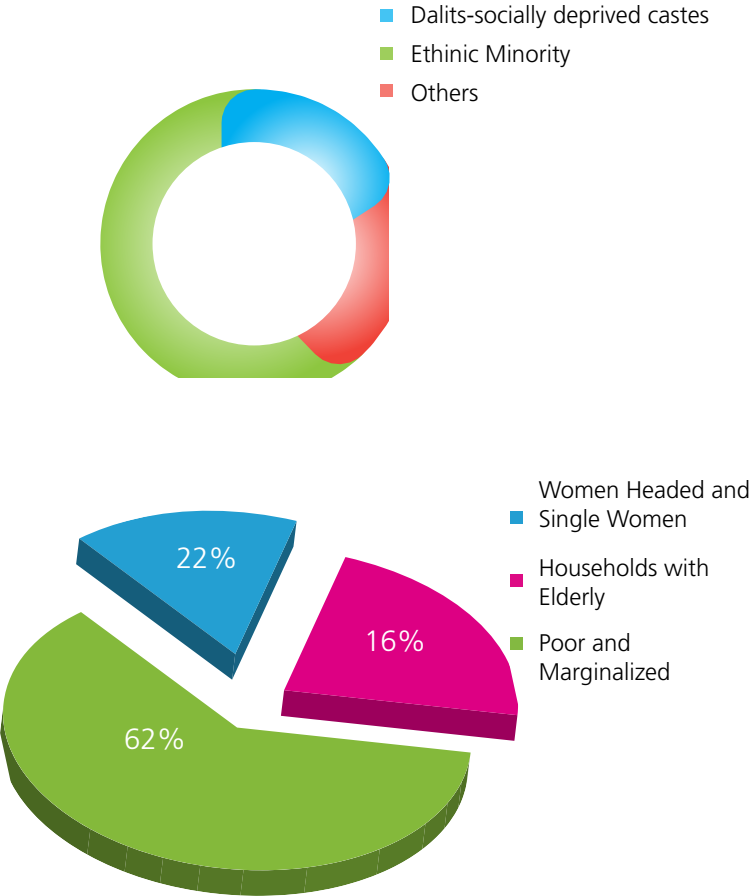
In Kathmandu valley, the project set the selection criteria in consultation with women community groups, youth groups and other local stakeholders. Following are the prioritization criteria adopted to identify the vulnerable people:

- Extremely poor families who had lost their home and belongings
- Women headed families and families who have lost their family members in the earthquake

- Large families with many children, pregnant women or with new-borns
- Families with elderly and people with illness

In case of Dolakha and Sindhupalchowk, the implementation partners with UN-Habitat project team selected beneficiaries in consultation with Village Disaster Relief Committee (VDRC), District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) and Citizen’s Forums. It mainly focused on following criteria:

- Families with pregnant women, newborns, lactating women, and elderlies
- Women-headed households who have lost their family members in the earthquake
- Dalits and marginalized families
- Large families with children.



THE AFTERMATH

OF 2015 EARTHQUAKE



The earthquakes of 2015 caused widespread damage to hundreds and thousands of traditional mud-and-stone houses that were virtually levelled by the quake. Besides losing their homes, people lost all their belongings, including food storage. Thousands lost their lives and countless more were injured.



Even those that remained standing were in precarious condition and required demolition.





Toilets, communal taps and other resources were also severely damaged, thus increasing the risk of disease spread.

Many people especially in rural settings had little to no resources - monetary or social - to cope with the destruction left behind by the earthquakes.



Millions were forced into makeshift shelters and tents like this one which would hardly withstand the fierce monsoon downpour and eventually winter, just a few months since the disaster struck.

BUILDING TEMPORARY SHELTERS VIA CICs

UN-Habitat worked through its long term partners actively working in the field to implement the project of building temporary shelters through community participation, establishing and operating the Community Information Centers (CICs also known as Shelter Kiosks) in 10 neighborhood locations. CICs were equipped with information IEC materials like flex, flyers, brochure, catalogs as well as physical models developed by the project, UN-Habitat, Government, Shelter Cluster as well as other agencies. It also served as an information and training facility on safer construction, building codes, WASH and information about government policies and supports for the affected people, training activities of different organizations and other relevant issues.



Construction of the temporary shelters were over-driven with labor support from fellow villagers. The design and concept was provided by UN-Habitat, which also performed regular monitoring and guidance of the construction process. Where possible, building materials were salvaged from the debris of their homes.



Construction work began after careful planning process taken place in CICs. Where possible, resources were salvaged from the rubble to be used.
UN-Habitat supplied CGI sheets, labor costs and designs.





UN-Habitat field staff inspecting the construction process. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of the work ensured the materials were effectively utilized for the intended result.



One amazing fact encountered again and again during the implementation of the project was the great resilience of the Nepalese and the creativity they bring in even in this hardship. Resham Bisankhe, a dalit working as blacksmith of Sipapokhari, Sindhupalchowk could be one of many examples. Mr. Bisankhe with a family of five was not sure when he would be able to construct a new house. Instead he used all the support provided by UN-Habitat/GoJ and the relief of NPR 15,000 he could receive from the Government of Nepal to build his more robust shelter. He topped up NPR 27,000 loan money so that he can easily go to cities for his work keeping his family safe at home. Instead of timber or bamboo posts and frames he used his skills and social networks to frame his house with steel and increased the floor area so that he could accommodate his family comfortably for a longer period.





RENTAL SUPPORT

The support was targeted to the core areas where the land for construction of temporary shelters was very limited. Rental support was provided for at most 3-4 months, so that people who could work and earn had better options to be prepared for the reconstruction phase. In some cases, affected families were taking shelter in host families especially relatives. The project also supported the host families to provide food and shelter in their homes so that they were encouraged to bear the additional cost. Some host families used the support to repair and add rooms to accommodate the affected families.

