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**Subject:** Post EQ Update - Our Situation/Work on the Ground - 22  
**Date:** 15 December, 2015 (bi-monthly)

**General:**

The effects from the now 3 month long India blockade has intensified and hardships increase as the cold increases. Electric load shedding has increased up to 9 hours a day. Finding a time to cook on electric stove is a hide-and-seek game few can compete if they are working full-time, some mornings one cannot even drink a cup of tea or hot water if you cannot light up a wood fire. Our so-called political leaders went to India but we have heard they have been asked to find solutions within for



their internal grievances – also some international pressure is building up. Opposition in the House of Parliament in India has called a spade a spade and decried the blockade and India's ruthless blockade in Nepal which in their own words, is a humanitarian disaster and is jarring beyond repair age-old relationships between the two countries. UNICEF has declared that over 30 lak children are at high risks in the earthquake affected districts; hospitals do not have life-saving drugs; industries have closed down for months, tourism is at point zero, and many have nothing to eat. After over a month motorbikes are being rationed 4 liters of petrol and it has been said that cars will receive 10 liters after this is over

but we have yet to see this materialize. It is hard to fathom what is happening here and harder to speak about it as a conversation.

Rina Rai (L), one of the Tewa grantee leaders from Makwanpur district is working now as a HTG volunteer in one of the most earthquake affected Dharmasthali of Kathmandu. At the HTG review/reflection meeting at Tewa, she said eating a hot meal like this is rare even in our home in our present conditions. She could not be more right all agreed!

**Tewa/NA:**

It is incredible how both the organizations are continuing to do the work with the HTG and the BL/IH programme. In Dharmasthali/Kathmandu, Jaruwarsi/Lalitpur, Irkhu/Sindhupalchowk, Manthali/Ramechhap, Barpak/Gorkha, and Salyantar/Dhading Districts Tewa volunteers are in the field/s and are

innovating/improvising, supporting and making linkages to ensure the best support and care that they can give. This has entailed building related work, income-generation activities, supporting agricultural work, caregiving, and awareness-raising activities with local women or women's groups. They have decided to continue for at least a further 6-month period.

Likewise, NA just sent one of its counselors and one programme officer to begin a follow-up and support visit starting from Barpak. Hari PO, and Antina the Counselor left for Barpak on the local bus (despite the crises created by the 3 month long India Blockade) and will be touring to other districts where the BL/IH programme/s are ongoing, involving local youths. The hands-on learning and insights from this visit will not only help strengthen the BL/IH and HTG programme, but will allow NA/Tewa a peep through the EQ affected communities to see how best to continue their ongoing support.

The review/reflection meeting for the HTG programme led by Tewa took place during 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> at the Kamla Hall in the Tewa Center. Out of the 5 districts where volunteers are working 3 came back from their sites and 2 groups (unable to go after the holidays mid November) have come to commit for another 6 months of work. Owing to the changing context in Nepal owing to the Madhes agitations and the India blockade and its negative impacts on all our lives, but more so on the affected districts, all had to review/reassess/revise the HTG programme support to make it most suitable for the ground reality. Sadhana, Susan, Urmila and Rita facilitated the 3-day long workshop to ground it in the changing context and to ensure that the HTG volunteer work is most valuable and meaningful. Some of the conclusions of this meeting among others were as follows:



- Respond to additional and changing needs e.g. knitting blankets for distribution, income-generation and for therapy
- See where needs are pertaining to the sustenance of women and the most vulnerable groups and invest/strengthen all that they can hope to do within the HTG volunteer's outreach
- Ongoing networking for possible linkages, follow-up and mentorship from the Tewa/NA team to provide support to the volunteers as well as learn in this fast changing scenario
- Minimize additional risks especially for children, by having mobile nutritious food kitchens for the ill, elderly, and children in areas of HTG work and by

educating/enabling mothers for alternative ways of preparing/use of food e.g. more raw vegetables and fruits.

### Case Study:

1. NA had conducted an open forum to raise awareness through songs by the women's groups to mark the 16 Days VAW Campaign in Lele VDC of Lalitpur district. Participants came from all the 9 Wards of the Lele VDC. There were 6 individual



singers and 9 group singers on the occasion. All of them picked up issues of VAW, importance of peace in the communities, the current hardships of the India blockade, and the inaptitude of political leadership/s in Nepal. Furthermore NA educated them on the campaign and NA also followed up on the earthquake-affected people in the communities. Govinda NA/PO received a request from the women's groups that they would like to organized a much bigger awareness raising song completion with about 15/1600 participants and they would like Nagarik Aawaz to collaborate on this initiative and event. Govinda reported that this would be an excellent opportunity for NA.

### Others:

Two programmes in relation to the post earthquake recovery work had to be postponed: the Bhaktapur heritage support initiative and the Tewa/NA PEQ reflection retreat. But both will happen in the coming week – the commute was impossible this time. Everything now is just so difficult!

### Conclusions:

While Nepalis are excelling at coping, being patient, and making ends meet with very little – all with fortitude and smiles one can see that all this is wearing thin. People are truly suffering and it is multiple and inter-related. This is worse as we do not see an opening of how all this will be resolved, much less made-up. The PEQ government work is at a stand still, worse – there are blatant cases of corruptions coming out in the news. How can Tewa/NA continue to do the PEQ work with dedication and meaningfully?

**Tewa/NA Teams send you best greetings for a happy X-Mas celebrations!**