

# Psychosocial Support Revives Earthquake-affected People

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NEPAL FORUM

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## Message from the Convener

Emergencies of large scale eventuate injury, cause the loss of lives and property and traumatize people. It often takes a long time for the people hit hard by disasters to recover from trauma. During the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, 8,891 people were killed and 22,302 injured, 608,155 residential buildings were flattened and 298,998 houses were partially damaged. The impacts were so devastating that thousands of people were rendered homeless and traumatized.



Hence, the tragedy had a deep impact on the psyche of the affected people. In addition to the immediate life-saving support, the survivors were in a great need of healing psychological wounds and rebuild social structures. A large number of philanthropic individuals and organizations provided immediate relief to the survivors in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake. But only a few humanitarian organizations felt the need for psychosocial support (PSS) and provided it.

In the context of Nepal, the concept PSS is relatively new not only to the government agencies, but also to some humanitarian and development organizations. Considering the magnitude of the impact and need for recovery, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Nepal, DanChurchAid (DCA), Finn Church Aid (FCA) and Felm Nepal provided the PSS in their respective working areas in the wake of the quake. The ACT Alliance Nepal Forum members strongly collaborated with the Church of Sweden to integrate the PSS into the needs assessment and to mainstream community-based PSS (CBPSS) in relief and recovery efforts.

The organizations covered 12 out of 14 highly affected districts by the earthquake. LWF Nepal provided the PSS in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, and Rasuwa; DCA in Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Dhading and Gorkha; FCA in Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Sindhuli, and Makawanpur; and Felm Nepal in Gorkha, Dhading, Chitawan, and Ramechhap districts.

We are happy to inform you that a large number of people have benefitted from our CBPSS interventions in the working districts. We have provided the PSS to children, students and teachers, staff of the ACT Alliance Nepal Forum members, and government officials. For the people we supported, the CBPSS has brought about positive changes in their mental health and psychosocial well-being. The 15 stories of this anthology depict the reality of the survivors of the earthquake.

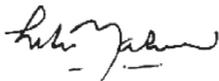
Our intervention in this sector has not only supported the beneficiaries to come out of trauma, stress and fear, and improve social cohesion, but has also initiated a discourse among the humanitarian and development practitioners, government officials and of course the community people on the inevitability of the CBPSS in the event of any large-scale disaster.

The changes that have taken place in the communities after we provided the CBPSS ranges from a child returning to normalcy to settling disputes that used to either smolder for years or result in community feud in most cases. Learning from the experience, we provided the CBPSS following the August 2017 Nepal Flood in our respective working areas as well. It is vital that the PSS is coordinated with and integrated into other relief and recovery efforts.

This publication, perhaps the first of its kind, epitomizes the innovation we introduced following the earthquake, and embodies our collective work as the members of ACT Alliance Nepal Forum. I strongly believe that the CBPSS we provided has not only improved the condition of people we reached, but also fostered harmony among the community people and created a 'we feeling' among the members of the Alliance.

I would like to thank all the beneficiaries of the PSS program in general and the interviewees in particular, the communities, the staff of ACT Alliance Nepal Forum members and their implementing partners, and the officials of government agencies of the working districts. Thanks also go to Mr Raghu Nath Lamichhane for writing the stories, and Mr Ram Sharan Sedhai of LWF Nepal for editing the stories and coordinating the publication.

We do believe that the cases presented in this anthology would be an eye opener for humanitarian and development actors, social workers, policy makers and implementers, the supporting partners, the researchers, students and the common readers.



Dr Prabin Manandhar  
Convener  
ACT Alliance Nepal Forum

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## “My triumph over anxiety”

**Manisha Manandhar**

**Grade VII, Shree Padam Secondary School, Bhaktapur**

Manisha Manandhar, who hails from Ramechhap district, has been living in Jhaukhel of Bhaktapur district with her family. Her father was a driver and Manisha and her brother used to play inside the bus whenever they were free. Actually, this was the part of their daily routine. On 25 April 2015 when the devastating earthquake ravaged the country, she was playing inside the bus. The bus started to shake terribly and she thought her father was playing a prank on them to make them happy.



“But this was my illusion. Soon after, I saw many of the houses in front of my eyes shaking and collapsing,” Manisha recalled the moment. “People were shouting for help and were running helter-skelter. Then we got off the bus and went to the open ground where many other people had already gathered for safety. We were so scared. My father took an injured person into the bus and drove towards the hospital. Everywhere people were shouting and they looked terribly scared. So was I. My mother, brother and sister stayed outside the house for many days. Because he was a driver, my father devoted much of his time to rescuing the injured people and taking them to the hospital,” she narrated her story.

The earthquake disrupted their daily routine. There was no timing for eating, playing and sleeping. The aftershocks that continued for many days added to their fear even more. There was no way they could go to the school in such a situation. When she came to know that her school had also collapsed, it greatly worried her. If she saw someone running or heard them shouting, she would think that could be due to an earthquake. It would add to her fear. Manisha spent an entire month in such a state of panic.

When other students started to go to school, she also joined them although her school building was still in ruins and all her friends were as panicked as she was. Her teachers were as much afraid, which added to her fear even more. But then

she slowly started to mingle with friends and started to cope up with the situation.

The Center for Mental Health and Counseling (CMC)-Nepal provided psychosocial counseling to students. The students who got selected for this session would participate in the counselling. Since Manisha was the captain of her class, she got selected for the program. “I was interested and when teachers selected me for the program, I happily participated in it,” says Manisha.

When she participated in this three-day session, she came out as a changed person. Her activities also changed. Manisha began to make people feel good by showing them funny sketches and cartoons and making them laugh. This was a difficult thing to do for the people who had seen the devastation. Of all the activities, she found sketching her teachers by placing an exercise book on her head.

The psychosocial support (PSS) worked wonders on students who had not been able to resume classes because of shock and trauma. It pulled them to school. Activities like displaying dolls, counting beans and declaring the last count as the winner, performing funny dances and involving all students entertained them.

“All this drove away fear from my mind. I would wait for the opportunity to play and have fun. I started missing the school and play with friends. Earlier I was reluctant to go to school,” Manisha said.

She says that the PSS made her feel light and fearless. Then she started to pay full attention to studies, like her friends did. Manisha began to teach fun games she learnt during the counselling to her friends. She would gather her friends and teach them these games whenever they had leisure. This helped her friends to have some fun and to forget the terror.

Manisha shared with her parents and siblings the knowledge she gained from counseling. Now she teaches those fun games to students of kindergarten in her school back home. “Whenever I went to Ramechhap, I would gather the children and teach them those games,” says Manisha. “When I visited my relatives at Panchkhal, I gathered the students of my age there and taught them those games. Everyone had fun. This makes me feel that I did the right thing.”

