

Voices That Matter: Adapting Recovery Through Community Feedback

With Technical and Financial support from International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) network Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) had implemented the Karnali Earthquake Response Operation in the three most affected districts—Jajarkot, Rukum West, and Salyan—following the earthquake that struck in November 2023, with its epicenter in Ramidada, Jajarkot. In this operation cash assistance was one of the major constituents where conditional cash support as well as unconditional cash support were applied for different activities. As part of the response, NRCS provided transitional shelter support through conditional cash assistance, along with water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, to 600 of the most affected families in Rukum West and Jajarkot.

During coordination meetings with local stakeholders regarding the response program across the three response districts, the urgent need for toilet construction was consistently emphasized. This need was further reinforced through community consultations, where affected individuals shared with Red Cross staff and volunteers that their toilets had been damaged or destroyed by the earthquake and needed rebuilding.



Figure 1 Community consultation for need identification in earthquake response district

While NRCS implemented response activities in all three districts, the shelter component was not included in Salyan district. Although families affected by the earthquake in Salyan

received cash assistance for transitional shelter from the government, this support did not include provisions for toilet reconstruction.

“Earthquake has destroyed our house, and the toilet so faced obstacle to use the toilets, we need to go to the field and open spaces it was very uneasy especially for the female. With the cash support from Red Cross, we are rebuilding our toilets together with the transitional shelter. Now we feel comfortable, thank you Red Cross.”

-----female, participant of the community consultation.

To respond to requests from both the community and local stakeholders, NRCS planned to support an additional 330 households—125 in Rukum, 125 in Jajarkot, and 80 in Salyan—for toilet construction as part of its early recovery program. This support was designed as a conditional cash top-up to complement the government’s transitional shelter assistance.

To support improved sanitation in the community, the disbursement of cash support for selected households to facilitate toilet construction was structured in two installments. The first installment (half of the total grant) was deposited directly into the bank accounts of the chosen individuals, following recommendations from local stakeholders. This initial funding enabled families to begin construction. The remaining installment was released upon verification of construction completion, as confirmed through a monitoring visit conducted by NRCS staff and volunteers.



Photo 2: Newly constructed toilet with cash support from NRCS

During the induction meeting with local stakeholders in Darma Rural Municipality, Salyan, NRCS presented its early recovery plan, which included providing cash support of NPR 15,000 per household to 80 families for toilet reconstruction, targeting those whose toilets were damaged by the earthquake. However, the Rural Municipality requested a revision of the plan—proposing to reduce the cash amount to NPR 6,000 per household to expand the number of targeted households from 80 to 200.

"With the support from another organization, Darma Rural Municipality was providing in kind support for the toilet construct for few affected households If Red cross can support the remaining household and bring uniformity in support it would have been even better".

- says Juna Malla, Vice chairperson Darma Rural Municipality.

The input provided by stakeholders during the meeting, along with the recognized need for sanitation facilities within the community, was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed by the operations team. In alignment with the recommendations of local stakeholders, the implementation plan for Salyan District was accordingly revised.

S. N	Ward No	No HH receiving support for toilet construction
1	Ward-1	47 Households
2	Ward-2	28 Households
3	Ward-3	32 Households
4	Ward-4	33 Households
5	Ward-5	36 Households
6	Ward-6	27 Households
	Total	203 Households

"Considering the need in the community and suggestion from local stakeholder the number of target and amount of support has been revised for the toilet support."

-Jagat Tamang, Program coordinator, Salyan

With the same budget, NRCS successfully reached two hundred and three Households of Darma Rural Municipality, Salyan by providing Rs 6000 cash support to each household that completed the toilet construction. Through effective collaboration and coordination every household in need of a new toilet due to the earthquake was able to complete their construction, ensuring that the Darma Rural Municipality met its sanitation needs. The cash support for toilet construction not only improved sanitation but also restored dignity and safety, especially for women and children.

This experience highlights the importance of actively listening to communities and local stakeholders to ensure a more effective and inclusive response. By engaging in dialogue during the planning phase, NRCS was able to adapt its approach based on community priorities, shifting from cash transfer to fewer households, to a broader reach with lower individual support. This not only increased the number of families receiving assistance but also fostered stronger local ownership and alignment with community needs. Community members expressed a deep sense of ownership over the rebuilding process, as their voices were heard and their needs prioritized.

Words: Jeena Malakar/ IFRC Nepal CD