



Earthquake Nepal 2015

SUMMARY

The year 2072 BS (Bikram sambat) (2015AD) turned out very painful to Nepal and its people. The disastrous earthquake of 7.8 Richter scale with its epicenter in Gorkha and the other in Dolakha killed around 10,000 people and hundreds of thousands of homes are destroyed. Historical places which have long been an attraction for internal and external tourists are destroyed as well.

When the victims were in pain, their immediate concern was the management of injuries, then they focused on acquiring two meals for a day and a roof to stay dry during rain. Entire world showed their concern and support as a family. Thanks to the all support, very few people lacked those three basic immediate needs. Everyone helped from their own level to the optimum. One of the main reason of writing this report is to say a Thank you from the base of my heart for the kindness and support shown by Kiran Funds, MSF, ICRC and all the unsung heroes that donated unanimously. It is because of people like you, we call earth a big extended family. Once again, I would like to thank you from my side and from the people who were helped -all because of you.



GROUND ZERO

I was in the third floor in a four story building, preparing for entrance examination for specialization. I didn't go to Kathmandu even if it was a Saturday. I was in Dhulikhel, in a room provided by the hospital. It was almost mid-day (noon). I closed the books and checked my iPad mini for Facebook notifications. The bed started to swing, locked door opened itself. The floor started swinging like that of a child's cradle. I couldn't stand straight. As a human act of desperation, I ran downstairs with iPad in my hand, had multiple falls. But finally, made it to ground outside the house. From there, I could see the entire house was literally rocking back and forth. After few minutes, people from neighboring houses started crying, screaming for help. It is said that a person recalls his family in two situations, one when he is in extreme sorrow, second when he is in extremely happy. The cries, woes and building falling apart made me remember my family and friends. I wanted to call them but in haste I forgot my phone in my room. I looked at the iPad and it was useless to make calls. After 15 minutes or so, I collected all of my strength and ran up to my room for cellphone but I found that my room was locked. I hurried back and requested a stranger in the ground, to make a call from his cellphone, then I discovered that the cellular network was already dead. I just left a text message for my brother telling him, I was safe and also to relay the message to those who were concerned about me.





Very soon, people from the other side of the road shouted-Look! The sky above the nearby valley called Panchkhal was filled with dust. Many assumed it was due to the dust and debris from collapsed houses. I could see patients being rushed to hospital, on top of loaded trucks, jeeps, ambulances, security vans. It was a down-pour of injured people. Then, I realized that the doctors in the emergency department couldn't manage all the incoming patients. Even though I was an academic doctor at the moment I felt that I should go to the hospital and help them. I had to ask for separate set of keys to my room from house owner, I equipped myself with my cellphone, and then I rushed to hospital. Soon enough, I got a call from my elder brother saying that everyone in our family was safe but my younger sister was still out of contact.

The scene in hospital was absolute chaos. Patients were crying for pain, for their lost father, mother, son, daughter, sister, brothers, for their collapsed houses and properties, for everything that they could think and knew of. And to make things worse, the powerful aftershocks now had started making horrible sounds from earth (I was as if someone was screaming with rage from the ground below). This sound terrified all of us. People used to run with the onset of each aftershock, even when, I was putting on hemostatic sutures, even when we treated them in an open ground. First time in my life, I had to counsel my patients despite that the fact that, I was scared and was equally uncertain of what would happen next!

Simple fractures, comminuted fractures, open fractures were not at all in high priority after an initial management. Volumes of patients were in hypovolemic shock due the pelvic fracture, femur fracture, head injury and blunt abdominal trauma. The patients referred for CT scan of head to Kathmandu started coming back. It was then; we learned that the highway had cracked deep enough at multiple places making it impossible to travel. The main reason for referral was there was no electricity, central electrical supply grid was completely down to prevent fire related incidents. I don't recall the exact count but the number of patients were as high as 1000 in the 1st day. We immediately recruited 1st year medical students to assist us. They helped us with wound cleaning, intramuscular injections of pain killers and tetanus toxoid. Every able body, be it skilled health care personnel or patient visitors sprung to action. Not because someone called them, not because they knew what to do but because of their human instinct. There was no partisan politics that day, no discrimination of class, caste, creed, and religion. It was genuine instinct to help.





