Earthquake Response: NEPAL
“Amid the utmost misery, the human spirit endures”

Rampur Village, Kavre District (Photo: Santosh Chhetri/UNFPA Nepal)

Highlights

- Mild aftershocks continue in the wake of the 25 April earthquake in Nepal – five tremors were recorded on Sunday, 3 May – a week after the disaster.
- As assessments of the scope of the devastation become more clear, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator says it’s obvious that “a scale-up of operations is required to ensure that immediate and principled assistance reaches people affected by the earthquake,” and that “scaling up logistics to reach rural areas remains a key priority.”
- UNFPA continues to lead two sub-clusters (Gender-Based Violence and Reproductive Health) and is an active member of the Health and Protection clusters. “Mandate creep” (UN Women towards GBV and UNICEF vis-à-vis RH) continues to be a concern.
- UNFPA and other UN partners are fleshing out funding allocations being sought for the next three months under the Flash Appeal. UNFPA submitted proposals for a total amount of $11.12 million ($4.7m for GBV and $6.42m for RH).
- The first lot of UNFPA Reproductive Health Kits has arrived in Nepal and has been distributed to partners for dispatch to the worst-affected districts and the most disadvantaged
• Communities. Many more RH kits are on their way, with a large consignment arriving by 6 May.
• Locally-acquired items for Dignity Kits are being packed by dozens of youth volunteers for a total of 6,500 kits, and are being sent out as well. 50,000 kits are being ordered through an existing LTA.
• Limited airport capacity continues to hamper aid efforts and much needed supplies are being delayed although the situation seems to be improving. Many remote areas affected by the earthquake can only be reached by helicopters or by foot/mules.
• UNFPA field visits have found that although many displaced individuals, including women and girls, are traumatized and bereft, they are forming communities of their own and helping each other at this difficult time. The arrival of practical assistance, such as UNFPA’s RH and Dignity Kits, goes a long way in restoring their self-image and boosting morale. Amid the utmost misery, the human spirit endures.
• UNFPA’s Regional Security Adviser traveled with a local staff for a scoping visit to Sindhupalchowk, one of the worst-affected districts, to view the site where UN agencies and partners plan to set up one of two field hubs (the other being in Gorkha district which will be visited in the next couple of days).
• UNFPA communications activities have scaled-up considerably, with strong visibility online via websites and social media platforms, as well as media interviews with international, national and local media. UNFPA visibility in the field is being strengthened as well, with the urgent procurement of UNFPA-branded shirts, caps, bags and other items, to ensure that UNFPA staff and volunteers are easily recognized as they carry out their crucial work.

Situation Overview
• At least five relatively mild tremors were recorded in Nepal on Sunday, 3 May, exactly a week after the devastating earthquake of 25 April. Another tremor shook the Kathmandu Valley area today (Monday, 4 May). These tremors were felt at the UNFPA Nepal office building as well. However, there were no reports of widespread alarm or panic among the population at large.
• As of 3rd May, 7,056 deaths and 14,123 injuries were reported. Sindhupalchowk, Kathmandu, Nuwakot, Dhading, Kavrepalanchowk and Gorkha are the most affected districts. 142,388 homes have been reported as fully damaged, and 155,884 are reported as partially damaged. Authorities expect these numbers to rise in the coming days and weeks, as not all affected areas have been fully accessed or assessed. Meanwhile there are still amazing stories of a few survivors being pulled from the rubble, each such rescue being dubbed a “miracle.”
• The UN Humanitarian Coordinator says that a scale-up of operations is required to ensure “immediate and principled assistance” reaches people in desperate need within the next six weeks, in advance of the monsoon season. Shelter remains the most critical need in the affected areas. Several camps for displaced persons are being set up by the authorities, while makeshift camps have sprung up in other areas.
• The UN is establishing two logistics hubs in two of the worst-hit districts, Gorkha and Sindhupalchowk, to strengthen its response to the disaster; several agencies will be represented at the hubs. UNFPA is considering strategic deployments there as well. A national staff together with the UNFPA Regional Security Advisor scoped the Sindhupalchowk area today (Monday, 4 May). The Gorkha district area may be assessed during the week. Several UN organizations and partners (e.g. Norwegian Red Cross and Save the Children) have
already started laying the groundwork for the Sindhupalchowk hub, with field hospitals and other facilities being planned and materials being brought in for speedy construction.

