



## A Feminist Approach to COVID-19



### From RC's Desk

The COVID-19 pandemic, has like never before, demanded that all of us, across countries and communities come together to respond and this is also true of the UN family. This UN Newsletter aims to highlight the work of the UN, key joint initiatives and achievements. But behind our collective efforts, there is the work of agencies, funds and programs, and in this issue, you will hear from IOM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and WFP, and how they came together to respond to the COVID crisis.

**U**N Women has adapted its strategy in the context of COVID-19 and adopted a comprehensive rights-based approach to support women from excluded groups. While the crisis has affected everyone, it has exacerbated existing fault-lines around gender, caste, religion and more, pushing those in the margins, further behind. To ensure we are supporting the most vulnerable women, UN Women is focusing its interventions on single women, women from Dalit and indigenous communities, female led

households, Muslim women, gender non-conforming persons LGBTIQ+, women in informal economy including self-employed, home-based workers, migrant workers and women with disabilities.

Immediately after COVID-19 outbreak, UN Women conducted a survey to inform its policy and programming responses to the pandemic. The survey, conducted in collaboration with UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens and NCell (a



mobile service provider), received 8,204 responses from across Nepal. The survey revealed how lockdowns have resulted in an increase in unpaid domestic work for women by 75% and single women (unmarried / widowed / divorced) living in households with children noted highest increases. Based on the principle of 'No one should go hungry', UN Women Nepal addressed the immediate needs of women and marginalized groups by establishing Community Kitchens across Nepal. It served over 28,300 meals in collaboration with Nagarik Awaz, Women for Human Rights and Maiti Nepal in Bagmati, Sudurpaschim and Province 5. The Community Kitchens have built social cohesion and reduced care burden for women. It has also provided income generating opportunities during COVID-19 and allowing flexibility to pursue other employment opportunities or simply rest.

In addition to the survey, UN Women conducted consultative meetings of Gender in Humanitarian Action Task Team with the Government, development partners and civil society to identify gendered socio-economic impacts and inequalities exacerbated due to the pandemic on women and excluded groups. The spike in levels of domestic violence and sexual exploitation, that is already an epidemic, in the period

was a prominent issue brought up by all stakeholders. Sabina Rimal, Program Officer at Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) Nepal shared how the lockdown has made it difficult to support cases of gender-based violence (GBV). "In normal circumstances, I would urge the survivor to immediately come to our safe house if they are facing violence. But when the entire nation has mobility restrictions, they are stuck at home with the perpetrators," says Rimal. Data from WOREC reveals an average of seven murder cases every month since lockdown in Nepal. In efforts to end all forms of violence against women and girls, UN Women has been partnering with WOREC to train counselors on supporting cases of GBV and ensuring survivors of GBV have access to psychosocial support services. UN Women also supported WOREC with providing relief supplies and technical support on monitoring quarantine centers from gender lens.

Responding to the pandemic is not just about rectifying long-standing inequalities, but also about building a resilient world in the interest of everyone with women at the center of recovery. Therefore, across all areas of our work, UN Women Nepal continues to support and prioritize the emerging needs of women and excluded group in response and recovery efforts to COVID-19.

In the past months, the whole UN family has also developed the Socio-Economic Framework document, which will inform our collective efforts to support Nepal in addressing and recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. As the UN, it is our responsibility to ensure that the needs of those most marginalized in our society are prioritized in the response and recovery. However, it is not for us to define what is needed and this is why we have conducted consultations with more than 1,000 people from historically marginalized and newly vulnerable groups to hear how the pandemic has impacted them and what they hope will be done to address this. This Framework has been an opportunity to identify new approaches and strategies for change, inspiring us to do things differently.

This year, we mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN with the theme "Shaping Our Future Together" and perhaps in some ways, 2020 really is the year for us to reimagine our work, to question the inequalities of the past and shape more equal societies of the future. For us to hear from all of you, how you imagine our future together, please participate in this short survey: <https://un75.online/>

As I come to the end of my time in Nepal, I leave with great pride of what the UN has achieved here and want to thank the UN family for the last four years together. The work is of course not finished, and as always, the UN stands ready to continue to support Nepal and its people in building a new and different nation, where inclusion, equality and prosperity are a reality for all Nepalis.



