

UNICEF NEPAL  
**C4D RESPONSE**  
EARTHQUAKE 2015



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All maps included in this publication are stylized and not to scale.

## FOREWORD

The mega-earthquakes that struck Nepal in April and May 2015 were the biggest disasters to hit the country in a very long time. Thousands of people were severely affected while nearly 9,000 lost their lives. UNICEF worked closely with the Government of Nepal and humanitarian partners in the areas of health; nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; child protection; education; social protection and communication for development to fulfil the urgent needs of women and children.

Communication for Development (C4D) is a critical component of any development program. Humanitarian situations are no different. As a response to the Nepal earthquake, the UNICEF C4D program used various communication channels to promote dialogue with affected populations around life-saving messages and critical information. To ensure accountability to affected populations, it also provided them with platforms to voice their concerns, provide feedback on the response to duty bearers and also receive psycho – social counselling to help deal with their situation.

Partnerships are key to making a lasting difference in the lives of children and women. UNICEF joined hands with the government, as well as national and local partners to reach communities with critical information and life-saving messages as well as to get feedback from them on their needs and concerns. UNICEF successfully brought partners together under the Communicating with affected Communities Working group (CWC) to better coordinate communication efforts.

UNICEF partnered with the national broadcaster – Radio Nepal to air radio programmes for earthquake affected populations. These programs helped ensure accountability to affected populations by providing them with a channel to give feedback to humanitarian responders on their concerns and needs as well as much required, on – air psychosocial counselling to help people get over their trauma. Intensive messaging through Nepal's widespread network of community radio stations coupled with community mobilization through youth volunteers and entertainment-education activities ensured that affected populations had access to critical and life-saving information.

UNICEF supported the restoration and rehabilitation of vital communication infrastructure. Many community radio stations, which are a very important source of information for people in Nepal were damaged due to the earthquake. UNICEF provided many of these stations with support in the form of tents and broadcasting equipment to help them resume broadcasting. UNICEF is also engaged in building their capacity to carry out programming on helping communities prepare and respond to future emergencies.

The C4D program also played an important role in promoting UNICEF flagships during the emergency such as the Back to School Campaign, Cash Transfer Scheme and the Nutrition week.

This report highlights the key UNICEF C4D interventions during the response phase of the 2015 earthquakes. It explains how UNICEF worked at the national and local level with key stakeholders to meet the information and communication needs of affected families and communities.



Tomoo Hozumi  
Representative, UNICEF Nepal

## ■ Introduction

Nepal is a 147,181 sq. km land locked country wedged between China and India. Due to its unique position in the middle Himalayas, Nepal is highly vulnerable to many natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, floods and drought. Its complex geological formation, heavy annual rainfall and position in an active seismic zone, contribute to making it extremely vulnerable to natural disasters.

It is ranked 28th out of 199 countries in terms of multi-hazard risks. According to the UNDP's Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Nepal ranks 11th on the list of countries most at-

The two devastating earthquakes that occurred recently in Nepal on the 25th of April and the 12th of May 2015, affected many regions within the country. More than 8,959 people lost their lives and 22,302 people were injured, and this included 2,661 children.<sup>1</sup> The entire nation was brought to a standstill and all forms of communication and transportation were disrupted. As part of the immediate response, the government prioritized 14 out of the 22 affected districts as severely affected.

Houses and human settlements were most affected with many of them being damaged or fully destroyed. According



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risk to earthquakes. Past records show that Nepal can expect an earthquake of a magnitude 7.5 to 8 on the Richter scale every 40 years and an earthquake of magnitude 8+ on the Richter scale every 80 years. As a result, Nepal has experienced many earthquakes over the years. In the past 200 years, large earthquakes ranging from 5 to 8 on the Richter scale have been recorded throughout the country.

to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), 605,254 houses were fully damaged and 288,255 houses were partially damaged. In the worst affected areas, entire settlements were flattened or swept away by landslides. Much of the community infrastructure, including water systems and latrines, were damaged or destroyed. Many health centres were also damaged. People

