

**Post EQ Update - Our Situation/Work on the Ground - 15**  
**31 August, 2015 (bi-monthly)**

**General:**

A crippling two-day strike in the capital inaugurated the fortnight. Trouble & unrest over federal demarcation ruled half the country, affecting all Nepalis. Clashes, shootings, curfews while citizens suffered at large as though we did not have enough troubles! On the 24<sup>th</sup> in Tikapur, Kailali district, in these protests 8 security personnel



and one 2-year-old male child of security personnel were killed owing to a proposed peaceful rally turning violent with armed protesters for which the security forces were not prepared. Scores were injured on both sides. As agitations spread and gained momentum, several districts are on high security alert and some are still under

Curfew - making life difficult for the people.

The women's collective campaign has been keeping up their vigils alive for all these days, protesting against the violence post Tikapur carnage, and bringing out statements! There were 4 days of closure owing to strikes during these 2 weeks in Kathmandu. But throughout Nepal there is political trouble brewing and many districts have been closed for weeks now. Amidst all these, the political leadership is struggling to proclaim the new constitution not very successfully.



On the other hand post earthquake, rice/corn, millet has been well planted (this is a tremendous work and a major relief), but landslides and floods have also been occurring and many people are made further vulnerable owing to these. The festival period has arrived and people are going to go about life in the best way they can.

**Tewa/NA:**

There is a recognition that we are in a coping mode. There is a pressure to pick up the threads of the ongoing work in both organizations, and the demanding focus on the very important new initiatives that have been taken e.g.:

- hamro tewa goan-gharma (led by Tewa)
- building lives – inspiring hopes (led by NA)
- the peace centers in the districts where NA is working with BL-IH, and
- the Bhaktapur World Heritage initiatives.

The good part in all these new initiatives is that despite breaking new grounds in some



of these programmes, and time/human resource pressures, all the initiatives are going on satisfactorily. Considering the organic nature of our work in existing uncertainties, this is certainly little short of being miraculous: e.g. in Bhaktapur, the weekly tour (L - Queen's shake bath), the food for the workers clearing rubble, and the research work has begun to move simultaneously.

### Case Study:

1. Despite the closures, all the 22 HTG volunteers gathered at the Tewa Center for a daylong workshop before going home for 10 days in the midst of strike days. It was no short of a miracle – coming in together from the 6 affected



districts, as well as the logistics and organizing for the house-keeping and the program staff! It is now affirmed without a doubt that the HTG is a very valued and a necessary initiative for/by both by the volunteers and the communities.

Some issues emerged such as in-team friction in one district – but it all ended up being a part of the wider learning. It is inevitable that this happens as we level hierarchies of age, class, and existing diversities and differences. But the key

outcomes affirmed that this programme provides the most needed support to the most affected women and their families, and as the survivors themselves reiterated, cash and material relief support came one time and was useful when it came, but the comfort of having a "friend" to count and depend on has been invaluable. For the HTG "volunteers" they are already seeing that service above self is all fulfilling and self-satisfying. They left their comfort zones, and ventured out to very unsafe and difficult territories, but now no one can deter them from going back until they feel that the communities are in a stronger place and can face the longer term challenges that will continue indefinitely. Our entire organizations are learning from these and it is hoped that the value of this programme is in:

- providing most needed support to the disaster affected women
- hands on experience and understanding of recovery work to the HTG volunteers and both the organizations, and
- the possibility of building rapid response carders throughout Nepal by working through the grantee organizations through the HTG volunteers as resource persons or the 6 programme districts as learning grounds.

### **Others:**

Nagarik Aawaz is still working from a cramped space in a makeshift office. Hopefully in the next 10 days, they can move back. Tewa is working hard to cope with the loss of 2 staff members who left abruptly to join INGO/s. Besides, the earthquake aftershocks (up to 5 Richter scales), the landslides, and the floods particularly in the affected districts are not easy in bringing lives back to some normalcy.

Another highlight was that regarding the BL-IH programme a donor is eager to gift a good piece of land for the peace center in Ramechhap district! It is mind-blowing!



### **Conclusions:**

This update is just a tiny window into a very very busy and a challenging time and work/s. The contradictions are too many: inspiring vs challenging; motivating vs frustrating; and just very very complex.