# IOM Supports Most Vulnerable Migrant Returnees to Meet Immediate Needs



## Kathmandu—

**P**abitra Jimba, (31) from Makawanpur District had been in foreign employment for over six years and had been able to support her family back home before she lost her most recent job in the United Arab Emirates to COVID 19. She had been stranded in that country for five months without job before she returned to Nepal in mid-July. She purchased flight tickets on her own as no one – the employer, host and home governments – provided her with support..

Similarly, 27-year-old Sarita BK (name changed), originally from Morang district was on her way to Kuwait in March via India but was caught up by the nation-wide lockdown in India and got stuck there for next four months. Unaware that she was travelling undocumented without a work permit, she managed to arrive in Kathmandu in early July with support from various organizations and her relatives. She is a divorcee and is the sole breadwinner of her three-member family.

Those are only examples of vulnerable Nepali returnee migrants hard-hit by the

COVID 19 pandemic.

According to the Government of Nepal, COVID 19 Crisis Management Committee (CCMC), a total of 51,441 Nepali migrants have been repatriated from abroad as of 14 August. According to various sources, an estimated 127,000 Nepalis abroad were in need of immediate assistance and 450,000 migrants excluding those working in India are projected to lose their jobs. This leaves migrants' families facing the risks and acute consequences of not being able to afford basic needs such as food, education, health and nutrition.

With hundreds of thousands of Nepalis back home, and those working in India also losing their jobs and 500,000 Nepali youths entering labour market every year, Nepal's unemployed population is set to be unprecedented.

Nepal, where contribution of remittances to GDP in 2019 was equivalent to 27.3 per cent, lost nearly 50 per cent of remittances in April and May compared to the same period last year according to the Nepal Rashtra Bank, the country's central bank's report published in May 2020. This clearly indicates that the socioeconomic effects of

*A returnee migrant, illiterate, puts her thumb print in place of signature acknowledging receipt of direct assistance from IOM.*

*Photo: IOM*

the crisis in Nepal are expected to be devastating to its national economy and the overall achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Under these circumstances, the road ahead for the returnee migrants like Pabitra and Sarita does not look an easy one as the Government of Nepal faces a big challenge of reintegrating returnee migrant workers in the national labour market. This requires a comprehensive plan for the creation of employment opportunities, matching skills and interests of returnees as well as needs of the national economy.

Along with Pabitra and Sarita, total of 97 (89 female and 8 male) returnee migrants have received direct assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as of 31 July 2020 to meet their immediate needs under an initiative supported by the United Nations Secretary General's COVID Response Fund.

# Meeting Family Planning Needs in Nepal's Quarantine Centres



## KATHMANDU —

**W**hen Kabita Bhandari arrived at a COVID-19 quarantine centre in Baitadi District, in far-western Nepal, residents thought she was bringing food. They soon realized she was delivering another kind of essential supplies: contraceptives.

There were four couples staying at the centre, undergoing a mandatory 14-day quarantine after returning from India. They said the family planning supplies were absolutely needed.

“The women were worried about getting pregnant,” recounted Ms. Bhandari.

She and her colleagues are known as “visiting service providers.” They specialize in delivering family planning information and supplies to remote communities. They often go to great lengths, scaling mountains and crossing rivers, to deliver

contraceptives to women who need them.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting service providers are coordinating with local authorities to help make sure women do not lose access to these services.

To reach the quarantine centre in Puchaudi Municipality, Ms. Bhandari travelled for five hours in a vehicle, then hiked for three hours over rugged terrain. She advised the couples about the range of family planning options available, free of charge.

“After this session, the four women, all in their mid-30s with three to four children each, came to the nearby health centre,” Ms. Bhandari said, referring to a family planning outreach clinic half an hour from the quarantine centre.

All four of the women chose implants that provide long-lasting contraception. Ms. Bhandari, wearing full-length protective gear, inserted the implants.

Swift action amid lockdown

*Kala Chaudhary provides family planning consultation to clients.*

*Photo: © UNFPA Nepal*

Since Nepal's coronavirus lockdown began in March, visits to health centres have sharply decreased, largely due to transport disruptions and fears of infection.

Experts have been concerned that disruptions in family planning services could result in an increase in unintended pregnancies. This, in turn, could result in “dangerous long-term impacts on women's health,” explained Dr. Guna Raj Awasthi, the provincial health director in Sudurpaschim.