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016

were forced to leave their houses and move to safe spaces or live in makeshift shelters. People living in remote districts, a vast majority of them under the poverty line, were severely affected and traumatised. These included women and children who became more vulnerable to trauma, exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

All forms and modes of communications were badly damaged and telecommunication networks were disrupted in all of the affected districts. Public service television and radio broadcasts went off air. Approximately 50 FM radio stations were affected. Of these 50 FM stations, 20 were unable to function for three days after the earthquake on the 25th of April. A lot of equipment and buildings belonging to community radio stations were either damaged or completely destroyed.

The UNICEF Nepal Country Office immediately responded and reached out to the affected populations by working with Government ministries, line agencies and development partners including Non-government Organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations. UNICEF provided support to partners to provide tents, tarpaulin, hygiene kits, therapeutic foods, medical kits, and plastic buckets. UNICEF also provided School in a Box kits, early childhood development kits and water tanks and responded to the information and communication needs of people affected by the earthquake. UNICEF provided US\$15 million worth of direct cash transfers to approximately 434,000 households through the government's existing social grant programme.

## UNICEF Nepal 15 CPAP\* (2013-2017) and 14 Earthquake Priority Districts, 2015



### UNICEF Field/District office:

- ★ Zone Office:
  1. Eastern Region, Biratnagar, Morang
  2. Central & Western Region, Bharatpur, Chitwan
  3. Far-Mid Western Region, Nepalgunj, Banke
- UNICEF CPAP 2013-17 Priority Districts
- UNICEF L2 Earthquake Emergency Priority Districts
- 🏠 UNICEF Site Office (Dolakha, Gorkha, Kathmandu, Nuwakot, and Sindhupalchowk)
- Country Program Action Plan

## Post-Earthquake Communication Needs

After the earthquake of April 25<sup>th</sup> 2015, people needed critical, life-saving information and the means to communicate with their family members and the authorities. Most telecommunication networks were badly damaged and services were disrupted. National and local television and radio stations went off air because of structural damage to their buildings, damage to equipment and the absence of human resources to run news programmes. It was very difficult for affected populations, families and individuals to access information or to communicate with authorities for rescue, aid and other health and psychosocial services. This also disrupted their ability to voice their concerns.

The ensuing landslides blocked major roads, highways and transportation was severely curtailed for authorities and relief agencies to reach affected districts and populations. Government authorities, development agencies and aid workers in Kathmandu and at the district headquarters faced difficulties in communicating with affected communities. There was an imminent need for communication channels to be established in order to communicate with the affected communities for rescue, aid, ensuring safety from constant aftershocks, providing key lifesaving messages and psychosocial support and prevention of disease outbreaks.

## Communication for Development (C4D) Response

Communication for Development (C4D) was an intrinsic part of the UNICEF response to Nepal earthquake. It was guided by the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Emergencies. The founding elements of the response included:

- Using various communication channels to promote dialogue with affected populations around key life-saving messages and critical information in the areas of Health, Nutrition, Sanitation and Hygiene, Protection, Education and Relief and Rehabilitation.
- In order to ensure accountability to affected populations, providing them with platforms / spaces to obtain relevant information, voice their concerns, provide feedback on the response to duty bearers and also receive psycho – social counselling to help deal with their situation, with a focus on women, children and the most marginalised.

- Forging alliances with multiple stakeholders and strengthening their capacities to effectively communicate with affected populations.

UNICEF Nepal's Communication for Development (C4D) program worked with the Government of Nepal and other development partners to develop a comprehensive communication for development strategy for responding to the situation. Based on a rapid assessment of communication needs, key messages / content for dialogue were developed and channels identified to disseminate these in the most affected districts. Care was taken to ensure that it was not just a one way dissemination of messages but that there were appropriate mechanisms to ensure that community feedback and voices were heard in order to make the communication and response efforts need based and also ensure accountability to affected populations.



