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## C4D in Humanitarian Action



# Nepal Earthquake 2015

Engaging communities  
to build resilience  
and accountability  
mechanisms

A case study

## *BACKGROUND*

The two devastating earthquakes that occurred in Nepal on 25 April and 12 May 2015 severely affected many regions within the country. Nearly 9,000 people lost their lives and over 22,000 people were injured. With a majority of houses being damaged or fully destroyed, people were forced to leave their homes and move to safe spaces or live in makeshift shelters. Many health centres and much of the community infrastructure, including water systems and latrines, were damaged or destroyed. The ensuing landslides blocked major roads and highways resulting in transportation being severely curtailed for authorities and relief agencies trying to reach affected districts and populations. All forms of communication and transportation were severely affected and telecommunication networks were disrupted in all the affected districts. This made it not only very difficult for communities to communicate with each other but also for government authorities, development agencies and aid workers to communicate with affected communities.

UNICEF Nepal's Communication for Development (C4D) response in the immediate aftermath adopted a step-by-step approach, starting with media channels that were

still functional, for the immediate dissemination of life-saving messages, collection of feedback on the needs and concerns of affected populations, and on-air psychosocial counseling (through call-in radio broadcasts), and then slowly moving on to direct outreach to communities through a variety of social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategies including mobile edutainment shows and face-to-face community mobilization by a youth-led organization.<sup>1</sup> These SBCC strategies played an important role not only in providing immediate access to life-saving information to affected populations but also in building resilience<sup>2</sup> and in strengthening the accountability of government and the international community.<sup>3</sup>



It was clear that there was an immediate need for communication channels to be re-established with the affected communities.



© UNICEFNepal/2017 - A boy listening to the radio.

To further strengthen community resilience and accountability of Government and other bodies towards vulnerable populations during the recovery phase, the C4D section developed the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in order to increase their knowledge and promote positive behaviour around the prevention of human trafficking, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency preparedness. Capacity-building was also done around how to collect feedback from rights holders and gather data on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Wherever possible and relevant, DRR and accountability components were entrenched in ongoing and new programmes. Detailed contingency and preparedness plans involving CSOs were drafted for different scenarios to expedite responses in case of emergencies. While the short-term and long-term C4D earthquake response followed a holistic approach, this case study primarily focuses on resilience-building and accountability mechanisms.

## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

### Immediate response

Important pillars of the SBCC strategy pursued by UNICEF Nepal's C4D section during the immediate earthquake response included: a strong coordination mechanism for communication efforts and accountability, between the government, national and local partners; a rapid assessment and rehabilitation of communication channels; and mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation and opportunities for community members to provide feedback and to receive much required large-scale on-air counselling.

It was clear that there was an immediate need for communication channels to be re-established with the affected communities. Discussions were held to identify urgent and effective ways of resuming community radio services in the districts that had suffered most.<sup>4</sup> The short-term plan consists of providing rehabilitation supplies to the damaged stations – tents, zoom recorders, power generators, telephone hybrids, stabilizers, laptops,

<sup>1</sup> Entertainment with the purpose of providing educational information to the target audience.

<sup>2</sup> Resilience refers to the ability of a certain community to withstand threats or shocks, or the ability to adapt to new livelihood options, in ways that preserve integrity and that do not deepen vulnerability.

<sup>3</sup> Please also see United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF Nepal C4D Response, Earthquake 2015', 2016, <[www.unicef.org/cbsc/files/Nepal\\_C4D\\_Earthquake\\_Response.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/cbsc/files/Nepal_C4D_Earthquake_Response.pdf)>, accessed August 2018; UNICEF Nepal, 'Nepal Earthquake: Communication for Development Response', video file, 2016, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=edg1HoRvrUK](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edg1HoRvrUK)>.

<sup>4</sup> Discussions took place through the radio subgroup of the Communicating with Affected Communities Working Group.



radio receivers for distribution in communities – and training to local technicians on repairing damaged radio sets. The long-term plan consists of providing training to community radio stations on strengthening their programming in relation to DRR and emergency preparedness and response.

