

WHY NEPAL?

Nepal is one of the poorest and least-developed countries in South Asia. Approximately 25% of the population lives below the poverty line. The unemployment rate is 42% and mass migration of low-skilled workers to the Gulf countries to work in low-paid jobs is a significant phenomenon. It was within this challenging context that a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April 2015. The earthquake's epicentre was in Gorkha District just south of the China border. In the following weeks, persistent and at times significant aftershocks continued to topple buildings and destroy infrastructure. The devastation was exacerbated by a second 7.3-magnitude earthquake on 12 May 2015. According to the Post Disaster Needs Analysis (PDNA) 8,790 people died, 498,852 private houses were fully destroyed and 256,697 private houses were partially damaged throughout 31 districts, of which 14 districts have been identified as mostly impacted.

WHERE DO WE WORK?

Medair deployed an Emergency Response Team to Nepal on 27 April 2015, establishing a base in Lalitpur District of the Kathmandu Valley. We worked in close coordination with the Nepal team of Danish INGO **Mission East** and with other district local partners. We delivered emergency shelter and provided tools for demolition and technical support to households through cash-for-work interventions and cash transfers. We also provided water, sanitation, and hygiene support to over 40,000 individuals in eight VDC¹s of Sindhupalchok district.

From January 2016, Medair conducted community mobilisation, PASSA² and mason training, and model-house construction in several VDCs within Okhaldunga, Sindhupalchowk, and Ramechhap districts, including Bijulikot VDC. In July 2016, Medair, together with local implementation partner Community Development Society (CDS), started a project to assist 310 households (HHs) in Wards 3 and 6 of Bijulikot VDC in Ramechhap District to rebuild earthquake-resilient homes using 'Build Back Better' principles, while adhering to the Nepal Building Code. Based on the good results of this project and the construction progress gaining pace, Medair started an additional reconstruction project based on the same principles mentioned above, covering all the remaining wards of Bijulikot VDC (9 in total and 1,263 houses in total) in May 2017.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION**Recovery/Reconstruction**

The Recovery/Reconstruction phase builds upon the earlier Emergency Relief and Early Recovery phase. The aim is to ensure that earthquake-affected families have the know-how and materials necessary to safely demolish their heavily damaged houses and to 'Build Back Better' their permanent houses.

Since April 2016, Medair and CDS have been designing and implementing a programme to assist all families in Bijulikot Village Development Committee (VDC), Ramechhap district, to build earthquake-resilient houses, including toilet facilities. This process started with modified PASSA sessions at ward level in Ramechhap and Okhaldunga district. The goal of this community-driven approach was to build trust within the local community and to give people a good understanding of why it was important to work together and help each other with the reconstruction. This led to the formation of 'clusters' of seven to 12 households within each ward. As clusters began to understand the owner-driven house reconstruction that they would be engaged in, they selected masons from their own wards to be trained by Medair's technical officers (all of whom were Nepali engineers). Everyone followed a curriculum designed by local NGO NSET³.

¹ Village Development Committee's: A District contains of VDC's and each VDC has nine wards

² IFRC's Participatory Approaches for Safe Shelter Awareness

³ National Society for Earthquake Technology, based in Kathmandu

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Trained masons got their first experience following the improved construction methods when they built four model houses for the most vulnerable households in Ramechhap and Okhaldunga.

Currently Medair is providing financial and technical support for the construction of 1,263 earthquake-resilient houses we support through PASSA, mason training, capacity building & technical assistance through an owner-driven approach.

To avoid doing harm to local communities by creating dependency to external assistance, Medair introduced the cluster system by incorporating 'Armah Parma' – the Nepali culture of working together and helping each other in the community. This is a so-called 'labour exchange system' in which a cluster of families living close together help each other finish a similar set of tasks. Commonly used in farming each other's land, this was adapted by Medair for housing reconstruction. People work together in small groups of about 10 households. Wards three and six of Bijulikot VDC blossomed into a flourishing community, working together and motivating each other to build back earthquake-resilient houses. They quickly discovered that they saved a lot of time and money by working together and helping each other for free. The less vulnerable helped the more vulnerable; the more highly skilled helped the less skilled; people with more materials helped the ones with fewer materials; and people joined together for transport trips from Manthali to Bijulikot.

Most households could salvage some materials from their demolished houses useful for reconstructing their new houses. However many materials, like RCC steel, sand, and concrete, were not available within the community. Therefore, in November 2016, Medair began transporting four-tonne loads of these crucial materials between Manthali, the capital town of Ramechhap district, to the homeowners in Bijulikot.

2015/2016 IMPACT REPORT: Total beneficiaries: 259,635

- 30,000 people benefited from emergency health kits given to health centres
- 10,135 families received shelter kits and 2,800 families received blankets
- 1,316 people participated in cash-for-work activities, including demolition, benefiting 6,580
- 4,132 families received winter cash assistance and foam-mat insulation in high-altitude villages
- 213 masons received intensive training on earthquake-resilient construction techniques
- 4 homes built during mason training: 2 for community use, 2 for vulnerable families
- 295 families received cash installments for owner-driven repair and reconstruction of their homes
- 28 homeowner clusters formed to assisting one another with demolition & reconstruction
- 4,043 people attended meetings and received training on community safe shelter awareness, 611 people received eight days of Disaster Risk Reduction training through 24 PASSA (participatory approach to safe shelter awareness) workshops
- 162,117 people were reached regularly with safe shelter promotion messages via frequent radio broadcasts on the most popular radio station in Ramechhap

THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

Mr. Hinde Tamang, 50-year-old resident of Bijulikot VDC: *'I am very happy to join the team of trained masons and the technical officers from Medair to build Bhakta Maya Adhakari's house. The support from the team members and the orientation provided by the Medair technical team is building a lot of confidence in me. I think I will be able to soon work as a skilled worker and to train other semi-skilled workers while we build another house in this community together'*.

FUTURE PLANS

International NGOs are only assisting a small percentage of the families who need a house that conforms to the Nepal Building Code, yet the assisted households may well end up being the majority for whom the

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reconstruction process has been a success. However, a vast number of families have received no technical assistance and are at great risk of falling victim to poor reconstruction. Medair would love to duplicate our proven successful model of community mobilisation that results communities of earthquake-resilient housing.

A significant amount of money has been invested through the Government of Nepal and its donors. Now is the time to make sure that their money is spent well so that all families can eventually live in an earthquake-resilient home. According to the HRRP and NRA, many VDCs in Ramechhap are currently uncovered in terms of the necessary and critical technical assistance. Medair and CDS are ready to support them by providing this long-term, life-saving support.

FINANCIAL PARTNERS

Swiss Solidarity, EO Metterdaad (NL), Woord en Daad(NL), All we Can (UK), and generous private donors.



*Medair and masons work on the layout of an earthquake-resilient house at Bijulikot, Ramechhap.
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*Two masons work on the reconstruction of earthquake-resilient houses at Bijulikot, Ramechhap.
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*Community members work together on an earthquake-resilient house at Bijulikot, Ramechhap.
© Medair/Wendy van Amerongen*



*A happy family stands in front of their earthquake-resilient house at Bijulikot, Ramechhap.
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FOR MEDIA

Interviews, photos, and stories are available in English (and in Dutch upon request).

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