## Communicating with Affected Communities (CWC) working group

Soon after the earthquake, UNICEF brought together several development partners including UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, media organisations and community radio operators under the Communicating with Affected Communities (CWC) working group to ensure a convergent and coherent C4D response to the earthquake. The CWC ensured that partners were informed about each other's efforts, had a common vision and approach and that there was no duplication of efforts. In collaboration with members of this group and the National Health Education Information and Communication Centre (NHEICC), which operates under the Ministry of Health and Population, a national communication response plan was developed. This was implemented through various partners. After the first few weeks of the earthquake, the CWC was further sub-divided into four sub groups in order to coordinate the work better. These included:

### 1. Messages and Materials

Through this sub-group a common set of messages were developed so that all partners communicated the same messages to communities and that there was no confusion among communities over these messages. The group would also periodically 'update' and 'refresh' messages based on evolving needs. Materials that were developed by partners were uploaded onto a dropbox site, which was accessible to all members of the

CWC. Members could download, view and print these materials as per their needs, helping in avoiding duplication in terms of different partners developing similar types of materials. Through this mechanism, based on requests, UNICEF provided printed materials to various partners.

### 2. Community Mobilisation

The sub-group on community mobilisation was responsible for coordinating direct, community based outreach work. This helped in ensuring that partners could spread themselves and cover areas in an organised manner and avoid duplication.

### 3. Radio

This group comprised of representatives of community radio operators and media – based organisations. The group managed work related to assessing the status of damaged community radio stations and preparing a roadmap for their rehabilitation. They also worked with various community radio stations to ensure uniform and correct transmission of key messages.

### 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Understanding the criticality of evidence – based and data driven work, the sub group was responsible for carrying out communication assessments, monitoring and evaluation.



COMMUNICATING WITH COMMUNITIES

Nepal Earthquake 2015

## Bhandai Sundai (Talking Listening) Radio Program

While many of the community FM stations, which are an important source of information for communities in rural Nepal, were unable to broadcast because they had been damaged by the earthquake, Radio Nepal (the national broadcaster) was still broadcasting 24X7. It was the only means of information for people in remote and far flung areas of the country. People were constantly tuned into Radio Nepal to get more information on the situation as well as relief and response efforts.

Taking advantage of this opportunity of being able to reach out to people at scale, within a week of the earthquake, UNICEF entered into a partnership with Radio Nepal to broadcast a program focusing on the earthquake situation titled 'Bhandai – Sundai' or talking – listening.

Along with the need to provide critical information to people and listen to their needs and concerns, it also became clear that there was a need to provide psychosocial support to people who were traumatised by the experience and needed a patient, supportive ear to listen to them as well advise them on how to deal with the trauma that they were going through.

The program was launched across four daily time slots:

- The morning show (30 minutes duration) focused on providing situation updates and information on relief and response efforts of the government and development partners. It also provided an opportunity for people to call in and share their needs and concerns with concerned government authorities who would periodically participate in the show.
- The afternoon show (55 minutes duration) was meant for providing psychosocial support to women. Calls on the show were answered by trained counsellors who would provide counselling to callers to help them deal with their problems and trauma.
- Not forgetting that children were also deeply impacted by the earthquake, a show (20 minutes duration) was especially organised for children in the early hours of the evening. During the show, they could call and share their feelings with a trained adult, who would give them practical tips on how to deal with the situation. They were encouraged to sing songs, recite poems, share jokes or simply talk to

*In order to provide accountability to affected population, UNICEF provided them with a platform to voice their concerns and give feedback to duty bearers in the form of an interactive radio program – 'Bhandai –Sundai'*

*– Tomoo Hozumi*  
Representative, UNICEF Nepal

help them get a few lighter moments and get over the trauma. Occasionally popular celebrities and comedians would also be invited on the show to increase the entertainment quotient of the show.