When Manisha engages other children in games and drives away their fear, everyone asks her: ‘Where did you learn all this from?’ It encourages her to share her learning with others even more.

## PSS helps change the pedagogy

**Sundar Khadka**

**Social Studies Teacher, Shree Padam Secondary School, Bhaktapur**

The schools that remained closed for a long time after the devastating earthquake had slowly begun to resume their classes. But neither the students nor the teachers were eager to get into the classroom. The teachers who were expected to reassure the students that nothing bad would happen were themselves panicky. Sundar Khadka was no exception.



“I would tell the students to get inside the classroom, but I was afraid,” said Sundar Khadka who is the teacher of social studies. “But when I participated in a psycho-social counseling organized by CMC-Nepal, things began to change.” It dispelled my fears, he added.

As a teacher, Sundar had to remain calm and assure his students that everything was fine. He had the responsibility to get his students back into normal situation. So he had no liberty to remain panicked himself. This is the reason he showed active participation in CMC-Nepal’s counseling session. He tried to drive away his fear with entertainment and fun. He engaged himself in making fun as much as possible, stopped thinking negative, and remain calm. This was also the main focus of CMC-Nepal’s program.

This brought a sea change in Sundar’s daily life. This also changed the way he taught in the classroom. After receiving psycho-social counseling, Sundar, said: “There was something amiss about my pedagogy.” Then I changed the teaching method, he added. Thus he conducts recreational activities in the class at least once a week and takes his students out to excursion or field trips at least once a month.

“The focus in the past used to be on teaching contents from the course book. Now on external knowledge and recreational activities,” he said. “More than what I have to teach, I try to find out what the students are eager to know. This has made teaching an easy job and students are also happy to learn this way.”

Sundar has learned that aspirations of the students should not be undermined.

Instead teachers and students should work together. Best of all learning is this realization that the teacher should sit together with the students. “Once I understood this, I changed the way I teach. As I can see, the students also enjoy this new method of teaching and learning.”

When Sundar perceives that students are under stress, he instantly finds ways to engage them in something interesting. For this, he sometimes asks his students to make books out of notebooks or to make post cards, greeting cards or envelopes. He sometimes asks the students to mimicry teachers. He says that such activities have greatly helped the students to overcome stress and to orient them to creative learning.

CMC-Nepal had counselled the students and teachers. A few days later, more and more students started to attend school. Those who participated in psychosocial counsel shared their learning with neighbors and friends. They spread the message that learning environment in the school has changed for better. “The students who were afraid go to school had started to go to school thanks to the counseling,” Sundar said.

Teachers like Sundar and other students who benefited from PSS have shared their learning with around 2,000 students. Apart from this, they also shared their learning with community people, neighbors and friends. He shared it with people in the shops and other gatherings. “Sharing increases knowledge. It benefits all. So why not share the knowledge?” Sundar said.

### The best that happened

The earthquake flattened one of the two school buildings we had. The walls of the laboratory cracked. When building was damaged, it was natural for the students and teachers to be afraid. Many were shocked and were unable to express anything. In this context, CMC conducted a five-day psycho-social counseling for the head teachers. I was one of the participants. I counselled 15 teachers of our school with the help of CMC’s trainer. Then we taught the students to keep calm, to drive away negative thoughts, and to remain fearless. We taught the students new fun games. We created environment for music in the school. To ensure greater participation of students in these activities, we also managed for prizes to the students. This helped the students and teachers to come out of fear, ultimately enhancing teaching-learning.



### Ram Hada

Principal, Shree Padam Secondary School, Bhaktapur

# Counselling drives away Sunita's fear

**Sunita Tamang**

**Grade 9, Bidhyarathi Niketan Secondary School, Bhaktapur**

When the earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April 2015, Sunita was playing football with her friends on her school ground. When the ground beneath her started to shake, she thought it was because of the movement of a lorry passing nearby. Immediately, she saw her own school canteen and other houses around her flattened. Then she realized that it was the earthquake. She saw the water tanks on the roofs shaking like the reeds in the wind, smoke and dust billowing from houses, people shouting and running for safety, birds flying and chirping in panic. These frightened her. When she saw that the ground of Bal Vidya Mandir had developed a crevice and water flowed from there, it chilled her to the bones.



The family of Sunita Tamang, originally come from Chuatarra, the district headquarters of Sindhupalchok. After this incident, they started to live in the makeshift tents. For a month, Sunita could not go to school. “Since aftershocks continued unabated, I was scared all the time. I was not interested to play, eat or read. The fear consumed me,” Sunita said.

When she resumed classes, her teachers informed her about the psychosocial counseling CMC-Nepal was providing to the students and asked her to participate in it. Sarjani Joshi, the head teacher of the school, also encouraged her to participate in the program because Sunita was one of active students in her class.

“I was not sure what I would learn and whether it would be useful. But later, I knew I was learning something really useful,” Sunita explained. “I learned the ways to play games, concentrate, make pictures and drawings and singing. These were taught in such an interesting way that it drove away all the fear that earthquake had created in me.”

Sunita was associated with the Red Cross. So she had the knowledge of first aid. What she learned from psycho-social counseling proved to be really productive.

When she began to make dolls, learn dance, and concentrate on positive aspects of life, it made her feel good. “I learned from this psycho-social counseling that creative and recreational activities help to drive away fear,” says Sunita.

The counseling changed Sunita. She started thinking positively, taking recreation and studies together, having fun and getting other friends do the same. She learned a lot of skills. Then she started to gather her classmates and other students of the school on the ground to counsel. She shared with her friends the knowledge she acquired from counseling. Her teachers often select her to lead such counseling.

Anita Tamang, who participated in counseling with Sunita says, “After the earthquake I could not think of anything but the disturbing events of the time, the dead bodies, falling buildings, screaming people and so on. So I could not concentrate on study, forget about going to school. When I received counseling, I began to be happy. This gradually drove away fear from my mind.”

### Very effective

Students lost temper within no time, some were scared for no good reason. We were worried about it. But when I participated in the CMC training, I gained the knowledge to solve such problems. Now I get the students to do rainbow dance, meditate, and play different games. These have been very effective to solve many problems.

I have also been employing the pedagogy that helps them to drive away fears of disasters and to make them understand that such disasters are but natural. The training enhanced my knowledge to explain my students that the nature also has its own course and this is why an earthquake takes place. I relate this issue with teaching to enable them to have better understanding of the subject. For this, I have composed a song for the students of grades one and two. I have the children sing these songs. This helps them experience peace of mind. They also become prepared to bear the risks psychologically.