A survey of children done in the immediate aftermath revealed that the major concerns were grief and sadness at the death of family members, friends and acquaintances and a strong feeling of loss, fear and other psychosocial impacts of the damage and destruction, highlighting the need for psychosocial support.<sup>5</sup> By targeting different audiences, the ‘Bhandai Sundai’ or ‘Talking – listening’ radio programme was able to address the psychosocial concerns of children, women and families who were otherwise outside the immediate reach of direct counselling services.

The radio programme became a very strong platform to promote initiatives such as the Back to School Campaign, Nutrition Week and the Cash Transfer Scheme for earthquake-affected families belonging to certain disadvantaged groups.<sup>6</sup> For instance, as part of the Back to School Campaign, mock classes were organized on the show to help teachers and administrators understand the facilities and services that needed to be provided in schools, and how they should carry out classes in the first few days after reopening so that children could overcome their fears and slowly settle down in a child-friendly environment. Several telephone conversations and interviews were also carried out with district education officers, principals, teachers, parents and students to discuss issues around reopening of schools, including psychosocial and safety concerns.

“ For the first time, I felt very relieved to listen to a radio programme that gives a chance for genuine conversation and this is so relevant right now for millions of parents to help their children. ”

– Min Raj Gyawali,

one of the first parents to call and share his concerns about his daughter’s traumatic experience during the earthquake.



Popular Nepali celebrities reached communities in remote areas with entertainment coupled with life-saving messages on health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene and child protection.



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<sup>5</sup> Plan International, et al., After the Earthquake: Nepal’s Children Speak Out. Nepal Children’s Earthquake Recovery Consultation Report, 2016, p.22, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Nepal\\_Children\\_Consultation\\_FINAL\\_highres.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Nepal_Children_Consultation_FINAL_highres.pdf), accessed May 2018. The survey was done in May and June 2015 and involved 1,838 girls and boys.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, please see [www.unicef.org/media/media\\_82139.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_82139.html); [www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(15\)00184-9/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(15)00184-9/fulltext); and [www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_100594.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_100594.html).

Based on the positive response to the radio programme and building on the popular brand name, a travelling edutainment show titled *Bhandai Sundai Gaon Gaon Ma* or *Talking – listening in villages* was created. Popular Nepali celebrities reached communities in remote areas with entertainment coupled with life-saving messages on health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene and child protection.<sup>7</sup> These celebrities and their messages were warmly received, drawing in huge crowds wherever the show was organized.

To reach affected populations in media dark areas, UNICEF partnered with Yuwalaya, a youth led organization that already had strong district-based



A C4D programme, Promoting Recovery and Resilience among Earthquake-affected Communities, was designed to empower young people and their communities to make informed choices that would make them more resilient during and after natural disasters.



© CWISH/2017. Development of Community Action Plan by a mothers group in Dhading as part of the UNICEF Nepal programme 'Promoting Recovery and Resilience among Earthquake-affected Communities'.

networks. Hundreds of youth volunteers went door to door, community to community and even to camp sites for face-to-face information exchanges and discussion. These young volunteers distributed communication materials and also demonstrated the use of essential rehabilitation supplies. Involving young people from local communities in the outreach activities not only ensures appropriateness and acceptance of messages, but also increases identification and creates a sense of ownership. Capacity-building for adolescents, youth CSOs and community radio staff was also a key element of building resilience and strengthening emergency preparedness during the recovery phase.

A partnership with the main national broadcaster, Radio Nepal, and subsequently with the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal helped ensure accountability to affected populations by providing communities with a channel for feedback to humanitarian responders about their concerns and needs.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that a key factor for the success of the programmes was that the radio is a very popular medium across Nepal and caters to all wealth segments of the population.<sup>9</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, it was the only means of information for people in remote areas of the country.

### **Engaging communities for recovery and preparedness**

From a long-term perspective, the C4D goals in the recovery phase were to help families and communities better prepare for and respond to natural disasters with a focus on women's and children's issues and to positively impact knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Given the destruction of livelihoods as well as the reduction in the protection and security provided by the family and community, children and young people were at an increased risk of sexual violence, gender-based abuses, human trafficking and unsafe migration. To empower young people and their communities to make informed choices that would make them more resilient during and after natural disasters, a C4D programme, Promoting Recovery and Resilience among Earthquake-affected Communities, was designed based on the

<sup>7</sup> They included comedians, magicians, singers and other performing artists, like Ani Choying Drolma, Jeetu Nepal, Kaliprasad Baskota, Komal Oli, Deepak Raj Giri and Deepashree Niraula.