- The show in the evening (45 minutes duration) was open to all audiences who wanted to talk to a trained counsellor to discuss the emotional issues that they were going through and find options to deal with their condition.

Steadily, the programs gained great popularity and the phones never stopped ringing! Unfortunately due to

time constraints, often many calls could not be taken, but listeners across the earthquake affected districts and beyond greatly benefitted from listening to the advice given by counsellors on the show as most of them were facing similar issues. Thus, gradually the program turned into psychosocial counselling on a mass scale. Considering the inherent private and personal nature of counselling, the identities of all callers were kept confidential unless they wanted to identify themselves on air. The program also received several feedback calls from satisfied listeners. The programme was successfully able to reach children, women and families who were otherwise outside the immediate reach of direct counselling services due to the devastating impact the earthquake had had on the physical infrastructure of the country.

Radio Nepal being a credible government body, also greatly helped ensure accountability to affected populations by directly calling concerned government authorities on getting grievances from affected communities in order to address them. Quite a number of such grievances were successfully addressed through the program. The program also helped disseminate information and critical life-saving messages and content on Health, Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Education and Child Protection.

The program steadily turned into a very strong platform to promote UNICEF sectoral initiatives such as the Back to School Campaign, Nutrition Week and the

*“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

*“Everybody was listening to radio at that time and that platform not only served to give information to affected population but it also became a platform for them to raise their concerns and share their fears.”*

– Rownak Khan

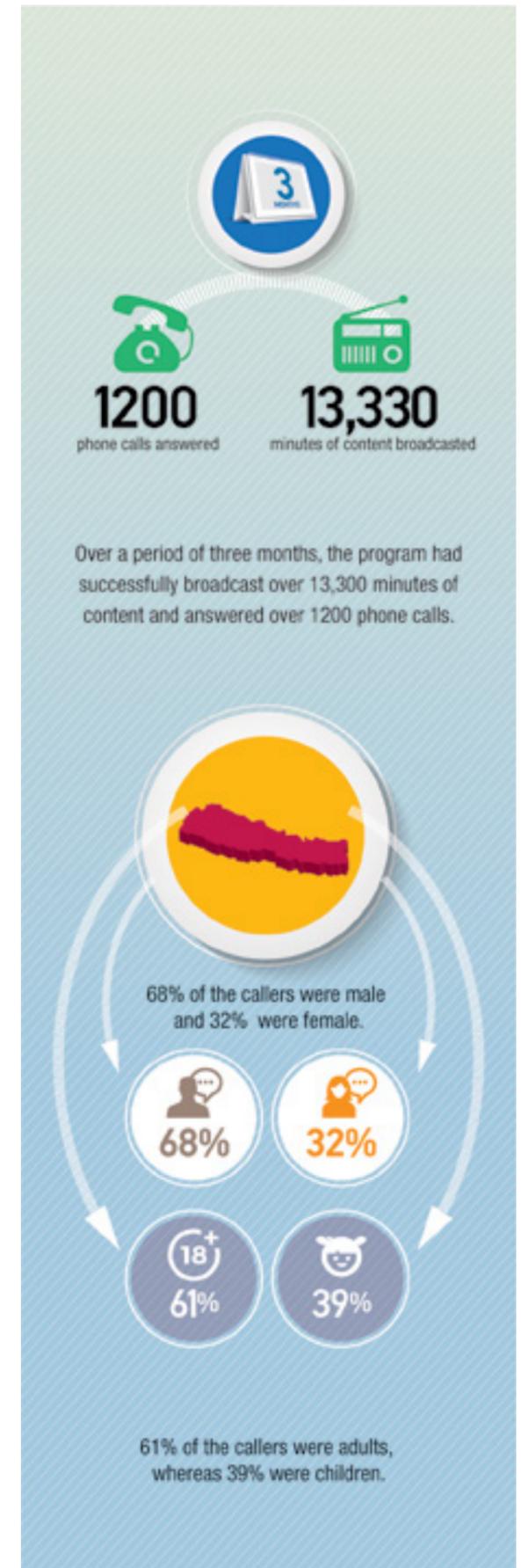
Deputy Country Representative,  
UNICEF Nepal