### **The song goes as follows:**

The wind is blowing  
The leaves are falling off  
The wind blows strongly and the branches begin to shake  
Then it turns into a storm and breaks the trees  
The floods come and it ravages the whole mass.

### **Resika Gwayamaru**

Teacher of Computer, Science and Health Education  
Bidhyarthi Niketan Secondary School, Bhaktapur

## Psychosocial support attracts youth

**Madhab Neupane**

**Advisor, Lekali Sunaulo Youth Club**

**Lekdanda, Ghusel, Bagmati Rural Municipality-1, Lalitpur**

Most of the villagers were engaged in agriculture and majority in vegetable farming. Some in service sector. Youths, however, would gather at the local clubs after completing their daily works. Some played volleyball, others frolicked with football. Others would play the local sports. Thus the villagers at the end of the day would alleviate their day-long stress by playing games and through other recreational activities. They were happy.



Their happiness was destroyed by the April 2015 earthquake. Madhab Neupane, advisor to Lekali Sunaulo Youth Club says, “The earthquakes not only destroyed our houses, but also broke our hearts. We had no place to take shelter in. We were just worried about finding safer places to live in. Youths were also worried. Everyone was disturbed.”

This led to some of the youths to depression. They saw their future uncertain and dark and some of them even migrated to other places. Others left the village to find the source of livelihood. This had a serious impact on those who lived in the village. They lost enthusiasm to continue with their work. They did not know what to do next. They were stressed and developed anxiety.

Yes, there were some sports materials. But the Okharbhanjyang Primary School had collapsed. And all the sports materials had been damaged. They had nothing to fall back on for consolation. “This was the biggest cause of worry for us,” said Neupane.

Meanwhile, the members of the youth club came in contact with the officials of Solve Nepal, an implementing partner organization of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Nepal. Solve Nepal had been providing aids and assistance to the earthquake-affected people. They shared their problems with those officials.

Solve Nepal realized that the problems those youths were facing were serious and provided volley balls, footballs and musical instruments.

“To lessen our stress, we even organized cultural shows with the help of Solve Nepal,” says Madhav. “We used the musical instruments the organization had provided. It engaged us for a few days in the preparation, program conduction and collecting feedback. This reduced our stress to some extent. Everyone in the village forgot their angst at that moment.”

The members of the club organized volley ball and football matches with the help of Solve Nepal, which has also been helping the villagers to rebuild the houses destroyed by the earthquake. Many of the youths were engaged in constructing houses. They are also involved in cultural programs and sports. All youths are excited. “Solve Nepal has brought the youths back to normalcy here,” said Madhav.

People participate in those events enthusiastically. Apart from 65 members of the club, a large number of people have been attracted to the recreational activities. This is because, said Madhav, nobody wants to miss the opportunities for recreation in a village which had virtually no source of entertainment. Second, the people have perfectly utilized those programs because they needed something to make them forget their pains and sufferings. Third, everyone wants to participate in the programs because the winners - first, second and third - are provided with prizes and certificates. Therefore, everyone is excited. Solve Nepal has supported them significantly, said Madhav.

The youth club organizes sports competition between settlements, clubs, schools and villages every Saturday. Cultural programs are often held during festivals like Dashain and Tihar. When they find time, people learn to play the musical instruments provided by Solve Nepal. This has greatly contributed to lessening the stress of the earthquake-affected people and added enthusiasm to their life.

Since most people have completed building their houses, now they are thinking to revive the club to its past glory. The club does not have its own building. Hence, they have to store the sports materials at individual houses. “Our target is to construct the club building, honor the elderly, conduct training in sports and music, and to give continuity to the existing programs. We are working to reduce stress of people,” explained Madhav.

# The revival of happiness

**Kasi Ram Lo Tamang**

**President, Mane Sudhar Committee**

**Sisautar, Ghusel, Bagmati Rural Municipality-1, Lalitpur**

There are around 250 Tamang households in the Kasiram village. This indigenous community believes in preserving their traditional practices. They love their culture and tradition. They perform various dances and singing competitions on different occasions such as *Hari Bodhani Ekadasi*, *Kartik Purnima* and so on. This is how they have kept their culture alive. The Tamang community considers their culture as a big social capital.



“But the 2015 earthquake shook our culture too,” said Kashi Ram Lo Tamang, who is also the president of Mane Sudhar Committee. “We play special kinds of music and we were special costumes on such occasions. But all these things were ruined by the earthquakes. Some were destroyed and others were lost and never recovered.”

For two years after the earthquake, Kashi Ram went on, we could not celebrate festivals with as much excitement as everything was lost. There was no fun and no entertainment. We did not have the musical instruments which we used in the past. We did not have the costumes as well. So our festivals were not like festivals at all.

The Tamang community suffered double jeopardy. They lost their houses and they were unable to celebrate their festivals and cultural programs. The entire community was deeply worried. They were worried that the god might have been angry with them. “But we could do nothing except worrying,” said Kashi Ram.

With the passage of time things changed. “Solve Nepal, an implementing partner of LWF Nepal, had been working in our village right after the earthquake, providing relief and materials to reconstruct the houses. Then we approached Solve Nepal and informed it about our problems. They listened to us seriously,” Kashi Ram told the story.

“Solve Nepal provided us musical instruments we needed to celebrate festivals and fairs. They included cymbals, madal and drums. It also provided us potteries needed for prayers. They provided costumes to us. Then our festivals got colors,” Kashi Ram said.

By providing such things, Solve Nepal helped the community to preserve their culture. It has also helped them to reduce their stress and anxiety to a great extent.

Thanks to the support, for the last one year, the Tamang community has been celebrating their festivals with greater enthusiasm. So everyone participates in such programs. Locals participate in these programs with a keen interest. All this has led to the preservation of their culture. Even the younger generation has been attracted to preserving their culture.

All the tools and costumes have been stored in the house of Surya Bahadur Tamang, the secretary of the committee. This committee was formed in consultation with Solve Nepal. Says Krishna Ram Lo Tamang, another member of the committee, “Solve Nepal not only provided us costumes and tools but also advised us not to worry. It also enhanced our self-confidence. All this has made us feel that there is something to fall back on during the times of need.”

## Preserving culture

Solve Nepal started supporting the locals of Ghusel right after the earthquake. It has already built 120 houses. It has also helped to alleviate the stress of the people through its psycho-social support. Solve Nepal has provided sports and entertainment materials to lessen the anxiety and stress of the youths. Necessary tools and musical instruments have been provided to the Tamang community to help them preserve their culture and tradition. It gathers the people of the community for the PSS. The support has helped reducing the tension, stress and anxiety of the people caused by the earthquake.