UN and partners setting up a field hub in Sindhupalchowk, one of the worst-hit districts (Photo: Stefano Palazzi/UNFPA APRO)

- The Nepali media continue to underscore the Government’s challenges in responding to the earthquake, although the tone has softened somewhat given that rescuers have found some survivors in the rubble in recent days. There are reports that the Government is preparing to send home most, if not all, foreign rescue teams including sniffer dogs, saying that Nepal’s own capacity to deal with search-and-rescue efforts from now on is sufficient. The Government has also reiterated that relief supplies which have arrived so far from other countries are still insufficient for even immediate needs, and is calling on the global community to step up its response.

- There is growing anger in Nepal about some of the media coverage of the post-earthquake situation by international journalists, especially by media from neighboring India who have been accused of “sensationalizing” their coverage and for allegedly behaving in a high-handed way with Nepali security authorities. The hashtag #GoHomeIndianMedia has been trending on Twitter for much of the weekend. http://www.opindia.com/2015/05/angry-nepalese-trend-gobackindianmedia-to-protest-insensitive-coverage-of-earthquake/ This threatens to overshadow the goodwill expressed by the Nepali people towards the Indian government and military which have been providing significant relief supplies and helping with relief and rescue missions.
Fleshing out the Flash Appeal, Scaling Up our Response

- In the wake of the April 29 UN Flash Appeal of USD 415 million for the response to the earthquake over the next three months, further assessments have been undertaken by UN agencies regarding the work they have been mandated to perform.
- Several agencies (including UNICEF, which co-leads the Child Protection Sub-cluster, while UNFPA co-leads on Gender-based Violence and RH under Health) have significantly fleshed out their initial requests, including UNFPA which is now requesting USD 11.12 million for the crucial work at hand, comprising of USD 6.42 million for reproductive health (RH) services and interventions, and USD 4.7 million for the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) at camps for the displaced and other challenged environments.
- UNFPA is working closely with existing and new partners and has consulted partner organizations that it will be funding from the Flash Appeal (e.g. FPAN, ADRA and CARE Nepal) to ensure that UNFPA’s requests complement those made by its partners under the Flash Appeal and avoid duplication.
- The flash appeal will be finalized by the end of the day today (Monday, 4 May) by the different cluster leads and OCHA.
- Surge staffing is being deployed to Nepal from across the organization to support the existing team in the response. Currently, 25+ staff from the Nepal Country Office are responding, plus 7 surge staff (with up to 7 more arriving in the coming week), are helping scale up UNFPA’s response to the earthquake. The Chief of UNFPA’s Humanitarian Response will be in Nepal for a week from Wednesday, 6 May, while the Senior Emergency Coordinator will arrive on Thursday, 7 May.

Reaching the Most Affected with Reproductive Health and Dignity Kits

- The UNFPA Nepal compound was a hive of activity yesterday and today, as a mini-army of almost 30 youth volunteers – mobilized through youth networks and the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN)/Sprint – gathered to help put together our trademark Dignity Kits. The items for the kits are locally procured and socio-culturally sensitive. In all, some 6,500 kits are being dispatched to displaced women and girls through implementing partners. A new order is being placed for a much larger quantity (pending availability of funds, 50,000).
- The young people who are helping put the Dignity Kits together say they are grateful for the opportunity to do something concrete to support earthquake victims as part of the wider effort to rebuild their shattered country. Their participation is just one of the angles of the UNFPA response to be portrayed in a short video being produced over the next fortnight; a videographer and photographer are on standby to document UNFPA’s work in the field and at the country office.
- UNFPA Nepal is coordinating the RH sub-cluster and trying to ensure that RH interventions complement one another. Joint/individual assessments are being conducted and a preliminary picture of needs and gaps is coming through. Distribution of RH kits is also being coordinated among other interventions.
- Meanwhile, three sets of Reproductive Health Kits are being given out via UNFPA’s implementing partners to those who need them the most. The beneficiaries include some of Nepal’s most disadvantaged communities (e.g. Dalits, who are often discriminated against in everyday life by upper-caste groups).
The kits are being distributed at mobile camps and other settings across the Kathmandu Valley and in the affected districts where displaced persons have gathered, via FPAN, ADRA, CARE Nepal, the Canadian Red Cross and IOM. The UNFPA team is also in the field ensuring that the initial distributions proceed well, and accordingly, advise can be given to partners on strengthening/improving their outreach.