*“This Bhandai Sundai Program has helped me as well as others. It has helped to reduce fear. We, the young people don’t get scared much. But children get really scared. So it has helped by telling them that they shouldn’t get scared and has also given lots of information regarding hygiene like washing hands before eating and after using toilets, keeping the surroundings clean, making temporary toilets etc.”*

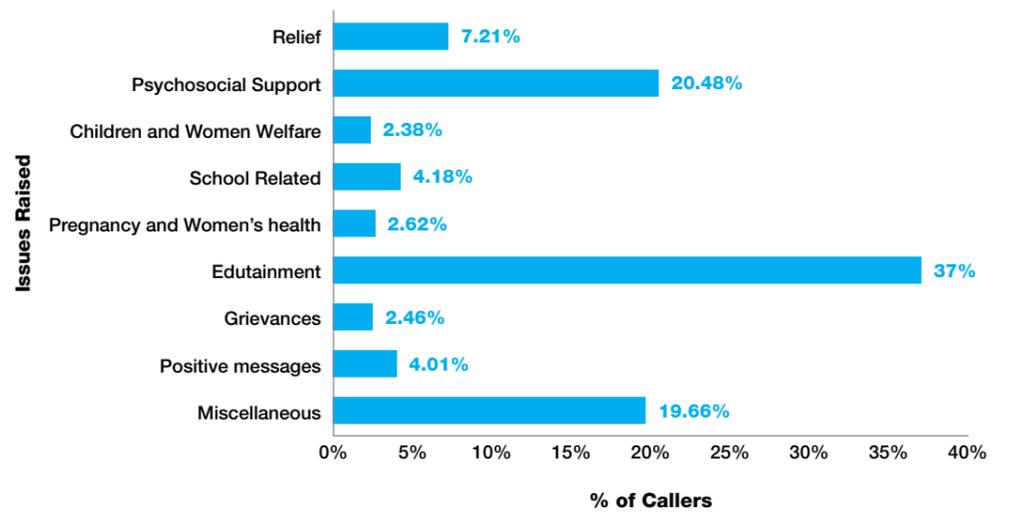
– Sunita Tamang  
Student and listener of  
‘Bhandai Sundai’ Radio Program

Cash transfer scheme for earthquake affected families belonging to certain disadvantaged groups. For instance, as part of the Back to School Campaign, ‘mock classes’ were organised 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 of the school 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.

Over a period of three months, the program had successfully broadcast over 13,300 minutes of content and answered over 1200 phone calls.



## Issues Raised by Callers on the “Bhandai-Sundai” Radio Program



68% of the callers were male and 32% were female. Although the number of female callers were lower than the male callers, an analysis of the calls revealed that many men were calling to discuss problems or issues related to their children or female members of their family. 61% of the callers were adults, whereas 39% were children.

A range of issues were dealt with through the calls, but these could broadly be categorized under - information on relief and rehabilitation, psychosocial support, issues related to the welfare of women and children,

school related issues, pregnancy and women's health, edutainment, grievances, positive messages on dealing with the situation and many other such issues.

Starting at a time when people were desperate for information and psychosocial support, the program was able to successfully reach out to people to satisfy both their information needs and requirements for emotional support. Further, it also created a conduit for community needs to reach duty bearers for taking necessary actions.

Anjali Darain, a 13 year old from Dhading district had lost her family in the earthquake. Compensation was hard to come by as the deceased had been enlisted as 'disappeared' because their bodies could not be found. On learning about this, the 'Bhandai Sundhai' radio program called up the Chief District Officer (CDO) of Dhading district to inform him about the situation and request for necessary action. The CDO immediately took up the matter and ensured that Anjali got the compensation money.