As time passed by, cellular network was back. My phone started to ring a lot, from my friends, my family or everyone I knew of. I had to ignore my phone as I was busy in triage and initial management. I don't recall since when but as of that time patients were transported to hospital in trucks not standard ambulances. With each truck, 10 to 20 patients added to our list of 1000s. 10 more in a jeep, 4 or 5 in an ambulance and so on. We were hopelessly tired and when we checked time it was already 1am in the night. After arranging another shift of health personnel (not that they were fresh but because they weren't as tired as few of us). I said to myself, I needed sleep otherwise I was of no use tomorrow. But I didn't want to stay in that house, I saw it sway like never before, and the aftershock of 5 + richter scales were happening once in every 15 mins or so. A friend of mine said he saw few tarpaulin tents nearby where we could sleep for few hours. When we went there, people were sleeping in tight rows. It was inhumane to wake them up, after all they had been through. So, we decided to spend our night in front of a fireplace. I saw the text from my brother that all of our relatives were alive. My house in Gorkha, where I was born and played some pranks and mischief was no more! I took a long sigh and stared at the fire, visualizing every outline and detail of my house, I could remember of...

DAY 2

It was 7 am! we (me and my colleagues) started to triage and provide supportive management to the patient. Around 12 am-midnight. Another powerful aftershock with epicenter in Sindhupalchowk (30 mins away) hit us. It not only destroyed all of the remaining houses but also leveled the debris of previously fallen houses. The number of patients was roughly the same as on day 1 but, that today we treated more severe injury. The doctors who had left for Kathmandu didn't show up maybe because of fear of aftershocks or they didn't have anyone to take care for their families. We were exhausted but we were relieved to find that more tarpaulin had been added. Aftershocks of 5+ were starting to feel like routine. Anyways, tonight we rested for 6 hours!

DAY 3

Nothing changed, woke up at 6, reported to duty, started triaging and managing. But today, I had a mid-day lunch, cellular network (with internet) was up and running. If I was offered a dollar for each notification, I could have been a millionaire overnight. It was really and truly humbling experience, I replied everyone. I found that Facebook had just launched marking feature for disasters, such a simple but powerful idea that really made much use. I steadily marked myself safe. I could see all of my friends been marked safe. Thank you Mark Zuckerberg!



DAY 4 & 5

On the fifth day, patient inflow started to stabilize. We saw what happened across the country. People were living in such a pitiful situation. As a medical doctor, we felt that every seconds of our time might be lifesaving. We volunteered to go to remote places, our hospital initiated discussion with a local hydro-power company in arranging a helicopter to transport medical doctors (including me) and medical equipment including essential medicines. We had to wait for two days in vain; we felt that the hydro-power company didn't want to collaborate with our hospital. Then the very next day, MSF Holland helped us to reach Fulpingkatti VDC of Sindhupalchowk district via Helicopter. The village was decimated by earthquake. Majority of trauma cases were already shifted to tertiary center for management. Many people were still suffering from fractured limbs, wound abscess, impending abscess or cellulitis. We treated cases of Acid peptic diseases, osteoarthritis, skin infections and so on. People were in tarpaulin tents and it started to rain. That might be one of the reasons why we found many cases of severe pneumonia. We informed people to make temporary latrine to prevent waterborne diseases especially acute gastroenteritis. Different families were living in a small tarpaulin tents. This incident made me realize that it was easier for a group of 3 doctors to visit communities rather than the people to visit doctors in hospitals. After four days of stay, we walked 4 hours downhill crossed forests, rivers and obstructed roads. At the end of 4 hour treacherous trek, our hospital jeep arrived to receive us.

HELP FROM KIRAN FUND

The remembrance of my house also triggered remembrance of my village as it was no different than the village I just served. As I scaled down the hills the passion to serve for my village grew stronger. All I need was someone to provide financial support just for medicines then I could leave my team (I already had made up my team in my mind). So, I requested Kiran Funds for the possibility of that support. Fully aware of the situation and the desire to help, they accepted my request. I was could finally be of assistance for my villagers due to support of Kiran Funds and my friends.



7th July, 2015



What did we do with KF's Support?

Soon after the decision of Kiran Funds to support my village (Phujel-5, Gorkha, Nepal) through me, we (me and my brother) discussed how to help more people both qualitatively as well as quantitatively. We were organizing free health camps to the earthquake victims as well as having need assessment for other possible necessities. People had already taken out the reserve foods and clothes, government had already provided 1 tarpaulin to each family. So, the immediate need was nothing more than a health camp there.