The beneficiaries for rental and host family supports were selected based on the following criteria that were agreed with local community groups:

- Poor families living in core traditional centers in either of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur or Thimi who did not have safe land to construct temporary shelter
- Families with houses completely damaged living on rent
- Families houses marked as uninhabitable by damage assessment team
- Living on rented house or with host family
- Host families lending space to their earthquake victim relatives
- Single women living on rent or with host family



TRANSPARENCY

While the disaster affected people of all socio-economic backgrounds, the most vulnerable in the society need more support as they have limited social and economic capability to cope with the situation. With limited funds, positive discrimination is perhaps the only effective way to utilize available resources judiciously. However, in a society this can be acceptably achieved only through transparency.

The criteria of selection of beneficiaries therefore was presented in the community meetings and selection was done with community consultations to identify the most vulnerable families in the settlements along with VDC representatives. Maps of beneficiaries were fixed in communal spaces and lists of beneficiaries were also made public.





A GLIMPSE INTO THEIR
LIVES

CHILDREN

Children, especially infants and newborns, were particularly vulnerable to the aftermath of the earthquake. Proper nutrition, shelter as well as psycho-social counselling have been important for the kids in order to ensure they are not affected physically, mentally and psychologically, particularly during their growth stage. UN-Habitat identified families with children for the temporary shelter support.



Dharma and Nani Maya Tamang

Sipapokhari, Sindhupalchowk

Dharma and Maya Tamang lost their four-year-old son in the quake and have eight kids to feed. Dharma works as a laborer in construction while Maya looks after their farm. With the new home they now live in, the Tamangs have been able to properly shelter their kids, all in their pre-teens.

"It's not been easy for us. Our son died and we're still having a difficult time letting that sink in. All the kids ask when their brother will be back, but we tell them that he's gone to Kathmandu with his uncle.

There is not much work in the village these days, especially because nobody is building houses. Everybody lives in shelters like us. At least we have been lucky enough to receive this shelter, which has made our life much easier. Right after the quake, I felt sorry and guilty that all the little children had to sleep under the buffalo shed. But that's not the case any more. No matter how difficult it has been for us, Maya and I are determined to pull us through this misery.





Yam Maya Chaulagain

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

Yam Maya's grandson Dilraj was born a month before the quake. The 55-year-old granny recalls the close call when she had the baby in her hands as earth beneath shook. Rushing to the clear as it rattled for a couple of minutes, which felt like forever, Yam took great care of the toddler even after they'd lost everything.

"I must say we were quite lucky that no family members were hurt. It was quite challenging to make sure the child was safe and healthy, and while we stayed at a relative's place for sometime, we needed a practical solution. A basic structure that would help us shelter the child from the winter chill and also from leaks during monsoon time was absolutely crucial. Constructed with the support from UN-Habitat, this shelter has been vital for the baby and everybody else in our family. We've created enough space for Dilraj to move around. He can't walk but can crawl to all corners of the house. We've even shifted our kitchen outside and the toilet is just nearby. We want to minimize risks of accidents and spread of disease. We clean our house every other day."



Srijana Acharya

Irkhu, Sindhupalchowk

Srijana Acharya occupies herself with her toddler son throughout the day. Bathing the child in the daylight, she recalls the horror during the earthquake that took her sister-in-law. Both her husband and brother-in-law have migrated to the Gulf for manual work. Srijana was pregnant during the time of the quake. In fact, the child today a healthy baby was born just two days after the quake.

“I was terrified during the quake and I feared for the child inside me as I ran. I was lucky enough to escape unscathed but my sister-in-law wasn’t quite so. Falling debris buried her and when we took her out, it was already too late.

After all these months, things have calmed down and we’ve come to terms with the loss the quake brought with it. We were able to construct a shelter with help from UN-Habitat, and have been able to make a small room for our toddler. She quite enjoys bathing in the sun and we’re happy that she’s grown healthily. We have to be strong for her, and not let the aftermath of the quake haunt the lives of our children.”



Bidya Prasad Shrestha

Leebali, Bhaktapur

Having lived without a proper roof above their heads for several months, the Shresthas suffered from PTSD as coping with the loss of their house in Bhaktapur was quite difficult. After receiving the shelter, they have been able to resume their lives well. The family used to live in makeshift tarpaulin tents and without proper food supplies. Bidya's brother has been kind enough to let them stay in the land in their new shelter constructed with UN-Habitat's support. The two families share a large water tank that's right outside their adjoining shelters.

"We have five members in the family – mother, wife, a 19-year-old son, a 13-year-old daughter and myself. My daughter Suwarnima is stunted and has trouble going to school with her heavy school bag. She was doing her Science assignment this morning in the shelter, and she feels at home. Our son too, he's in college but is understanding and helps us out with family matters. My wife and even my mother are quite active in domestic chores too."







Anita Nepali

Sipapokhari, Sindhupalchowk

Anita Nepali lost her eldest son in the quake. Her husband Arjun is often times off in the city to earn a living from playing music at weddings and as a tailor.

“After the earthquake, we were all homeless. And if losing my son wasn’t bad enough I broke my arm while working in the fields. I went to my parents’ after that for a month till I recovered. Once I was back, this shelter was already built and I was glad to see that the two sons had already adjusted with their lives. I don’t know what our fate would have been like, especially given that we have barely any income to get by. In fact, while one of my sons had died, I feared the other two would die of starvation and shock. But with the shelter, we’ve been able to at least save ourselves and live a more dignified life than in tents.”



Ganga Gaiju and Jamuna Gaiju

Bhaktapur

Twins Ganga and Jamuna Gaiju, 20, are in a partitioned room in their shelter preparing for their Bachelor's exams. The room doubles as a kitchen during mornings and evenings. Their father Punya Man is a painter and mother Min Laxmi makes clay pots called pyala. They live with two other brothers, who are seeking employment in Bhaktapur.

"For several weeks following the earthquake they lived in a building that was under construction with several other families. There was no proper water or food supply, and privacy, including toilets and sanitation, was next to nothing. Our college resumed eventually but we weren't able to attend classes. But now, we can say that things have fallen back in place and though we don't have a house, we still have a home and we've caught up with studies."