The visiting service provider programme initially came to a halt when Nepal's stay-at-home order was announced. Providers tried offering services remotely, but knew that in-person counselling and care was more





effective.

They also knew that the communities they serve have the greatest needs. The programme – which is funded by DFID and UNFPA Supplies, and works with federal, provincial and local governments as well as partner organizations MSI Nepal and ADRA Nepal – covers 16 districts that have low contraceptive prevalence rates.

“Whenever I spoke to the district health authorities, we discussed how to resume family planning services under these circumstances,” said Ganesh Shahi, the UNFPA district officer in Baitadi.

“We finally came to an arrangement to issue special travel passes in coordination with authorities so that the providers could go back to work, taking steps to protect themselves. We sought advice from government health officials to select the quarantine centres with families, paving the way for the deployment of visiting service providers.”

### Working with pride

Outreach to quarantine centres began on

16 May, starting with Baitadi, where a team of four visiting service providers, in safety gear, reached 14 different health centres.

As of 23 June, they had provided implants to more than 250 women, intrauterine devices to 40 women, and family planning counselling to 720 people across 19 quarantine sites in Baitadi alone. Across 11

“Helping out people in difficult times like this makes us proud,” she said. “We are planning to visit even more quarantine sites to reach as many as women and men as possible.”

*Ms. Bhandari places a long-acting contraceptive implant in a client's arm.*

*Photo: © UNFPA Nepal*

districts, in both quarantine centres and the community, more than 950 women had received contraceptive implants, and more than 120 received intrauterine devices during 28 days of the lockdown.

Kala Chaudhary, who coordinates the work of four visiting service providers including Ms. Bhandari, said the work has been rewarding.

“Helping out people in difficult times like this makes us proud,” she said. “We are planning to visit even more quarantine sites to reach as many as women and men as possible.”

Dr. Awasthi said he admires their dedication: “It’s heartening to see how motivated they are to continue their important work. We cannot let the progress we have made in averting unplanned pregnancies slip due to coronavirus.”

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Ashiki playing 'catch-and-catch' with friends from her neighbourhood.

Photo: WFP/Rajendra Rasaili

## WFP Delivers School Meals in Nepal Despite Coronavirus

World Food Programme support helps vulnerable schoolchildren in Bajhang district maintain a nutritious diet

**L**ike many children in Nepal, for the past three months, Ashiki has missed out on school because of the coronavirus lockdown. She spends her time playing with her younger brother, helping her mother with household chores, and reads storybooks borrowed before from her school before it shut.

Ashiki says she often feels restless. "I worry because coronavirus keeps me going away from school, meeting my friends and from doing other important things that I like to do," she says. "What I miss the most is eating school meals together as a family in the school kitchen."

To ensure children and their families do not miss out on meals interrupted by the pandemic, the World Food Programme together with Nepal's Ministry of Education and local government, is distributing around 1,500 metric tons of rice, lentils and vegetable oil, to 150,000 households, under strict safety and hygiene protocols.

The closure of schools is putting at risk the future of millions of children around the world, affecting not only their ability to learn but also their access to nutritious food and health-support schemes. WFP's new estimates show that the number of acutely hungry in the countries where it operates

could increase to 270 million this year — up by 82 percent on pre-pandemic figures, largely due to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

Since March, 2.4 million children in Nepal have been missing out on the nutritious lunches they used to receive at school — the only proper meals many of them could count on.

### Big yellow mangoes

Ashiki's day starts with a sumptuous breakfast of roasted corn and yoghurt, with a glass of fresh milk. She likes to have her breakfast in the courtyard where it is nice and sunny. Ashiki's family are traditional buffalo farmers, so she gets to drink milk two times a day. This season, however, she is missing out on many seasonal fruits, including the big yellow mangoes from India, which under these circumstances are hard to find.

Every day, Ashiki makes a point of getting in some exercise. This includes carefully physically distanced walks together with her brother to the main water tank from where she brings water. "We come quickly in the morning to fill water because if the crowd comes coronavirus will spread," she says. Ashiki giggles as she walks with her brother

to the main tank from where she brings water for household chores.

As soon as they reach home, the first thing you see Ashiki doing is washing her hands using the techniques she learnt in school. "One of the cheapest and easiest ways to prevent the spread of the coronavirus is frequent handwashing," she says, repeating the mantra as she first washes her hands with soap and water and then helps her brother do the same.