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## Communicating through the Network of Community Radio's

Nepal has an extensive network of around 270 community radio stations spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. They serve as the most important source of information for communities residing in remote and far-flung areas of the country. Unfortunately, quite a few of them in the earthquake affected districts were damaged and many were not in a position to communicate with communities in the geographies that they serve due to breakdown in the supply of electricity. However, within a few days of the earthquake, many of them resumed broadcast from temporary and makeshift shelters.

UNICEF in partnership with these community radio stations, started to intensively broadcast critical information related to staying safe, relief efforts and messages around Health, Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Education and Child Protection. **Over 100,000 minutes of messages were broadcast. Rapid assessment findings indicated that around 87% people could recollect key messages that were aired through radio.**

Through the radio sub-group of the Communicating with Affected Communities working group (CWC) discussions were held to identify urgent and effective ways of resuming community radio services in the districts that had suffered most. In collaboration with the ASIA Pacific regional office of AMARC and the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB), UNICEF supported an assessment of the extent of damage suffered by community radio stations. Based on the assessment findings, a short term and a long term rehabilitation plan was developed and implemented. The short term plan comprised of providing rehabilitation supplies to the damaged stations such as tents, zoom recorders, power generators, telephone hybrids, power back-ups, batteries, stabilizers, laptops, radio receivers for distribution in communities and also providing training to local technicians on repairing damaged radio sets. The long term plan comprised of providing training to community radio stations on preparing for future emergencies and developing programs to help communities better prepare and respond to future emergencies.



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Radio Sindhu, a community radio in Sindhupalchowk was destroyed by the earthquake. Ashmi a presenter at the station was thankful for the immediate support provided by UNICEF.

“The tent UNICEF provided was a huge help for us. We are protected from rain and have lot of space. We were able to give out the information on things such as what should be done during the disaster, unsafe places during an earthquake and so on. We are extremely happy and want to thank UNICEF for helping us.”



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– Asmi Syangten

Presenter at Radio Sindhu, a community radio in Sindhupalchowk.



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Maiya Giri would have never known about the UNICEF cash grant, had it not been for the messages that she got over the radio she said.

“While listening to the radio after the earthquake, we received news that the Village Development Committee (VDC) was distributing cash,” she said. “We went to the VDC office and got the cash.”

Maiya, a senior citizen living in Sindhupalchowk, one of the worst affected districts was very grateful for the information and the cash.

“I bought medicine and sugar,” she said. “I was also able to get medical treatment through the extra cash”

– Maiya Giri

Senior citizen living in Pokhari Gaun, Sindhupalchowk .

“Many community radio stations were damaged by the earthquake. UNICEF supported some of them with tents and essential broadcasting equipment so that they could resume broadcasting of critical information and messages.

– Rudrajit Das

Chief, Communication for Development, UNICEF Nepal

## Communication Materials

Based on a common set of messages that were agreed upon with partners, UNICEF produced a range of communication materials to support group and interpersonal communication efforts by community level implementing partners. These included posters, flipcharts, leaflets, booklets and comic books. **19 types of materials were developed and around 1.8 million copies were printed and distributed among most affected communities.**

- Posters and flyers on Water Sanitation and Hygiene, Back to School Campaign, Pregnancy Care, Postnatal Care, Neonatal Care, Sexual Abuse Prevention, Stress Management for Children, Stress Management for Parents and Menstrual Hygiene.
- Booklets with comprehensive information on hygiene, sanitation, water purification, pregnancy care, postnatal care, diarrhea, other childhood illnesses, trafficking, stress management, menstrual hygiene and the importance of education.



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- Comic books for children on psychosocial counseling
- Pamphlets on trafficking for immigration officers and transportation workers and also for social workers, politicians and community mobilizers.
- Brochures on the prevention of water borne diseases and water purification methods.