Laxman and Sumitra Karanjit

Sankhu, Kathmandu

Laxman and Sumitra have an open vegetable garden in their compound and also trees that keep the surrounding cool and shady. The couple are in their 20s and are taking turns to keep an eye on Sakcham, their newborn child sleeping in the shades outside the shelter. A security personnel by profession, Laxman is off-duty today and visiting his family.

“We have to keep flies and mosquitos away from Sakcham. They tend to be a menace during the day, especially because there are animal farms nearby. Before the baby was born the kitchen was inside the shelter, but since his birth, we’ve moved it out so that the smoke doesn’t affect him. I was particularly concerned because Sumitra was pregnant during the time of the quake, and had suffered from anxiety attacks. I feared that would affect the child. By god’s mercy, he has turned out just fine and has found home in the new shelter we were supported with. We’re doing our best for him.”





SENIOR CITIZENS

The plight is especially pronounced for senior citizens who have nobody to look after them. Having lost their house and all belongings, many were unable to construct even a basic shelter. In most cases, the community came together to help out and now with the support of UN-Habitat's shelter, they have been able to live decently.



Mangali and Wazir Tamang

Kubhinde, Sindhupalchowk

The Tamangs are in their 70s and live by themselves. Mangali is mute and Wazir is an amputee. Upon seeing us at their shelter, Mangali's eyes light up. Perhaps she doesn't get visitors too often. She is preparing a leaf-rolled cigarette and without further ado, she lights it up. Behind faint crackles of burning embers and a veil of rather odd-smelling smoke, her wrinkles spread out like branches across her face.

"During the earthquake, I was sitting by the street. I was really frightened and couldn't run like others. But more than myself, I feared for my wife. It doesn't help that Mangali is deaf. We lost our house in the quake, but now spend most of the days in our new shelter, lounging in the lawn and just talking to each other. All that we have, after all, is each other."



Chandra Bahadur Duwal

Leebali, Bhaktapur

Chandra Bahadur was a farmer and carpenter before he retired. But after the earthquake destroyed his home, he lived in a tent for a few months before constructing a makeshift shelter with UN-Habitat's support. Using his skills and resources, Chandra Bahadur has revamped the design and created a beautiful home.

"It was surely encouraging and touching to see people who had lost home get shelters. I was one of them. I've made designs to fit my family. It took quite a bit of free time and some skills to give it shape. My family has been happy with the work and even people who walk past cannot believe that it is based on a pretty simple but robust structure proposed by the UN-Habitat. It wasn't easy though to procure the materials, as the prices had hiked up during the blockade. I am quite eager to see through its completion, and it shouldn't take much time."



Paakhai Ama

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

Paakhai Ama as she's affectionately known is 90 and sits on the porch most of the day. A cholera outbreak in her village several decades ago wiped out her family. Now living by herself in a dark shelter amidst infinite terraces of Dolakha, she couldn't be less bothered by the darkness for she is blind in an eye and dim in the other.

"This shelter is big enough for me. It fits all my belongings. All I really need is a bed and a place to keep my clothes and maybe a stove. I keep it at the entrance because I need enough light to look at it. I could light this stove now, that'd make it a little bright in here. I've collected some firewood that'll last me a few days. I scavenge firewood from wherever I can lay my hands. My neighbors have no qualms about it. I really don't have plans to cook tonight. I will ask food from somewhere. I've gotten used to it. They've adopted me."



Chandra Kumari Shrestha

Sipapokhari, Sindhupalchowk

The earthquake claimed her husband's life and her grand daughters still get scared very often at night. But Chanda Kumari is a mellow personality and doesn't speak much of her misery. Her daughter-in-law is strong and drives the family forward.

"The house crumbled on top of my husband and he was dead by the time we got him out. There was nothing that we could do to help. But we've moved on. My three grand daughters are doing well in school and my son is a technician. I feel the strongest in this house is my daughter-in-law, who like a wonder woman takes care of everything. She has been our rock through these trying times.

We have set up a small shelter, which serves as a kitchen, store room and bed room for us. We felt the kids needed more space to study, so have built another small shelter. While life cannot be like it was before, we've been able to make our shelter cozy for ourselves. We are home."



Rama Chaulagain

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

Rama greets her guests with a cheerful smile. Her house is as joyous as herself. The walls have been painted bright blue and window frames green, with a red accent. It would be hard for anyone to believe that it's actually a shelter she built after she lost her home. It's built on the foundation that used materials from her fallen home. After putting all the love and care to groom it, the Chaulagains are happy to call it a home for the rest of their lives.

"My husband goes to Charikot several times a day. He is busy most of the times but makes time to upkeep the house. In fact, it was his idea to paint the house. He said we should add life to it. We'd lived in a tin shed for several months after the quake. This shelter for us is the most we could ask for. We even have a small lawn where our chickens roam about. My husband does some clerical work but I'm mostly in the farms, herding goats and chicken, or reaping and sowing."



Shiva Bahadur Chaulagain

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

Shiva, 93, is filled with impressive and contagious energy. He struts around the village where he served almost his entire life as a technician, which is why he's considered the most senior technician throughout Dolakha, having worked without innumerable schools and other construction projects. As with most of the people in the village, he too lost his house in the quake. He is survived a loving family and recently became a great grandfather.

"I didn't think I'd live to see this day. I thought I lost everything but I have a place now to rest my head and store collectible keepsakes over my decades-long career as a technician. My great grandson Dilraj was just a month old when the earthquake struck. I like spending the days mostly playing with him in the sun."



Putali Bayalkoti

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

Putali Bayalkoti is losing vision. Her eyes have started to fail on her and doctors say she cannot have a surgery as she has chest problems and high blood pressure. She spends most of the days by herself, basking in the sun. She is survived by a son, daughter-in-law and two grand kids. A poster of Hindu gods above the entrance warmly welcomes guests into her house, which the family has decorated with new and old furniture and amenities.