### Making sure no-one misses meals

The nine-year-old often helps her mum in the kitchen as she cooks lunch for the family. The Puri family are still having normal meals, three times a day, even though they are eating less. "We have cut down on poultry and eggs, and we eat a less diversified meal to stretch our money a little further," says Harka, Ashiki's mum, as she toys with her handkerchief, knotted to keep safe the monthly allowance provided by her husband.

The largest provider of school meals in the world, since 2002 WFP has been serving free nutritious midday meals to 250,000 children in public primary schools in Bajhang and 10 other districts in Western Nepal with funding from US Department of Agriculture. Each plate of fortified rice, lentils, fortified vegetable oil and iodized salt provides 30 percent required daily allowances.

"The food provided at school is the only proper meal that many families in Bajhang can count in for their kids," says Ashiki's dad, Harka. "School meals mean a great deal to many families here in Bajhang, as food is scarce even at normal times."



# An Essential Defense Mechanism



UNICEF providing a package of water, sanitation and hygiene equipment and supplies to hospitals in far-western Nepal to support them in continuing to serve communities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

Healthworkers at the District Hospital in Achham in far-western Nepal, receive a package of water, sanitation and hygiene equipment and supplies provided by UNICEF, in coordination with NEEDS Nepal and the local government.

Photo: NEEDS Nepal

## Achham, Nepal—

**A**t a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing its spread across the country, it has never been more crucial to both ensure access to and promote hygiene and sanitation practices. This is especially pertinent at health facilities that see a constant flow of patients and staff, and where – in the absence of essential defense mechanisms – potential for transmission could be high.

To boost hand hygiene, UNICEF – in coordination with its partner organizations and respective local governments – has provided a package of water, sanitation and hygiene equipment and supplies to support the health system in the Sudurpaschim Province in far-western Nepal to continue

to serve communities while protecting healthworkers and service-seekers. The package comprises foot-operating hand-washing stations and sanitizer stands, and foot pumps that are designed to convert existing wash basins into pedal-operating handwashing facilities.

Being operated by foot means that when using these stations and stands, contact – and by extension transmission of the virus – is limited.

In addition to this, supplies of hand-sanitizer, buckets and mugs have also been included in the package, as well as improvements to the given facility's water supply/storage systems and toilets where required.

“The crisis has forced people to understand

the importance of hygiene,” says Ganga Budha Magar, Hospital Nursing Inspector at the Achham District Hospital – one of the hospitals to receive the package.

“These handwashing and sanitizing stations are a good reminder to both staff and service seekers to keep our hands clean at all times.”

Besides Achham, the support has also extended to Bajura District Hospital, Bajhang District Hospital, Doti District Hospital, Dadeldhura Sub-Regional Hospital, Baitadi District Hospital, Darchula District Hospital and Tikapur Hospital – all of which have been playing a crucial role in providing much-needed services to remote communities in this part of the country throughout the pandemic.



## Power in Preparedness

With the threat of floods and landslides looming large with the arrival of the monsoon season, UNICEF is supporting local governments across Nepal to boost their disaster preparedness and response capacities

Dhanusha, Nepal—

**O**n the afternoon of 18 July, locals of the Shahidnagar Municipality in Dhanusha District in Nepal’s southern plains were gathered on the banks of the Kamala River, watching as security personnel swam back and forth in the water with lifejackets and floatation devices. What they were witnessing was a flood evacuation simulation, organized by the municipality in partnership with UNICEF and partner organization LIFE Nepal, in which different search-and-rescue techniques were being demonstrated.

Shahidnagar, much like many other places in the low-lying Terai plains, is highly susceptible to flooding during the monsoon season. Recognizing the need to strengthen local-level preparedness and response to this yearly threat to lives and livelihoods, UNICEF supported the municipality to

organize the simulation – geared at raising both community awareness as well as the municipality’s ability to save more lives in case of a flood.

In addition to the demonstration, the support also extended to the provision of a set of search-and-rescue materials to the municipality, including life jackets and tubes, sirens, hand mikes, as well as other items such as tarpaulins and first aid supplies.