<sup>8</sup> Two hundred and seventy radios were registered as community radios in 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Twenty-eight per cent of females and 36 per cent of males indicated that they listen to the radio on a weekly basis. *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2016*, p. 56–57.

Socio-Ecological Model and implemented in select earthquake-affected districts.<sup>10</sup> The capacities of CSOs, community-based groups and networks, and young people were built to disseminate critical information; track community perceptions and needs; develop community action plans to address critical issues; and to create mechanisms for both community feedback and accountability actions by duty bearers. These measures, reaching over 57,000 people, would prepare these communities for future disasters.

“An important element that contributed to increased awareness on human trafficking and unsafe migration among earthquake-affected communities was youth mobilization. Similar projects are needed in other parts of Nepal with high migration rates. They need to be adapted to the new government structure, and ensure financial contribution at local as well as national level.”<sup>11</sup>

– Ms. Urmila Kafle,  
Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD)

To increase family and community preparedness for natural hazards, UNICEF designed and implemented an edutainment radio drama series ‘Milan Chowk’ covering child survival and well-being, with episodes on health, nutrition, sanitation, education and protection.<sup>12</sup> These

were complemented with DRR messages around recurring types of natural disasters in the country. The drama, located in the imaginary village of Milan Chowk, was developed and broadcast in Nepali and four widely spoken languages. It was supplemented by local content in local languages produced by 16 community radio stations from priority districts who benefited from mentoring and training. The local programme capsules created community participation and ownership of the drama series, thus increasing their effectiveness. Audience feedback was generated through interviews with people from the community, so-called vox pops (short interviews of members of the public), group discussions held during the recap episodes, and focus group discussions and key informant interviews held during the field and mentoring visits and fed back to the radio drama series.<sup>13</sup>

As Nepal is highly prone to both rapid and slow onset natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, floods and droughts, UNICEF internal mechanisms and instruments to expedite the response during a disaster were developed in the aftermath. They included: (1) a contingency plan<sup>14</sup> including specific agreements with partners for outreach and community mobilization;<sup>15</sup> (2) long-term agreements for needs assessments, monitoring and evaluation, material development and media buying; and (3) capacity-building of staff and the formulation of terms of references for surge staff.

## Coordination, monitoring and evaluation

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake a Communicating with affected Communities Working Group (CWC) was established to better coordinate communication efforts among relief providers, UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media organizations and community radio operators. The CWC was later further divided into four subgroups: Messages and Materials, Community Mobilization, Radio, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

<sup>10</sup> An introduction to the Socio-Ecological Model is available on the UNICEF website’s Communication for Development page at <[www.unicef.org/cbsc/index\\_43099.html](http://www.unicef.org/cbsc/index_43099.html)>. For more about the C4D programme, see UNICEF Nepal, Promoting Recovery and Resilience among Earthquake-affected Communities, 2018 available at <[www.unicef.org/nepal/media/1846/file](http://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/1846/file)>

<sup>11</sup> Renamed as Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA).

<sup>12</sup> For more about the radio drama series, see UNICEF Nepal, Radio Drama Series on Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction, 2018, available at <[www.unicef.org/nepal/reports/radio-drama-series-child-centred-disaster-risk-reduction](http://www.unicef.org/nepal/reports/radio-drama-series-child-centred-disaster-risk-reduction)>

<sup>13</sup> FGDs and KIIs are techniques used to gather feedback on a topic of interest from either a group of people or an individual with specific characteristics, background or experiences.

<sup>14</sup> Accessible on the UNICEF Emergency Preparedness Platform, <[unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/EMOPS/EPP/Pages/Home.aspx](http://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/EMOPS/EPP/Pages/Home.aspx)>.

<sup>15</sup> Two contingency Programme Cooperation Agreements were drafted, one with a network of community radios for dissemination of life-saving messages and psychosocial counselling and one with a youth-led organization for social mobilization activities.





© CWISH/2017/S. Satyal - A social mobilizer interviewing young women as part of a community perception survey for the UNICEF Nepal programme Promoting Recovery and Resilience among Earthquake-affected Communities.