The RH Kits have been accompanied by sanitary pads for women and girls of reproductive age, items that are truly appreciated by their recipients. Scores of women and young girls have told staff from UNFPA and implementing partners that these items are helping “restore” their lives and dignity. Some have even stated that UNFPA’s assistance and interventions were concrete and practical – “you don’t just talk, but you act” was what more than one beneficiary said. UNFPA’s interactions with our beneficiaries have truly brought home the message that “amid the utmost misery, the human spirit endures.”

UNFPA and its partners are responding swiftly to reports of gender-based violence in camps for the displaced and other environments; in recent days, a number of incidents that were reported were investigated immediately, and an effective response was provided in conjunction with the appropriate authorities. UNFPA Nepal’s GBV team is holding regular meetings of the UN GBV sub-cluster, which UNFPA co-leads with UNICEF, and will be providing training and sensitization sessions at the UNFPA Nepal country office to implementing partner organizations.

Sharing our Messages with our Beneficiaries, Sharing our Stories with the World
UNFPA continues to distribute and disseminate key messaging on crucial issues pertaining to our beneficiaries, such as the wellbeing of pregnant women and new mothers in the post-disaster setting, and the prevention of gender-based violence, via platforms such as community-based radio and other media through the auspices of the OCHA-led Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) and the complementary Communicating with Communities platform. These messages are translated into Nepali and sent out by a range of outlets under the CDAC/CWC umbrella (including BBC Media Action and Internews), reaching people on the ground.

UNFPA Nepal Communications has been instrumental in capturing compelling images and stories from the field and sharing these online via UNFPA’s own web platforms and social media, as well as by translating stories into Nepali using a top-notch translator from Kantipur Media (a key media conglomerate in Nepal) who in turn helps disseminate our stories to multiple outlets.

http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/nepal/2015/05/03/12009/amid_the_utmost_misery_the_hum an_spirit_endures/

A young mother and her 14-month-old infant in Kavre district, beneficiaries of UNFPA supplies (Photo: Santosh Chhetri/UNFPA Nepal)

UNFPA Nepal (@UNFPANepal) and UNFPA Asia-Pacific’s (@UNFPAAsia) tweets have had significant reach via immediate subscribers, and have also been re-tweeted in a significant way, with some of the most compelling messages reaching hundreds of thousands of Twitter users.
• The UNFPA Nepal office is facilitating field visits by media to help them gather stories which explain the importance of providing the kind of services UNFPA does. UNFPA Asia-Pacific is producing infographics explaining what our RH and Dignity Kits contain, so that these can be shared with media and other audiences as well.
Draft Nepal Dignity Kit Infographic (some items will be adjusted/corrected) [Created by Supaporn Chatwanichkul/UNFPA APRO]
UNFPA's storytelling, complemented by media coverage, is being strongly linked to resource mobilization – both for our response to the Nepal earthquake, as well as our wider work across the spectrum (using UNFPA’s humanitarian disaster response as a key peg). UNFPA Nepal’s images and stories will be used by Friends of UNFPA to help drive donations from the public at large for the earthquake response, and will also be packaged by UNFPA Headquarters and the Asia-Pacific Regional Office to reach diverse audiences and strengthen the organization’s brand identity.

https://www.friendsofunfpa.org/NetCommunity/support/dn-nepal-earthquake-relief

UNFPA Nepal is also receiving a significant shipment of branding and visibility materials, such as shirts, caps and bags with the UNFPA logo and messaging, for UNFPA staff and volunteers to wear both while working in Kathmandu and during field visits and missions. This helps strengthen our brand and corporate identity at a time when multiple organizations are operating in the same environment. UNFPA Bangladesh, India and Indonesia Country Offices have helped procure these items in record time, with the support of UNFPA Headquarters and the Asia-Pacific Regional Office.
UNFPA Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Response Coordinator Priya Marwah takes a selfie with young women and girls in Kavre district

For UNFPA’s stories from the field, visit [http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/nepal/](http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/nepal/) and [http://asiapacific.unfpa.org](http://asiapacific.unfpa.org). For regular updates subscribe to our Twitter feeds @UNFPANepal and @UNFPAAsia, and our UNFPA Nepal Facebook page [www.facebook.com/unfpa.nepal](http://www.facebook.com/unfpa.nepal)