### **Ramji Gautam**

#### **Elected Member, Bagmati Rural Municipality-1**

# The wonder of community mediation

**Dil Bahadur Gurung and Hari Bahadur Magar**

**Gorang, Benighat Rorang Rural Municipality-10, Dhading**

Dil Bahadur and Hari Bahadur are neighbours. People in the village lived in harmony. This was true to the village of Gorang as well. Dil Bahadur and Hari Bahadur were involved in vegetable and poultry farming. They had also kept some goats. So they had been sustaining their family well. Both Dil and Hari were happy and satisfied.

Dil Bahadur had 10 goats. He would take them to the nearest forests for grazing. One day, one of the goats did not return. Dil Bahadur combed everywhere but in vain. He did not know whether the goat was alive or dead. Seven days passed. Dil Bahadur was worried.

On the eighth day, someone told Dil Bahadur that Hira Bahadur had killed his goat by hitting with stones as it destroyed Hira's potato. Dil Bahadur believed it instantly because Hira Bahadur had warned the villagers to control their animals. He had also warned of killing the animals that entered his field. Dil Bahadur believed in this story readily. But he could not decide what to do. He could not think straight, he was angry and sad both.

Then he thought of an idea. He would report the case to community mediators. And he did the same. Action Nepal, an implementing partner of DCA, had provided eight-day training to the villagers on community mediation right after the earthquake. Community mediators had been mobilized in the village and they had been working to resolve community disputes. This is the reason Dil Bahadur looked up to community mediators for help.

Surya Narayan Gurung, the community mediator of the village, came to Dil Bahadur's home and listened to his grievances carefully. Then he went to Hari Bahadur's house to listen to his side of the story. He arranged for a meeting Hari Bahadur's house to discuss the matters. Dil Bahadur and Hari Bahadur disputed over the case.

Then Surya Narayan intervened by saying that he was the community mediator. He told them about his role, responsibilities and code of conduct. He also provided them psychosocial counseling on community mediation. He then

called other people of the village and discussed the issue in the presence of both Hari Bahadur and Dil Bahadur. He also talked to each of them separately.

Dil Bahadur demanded that Hari Bahadur must provide two goats for the dead one. Hari Bahadur agreed to give one goat. Neither side budged. Then Surya Bahadur talked to each of them individually to settle the dispute. Dil Bahadur told Surya Narayan that he would be flexible if he was paid the compensation of at least Rs 10,000. Hari Bahadur insisted on paying Rs 9,000. Surya Narayan convinced both parties to settle for Rs 9,000.

The dispute was resolved with the intervention of a community mediator. Following this, both apologized with each other for being rude during the debate. They talked about how they had spent their childhood together, how they worked and lived together and why they had to be in good terms. Both committed not to wrangle in the future. Now Dil Bahadur and Hari Bahadur have completely buried their bitterness. Now they behave in such a way as if nothing had happened between them.

“I try to peek into their behavior to know if the two families have any issue now. I am pleased to find that they have none,” said Surya Narayan. They live together in harmony. Their relation has been galvanized.

Many other things have changed since this incident. People do not leave their pets (cows, goats, etc.) in a way that would destroy the crops of others. There is a kind of understanding among the villagers that if anybody did so and their animals destroyed the crops of others, the affected persons won't kill the animals rather inform their owners about the incident. In the event of damage or loss to the crops, the owners of those animals would have to pay the compensation. Now the villagers do not leave their domestic animals stray. And this has significantly reduced tension between the villagers.

## Rejuvenating life the mothers' way

**Radhika Acharya**

**Surigaun, Gaurishankar Rural Municipality-5, Dolakha**

Swastha Bumesthan Mother's Group meet on the seventh of every month where 29 members of the group discuss on disbursing loan and collecting monthly savings. Bhumesthan, a predominantly Sural (the minority tribal community) village, has members from other communities as well. These women meet once a month.



Things have changed now. Their meeting today is not limited to collecting savings or disbursing loan alone. In every meeting, there is a meditation session, recreation and sports activities. The members of the group come out in the open, stretch up, jump and frolic. They have fun. “Even those who are stressed feel refreshed by the time they return home,” said Radhika Acharya, the secretary of the Group.

What is the secret to such changes? “When the officials of HURADEC came to our Group and provided us psycho-social support, we found it very useful. We practiced what they had taught us to remain happy and refreshed,” said Acharya who is also the community health volunteer.

As a leader of this group, Radhika shared the learning she had gained from the training with others. And the other members of the group also followed the practice. “I share my pains and suffering with others and I encourage others to do the same. I participate in sports and other recreational activities and ask others to do the same,” said Radhika.

The earthquake did not spare a single house in this village. Many lost their loved ones. The Sural women were really heartbroken and they were worried about their future. “We somehow survived. We had lost all hope,” said Yam Kumari Sural. “When I heard the sufferings of others in mother's group, I realized many others had the fate similar to mine. When I saw others speak fearlessly, it added confidence to me. I am not scared of anything. I have grown confident enough to earn my living,” she said.

Women like Radhika and Yam Kumari organized cultural programs in the village on the school ground of Bishnuswari Primary School. The program was organized with the support from HURADEC. Many others from the village enjoyed the program. Best performers were awarded. Yam Kumari says the program made the villagers forget their pain and created an environment to live a stress-free life.

One would come across many people like Yam Kumari who were emotionally disturbed by the earthquake. Since they got psycho-social counseling, their life has changed. They have become bold and optimistic. Dilli Bhujel, Sabita Bhujel and Dambar Kumari Bhujel, whose houses were flattened and whose land ruptured by the earthquake, have also been able to drive away all the stress.

You will see many women who have been able to come out from stress and trauma caused by the temblor. Junki Surel, though old, would participate in the meetings of a mothers' group. She was sad that her house was destroyed and she would not be able to rebuild one. Members like Radhika and Yam Kumari would console her by saying that things would improve, the government and other organizations would come to their aid and the house will be rebuilt. Other members of the Group would also console her by saying the same thing. Her house was built. Junki became happy. She lives a stress-free life now.

Radhika has realized the power of psycho-social support. "When the earthquake struck we were organizing a clinic in the village. It was the lunchtime and we were having lunch on the attic of the house. When we felt the tremor, we ran outside. Houses flattened in front of our eyes. This was really scary. But when I participated in this program, it dispelled all my fears. And I have been able to instill hope and confidence in others as well," Radhika narrated her experience.