“We’d taken a loan to build our house, but not even a year since we moved, it was reduced to rubble. It breaks my heart to see my son’s hard work simply crumble, but we now have this shelter where we live comfortably. I was terrified when the earthquake hit, I was sleeping inside and when I got out of the house the front had already collapse. I made it to safety and so did the rest of the family thankfully, but it was devastating to see it go down to dust. This shelter though has helped us cope with our loss. There are even windows that let in enough sun in for my siestas.”



Govinda Maya Pradhan

Sankhu, Kathmandu

At 95 years of age, Govinda Maya is one of the most senior in Sankhu. She lives with her daughters and a son, all over 50 years of age, in a shelter constructed with the support of UN-Habitat – a well decorated and maintained quarters they consider their new home. She likes basking in the sun all day long in a small courtyard near her home and between towering grapefruit trees. Govinda's hearing has declined but her daughter Ganesh Laxmi helps us communicate with her.

"I'll be a hundred years old in a few years if I live that long. But never had I imagined such a disaster of this scale would strike us. I was barely able to walk that day. It was frightening. These days, my daughters look after me while my son helps out with some chores in the house. He suffers from mental disability but we all love him. In fact, he is in charge of keeping the shelter clean, sweeping the lawn and flowering the plants. On slow days my children and I invite neighbors over and enjoy bhogate saandheko. Our shelter can easily fit a dozen or so guests."





Mina Shrestha

Sankhu, Kathmandu

The list of ailments that the 68-year-old Mina Shrestha has been facing is a long one. She smiles and rummages through a plastic bag full of medicines as she narrates her story. Hers is a family of five and their arable land near their house was swept away by Sankhu's Manohara River a few years back when it changed its course.

“When the ground started shaking violently, I jumped from the roof of my four-storey house as the ground floor collapsed. Despite being overweight, I managed to climb over to my neighbor's with only a few bruises. It could've been a lot worse. I suffer from a heart condition, high blood pressure and diabetes, and have been prescribed more than a dozen daily medications. I don't even know which ones I have to take, so I just put them on a table and start taking them one by one. The first months without a house was terrible, but the shelter is spacious enough to accommodate a kitchen, a dining table and this bed for me. We've made modifications and added plastic insulation which has really helped over winter.”





SINGLE WOMEN

As one of the prime candidates for the shelter support, single women received support from UN-Habitat. Marginalized and discriminated against a largely patriarchal society, women continue to face heavy social stigma and harassment. Collapsed houses meant they and their children are exposed to dangers posed not only by weather and animals, but by some fellow villagers as well. Their new shelters have helped single women and their families live in a more secure environment.



Som Maya Tamang

Bhorsipa, Sindhupalchowk

Widower Som Maya Tamang is somewhere in her 70s and lives by herself. Her neighbors helped her move her belongings to her new shelter. She's been innovative with the design and even has had it extended with an adjoining goat shed and a kitchen outside.

"I married two daughters off to a well-to-do family. I have gotten used to living myself. My house was destroyed by the quake, but I have this little shelter for myself. I have no source of income but get by with the little produce I can harvest in the fields. I have wonderful neighbors who've helped me out to construct a shelter that is spacious and airy. I am at peace."



Ruma Kumari Shrestha

Kubhinde, Sindhupalchowk

Her house was leveled by the earthquake and her son abandoned the family. But Ruma Kumari Shrestha has a cheerful veneer. “My son has been out of touch for the past several years. Even during the dire times of the earthquake he seemed barely concerned about me or his wife and kids. He does call us once in a blue moon just as formality, whenever we tell him our plight and that we need some money, he hangs up,” shares Ruma Kumari Shrestha. “So I must be strong, for my family if not for myself. They look up to me.”

Ruma’s granddaughter watches TV with her friends while in the dark corners of her shelter pokes sunlight through tiny holes that riddle the metal walls made of salvaged sheets from the ruins of her house. “Though the bright holes are a reminder that our shelter is not perfect,” says Ruma, “it has given us the confidence and might to carry on despite losing our son and all that we had.”



Jamuna Mainali

Sipapokhari, Sindhupalchowk

A mother of two, Jamuna, 31, has been living by herself in a shelter provided by UN-Habitat. Her husband eloped with another woman years ago but has been living in the same village. Her fifteen-year-old daughter, who now lives with her husband and his mistress, vocally denounces Jamuna. And the in-laws have been quite violent. But Jamuna hasn't given up hope.

"Life hasn't been fair. My son and myself, we used to live in a small house, and we've never been left in peace by our in-laws. Even my husband's mistress has turned my daughter against me. They used to come to our house to beat us up for no reason. Sometimes they would rally other villagers too. I used to be threatened with my life and we never felt safe since our house crumbled. Without it we were totally vulnerable. With this new shelter, we have some protection and frankly, mental peace. Even during a time of distress, we were singled out, but the shelter is our little home and it is everything we need to keep ourselves sound. I had considered fleeing the village, but that is not the case anymore. I have grown strong."



Laxmi Magaranti

Sipapokhari, Sindhupalchowk

Nobody knows why Laxmi's husband took his own life, especially in such a traumatic period following the deadly earthquake. Laxmi is now survived by her two young sons who she tends for with income from farm produce.

"The shelter is our only home now. Before we were supported with this shelter, we would have to resort to sheds and makeshift tents that were far from ideal. Having to live with animals made us feel like animals. But now we've moved to the new shelter. It's our bedroom, kitchen and living room. It's all my kids and I need to live in. Village folks and various organizations have been kind enough to help us in these trying times. And I couldn't be more thankful for that."



Lok Maya

Bramhayani Sibir, Bhaktapur

Lok Maya smears the mud floor of her shelter with adobe in traditional Nepali way. She lives alone with her grandson while the rest of her family members either live separately or are deceased. A house that she owned was reduced to dust by the quake, which explains why she wears a resigned look. But she refuses to give in. She takes care of the shelter very well and maintains to make it look clean and hygienic. And the small idol of god at the doorstep is a warm invitation for guests to enter.