## Youth Engagement

The Nepalese youth came out in unprecedented numbers to support people of their country in the relief and response efforts. UNICEF partnered with a youth organization - 'Yuwalaya' with strong district based networks to reach out directly to communities in most affected and media dark areas with critical, life-saving messages. Youth volunteers went door to door, community

to community and also to camp sites to talk to people, provide information to keep them safe from disease outbreaks and other effects of the earthquake such as trafficking of women and children which dramatically increased after the earthquake. Further, they also demonstrated the use of essential rehabilitation supplies and distributed communication materials.

Binita Ramtel, a higher secondary school girl from Pachkhaal, Kavrepalanchowk district and a member of the District Child Club Network, had developed a routine after the earthquake. After school, she would help her community as a volunteer to identify and solve problems.

"We went to different places to make people aware about safe drinking water and hygiene. We also taught them about stress management techniques and about post earthquake measures to be taken."



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Januka Parajuli, a grade 10 student of Shree Baagdebi Higher Secondary School, said, "After participating in an awareness session organized by a youth volunteer in our school, I learnt about water purification techniques, need for temporary toilets and about keeping our surroundings clean. Later, I went home and asked my father to build a temporary toilet and also started drinking water after purifying it."



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"I promoted awareness on health and hygiene and also distributed educational materials in my community. People are now drinking water only after purifying it. They have also become conscious about keeping their community clean."

Muna Thapa Magar of Sindhuli is another volunteer who is active in combating the possible risks in the aftermath of the earthquake. She worked with her community to raise awareness about the significance of clean drinking water, health, and sanitation.



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## "Bhandai – Sundai Gaon Gaon Ma" Entertainment – Education sessions in communities



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Immediately after the earthquake, most of the relief and response activities focused on rescue, treatment of injuries and provision of essential relief supplies to affected communities. While these were extremely important, there was also a need to provide psychosocial counselling to people to get over the emotional trauma that the earthquake had caused. People including children were demonstrating common signs and symptoms of mental stress such as palpitation, sleeplessness, headache, dizziness, anxiety, fear and inability to focus on day-to-day activities. In order to reach out to communities at scale with psychosocial counselling support and entertainment-education, UNICEF had initiated the radio program 'Bhandai Sundai' (Talking – Listening). Based on the positive response to the program, UNICEF felt encouraged to take the entertainment – education component of the show to reach out to communities in much need of a hearty laugh as well as critical information.

Building on the already popular brand name, 'Bhandai Sundai', UNICEF came up with a travelling entertainment – education show titled 'Bhandai Sundai Gaon Gaon Ma' or Talking – listening in villages. UNICEF teamed up with popular Nepali celebrities – comedians, magicians, singers and other performing artists to reach out to communities

in remote areas with entertainment coupled with messaging on critical issues. Some of the celebrities included UNICEF goodwill ambassador Ani Choying Drolma, Jeetu Nepal, Kaliprasad Baskota, Komal Oli, Deepak Raj Giri, Deepashree Niraula and others.

The celebrities along with the messages that they carried were warmly received by people in much need of entertainment to help them forget the extremely traumatic experiences that they had been through. The celebrities reached out to the communities and provided them entertainment along with life-saving messages on health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, child protection - through music, comedy shows and other entertainment based programmes.

The celebrities braved earthquake ravaged roads, monsoons and difficult terrain to reach out to people living in communities and camps in the districts of Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhupalchowk, Kavre, Sindhuli, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. The program received tremendous response from the people, drawing in huge crowds wherever it was organised. People were elated to see that celebrities who they had only seen on television or heard on radio so far, had actually come into their communities, homes and lives to share their sorrows.

## ■ Communication Assessments, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Common Feedback Project (CFP), 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 members. These were carried out to understand communication needs that communities had, as well as barriers and challenges that they were facing in accessing information. These assessments provided valuable information to UNICEF and partners to fine-tune the communication response as well as provided insights into 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, Local Interventions Group and Accountability Lab. Data from these feedback mechanisms helped inform communication efforts.

