

Nepal Earthquake: Three Months On

The earthquake of 25 April 2015 brought devastation to Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world. Then just days later, a second earthquake of similar magnitude struck. In total, over 8,500 people died and 22,000 were injured. Across the country, around 750,000 homes were either damaged or completely destroyed, leaving 2.8 million people homeless or in need of assistance. But thanks to your support, we were working within hours of the earthquake, distributing vital supplies to people affected.

A challenging response

While thousands of people lost their lives, many more were threatened by disease, with the risk of cholera, dysentery and other water-borne diseases increased due to contaminated water and poor sanitation. In addition to items such as latrine slabs, water tanks and buckets we had stored in Kathmandu and India, we were able to fly equipment into the region from our warehouses in Spain and the UK. This meant that our experienced teams on the ground could start helping the people affected almost immediately.

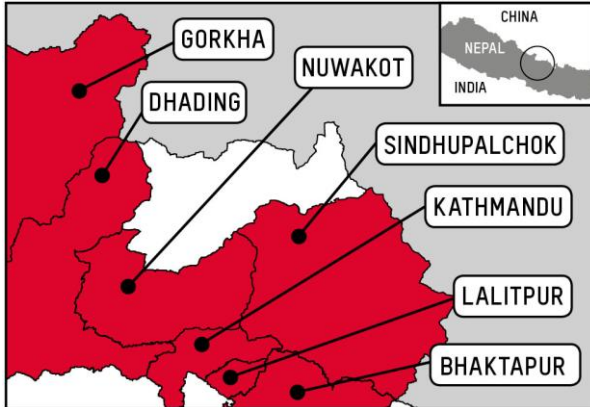
However, the initial earthquake – and the numerous aftershocks that followed – led to many roads being blocked by landslides or falling rocks. The onset of the monsoon rains has created further disruption, meaning getting help out to more isolated districts has been extremely difficult. Oxfam staff teams are camping out in regional ‘hubs’, many of which are off-road with access only by foot, and staying in tents while they get work done.

We have also employed mountain guides and porters to help deliver supplies to even the most remote communities. Not only has this meant aid has been delivered safely and quickly, it has provided work for the guides, who have struggled to find work after the earthquake. Their knowledge and expertise has been invaluable in reaching people.



Porters hired by Oxfam deliver relief material by foot to the remote village of Laprak, because the road is inaccessible due to recent landslides. *Photo: Sam Spickett / Oxfam*

Where we are working



Oxfam is working in seven of the worst affected districts: three in the Kathmandu Valley, and four in rural areas.

Kathmandu and the surrounding Kathmandu Valley: We are providing clean chlorinated water, distributing hygiene kits and have built almost 500 latrines. This essential work will ensure people are able to survive the aftermath and minimize the threat of disease.

Sindhupalchok region: Oxfam has set up a 10,000 litre bladder tank and dug emergency pit toilets to supply a field hospital with clean water and sanitation. A sports field has been turned into a field hospital with huge tents doubling as operating theatres and children's wards, after the hospital in Chautara was badly damaged in the earthquake.

Gorkha and Nuwakot regions: We're providing emergency shelter materials to over 11,000 households whose homes

have been damaged or destroyed, and emergency relief kits and food parcels – a lifeline for thousands left homeless and without the basics to survive.

Dhading region: The earthquakes struck just as farmers were beginning to plant, and many lost their seeds and stock under dust and rubble. We have distributed rice seeds to 7,800 farming families, so communities could plant before the monsoon season took hold. Your fast response meant we could get seeds in the ground – and crops growing again.

Overall, we've been able to help over 367,000 people so far – this would not have been possible without your help.