“I had two sons, but the eldest one committed suicide and his wife left with another man soon after. Their son, my grandson, has lived with me over the years and it’s not been a particularly easy journey for us. My youngest daughter-in-law died of tuberculosis as well, despite all the treatment. After the earthquake, we were devastated as we’d become homeless, and the entire neighborhood had to be relocated. We were generously provided with this shelter which has given me strength to raise my grandson, now a teenager.”







REBUILDING LIVELIHOODS

The earthquake took with it not just lives and houses but also livelihood. Some had their workshops destroyed while others lost their cattle. The first few weeks of the earthquake mixed fear and hunger as strong aftershocks shook the ground and food supply in uncertainty. However, people have slowly started to piece back their lives.

Through the shelter, people have been able to resume various trades they were involved in. Whether weaving bamboo baskets or starting a shop or storing their grains, families have regained their trade and are now mostly sustaining with their own income. Most of the beneficiaries rely on agriculture while others provide services as masons, electrician and technician.



Rek Bahadur Magaranti

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

Carpenter by profession, Rek Bahadur lives in a joint family, and is the sole breadwinner. He's kept himself quite occupied with a ton of reconstruction projects for families whose houses were destroyed during the quake, his own being no exception. He has hired an employee who helps him out with cutting, assembling and in the field. It becomes evident from the looks of his shelter that Rek Bahadur is an ace in his trade. His gleeful 9-year-old grandson Yubraj plays in the small courtyard as he saw a piece of metal.

"My eldest son is in Kathmandu and doesn't come here much, he is involved in questionable activities in Kathmandu. His wife eloped years back and hasn't been back even for the child, our grandson. We look after him. Every now and then, villagers harass him by asking whereabouts of his parents. But we're doing our best to not have him distracted or distressed by such malice. That's one of the main reasons why I've put extra effort in revamping the shelter that was built with the support of UN-Habitat. Now he has his own room and enough space to play in. Even if we don't have our old house, the shelter we have now is cozy and we're doing our best to make him feel at home. Luckily we've also managed to salvage some of our old furniture, which we now use in our new house. I'm glad that in spite of the tragic turn of events, Yubraj hasn't been affected psychologically and has coped rather well."



Bahadur Jung Karki

Irkhu, Sindhupalchowk

During daytime, Bahadur weaves traditional buckets called doko, while his granddaughter helps him out with the trade.

"I am on my won. My daughters live a quite regular life. Both my sons are dead though not by the quake. My eldest son was killed by insurgents during the Civil War, more than ten years ago. He was a sincere teacher in a school nearby, and was on his way to work that fateful morning when he was abducted. We found his body in the woods after days of searching. My younger son died just weeks after he moved to Kathmandu. They couldn't diagnose his disease.

I have no source of income except for the produce I reap from the small piece of land that I own, and dokos that I sell in the market. My beautiful granddaughter visits me every now and then and helps me upkeep the shelter."



Gore Bahadur Sarkini

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

With a family of seven, including four kids and a mother, Gore Bahadur has taken care of his new home with much love and care. With a garden that looks no different than a vineyard to a shed created with fresh timber, Gore Bahadur's surrounding is exemplary. He has orange plantation on one side of his premises as well. The floors are properly cleaned and even the toilet is one that can rarely be found in the village. He keeps photographs of his house from the day it was collapsed in the quake, up to the point where the shelter was built.

"This is our new home. I'm glad that my old mother, wife and kids have been able to adjust to it, and they like it too. It's portioned and has a few rooms, plus a kitchen. As with most Nepali homes, we require people to take off their shoes at the door. My mother Seti especially likes to have a clean house, it's a value that she instilled since we were small kids. She is visually impaired in one eye, and hasn't yet come to terms with the fact that our old house is gone. But she likes it here now. It has ample space. My wife often helps my mom out in our small fruit farm. Our first batch of oranges is ready to eat. They're small but they're really sweet."



Satya Pal Ganesh

Leebali, Bhaktapur

For a living, Satya sows bhadgaule topis, traditional Nepali caps. He is preparing to ship the latest batch to Kathmandu for selling. He used to own a small but beautiful house in Bhaktapur's main premises, but now cannot go back as it is in a perilous condition. He has a married son and two grand children.

"My main trade is making and selling topis in the market, while my wife Krishna Maya makes pop corn bags for a multiplex. Our son works at an office in Bhaktapur and can just get by, and our daughter-in-law is on maternity leave. We've salvaged almost everything from the house, but we still have some furniture left. It's too dangerous to go in. We don't know when we will be able to rebuild a house or even go back. Till then, we work out of the shelter and have to adjust here."



Dil Bahadur Mijar

Sipapokhari, Sindhupalchowk

Born to a marginalized family, Dil Bahadur and wife Srijana Mijar are survived by four daughters and a son. For several months after losing their house to the earthquake, the big family had had to share a makeshift tent with their cattle. Situated on terraced slopes, the tent was battered by fierce winds.

“The tarpaulin of our tent used to get blown away. We lost our food reserve in the debris, and for several weeks and months we struggled to have proper meals. The shelter that we now have is spacious where we fit more comfortably and with dignity. I have been able to focus on my trade of selling buffalo skin in the market, which is how I earn to feed the family.”



Shakuntala Dongol

Sankhu, Kathmandu

Shakuntala Dongol is preparing to take prayer items to sell in the market nearby, which is abuzz today especially because of a festival taking place. She manages the items in the shelter before taking them to a roadside stall they have set up. With the income generated from the shop as well as from the farms on regular days, she hopes to save enough to rebuild a small house for her family. They have been able to salvage some of the belongings from their own home, which they've used to decorate their new shelter.