UNICEF had established a third-party end-user monitoring system to monitor the effectiveness of the UNICEF humanitarian response, which provided periodic reports on the performance of UNICEF emergency programs, including C4D. The feedback from the monitoring system helped understand program performance as well as implementation bottlenecks and course correct as required. An evaluation of the UNICEF response is also being carried out.

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1. Over one million people in most affected areas were reached with life-saving messages and critical information.
  2. 100,000+ minutes of key messages were disseminated through 191 community radio stations. Rapid assessment findings indicated 87% message recall by listeners.
  3. Around 13,300 minutes of on-air psychosocial counselling, key lifesaving messages and information was provided to listeners through the *Bhandai Sundai* (Talking- Listening) radio program. Around 1200 phone calls were received on the show.
  4. 19 types of communication material were developed and 1.8 million copies distributed.
  5. Support was provided for the assessment, capacity building, restoration and rehabilitation of damaged community radio stations.
  6. Communities in 12 highly affected districts were reached out through youth volunteers and entertainment-education initiatives in partnership with popular celebrities of Nepal.
  7. A Communicating with Affected Communities (CWC) working group was established to promote coordination of communication efforts across partners.

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## ■ Challenges

The situation created by the earthquake was one which the country had not experienced in the living memory of most of its people. Essential services were badly hit. Lack of electricity, mobile and telephone connectivity and damaged physical infrastructure made it very difficult for communities and relief responders to communicate with each other. Community Radios in affected districts had been badly hit, families had lost radio and television sets affecting information availability in the first few weeks. Communication

service providers such as design agencies, media buying agencies and printers had all been affected and were working at sub-optimal capacity. In an environment like this, it was a massive challenge to ensure that people in affected communities had timely access to critical information. Using a step-by-step approach, starting with functional media channels and then slowly moving on to directly reaching out to communities, the C4D response had to evolve over time considering the nature of the situation.



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## ■ Conclusion, Lessons Learn't and Way Forward

UNICEF along with the government and other development partners was able to successfully provide psychosocial support as well as critical, lifesaving messages to communities to help them recover from the effects of the earthquake.

Psychosocial counselling, situation updates, key message dissemination and ensuring Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) through the radio program '*Bhandai – Sundai*' (Talking-Listening) was a timely and innovative intervention. Intensive airing of messages through community radio ensured that people were reached with key life-saving messages right from the onset of the emergency. Direct outreach to communities in most affected and media dark areas through youth volunteers and entertainment – education-based approaches also bore positive results.

The UNICEF radio program as well as community perception surveys that were carried out by the common feedback project, as part of the CWC, provided valuable feedback on the information and rehabilitation needs of communities. However, in the absence of a C4D cluster, this feedback could not often reach clusters in a systematic manner. Further, information on the timeframe of response efforts such as supplies, shelter, etc. could not be fed back to communities to the extent desired as information on these were not systematically available to the CWC partners. The CWC was activated after the emergency. Having such a group activated as a preparedness measure would have greatly helped to push the preparedness / prepositioning agenda.

Further, having a C4D cluster in this regard would have been very useful.

Building capacities of community radio stations on disaster preparedness and response can be a valuable investment so that they can prepare communities as well as immediately start local programs after a disaster. Hence, UNICEF is now working with the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters to build their capacities in this regard.

Having contingency agreements with partners for community mobilisation and long-term agreements for needs assessments, monitoring and evaluation, material development and media buying greatly helps in expediting the response during a disaster.

Concurrent monitoring, evaluation and documentation helps course correct as well as establish the added value of C4D interventions for ensuring greater investments in C4D Human Resources and program budgets.

Much has been done, but the journey is not over. People continue to need support to help them fully recover from the effects of the earthquake and rebuild their lives. UNICEF will continue in its efforts to reach people with critical, lifesaving information and more importantly ensure accountability to affected populations by providing platforms through which children, women, youth and affected populations as a whole can communicate with duty bearers on their needs and concerns. UNICEF will work on building resilience and capacities of communities with a focus on adolescents and youth, to help them better prepare and respond to future emergencies.



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