The Common Feedback Project (CFP),<sup>16</sup> which was a part of the CWC and housed under the UN Resident Coordinator's office, carried out communication assessments in collaboration with the CWC member organizations. The aim was to understand the communication needs of communities, as well as preferences, challenges and barriers to accessing information. This information allowed UNICEF and partners to fine-tune their communication response and gauge the effectiveness of ongoing communication interventions. The CFP also carried out community feedback and perception surveys as well as weekly rumor tracking surveys in collaboration with Internews (an international nonprofit building media environments), Local Interventions Group (a company working on data, technology and governance) and Accountability Lab (a group working on global accountability issues).<sup>17</sup>

A third party end-user monitoring system to monitor the effectiveness of the humanitarian response was also established to provide periodic reports on the performance of UNICEF emergency programmes, including the SBCC initiatives.<sup>18</sup> The feedback from the monitoring system helped UNICEF understand programme performance and implementation bottlenecks, and course correct as required.

Concurrent monitoring, evaluation and documentation of C4D programmes help course correct as well as establish the added value of SBCC interventions in ensuring greater investments in SBCC human resources and programme budgets.

As for the recovery projects, a perception survey was conducted among communities in select earthquake-affected districts to better understand community knowledge and perceptions of human trafficking and the factors triggering unsafe migration.<sup>19</sup> The survey also examined the use of available services at the community level.

Concurrent monitoring, evaluation and documentation of C4D programmes help course correct as well as establish the added value of SBCC interventions in ensuring greater investments in SBCC human resources and programme budgets.

<sup>16</sup> For further information, please see the website of the Interagency Common Feedback Project, <<http://cfp.org.np>>.

<sup>17</sup> In the initial phase, a lot of rumours spread, including misinformation about other earthquakes, the Government's response and relief material. Reports are available at <<http://citizenhelpdesk.org/nepal-archive>> (previously: <<http://quakehelpdesk.org>>).

<sup>18</sup> 'DARA (2016) Evaluation of UNICEF's Response and Recovery Efforts to the Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal', <[https://daraint.org/dara\\_evaluations/evaluation-unicefs-response-recovery-efforts-gorkha-earthquake-nepal](https://daraint.org/dara_evaluations/evaluation-unicefs-response-recovery-efforts-gorkha-earthquake-nepal)>, accessed May 2018.

<sup>19</sup> For quantitative data, surveys were conducted using the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling technique, a methodology preferably used for a small geographical area with a small sample size. Qualitative data was collected using Key Informant Interviews to further explain the findings from the quantitative survey.

# RESULTS

“ The C4D section was able as well through the CWC working group to harmonize and coordinate the messaging of different partners and different sectors. This resulted in raising the profile of communication with communities to a specific area of activity, with its own funding and objectives. Effectiveness and coverage have been outstanding. ”

'Evaluation of UNICEF's Response & Recovery Efforts to the Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal', DARA, June 2016.

## ✔ Messaging

As part of the above-mentioned emergency response and recovery programmes, child and youth related issues in a humanitarian context received special emphasis in the advocacy and coordination mechanisms with local and national stakeholders, including key ministries and/or government authorities.

A multi-channel approach set up to spread critical information related to staying safe, relief efforts and messages around children's and women's issues, as well as providing a platform for community feedback, proved to be crucial. During the first three months after the earthquakes, over 100,000 minutes of messages were broadcast through 191 community radio stations. Rapid assessment findings collected in July and August 2015 indicated that around 87 per cent of people could recollect key messages that were aired through radio.<sup>20</sup> Another 13,300 minutes of on-air psychosocial counselling, lifesaving messages and information were provided to listeners through the 'Bhandai Sundai' radio programme, responding to questions from around 1,200 callers. At the same time, UNICEF produced 19 types of communication materials and distributed 1.8 million copies in earthquake-affected districts.

<sup>20</sup> Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project, 'Information and Communications Needs Assessment: Inter-agency Common Feedback Project, March 2016, Nepal', 2015, <<https://bit.ly/2NdDYHM>>, accessed May 2018, p. 40. The rapid assessment was done based on 222 key informant surveys across 10 earthquake-affected districts.