"I have a small school-going son whose future we need to ensure. We cannot let the earthquake destroy our dreams. Besides using the shelter as a bedroom and living room, it is large enough to store the consignment we sell in the market, including prayer items. Besides that, we also rely on agriculture as a source of living. The shelter design is well thought through as it ensures enough light and ventilation, crucial not just for us living inside but also for farm produce to retain its quality and freshness."



Sita Shrestha

Kubhinde, Sindhupalchowk

A lady of few words, Sita Shrestha keeps mum about the loss of her oldest son. The gorgeous 13-year-old was crushed to death along with two other kids he was watching a movie with in the April 2015 earthquake. Now Sita is survived by her loving husband Tulku, a carpenter, and three pre-teen kids. "The oldest is differently abled," she shares her plight. "But we want to afford the best treatment for him and education for the others. That is why I'm planning to open a small shop here," she adds, pointing to a small rack of miscellany inside their new shelter created with UN-Habitat's support. "We've lost our son and we're heartbroken, but we would've have lost hope for our family had it not been for our shelter."



Jagat Bahadur and Chandra Kumari Budhathoki

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

From a distance, Jagat Bahadur's house looks like any quintessential Nepali house – colorful, cozy and made of wood and clay. A closer look reveals cracked walls on all sides, as the three-storey structure stands precariously, ready to fall from any aftershock. He now lives with his wife and college-going kids in a shelter nearby. The misery notwithstanding, Jagat maintains a strong demeanor and offers tea to the guests, which he prepares in the kitchen tucked away in back corners of his shelter.

"We use to feel like chicks without their mother, ready to be devoured by a predator. There was no roof above our head or food on our plates. We had nobody to reach out to, for everybody faced the crisis much like we did. Slowly but surely organizations supported us with supplies and shelter.

My daughter is majoring in Commerce and my son in Computer Science. I should be thankful that the kids have been able to focus on their studies and not let the disaster affect their performance. In fact, we have created partitions in the shelter to create studying space and privacy for them. Looking back, from purchasing overpriced tarpaulins and leaky tents to shelter ourselves, we've been able to create a homely space. We even have a kitchen at the back! My wife Chandra suffers from PTSD, and still trembles at night sometimes, but from the tarpaulin and tent days, we've come a long way, and things are slowly getting back to normal."



Ratna Maya

Macchegaon, Kathmandu

Ratna Maya solely looks after her grandson. Her daughter eloped with no regard to the family's howabouts. Ratna Maya sold her land to treat her ill husband, who expired despite best attempts. She is determined to give her grandson a good future, and thus runs a small tea shop in Macchegaon.

"I start serving tea at 3am. It sounds too early but there will be some people, especially laborers, already awake during that time. Besides, other tea shops in the neighborhood are closed that early in the morning, which gives me some business. Our shelter is nearby so it isn't a problem for me to come and go as I need. I've kept it simple and we have two rooms, one for my grandson and the other for myself. He asks me every now and then where his mother is, and I have no answer, but I hope to give him good education and life that hasn't particularly been fair."





DISABLED

While many have been lucky enough to escape unscathed from the horrors that the quake brought with it, others have not been so. Instances of injuries were widely reported, and though many wounds may have healed with time, some are left with debilitating disabilities, including paralysis and PTSD. UN-Habitat's support reached out to many of such disabled persons who otherwise could not have fended for themselves or their families.



Bhuwan Shrestha

Sankhu, Bhaktapur

Bhuwan Shrestha teaches Maths in middle school just outside Saankhu. He was unfortunately injured waist down during the quake. The injury has forced him to skip classes and now he often does physiotherapy in the shelter to regain movement.

“I have not been able to go to work for the past ten months, after the earthquake. In fact, I have finally been able to walk although with the help of crutches since only recently. A couple of the six surgeries performed to fix my back were unsuccessful. In the first few weeks, there was an American doctor assigned here in Saankhu’s hospital just to look after me. I am thankful that with all the treatment, including physiotherapies that I do everyday, I’ve been able to move around on my own. When you can’t go to work or even walk, it then becomes a comforting feeling that there are organizations out there looking after your best interest. My house is completely destroyed but I’m happy with this shelter, my home for now. Perhaps, without it, my family and I would have been completely vulnerable with nowhere to go.”