### **The village has changed drastically**

I was working for District Development Committee. Four days after the earthquake, we reached out to the villagers through a helicopter and distributed Rs 2,000 each to the affected person as an immediate relief. People looked really scared. They were unable to come to receive relief package as well. They were in state of panic. But now they have changed. Now they ask "Are there any program for us?" They are free from stress and trauma. They suggest others not to be panicked and they tell others how stress harms them. I am pleasantly surprised with this development.

**Madhusudan Acharya**

**Ward Secretary, Gaurisankar Rural Municipality-5 Dolakha**

# A PwD becomes the light house

**Leela Bahadur Khadka**

**Ghamtara, Gaurisankar Rural Municipality-5 Dolakha**

Leela Bahadur Khadka was a young muscular man. He could do his farming himself. He had no problems. But then affliction had its way. He became paralyzed. He could not move his left leg. He needed crotches to move on. Then his right leg also got paralyzed. Leela did not know what to do.



His worries multiplied when the earthquake destroyed his house. Since he was a teacher in Dibyaswari Primary School, he had some money to go by for some days. But this was no consolation. “Many others had lost their houses. I had some money but this was of no help

because I had almost become crippled. I was worried that I would not be able to rebuild the house,” Leela said.

And then Leela knew that HURADEC, an implementing partner of LWF Nepal, was providing psycho-social support for earthquake-affected people in his village. HURADEC had provided relief in this village. Leela did not know what actually the program was about. But he decided to take part in it. “This program was really important. It taught us to manage stress and to remain calm and confident. It showed us the way to solve problems,” Leela recalled.

Leela’s training session concluded on December 5, 2016. He started to rebuild his house from the very next day. He had learned that one should not be worried about the situation all the time rather find ways to move forward in life. “I wanted to give the message to others that when the disabled person can do it why can’t the able. This is why I started building the house first,” he said.

Thanks to this change and activism, people have nominated him as the coordinator of Reconstruction Coordination Committee of the village, which was formed with the help of HURADEC. With this, his responsibilities have multiplied. To encourage his villagers to rebuild their houses, he had to set an example. This is why he started first. When a disabled person was successful, other villagers became pretty confident that they would be able to build their houses. Now the villagers are busy with rebuilding their houses.

It was not an easy job for Leela to take things normally. He thought that only the normal people would be able to rebuild their houses. He did not know if any organization would even help. But now he has not only built his house as per the standards set by the government but also inspired others to do the same. He even inspects whether others have followed the building code. “I was worried that I won’t be able to build the house. Now I oversee whether others have followed the building code,” he said.

Now his concern is whether everyone in the village is building their house. If anyone has a problem, he tries to find the way to solve the problem. “I have arranged credit facilities for those who cannot pay for construction materials immediately and helped them solve many other problems. I have even helped to resolve family disputes,” Leela said.

The credit for this change in Leela goes to HURADEC and LWF Nepal that provided psycho-social support. Leela learned that a person comes across a number of problems in life but instead of running away from those problems one should be patient and courageous to fight with those problems. He says that psychosocial support was extremely important to bring people out of trauma.

To those who complain that they are not able enough to rebuild the houses or that they have some problems or they are ill, Leela convinces them by giving his own example. He tells them how he could make others rebuild their houses. He encourages them and enhances their confidence. “There are many who feel really energized after hearing my story. I praise them,” said Leela.

### **Really exemplary**

Despite having disability, Leela Bahadur is so active that we mention his audacity to make the villagers work on rebuilding. The views that he expresses in the program really encourage other participants. This is why he is the chosen person of the organization.

**Dhruba Acharya**  
**Program Coordinator, HURADEC**

## Pigsty shift: A paradigm shift

**Kumal Bahadur BK**

**Dhungin, Lamatar, Mahalaxmi Municipality-9 Lalitpur**

Iron works was the generational occupation of Kumal Bahadur's family. Since he had not enough land for farming, he raised pigs to add to family income. Though Kumal has two sons and a daughter, they do not live with their parents now. Iron work and piggery are the only source of income for Kumal couple to raise and educate their children.



Kumal Bahadur, 64, has taken a bold decision. He is planning to shift to the field a bit farther from where he is currently living. "This is because we cannot raise pigs here. But I don't want to quit the occupation which has been supporting the family for years," said Kumal. "Unlike the past, people in the neighborhood complained of foul smell coming from pigsty. I don't want to pick fight with them. So, I want to shift the pigsty itself," he said.

People have not complained against it officially though. Nobody has told him that he cannot raise pigs. This is because Kumal has been in this job for years and he is the native of the village. So, people hesitate to force him to shift the pigsty. But the foul stench had really troubled his neighbors. They did not know what to do. They did not want to tell Kumal Bahadur in his face about the trouble. They could not tolerate the stench either.

"Then we thought of a win-win proposal," said Raj Kumar Pariyar, one of the neighbors of Kumal Bahadur. "We informed the community mediator, Paritosh Paudel, about the problems we faced and why we were not able to do anything about it despite the stench wafting from the pigsty. We asked him to find the solution for us," he added.

Paritosh had received training in community mediation. He knew that community disputes should be resolved with great care. So Paritosh thought for a long before going to inspect the pig farm of Kumal Bahadur. Paritosh pretended that he had come on his own and that nobody had complained of the

foul smell. He spoke to Kumal about the health hazards. He said that it would create health problems for Kumal and his family apart from neighbors. Kumal listened to him.

At the beginning, Kumal did not care about Paritosh's advice. Then Paritosh came up with another idea. The Red Cross was organizing a program on drinking water and hygiene. Paritosh requested the Red Cross officials to speak on the possible harms caused by unmanaged pig raising. Kumal was also present in the program. The Red Cross presenter did as requested. This created additional pressure on Kumal to relocate his pigsty.

"When I listened to everyone, I felt that this had to be done. Then I used phenol water to kill the foul smell. I covered the pigsty to prevent the stench from wafting. I cleaned the pigsty. But nothing worked. Whenever they saw me, the villagers would make face, and would resent my work. This worried me. I began to think perhaps I was doing the wrong thing," he said.

Now he has decided to move his pigsty to a little farther from the settlement. "What would I do? I cannot give up because this is the source of livelihood. To continue would be annoying to my neighbors," he said. "One needs to learn to move ahead with times," he said.

Kumal has sold off three of the pigs that he had. He wants to sell the remaining ones as well. Then he is going to raise pigs at another location where he is building a new house and another pigsty. "There will be no houses around mine. There will be nobody to complain against me as well. I will be able to do my business and it won't harm others," said Kumal.

