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Subject: Post EQ Update - Our Situation/Work on the Ground - 21
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General:

Nepal is at its most difficult transition. With the promulgation of the new Constitution since 20th September the Madhes andolan is ongoing since over 3 months, and the undeclared India blockade is ongoing for over 9 weeks. People have no petrol, cooking gas, and medicines. Industries, hospitals, schools, eateries, are fast shutting down. Corruption is rampant and many believe that the government and rulers are hand in glove in all this. One hears that one can easily buy petrol and gas cylinders – but at least three times the price! People affected by the earthquake in the past 8 months, who are living in makeshift tin sheds in the mid-hills and the high mountains are suffering as winter sets in – elderly, the sick, the new-born children and mothers. The recovery work and relief benefits are at a stand still.

There is no political resolve or government ability to ease the situations by rationing the meager goods, which has come in. New conflicts are emerging as people lose their patience and the desperations rise. It is shameful to share that even in these times we had a day of strike on the 29th called by one of the Maoist groups, while on the 28th - another one set fire to a



Geeta our head cook at Tewa...

vehicle belonging to the Indian Embassy (although the Embassy contradicted this by saying that it was a technical accident of the vehicle itself.

Anti blockade demonstrations by the diaspora Nepalis are taking place everywhere in the world and I think the responsible world bodies are all well aware of what is happening in Nepal since the UN agencies and the EU nations are all working here, notwithstanding the instantaneous social media. But maybe the world is now used to more drama and violence. The forbearance and the fortitude of the larger number Nepalis is surreal. Who knows when the dam will burst – even in resilient and patient Nepal!

Tewa/NA:

Regarding NA led PEQ recovery programme, **Building Lives & Inspiring Hopes** (BL/IH), thanks to Dr. Ambreen Ahmed and Ms. Asha Basnet's the first-aid volunteers' overall wellbeing and confidence level has greatly improved. Now 22

youths are engaging in raising awareness about psychosocial counseling and some of them have started to take individual counseling as well. It was further shared that the local host organizations in 3 affected districts: Dhading, Sindhupalchowk and Ramechhap are backstopping the youths, but in Gorkha, there has been a gap since the local host organization is not based in Gorkha and communications is a hurdle owing to power outage/mobile charging. The program team is soon to make a follow-up visit to Gorkha and a suitable local host will be identified.

Regarding the Tewa led **Hamro Tewa Goan-gharma** (HTG) programme, in Dharmasthali 30 women were provided sewing skills and have started to engage in income generating activities. The trainers are willing to provide the skills in Jharuarashi in a voluntary basis, which is showing a ripple effect. In Jharuarashi the volunteers are engaged in cutting, winnowing, and storing paddy for whoever needs additional help. The community women are requesting HTG volunteers for income generation skills like knitting and sewing, while they have already learnt candle and incense making skills. In Dhading, the HTG Volunteers are engaged in providing tuition to the 25 displaced children displaced from Laprak. They are also educating them about health and sanitation. In Barpak activities have been stalled due to the festivals. In Ramechhap the volunteers provided candle-making skills to the women's group. Provided with training, women made candles and also sold them in the time of Tihar festival and earned some money. They also built some community toilets by utilizing the local resources. The HTG volunteers have also helped to register a women group named Paurakhi Women's Group. The HTG is building its momentum in an alternate way where it has been observed that the larger communities are being benefited in different way. The volunteers are connecting, coordinating, and using all their strengths to support women's agency and those who most need their help.

A local youth from Khmiti, Ramechhap expressed he was surprised to see the work of the HTG volunteers who helped in clearing the rubbles of his fallen house. He questioned the political leaders present if they had ever deployed their cadres or themselves for such good work? He expressed sincere gratitude to the HTG Volunteers for helping him, and making him realize that they can start with similar initiatives, which does not require money or things.



Urmila, Tewa Programme Managers in Ramechhap

Tewa & NA feel that since in every district the women's groups are requesting for sewing/knitting skills, this programme will be launched to ensure warm clothes for the children and the elderly as well as engage interested people in knitting blankets. Besides ensuring warmth it will be therapeutic for those involved, while bringing in some income. A reconvening of the HTG volunteers is scheduled for early December 3rd.

Even during these difficult times, the Tewa/NA team visited Ramechhap on the 26th as a part of the ongoing monitoring and mentoring work. Some of the observations of the team were:

- Discussions with the local stakeholders helped in understanding the HTG & BL/IH initiatives at a deeper level.
- First-aid psychosocial support workers need ongoing mentoring support.
- The role of local host organization needs to be strengthened especially for the mentoring of the program BL/IH.
- Regular field visit to document & assess progress of the programme is essential to strengthen the services.
- Both the initiatives are very time and context relevant in the communities being served.
- Diverse and broad needs of the community makes work challenging. Youths at present still have limited skills in dealing with the broad range of cases they encounter. In some cases making referrals is the only solution.

Case Study:

1. Post earthquake, now that all and everything is coming to a grinding halt, and the Tarai/Madhes agitation is ongoing for the past 9 weeks, Tewa/NA has felt the need to also look into these developments in a way that can respond positively and creatively to the grantee women activists/leaders. In relation to this, 9 Tewa grantee representatives from 5 districts, Kanchanpur, Mahottari, Dhanusha, Udayapur, and Morang, were able to come despite many challenges although 20 grantee representatives from 7 districts were invited and were trying to come. Through ensuring their wellbeing, and



Grantee representatives from Madhes engage...



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careful and thoughtful deliberations, we have come to better understand the given context in the Tarai/Madhesh:

Given this situation, which still shows no signs of abating, the consultations resulted in coming to the following conclusions:

- failure of leadership to provide some resolve and provide relief to the people
- the conflict is now getting more complex and multi-tiered & multi-faceted
- conflict is being instigated by those who have a vested interest and who gain from fueling this fire.
- silencing/shrinking of civil space; us/them situation of growing polarization, corruption/impunity, and increasing and rising desperation among the people
- it is yet unclear whose interests are met and who will benefit, but it is for sure that all the Nepalis will suffer/lose

Tewa/NA feels that this has given more clarity and a response that may best respond/facilitate the needs of the women and the community in these districts.

Some of these are as follows:

- a resolve was made to work/live with honesty, and sincerity
- guide one's family, demotivate family from being a part of or support the troubles/andolan which is instigated for political interests...
- provide any possible support to survivors
- be mindful of one's own self care/lead a disciplined life and get out of stress, by simple living/high thinking
- use local production/produce and use cycle/walk
- support one another and lend a helping hand to those who need (on either side)
- create spaces to understand, create awareness amongst one another
- put pressure on the state for addressing corruption, addressing human rights and come to a consensus to resolve this conflict and the blockade

Others:

It is worth mentioning here that even in these times, (cooking on firewood) the Tewa Center hosted two events: Fedo's strategic planning, and Tewa/NA's timely consultations with the grantee representatives from Madhes. How logistics was managed for the two programme/s with over 50 participants to run smoothly was certainly praiseworthy.

Conclusions:

It does not look like anything will be resolved in the near future and Nepalis are going to have a hard time for a long time. Our hands seem to be tied-up. But there is a resolve in our teams that we will not leave a stone unturned to continue supporting our PEQ programmes or the Tarai/Madhesh grantees facing the emerging conflicts.