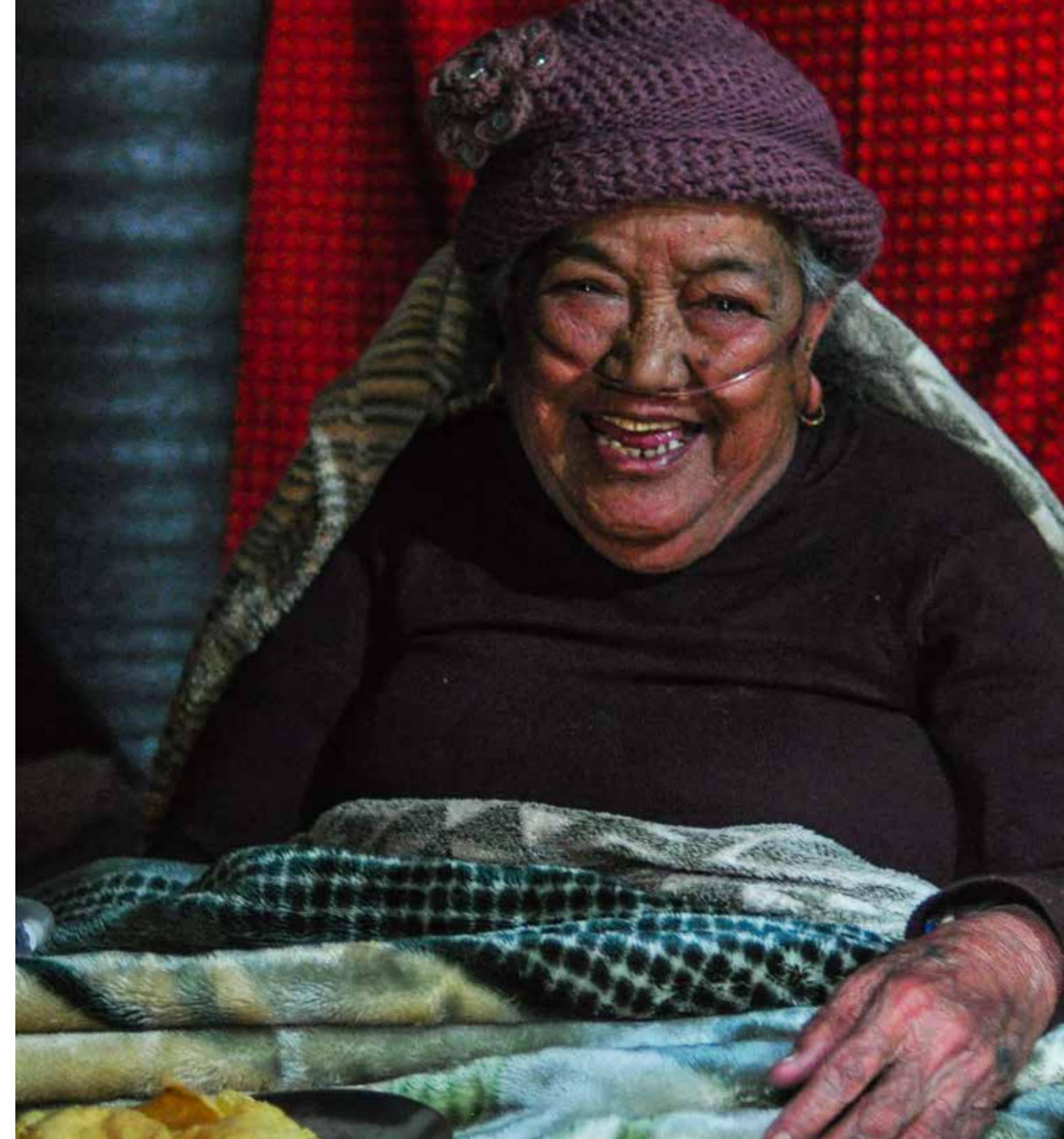


Jamuna Bajracharya

Sankhu, Bhaktapur

Jamuna Bajracharya is in her mid 80s and her health has been deteriorating over the past few years. She has breathing problems. Survived by a son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, Jamuna is mostly indoors on her bed, next to oxygen cylinders she needs all the time. Regardless, she sports a contagious smile as she enjoys her papadum.

“We lost our home and I’d lost hope too, but my son and daughter-in-law have beautifully decorated this shelter for me and even installed bright lights and a TV. I cannot move around much so I keep myself busy with the lovely company of my neighbors. I also like takings naps whenever I get a chance.”



Maiya

Irkhu, Sindhupalchowk

Maiya is blind and supported by her husband and his second wife, who she consider her sister. The love and affection that she has received from her sister is quite a heart-touching story.

"I started losing my vision almost two decades ago, and after medications and treatment failed, I realized my husband would need a second wife. I didn't want to be a burden for him. It always used to bother me how his new wife would turn out to be like, whether she would mistreat me. But I feel blessed now to have such a wonderful sister.

I am barely able to navigate around the house without causing a mess. But she's always there for me, and feeds me and puts me in bed in our new shelter. Now after the quake, we spend more time together because I get scared. Despite losing our house, we haven't lost hope because of the support we've received from various organizations like UN-Habitat which helped us with this shelter.



Sharda Thakuri

Khokana, Lalitpur

Sharda Thakuri, 62, and her ailing husband Shyam Bahadur, 82 live by themselves in a shelter constructed with the support of UN-Habitat. With watery eyes she explains how she's spent the last couple of decades trying to ensure her husband's good health. Oxygen tanks by the bedside are either empty or running low, and a cold reminder that Shyam is in a fragile condition.

"Shyam used to work in a factory but since almost 25 years ago his health has deteriorated. We have five daughters, all of whom are happily married. They visit us every so often and it gives us a moral boost. In fact, they also help us out with Shyam's hospital bills. He can't move around and we've not been able to clear the rubble of our house. I look after the garden and water the plants. Having to handle every chore here is draining me out. This temporary shelter has given us respite from our situation. We've partitioned it and my husband prefers to stay in a dark corner as he is sensitive to light. We were living in pitiful conditions, but now we can comfortably live here temporarily for the next few years."