## End to stench

I lived with stench for years. We could not tell him directly, lest he get angry. If we did not tell him, we would be suffering. Thanks to the community mediator who solved this problem for good. We also informed him on time. It's a win-win situation. He does not have to stop his pig raising business and we don't have to live with the stench either. We sought the help of mediator because he had resolved such other disputes in the village. We did the right thing.

**Raj Kumar Pariyar**  
**Neighbor of Kumal Bahadur Pariyar**

## 'Stress on managing the stress'

**Saraswati Shrestha**

**Grade 10, Rameshwar Secondary School**

**Dhade, Jugal Rural Municipality-5, Sindhupalchok**

Saraswati used to be very much stressed out while doing homework and suddenly she used to go blank. She would throw tantrums at her mother or sisters during the meal times. She would remain under stress the whole day, even while on the way to school. Her family members used to be much worried about the situation.



Saraswati has changed now. She does not lose her temper when she cannot do homework. She drinks a glass of water and plays with her friends for some time. She listens to others talking or watches them doing their work. "This gives me a piece of mind. The stress lessens, and then I resume homework. When I think in a cool manner and start working, ideas emerge and I find answers to questions," this is how Saraswati explains about her new-found ability to solve problems.

Kajal Shrestha, a 10<sup>th</sup> grader and a close friend of Saraswati, has also learned some of these skills. "When a friend gets angry, I try to find her problem first. I behave with him/her accordingly. People become stressed if they cannot share their feelings with others. Others become stressed when they fail to understand the people. This is why we need to listen to and understand the problem of everyone who suffers from stress and anxiety," Kajal opined.

Unlike Saraswati and Kajal, other students of this school are not stressed out when they are unable to do their homework. The two girls suggest their friends not to lose temper. "This is because we have made every friend understand that stress is a disease and everyone should stay away from it," said Saraswati.

But how did the young students learn this? Who imparted this rare knowledge? "Gramin Mahila Srijanshil Pariwar (GMSP), an implementing partner organization of LWF Nepal, had come to our village to support the earthquake-affected people. It also provided psycho-social support. I participated in a two-

day training and learned these things,” explained Saraswati. “I learned to remain fresh, active and calm. I know that this drove away my stress,” she added.

Saraswati teaches on the PSS to her friends during the lunch break. When a teacher remains absent, she counsels her classmates. “My teachers understand the importance of the PSS. They have also got such training. So, they allow me to educate others,” she said.

GMSP and LWF Nepal not only provided them the skills and knowledge to kill stress, but also a harmonium and other musical instruments. They also organized cultural and entertainment programs which the entire school family enjoyed.

“Many students in our school are very poor at English. This is one of the causes of stress. The organization has also provided us with an English dictionary along with books that help reducing stress. It also provided us a speaker to conduct programs. These have helped the students to reduce their stress,” Kajal said.

When Saraswati notices any student in her school grow angry, throw tantrum or lack concentration on studies, she identifies their problems, and counsels them individually. When she cannot help, she requests her trained teachers to help her solve such problems. “We have been able to solve many problems,” said Saraswati.

The students conduct debates and elocutionary contests on issues ranging from trafficking in women and girls, gender-based violence, domestic violence and issues related to adolescents. According to Kajal, the PSS has become effective to address many problems. Both Kajal and Saraswati said in unison: this has helped a lot in stress management.

### **I no longer lose temper**

I used to lose temper when somebody said something unpleasant about me - be it at school or at home. This is why they called me an irascible girl. But when the senior students of the school imparted psycho-social counseling, all anger vanished. I do not get angry these days.

**Susmita Shrestha**  
**Grade VIII, Rameshwar Secondary School**



# Bishnu Maya breaks free from depression

**Bishnu Maya Paudel**

**Chanaute, Jugal Rural Municipality-5 Sindhupalchok**

When earthquake destroyed her house, Bishnu Maya had almost fainted. Even when the buses plied the village roads, causing vibration she used to think of an earthquake. She used to be disoriented while going to a place. At times, she used to forget to respond to the call of nature. She used to wet her undergarments. She used to have a terrible headache. “I thought I was getting mad,” she said.



For many days, she could not gather courage to enter her own house. She thought she could be perished inside the house if she entered. It was not that only Bishnu Maya had been terrified but many others too. But the way she was reacting had surprised many in the village, including her husband and children. “This was the result of the great loss. As I have lost the house, how would I be able to stay calm?” Bishnu Maya said.

Her husband and children were really worried about her. They were afraid that she would trip against something on the way and sustain injury. They also feared that Bishnu Maya would leave the village and go elsewhere out of frustration. Instead of working to bring things back to normal, they had to look after Bishnu Maya all the time.

There was another factor that led Bishnu Maya to this situation. Her son (from her husband’s first wife), had made a beautiful house from the money he remitted from abroad. That house also collapsed. They had become homeless at their old age. And they had no other source of income. This was the reason for her to become mentally disturbed. “These factors multiplied her anxieties,” said her husband.

Then Gramin Mahila Srijanshil Pariwar (GMSP) an implementing partner of LWF Nepal, which had been working for the earthquake-hit people, provided psycho-social support including counseling, everyone advised Bishnu Maya to take part in it. When she participated in the training, she realized that great

many people were suffering like her, some were in worse situation than hers. At least she had not lost anyone in her family. She came across people who had lost their wives or husbands or even children. There were those who had become homeless. When they narrated their stories, Bishnu Maya thought she had not lost anything compared to the others.

“They taught us to sit like this, squatting and concentrating. We meditated and when we did that it reduced the stress. They had us play the games. They made us laugh. This also reduced stress. Then we started to share the experience of sufferings with others. I shared my problems with others, I felt fresh. Sharing lessens the pain of sufferings. When I repeated those activities on a daily basis, I had a great relief,” related Bishnu Maya.

Then whenever the thought of the troubles came to her mind, she began to think of those who had faced far more serious problems than her. She would think ‘even these people are coping with the situation. How can I afford to become so miserable?’ Later, she provided psychosocial counseling to others who were in problems.

Meanwhile, she received Rs 50,000 in the first installment of housing grants and started building her house. She has already got the second tranche and will soon get the third one. Pointing towards her house, which is almost complete, Bishnu Maya said, “It was the house which had taken away all my happiness. Now the house is back. I should be happy.”

Of her three sons, the youngest one is with her now. The family was worried about Bishnu Maya. She had almost lost sanity. Now things are getting back to normal gradually. Old wounds are being healed. Houses have been rebuilt. And her husband is happy. “Thanks to LWF Nepal and GMSP for providing me psych-social support and the government for housing grants,” she said.

