



AJWS'S RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKES IN NEPAL



On Saturday, April 25, 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal. The worst since 1934, it destroyed historic buildings, including seven major temples, near Kathmandu and triggered a deadly avalanche on Mount Everest. A little more than two weeks later, a second major (7.3 magnitude) earthquake shook Nepal. This second quake and hundreds of aftershocks set back recovery efforts and exacerbated the damage. According to the government of Nepal, the two disasters affected at least 2.8 million people and left 8,940 dead, 22,239 injured and 188,900 displaced.

Damaged roads, landslides and at-times heavy rains limited transportation, preventing supplies of medicines, water, tents and other critical aid from reaching people in need. The response was greatly impeded by a four-month-long fuel blockade, which made it particularly difficult to reach remote, rural communities. It also significantly affected the availability and price of food and medicine, and forced people to resort to using firewood, kerosene or diesel purchased on the black market for cooking. Each of these options is expensive and hazardous to health.

AJWS'S RESPONSE ON THE GROUND

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) provided humanitarian aid by funding first responders on the ground with whom we have strong partnerships and who have mobilized quickly and effectively to aid communities affected by the earthquake. We have been funding these partners to provide interim and long-term housing, medical assistance and supplies, and basic necessities like food and water.

AJWS believes that community members are best placed to serve their own communities in times of need, so we are distributing funds through community-based groups led by and for these local communities. We are focusing our efforts on helping rebuild broken infrastructure, providing psychosocial support to survivors who have experienced tremendous trauma—including those who have been exposed to gender-based violence—and supporting communities to prepare for and protect themselves from future natural disasters of this

magnitude. In addition to addressing the provision of direct services, we support rights-based work through grassroots organizations that operate legal centers to end impunity and offer training and raise awareness about human rights.

Understanding that poor and vulnerable communities are often disproportionately affected by disasters, AJWS is supporting vulnerable populations that are typically not reached by other funders and may be at greater risk of further trauma in the aftermath of the earthquake. These vulnerable groups include communities in remote regions, women, youth, LGBT people, Tibetan refugees, people with disabilities and the Dalit community. Dalits are the lowest caste of Nepal's centuries-old caste system. Referred to as the "untouchables," they are frequently ostracized, discriminated against, deprived of economic opportunities and blocked from using public services.

AJWS'S GRANTEES

Since May 2015, AJWS has provided immediate support and humanitarian relief to the following organizations in Nepal:

- **Boudha Bahunipati Project-Pariwar (BBP-Pariwar):** BBP-Pariwar works to empower rural people to become the lead actors in improving their lives. Most of the homes in the districts where BBP works were either destroyed or severely damaged. With an emergency grant from AJWS, BBP-Pariwar is providing temporary shelter to 32 families in four villages in Sindhupalchowk and Kavre.
- **Himalayan Climate Initiative (HCI):** HCI was founded by Nepali entrepreneurs to build peace and develop the economy in Nepal. This youth-driven and solution-oriented non-profit organization delivers sustainable social-entrepreneurial initiatives like renewable energy, telecommunication and housing. With an emergency grant from AJWS, HCI is providing earthquake-resistant housing to community members who most urgently need shelter, such as those with elderly family members and young children.

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- **Association for Dalit Women's Advancement of Nepal (ADWAN):** ADWAN was founded by a group of Dalit women working to advance Dalit communities, focusing on the rights of women and children. Ten months after the earthquake, many Dalit families were still living without housing, often under the open sky. AJWS is funding the construction of 45 semi-permanent homes; ADWAN is also supplying Dalit communities with toilets, dishwashing stations and safer, smokeless stoves that use less firewood.
- **LOOM Nepal (LOOM):** LOOM develops women leaders in Nepal by helping them address the political, social, religious and cultural components of gender discrimination. With a grant from AJWS, LOOM is distributing feminine health products and basic hygiene kits, and setting up mothers' and women's groups to ensure that women can share their safety concerns, access medical care, and benefit from earthquake recovery and relief programs.
- **Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA):** NDWA supports women with disabilities through livelihood training programs. This group encountered enormous losses after the earthquake: They lost loved ones, sustained severe injuries and were displaced because their homes and livestock were destroyed. NDWA immediately sprang into action by distributing emergency and relief materials. With a grant from AJWS, NDWA is working with 16 community groups to teach women with disabilities how to form village savings cooperatives and provide livelihood trainings to begin their economic recovery.
- **Sahayatri Samaj Nepal (SS):** Gender-based violence saw an uptick after the earthquake. SS manages safe houses for survivors, provides psychosocial and legal counseling and facilitates trainings on the Nepali legal system to ensure that cases are prosecuted. SS is establishing five new safe houses for women in earthquake-affected villages with a grant from AJWS.
- **Himalayan Community Committee (HCC):** HCC was founded shortly after the earthquakes by the people of the Langtang Valley in Nepal's mountainous region of Rasuwa to assist the community's recovery and rebuilding efforts through the construction of greenhouses. These greenhouses will enable the cultivation of vegetables and other cash crops, providing critical livelihood sources in the otherwise cold and arid region. AJWS's grant will support the rebuilding of 27 of the 64 greenhouses that were destroyed as a result of an avalanche caused by the earthquakes.
- **Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (LACC):** LACC was formed by a group of female lawyers and teachers to provide free legal aid and services to victims of abuse and discrimination, as well as to conduct rights awareness and gender sensitization programs. It reaches populations throughout the country with walk-in and mobile legal clinics, human rights publications and interaction programs. With a grant from AJWS, LACC will establish a legal desk in the district headquarters of Sindhupalchowk and Kavrepalanchok to provide counseling, as well as paralegal and litigation services to women. This grant will also facilitate an "interaction program" to collaborate and build rapport with local governments and civil society organizations and to operate mobile clinics in remote rural communities.
- **Sengedag Service Society (SSS):** SSS provides food, livelihoods, shelter and medical care to Tibetan refugee nuns and monks in the remote Bakhang and Liping communities in Nepal's Sindhupalchowk District. The earthquakes destroyed all 207 homes in the nunnery and forced the nuns and monks into an overcrowded camp in Kathmandu, where the spread of illness was rampant. With a grant from AJWS, SSS has been able to work with the Hunnarshala Foundation—which has the technical knowledge and experience in large-scale construction projects that SSS lacks—to build 60 earthquake-resilient, stone containment homes using locally-sourced materials and craftsmanship. This grant will also support the construction of a 27-kilometer road that will bridge the gap from the highway to the nunnery, assist the delivery of rebuilding materials and allow the monks and nuns to more easily access surrounding communities. Hunnarshala will provide engineers and architects to guide the project and ensure that the structures are resilient to future disasters.

To learn more about our response to the Nepal earthquakes, please listen to an update from the field <https://soundcloud.com/americanjewishworldservice/nepal-earthquake-conference-call-field-update>.

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