30,000 people have benefitted from chlorinated water distribution

45,300 hygiene kits – including buckets, soap, towels and oral rehydration salts – have been distributed

4,470 latrines have been built, as well as vital hand washing points

32,800 emergency and improved shelter kits have been distributed, along with foam mats, groundsheets, blankets and solar lamps

27,000 households have received either food baskets – including items such as rice, lentils and cooking oil – or support to grow rice crops again



Sanu Golee and her daughter Sushmita* (13) are from Kathmandu. Their home was damaged during the earthquake and they are now living in one of the tents in the green spaces of the city centre, where Oxfam is providing clean water. *Photo: Aubrey Wade / Oxfam* *name changed

Being prepared

The Nepalese government has in recent years launched several flagship disaster risk management programmes. These have improved its ability to keep schools and hospitals safe and be prepared for emergencies. Oxfam has supported the government's preparedness programmes, as well as training emergency response volunteers and establishing relief supplies and warehouses in Nepal – around 45% of Oxfam's programme budget in Nepal before the earthquake was spent on helping communities prepare for disaster.

Lajana Manandhar, Executive Director of Lumanti, a Nepali organization which works with Oxfam, said: "Being prepared works. Together with Oxfam we have trained over 2,000 volunteers in communities, equipping them with the right tools and skills so they can react quickly in case of a disaster. Within a few hours of the earthquake, volunteers were helping rescue survivors, administering First Aid, building latrines and even mending water pipes in the Kirtipur area of Kathmandu."



Oxfam staff and volunteers construct an 11,000 litre water tank at Tundikhel IDP camp. Oxfam is providing water to 15,000 people here. *Photo: Pablo Tosco / Oxfam*

Working together

Oxfam India was, for the first time – and with special permission from the Indian Government – able to deliver humanitarian support outside its home country. Operating as part of a single Oxfam response, Oxfam India has taken responsibility for initiating and managing activities in Gorkha District.

With a presence in Nepal reaching back more than 20 years, Oxfam also has working relationships with local partner organizations, many of whom have been able to support the earthquake response, aligning their activities with the needs of the affected populations. Small Farmers Agriculture Cooperative Federation, for example, have been helping with the distribution of rice seeds in the Dhading region.

Monsoon season

With over 90% of homes destroyed in some districts, food still scarce, and water-borne diseases remaining a threat, thousands of people still need our support – particularly as the monsoon season has now begun. 80% of Nepal's annual rainfall will fall in less than three months, from June through to August. Access to remote

areas becomes increasingly difficult, as many are served by just a single track dirt road, and the risk of landslides is a real concern.

Over the coming months, our most urgent priority is to supply clean water, hygiene materials and training on how to prevent the spread of disease. We will also distribute building materials, including corrugated iron sheeting, so that people can build more robust shelter from the monsoon rains, and we'll be looking at ways to revitalize people's damaged livelihoods and boost local economies.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Sanu Thapa (63) of Tripureshwor waits at the distribution point for rice seeds. She walked for almost three hours from her home to receive the seeds. She could have waited for a distribution taking place at a nearer location, but she wanted to come and collect the seeds as soon as she could. There is only a rough path leading to her house.

"It's a long way back home with a load of 20 kg, and today is very hot. But we have no choice. Whatever seeds we had, they got mixed with mud during the earthquake and we lost them. I came here with my friends to get the seeds, so that I can sow for a new crop before the monsoon. We will help one another to take them home."

All told, Oxfam has distributed rice seeds to over 20,000 Nepalese farmers in the regions of Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, and Dhading (where Tripureshwor is located), working alongside our partner, Small Farmer Agricultural Cooperative Federation (SFACF). *Photo: Aubrey Wade / Oxfam*

The next steps

Beyond the immediate need to make sure people have shelter, clean water, and support to buy food, we will continue to work in Nepal in the longer term – helping people return to their normal lives. The coming months will be incredibly difficult, but because of your support, we can be there for as long as it takes to help people recover, and restore their lives once again. Three months on from the first massive earthquake, people still need humanitarian aid, but there will now be an increased focus on providing materials for improved shelters, influencing the wider reconstruction priorities, and beginning to support communities on long-term livelihoods activities.

Nepal now has a chance to build back stronger, to get people back on their feet and better prepared for the future.

Thank you for your support.