Having found so, we decided to distribute food or tarpaulin to places where it was an urgent need. People in my village would have been happy to get food package or more tarpaulin but we decided to help people whose situation was worse. So, when we reviewed and verified the news that Sindhuli district was equally neglected as Gorkha and Sindhupalchowk. We decided we provide tarpaulin for this district.

Near to the epicenter village of Gorkha called Jaubari, my brother Dilly Ram Bhatta (Engineer) had visited this place for the engineering of temporary houses. He took some junior engineers (overseers) as volunteers for physical and management work. They requested for compensation for transportation and food. We thought it was reasonable so, we compensated the volunteers using local rates. During their work, volunteers and my brother constructed 43 houses (in a week) for the elderly people and people who couldn't make their own house due to trauma or any other reason.





WORK SUMMARY

Free (1 day health camp proper, but we needed 1 day each to reach and return to the site) health camp for the earthquake victims was organized in Phujel VDC, Gorkha. We examined and treated 320 patients in a day long camp proper. Besides KF, special thanks to Dr Amit Singh, Dr Ram Kumar Mehta, Dr Ishu Gajurel, Senior Pharmacist Shambhu Ghimire, and Junior Pharmacist Miss Pant, Senior Nurse Rita Bhatta, Junior Nurse Sabina Panta, Manager Erg. Dilly Ram Bhatta, Local organizer Mr. Narayan Pant, all the volunteers and our jeep driver. We also got medicine packages from MSF Holland and Dhulikhel Hospital, we would also like to extend our gratitude to those partners. Heartfelt Condolences to Dr Sandeep Mahat and Dr Jessica from MSF Holland who lost their lives in Helicopter accident who were our colleagues just a few days earlier before that unfateful day.

We distributed 178 tarpaulins to 178 families, 1pc per family. This is distributed in Pipalmadi VDC of Sindhuli District. According to the government's rule, we handed over this to the local committee to distribute the relief materials.

We provided travel and food compensation to the junior volunteer-overseers (junior engineers) during their stay in Jaubari VDC of Gorkha District to construct the temporary houses (to shade from rain, made up of tin roof and other local materials).

We distributed the construction equipment (than local people can use, are acquainted with) in Phujel VDC of Gorkha District so that they can construct water proof temporary houses to escape the rainy season of this year.

THINGS (else) I DID

It was already day 17 or so. Life was getting normal with the exception people had no houses and stock food. We had resumed our work in the university. Students were in the lecture class. Then we suffered from another powerful aftershock which killed hundreds of people. In comparing the death toll, this number was justifiable because people were not yet in house rather in tarpaulin. Soon after that, we went to the emergency department to help the doctor on duty. We worked for two days. Then we worked ten days in the department of emergency as a regular medical officer. After that we went to Lamosanghu, Sindhupalchowk for free health camp sponsored by Malteaser, Germany. Dhulikhel hospital had arranged this connection. We delivered free health camp for 4 days then we returned. University was about to re-resume. We prepared for the upcoming classes.



FINANCE STATEMENT

S.No.	Heading	Unit	Quantity	Rate (NRs.)	Amount (NRs.)
	Free Health Camp at Phujel Gorkha				
1	Procurement of medicines		1	250000	250000
2	return		1	-20000	-20000
3	Transportation cost for Health camp	Trip	2	16000	32000
4	Logistic and Snacks	Times	5	4000	20000
5	Local Transportation	Lum Sum	1	10000	10000
6	Pocket expences for local volunteer	Person	10	2000	20000
	Tarpaulin (tripal)				
7	Procurement of tarpaulin Sheet	Number	178	2000	356000
8	Transportation cost for tarpaulin	Trip	1	50000	50000
	Temporary house construction allowance for technician				
9		Number	5	5000	25000
10	Supply of house construction tools	Set	1	50000	50000
11	Transportation of tools	Trip	1	16000	16000
	Grand Total				809000



I'm always ready to move to such remote places in case I can help them as a medical doctor or to provide relief materials.

Whatever I did, till the moment about the medical care to the earthquake victims, it was all possible because of support from Kiran Funds. Thank you Kiran funds, its members and donors. Thank you everyone concerned.



More pictures at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bveiwubwtr4ssq/AACaVbRzwBq2pT9M1dBxfzgsa?dl=0>