## An avoided divorce galvanizes relationship

**Tika Pariyar**

**Chaukitar, Benighat Rorang Rural Municipality-9 Dhading**

It was during mid-May 2017. Tika Ram Thapaliya, the principal of Rising Star Boarding School, telephoned Tika Pariyar. He told her how her three-year-old daughter had lost concentration on her study. The reason behind her lack of concentration and being worried was her parents' frequent quarrels over small matters. Tika Ram said that he had phoned her to inform of her daughter's situation in school and requested Ms Pariyar and her husband to create a learning environment at home. He also asked her to meet him along with her husband.



Tika was taken by surprise. She and her husband used to quarrel, but she had never thought it had disturbed her daughter's psychology and affected her studies. Knowing this she was much worried. She told her husband what the school principal had told her and asked him to go to the school along with her. Her husband refused. So she went alone to meet the principal the next day. She told him of the family matters and assured him that she would do her best to create a learning environment at home.

The root cause of the problem was this: Tika Nepali was the follower of the Nepali Congress party. Her husband, Kishor Nepali, was the cadre of the Maoist Center. This often led to dispute between them. Kishor used to work in Qatar. When he returned home on 22 April 2017, they talked about political issue, and it became contentious.

Local elections were taking place on May 14. Tika Nepali had filed her candidacy as a member of ward. Her husband did not like it and asked her to withdraw the candidacy. But Tika would not budge. She told him that she was associated with that party since her schooldays.

But Kishor was against it. He made a mole hill out of it. Things took a nasty turn and he even started to abuse her physically. He would come home drunk and

fight with her. Tika could not stay with him anymore. Kishor sought divorce. Tika had had enough of such threats. She called her mother and sister from Chitwan to discuss the matter.

When all these people gathered, Kishor requested local community mediator, Saroj Raj Adhikari, to prepare the divorce papers. Saroj talked to Kishor about the matter in details. He separately talked to Tika as well. When he found out the root cause of the problem, he talked to Kishor again separately. He told him that divorce could lead to a family breakdown and jeopardize the future of their daughter. He also told him that since the root cause of the dispute was not so big, it could be easily be resolved through mutual understanding.

Tika's, mother and sister said that though they were Gurung, an upper caste compared to Kishor, they had not objected to Tika marrying Kishor Nepali. But they said that the current situation had deeply worried them and suggested Kihor and Tika to end dispute and live in harmony. Saroj listened to the both parties. He separately talked to them and suggested them not to go to the extent of being separate. Then Kishor agreed not to divorce Tika. He agreed to live with her.

“This was the decision taken on May 20,” said Tika, “but for two days after this my husband did not even talk to me. Then he realized his mistake and promised not to raise political issue with her. He also promised not to have arguments over those matters. He also said that he would go back to Qatar to resume work to ensure better future of his daughter and the family.”

They came to terms. Kihor left for Qatar on June 9. “He sends me Rs 20,000 to 25,000 every month. He says that he cannot sleep sans a video chat with me. He advises us to eat nutritious food and asks me to care our daughter,” Tika said. This change in her husband has surprised her. “These are the best times we have had ever since our marriage,” she said.

Tika Nepali says that her relation with her husband improved only because of the intervention by community mediator Saroj Raj Adhikari. She says many such disputes in the village have been resolved through community mediation and everyone in the village is really impressed with the work of community mediator. “When I see couples in discord, I advise them to consult Saroj Raj Adhikari to find the solution,” said Tika. All these became possible thanks to the PSS provided by the organizations, she added.

# Poultry gives wings to Ramila

**Ramila Thapa Magar**

**Laipur, Benighat Rorang Rural Municipality-2 Dhading**

Earthquake flattened all the houses in the village. Everyone was left helpless. The repeated aftershocks had terrified the people. As the village was on a rocky hill, it was hard for the people to run to safer location. Everybody was panic-stricken. They were not able to think anything beyond.



Ramila Thapa was also worried but for a different reason. She was worried because her house still stood out while all other houses had collapsed. She should be happy about it. But not. “Those whose houses were destroyed got grants and assistance from the government and other agencies. And they built the earthquake-resilient houses. But my house did not collapse. I thought it would collapse by another earthquake and we would all be killed. This fear literally killed me,” Ramila said.

Ramila thinks that if another earthquake strikes the village, her house would not withstand the tremor. Ramila thought that her family were the only people living in an unsafe house. This added to her anxiety. “If I demolished this house to make a new one, I won’t get grants. If I let the house remain as it is, I feel so unsafe. This is the cause of worries,” Ramila said.

Ramila did not have to remain in such a situation for long. A local organization Prayash which had been working for the earthquake survivors in the village provided psycho-social support including counseling. Stress management was the main purpose of the program. The organization formed a trauma elimination committee comprising the traumatized people. As the purpose of this committee was to restore peace, it was named peace trauma group. Ramila was a member of this committee.

The officials of Prayash gathered people like Ramila and provided support including counseling. The program included sports and games and other recreational activities. This significantly reduced anxiety of Ramila. One would

narrate one's suffering and others would listen to it. The process continued. "When I listened to the problems of others, I realized that my problems were less disturbing than others'. Then I started to console myself," Ramila said.

From counseling she also learned that if she devoted herself to some small and engaging enterprises, it would drive away her anxieties. It would also help her make some money to help earn a living. "But knowing this was not enough. The organization provided skills development training. I took poultry farming training and soon started keeping poultry. Now I spend most of the time tending the chickens. I have no time to be worried and frightened," Ramila said.

Soon after the training, she bought 638 chicks. She sold them all and made a good profit. Out of this income, she arranged a better shed to keep the chickens. Then she again bought 480 chicks, from which she made a profit of Rs 50,000. Now she has 600 chickens in the pen. Now most of her time is spent in tending these chickens. Ramila is happy with what she is doing.

Ramila has purchased a piece of land at Baddanda from the income. Her husband, who was involved in masonry work, was emotionally disturbed. It had made her even more worried. Now mother of two daughters (aged 11 and 4) and a son (aged 9), Ramila says poultry farming has taken away much of the stress they had. "Now that I have found the source of income, I have gained the confidence to live a better life. Since my in-laws have made earthquake-resilient houses, I can go and live there just in case," said Ramila.

Ramila does not have much of fertile land but whatever grows suffices to feed the family. Therefore she has decided to continue with the poultry business for generating income. She thanks Prayash for providing her the PSS and poultry farming skills. She sees better prospect in poultry business. "If I grew vegetables I have to wait for six months to harvest. I have to carry them on my back to sell it in the market for two hours. If they don't sell, they will rot. But chickens become ready to sell just in two months. It's easier than vegetable farming," Ramila said.

Ramila can have the chicks and feed transported up to her house. This is why she finds this enterprise really beneficial. "On the one hand, it killed my stress, and it brought me money on the other hand. I am living a life free of anxiety. I am happy," Ramila said.