## ✔ CSOs

The capacity of CSOs and their links with public and private institutions were strengthened. Three thousand six hundred and fifty interactive sessions on DRR and safe migration were conducted by 156 trained youth mobilizers and 18 community workers, resulting in the development of 469 Community Action Plans. Further, 2,383 key stakeholders were reached through 115 meetings on DRR and safe migration, putting these topics on the political agenda. As part of the radio drama series 'Milan Chowk', 832 local programme capsules on child-centred DRR were produced, reaching people from 42 districts in their local languages. Eighty-eight per cent of listeners (n=307) indicated that they changed their behavior in responses to messages promoting regular check-ups, nutritious food and the family's role during pregnancy and early childhood, supporting an end to child marriage and preparing better for disasters.

## ✔ Media

Capacity-building of members of the media helped strengthen their ability to support accountability towards the affected population, shape public perceptions and push key stakeholders towards taking necessary actions. Media missions and



trainings reached 322 media personnel and 136 packages, each of them five minutes long, on gender-based violence and unsafe migration were produced and aired 4,243 times through local radio stations. Trained journalists committed to a code of conduct for reporting on unsafe migration and trafficking issues.

In disaster-prone countries like Nepal, it is crucial that government and development agencies invest in reaching people with critical information for DRR and emergency preparedness, at the same time as ensuring accountability to affected populations by collecting feedback and inputs from at risk and affected people, providing platforms through which children, women, youth and populations as a whole can communicate with duty bearers on their needs and concerns. The C4D section of UNICEF Nepal continues building resilience and the capacities of communities to disasters by actively involving children, adolescents and youth in SBCC programmes related to DRR to help them better prepare and respond to future emergencies and protect the most vulnerable.

## LESSONS LEARNT

### **Coordination and feedback mechanisms are needed for community engagement and increased accountability:**

The CWC, in collaboration with the government, took a key role in providing situation updates, supporting community engagement and disseminating critical and timely life-saving messages right from the onset of the emergency. The close collaboration with all involved stakeholders, as well as the presence of established mechanisms, helped to ensure accountability to the affected population.

### **C4D role plays a major role in supporting psychosocial counseling:**

A survey to explore the views and experiences of communities affected by the earthquakes was conducted by the Communication with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network<sup>21</sup> one year after the earthquake highlighted that the psychosocial benefit of the on-air counselling ranked just behind information about relief assistance and knowledge around earthquakes. This resulted in an overall recommendation to strengthen the role of communication with communities to address trauma and psychosocial needs.

<sup>21</sup> Buchanan-Smith, Margie, et al., 'Are You Listening Now? Community Perspectives on Communicating with Communities During the Nepal Earthquake Response', CDAC Network, 2016, p.8,10, <[www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/84553f31-da55-4ce4-81a6-8c9ca61194bd/attachedFile](http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/84553f31-da55-4ce4-81a6-8c9ca61194bd/attachedFile)>, accessed June 2018.

“The C4D section was able to raise the profile of communication with communities from a sort of service for different sections to a specific area of activity, with its own funding and objectives. This has provided better means, flexibility and adaptive programming to the emergency situation and to the challenges of communication. (...) the experience of Nepal can provide guidance on how to better integrate under one common umbrella C4D-related activities and communication in emergencies.”

'Evaluation of UNICEF's Response & Recovery Efforts to the Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal', DARA, June 2016

**C4D-specific funding is vital:** Having its own emergency intermediate result (IR) and dedicated funds gave C4D teams great programming opportunity and flexibility, helping to speed up efforts.

**C4D must be mainstreamed on different levels:** Community mobilization activities that are part of sectoral initiatives are often planned and implemented parallel to the C4D work. These activities need to be integrated under one common C4D umbrella. Similarly, integrating C4D information needs into the cluster needs assessments was a challenge. C4D needs to invest in its own mechanisms, by setting up a C4D cluster, for example.

## Acknowledgements:

We would like to recognize the UNICEF colleagues who assisted with the preparation of this case study: Diane Summers, Emily Ramos, Naureen Naqvi, Rahel Vetsch, Rudrajit Das and Sanju Bhattarai.

We acknowledge the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in the development and production of these case studies.