TOILETS AND SANITATION

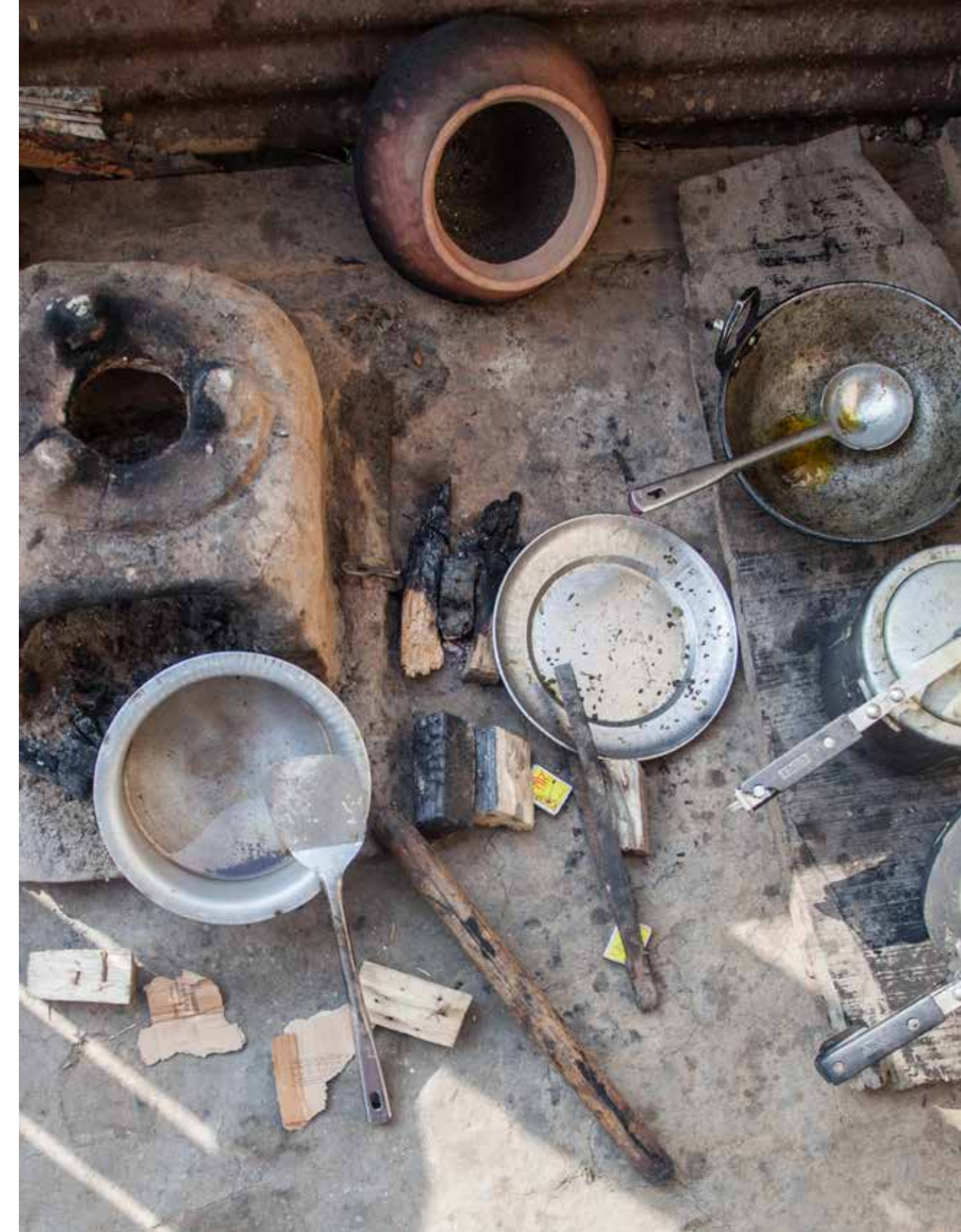
Toilets in most cases were damaged or destroyed by the quake in the areas of this project. But with salvaged materials, people have been able to construct a toilet outdoors. Many have created permanent toilets using concrete and woods to last longer, which has besides keeping it clean and thus minimized the spread of diseases, also added to the aesthetics of the temporary shelters.





KITCHEN

A small mud stove area was created in most shelter as kitchen. This is the traditional method of cooking in most rural parts of Nepal. In Sindhupalchowk, a smokeless stove was provided to the families which exhausted smoke out of the house. This not only reduces health problems in the long run but also keeps the interior clean and prevents bad smell. A few households moved the kitchen out of the house in order to save space and keep smoke out.



Govinda Raj Sapkota

Bhimsensthan, Dolakha

The cheerful Govinda Raj Sapkota uses strings on a wedding pavilion as a clothesline. His daughter Sarita recently got married off from a ceremony held in the premises of their new shelter. Besides agriculture, he earns a living as a priest in weddings. He is survived by his wife, son and father.

"I actually don't know his name. We aren't allowed to ask names of our son-in-law until the wedding is well over. We just call him jwaaisaheb. During the wedding ceremony, we created enough space outside and inside the shelter as well to accommodate guests. Before the shelter was built, it would not have been possible, but upon its completion, we were quite relieved that we could comfortably see through the wedding ceremony and parties."

I was the emcee during inauguration of hand-over ceremony of the shelters from the UN, but it was quite amusing as I kept getting phone calls that day from another wedding. I am a Hindu priest as well, and they were requesting me to recite prayers at the ceremony. It was urgent as the would-be groom had eloped with his belle. I had the privilege to meet the folks behind the program that helped countless people in my hometown in Dolakha, but I had to rush to the wedding ceremony too. It was nevertheless evident from the number of people who showed up at the inauguration ceremony that the shelters were definitely a relief for everyone and a morale boost."



CHALLENGES FACED

The support initiative encountered some challenges in the difficult time after disaster, hindering if not delaying some of the activities to be completed in time.

Festivals:

The major festivals of Dasain and Tihar widely celebrated by the community members fell during the project time period due to which communities were unwilling to participate in any kind of activities.

Plantation and Harvesting season:

Implementation of the project was immediately followed by plantation season and a few months later by harvesting season for winter crops. Labor was difficult to find. Although the community members were keen on understanding the earthquake resistant technologies their first priority was bringing the crop home rather than preparing for rebuilding.

Beneficiary Selection:

Due to lack of proper data as well as high demand for the shelters, it was difficult to select neighbourhood location as well as beneficiaries.



Women working in the fields of Khokana during the monsoon season that typically starts in June.

Political Situation & Fuel Crisis:

Because of political issues as well as fuel crisis in the later half of the project, implementation of some activities was affected. The fuel crisis was a major hindrance in regular visits to the CIC and other communities. It also affected supply of materials for the construction of shelters.

Shortage of CGI:

In the initial period of the project, there was a short supply of CGI sheet in all districts due to high demand from earthquake-affected people. To manage the short supply, certain activities of the project had to be rescheduled.



Earthquake victims were widely supplied with CGI by various NGOs and the government for construct temporary shelters.



THE WAY FORWARD

Having lost their homes and belongings, and in many cases loved ones and livelihoods, people have slowly started to piece their lives back. They are no longer living under tarps or tents. The shelters funded by the Government of Japan through the UN-Habitat have provided much needed, in fact life-saving, temporary housing for the thousands of earthquake victims. These transitional structures will be crucial for families for the next two years, after which the communities would commence construction of permanent houses.









UNHABITAT

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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