## Ram Pyari rises from the rubble

**Ram Pyari Chepang**

**Kalanga, Benighat Rorang Rural Municipality-2 Dhading**

The house stood at the foot of the mighty hill. Below the house was slope land. The earthquake developed cracks on the walls of her house and fissures on the land. The small shed they had was damaged. Ram Pyari was feared to death. She feared that the hill above her house might fall down on her, anytime. This is why she shifted to a small shed. She has stored goods and things in her house but the family does not live there. They eat and sleep inside the shed.



But the situation has changed now. When Prayash provided psychosocial support comprising counseling for the earthquake survivors, Ram Pyari also participated in the session. Participants used to share painful stories with each other. Hearing others' stories of pain, Ram Pyari began to feel that she was not the only person who had suffered. The participants played various games and engaged in recreational activities. Ram Pyari's stress got reduced. According to her, the PSS has changed the lives of many others who suffered like her before.

The social mobilizer of the organization conducted various activities as part of the PSS. Such activities provided them relief, at least for some time. Ram Pyari says she would look forward to such programs. Many others did the same. This is the proof of how effective the PSS had become for the survivors in general and the women in particular.

The organizations also assisted 3 out of 17 members associated with stress management committee selected from the deprived community. Two were from Magar community and one - Ram Pyari from the Chepang community. She got a two-day training in poultry farming and 300 chicks. Her happiness knew no boundary. Right after the training, she devoted her time for poultry farming. But there was no regular supply of electricity during the winter. But the chicks needed some warmth to survive. Ram Pyari came up with an idea.

She collected old zinc sheets and hung them over the chicks. She burnt firewood and placed the coals over the zinc sheets. When the sheets became

hot, it gave warmth to the chicks. This is not a sustainable solution, she knows, but it saved her chicks from dying. And this is the clear proof of how Ram Pyari has paid her full attention to poultry farming.

Ram Pyari is also involved in making concrete blocks and she runs a watermill as well. Ram Pyari takes care of her two sons and a daughter and the chickens. “Now I am not scared. I have no time to think about the earthquake. I have learned that when a person is occupied with productive work, it drives away half of the anxiety,” Ram Pyari said.

Ram Pyari has now decided that she would make poultry farming her vocation. She says she will add more chicks, raise them, sell them, and continue with this process. She pointed out to a better managed poultry shed that her husband had recently built. She says that her husband has agreed to take poultry business forward. Ram Pyari has set the goal: She will keep more poultry, earn out of it and ensure better future of her children.

## Community role model

When we started working in this village, we found Ram Pyari in a very hopeless situation. She looked terrified. But when she received the PSS, she began to change gradually. She began to interact and mingle with others. This helped her to reduce anxiety.

When we provided skills development training, Ram Pyari was willing to participate in it. She was selected. The interest that she has shown for the enterprise and the change that has gone through over the time has really surprised me. She belongs to the Chepang community, one of the most marginalized and minority groups in Nepal. She is the role model for the whole community. It pleases me to see her grow like this.

**Babita Koirala**  
**Social Mobilizer, Prayash**

# Strategy for building back better

## Baramchi Village

### Jugal Rural Municipality-5 Sindhupalchok

Baramchi village, some 95 kilometers from Kathmandu, was devastated by the 2015 earthquake. The Janajatis, Brahmins and Dalits alike - the main inhabitants of the village - lost their house, property and livestock. They had nothing to fall back on due to such a colossal loss.



### The assistance

Many agencies, governmental and non-governmental, came with relief and assistance package to help the earthquake-hit people in the aftermath of earthquake. The GMSP, an implementing partner of LWF Nepal, was one of them.

When the GMSP and LWF Nepal reached this village, the affected people were living inside the makeshift tents. They were apparently worried. There was no smile in their faces. To help them to reconstruct houses, the GMSP and LWF Nepal decided to rebuild the houses of 142 families in the remote villages of Sirangaun, Sano Jhirgaun, Khangral and Gwase. Then the GMSP provided orientation to the villagers. But they did not seem very keen on reconstruction. They lived with the constant fear that an earthquake could hit them any time and wreak a havoc again. They thought that the makeshift tents, where they were living at that time, were safer than the would-be-new houses.

Som Maya BK, one of the participants in the orientation, was of the view: “Our house collapsed but we somehow managed to survive. If we built the house again and start living there, what would be our fate if an earthquake strikes again? We would die. The makeshift tents are better for us now.” The GMSP officials tried to convince them that the new houses would be earthquake-resilient and they would not face such problems but since they were terrified none of such logic worked. Their efforts to convince them failed. The GMSP officials could not figure out what to do next.

### The trick worked

The GMSP officials then reached the conclusion that psycho-social support could

be helpful. So they first gathered all the survivors and told them about what actually leads to loss of lives and property during such tragedies. They educated them on earthquake-resilient houses and the benefits of building and staying in such houses. And they would be safe in such houses even during earthquakes.

They convinced the people that it is not an earthquake that kill people, but structures made by people without following resilient norms. They told the people that makeshifts tents only help temporarily, and they had to rebuild the houses. Living in temporary shelters for long would be harmful. Then the people realized how important it was for them to rebuild earthquake-resilient houses.

### Problems galore

The villagers started to rebuild their destroyed houses but they faced problems one after another. Many built a one-room house. When they all lived in the single room with kitchen and beds together, it caused terrible inconvenience to women and children. Then the GMSP advised them to make at least a two-room house each from health point of view. The people agreed.

The GMSP spread the message that the concerns of women and children should be addressed while building new houses. They also encouraged them to involve as many women as possible in reconstruction process. So with the participation of women, they started to build more-than-one-room houses. Such houses could also become women- and children-friendly.

But when they received Rs 150,000 as the second tranche of housing grant, another problem emerged. The male members of the family tended to spend the money on drinking and gambling. This led to family feud and domestic violence. When the women complained of this to the GMSP officials, they orientated their beneficiaries to conflict management. This helped reducing the cases of drinking and domestic violence.

### The changed landscape

A total of 142 houses have been built at Sirangaun, Sano Jhirdgaun, Khangral and Gwase with support from the GMSP and LWF Nepal. This has become a model settlement for the entire village. Every household has access to drinking water, sanitation and toilet. Cases of drinking, gambling and other associated problems have gone down significantly. Paisang Lama, a local leader, says, “We had thought that we needed to build a house were money, bricks, cement and rods. But building a house is not that easy. We need to manage several things for this. By providing us psychosocial support, the GMSP and LWF have made us indebted to them forever.”

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