

Emergency Relief – Nepal Earthquake



Damage in Swatha Square in Kathmandu. Photo courtesy of Edyta Stepczak



April 27, 2015

OVERVIEW

A 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal in the late morning of April 25 just 50 miles northwest of the capital, Kathmandu, toppling buildings and homes, causing widespread panic, and claiming more than 3,900 lives. The devastation and toll on human life is still becoming clear as rescue workers access the affected areas and populations.

The earthquake struck the Kathmandu valley, which is densely populated with nearly 2.5 million people. Kathmandu's streets and squares are covered in rubble and many are feared trapped in collapsed buildings. Many buildings, including historic sites, are destroyed or unsafe.

Tens of thousands of families are sleeping outside in Kathmandu and require shelter and protection from the cold and relentless rain, which has worsened conditions. Aftershocks continue—one reaching 6.7 magnitude and another 5.4 magnitude—increasing fear, causing further damage to buildings, and interrupting rescue operations. Most markets in Kathmandu are closed.

People urgently need basic essentials. Shelter, blankets, safe water, food, medical care, hygiene and counseling are priorities. Hygiene and sanitation are critical to preventing waterborne diseases.

CRS RESPONSE

CRS is providing 10,000 families (50,000 people) with emergency shelter materials, blankets, water treatment and hygiene kits. Given the scale of the disaster, we expect to expand relief activities to additional families. CRS is working with Caritas Nepal to identify the most pressing needs in the hardest hit districts between Kathmandu and Pokhara, and will scale our operations accordingly.

Highlights of CRS activities to Date:

- Deployed 15 CRS emergency specialists from India and elsewhere to Nepal immediately
- Transporting shelter kits, blankets, water purification kits and hygiene kits for 2,000 families
- Flying in 3,000 additional tarps from the hub in Dubai for immediate distribution
- Procuring critical supplies in neighboring Indian markets to meet urgent needs on the ground

A major focus of our efforts will be emergency shelter. CRS has committed an initial \$825,000 from private funds to this response, and estimates that more than \$10 million will be needed for long-term recovery.

“When the earthquake happened, I was reading a book and my brother was playing on the internet. At first we thought it was the wind, then everything was shaking,” says Qurnain, 15. Adds her younger brother, Ahmed, “I felt like I was flying.”

NEPAL EARTHQUAKE: EMERGENCY RELIEF ACTIVITIES

“We are not feeling safe inside the house, but feeling more safe outside, under this tent in the Assumption Church. We feel safe in the church premise and thankful to Caritas Nepal for the tent.”

—Renuka Magdalene Thakuri, 54, Kathmandu

The timeliness of humanitarian assistance is critical. In addition to catastrophic loss of life, a singular event like an earthquake, especially for those in impoverished parts of our world, can derail a family’s stability, deplete a lifetime of savings, and push them over the edge into poverty. For communities, the devastation to infrastructure, economy and reserves can set back a generation.

CRS immediately launched the following activities and will expand our efforts as needs are identified. They will serve as a foundation for a more comprehensive recovery effort. We will update this information and details as our teams gain greater access to affected communities and can determine the kind of support that is most urgent and appropriate.

Emergency Shelter

With major devastation to people’s homes, it is urgent that families have protection. Living without shelter is particularly challenging for women and girls. CRS/Caritas Nepal will target heavily affected areas and distribute tarps and shelter materials to families living outdoors. We will assist families in constructing structures with emergency shelter kits that contain one durable tarp measuring 258 square feet, and nails for fastening it in an A-frame design. The frame can be made from salvaged materials or lumber and the tarps are durable, long lasting and suitable for all climates. During recovery, we expect to support access to permanent housing solutions.

Emergency Living Supplies

People face critical needs for essential living supplies. Priorities include blankets, soap, buckets, towels, toothpaste, cooking sets and other items. CRS is sourcing key supplies largely from India because markets are closed in Kathmandu. Families lost their possessions in their homes—essential supplies are buried under rubble—and need the basics just to get by with a semblance of dignity and privacy.

Water, Hygiene and Sanitation

Families have limited access to clean drinking water because of damage to pipes, contamination of water sources and the loss of electricity. Hygiene and sanitation assistance is critical to preventing waterborne diseases that often occur in crises. CRS will distribute hygiene kits that include a water jug, pail with cover, and water purifying treatments. Distributions will be accompanied with information about the practices and benefits of hand-washing, and proper handling and storage of water.

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT

Over the weekend, CRS provided perspective on the crisis in a number of major media outlets, including CNN, the [Washington Post](#), [Baltimore Sun](#), [Wall Street Journal](#). CRS is also included in several “How to Help” lists in major media outlets, including the [New York Times](#). CRS social media outreach has produced 6.9 million Twitter impressions. Posts on four CRS Facebook pages have reached 92,000 people to date.

Keep up to date with the latest updates and stories from CRS teams in Nepal at [CRS.org](#). And, please keep the people of Nepal in your thoughts and prayers.