“We’ve seen in the past how lack of awareness can really hinder rescue efforts,” says Ashok Kumar Jha, Disaster Risk Reduction Officer at UNICEF. “The simulation was aimed at showing people how search and rescue operations actually work so that they can be prepared.” He adds that the programme also communicated to the public how information should flow during a crisis. “Knowing where and who to inform is a

very important aspect of response,” he says.

Shahidnagar is among a total of 12 municipalities across Provinces 2, 5, Karnali and Sudurpaschim, where UNICEF is working with local governments to boost disaster readiness and response. Search-and-rescue materials and other supplies have already been prepositioned in many of these municipalities, and work is underway to support municipal authorities to develop detailed preparedness and response plans, including focused assistance for vulnerable households. In addition to this, simulation exercises, such as the one held in Shahidnagar, are also planned for the remaining municipalities in the coming days.

“Last year, we had cases where people were drowning in the floodwaters, but because we didn’t have all the proper equipment prepared beforehand, it was difficult to rescue them,” says municipal chief Udaykumar Yadav Barbariya. “We’ve understood how important it is to have everything ready – both in terms of equipment and skills – to save lives, and we’re hopeful that through this partnership with UNICEF and LIFE Nepal will, we are going to be much better prepared this time around.”





## Coping With COVID-19 in Nepal

A livelihoods recovery project launched in partnership with the Government is helping the hardest hit population weather the impact of the crisis.

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**AUGUST 4TH, 2020 —**

He knew what he dreaded most was going to happen.

The lockdown in Kathmandu had gone on for two weeks and Bikas Tamang, 21, was hoping businesses would reopen. Then the lockdown was extended for another 15 days, and he lost his job as a waiter, in a restaurant, in the Kalopul neighbourhood.

Looking back, he had dreamt of paying off the loan he had taken while rebuilding his two-room house that collapsed during the 2015 earthquake.

As a poor migrant worker Bikas now lives on the margins of poverty, scrambling to find odds jobs. In that frantic hunt to find any work, he is one among tens of thousands of informal sector workers who have lost their jobs and are struggling to stave off hunger and poverty. Nepal's informal sector employs nearly 62% of its total labour force, nearly 4.4 million people. They have been joined by thousands more who are returning home from places like India and the Middle East, driven out of work by the devastating impact of COVID-19.

Even before the pandemic struck. Bikas's life was complex. Six years ago, he lost his father to an unknown disease. Shortly after, his mother married another man

abandoning him with his two ailing grandparents. Then when the major earthquake struck Nepal in 2015, it killed both his grandparents, leaving him with his wife, whom he had married only two years ago. With few options for work in the village, he left her behind to look for work.

For a youth coming from a historically marginalized ethnic community, there was no option but to head to the capital Kathmandu, in search of a job.

**"I used to earn Rs. 9,000 per month for working 14 hours every day at the restaurant in Kalopul," Bikas says. But when he lost the job, "I had to come back. I had no choice," he says, about returning home.**

He is among the fortunate to find short-term employment in his village, following nearly two months of a lockdown. He was among the 50 most vulnerable people selected for employment by the local government.

**"I had given up hope. I am glad that I got something to do in my own village," he says. "For now, this is a great relief. I need to think of what to do next in the coming days."**

Bikas and 49 of his fellow villagers, have been hard at work constructing a road for

over 20 days now. Each labourer earns Rs. 750 (\$7) per day. The nearly completed 500-meter serpentine road, paved with chiselled stones and flanked by green pine trees, connects the village to a newly built medical clinic.

The impressive stretch of work has given the municipality ideas to improve other rural roads, while at the same time creating short-term jobs for unemployed villagers.

According to a recent study commissioned by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), three out of five employees in micro and small business have lost their jobs, due to COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown.

These businesses have seen monthly revenue fall by an average of 95 percent. Most shut down within the first three months of the lockdown. The agriculture sector, which employs over 80% of the working population, has also been severely impacted by the lockdown, with the disruption of supply chains of agricultural inputs, produce, and human resources, due to transport restrictions.

Indramaya Tamang, 35, a single mother who works as a wage labourer to support herself and her two children, says there are hardly any jobs, after the lockdown. She lost





her husband to tuberculosis a year ago.

**“It’s even more difficult for a woman to make a living. They don’t hire women. They think we cannot work hard,” says Indramaya, who has been working as a manual labourer, at the road construction project. “The private contractors pick only the strong males. We rarely get any opportunity. We are so glad that the ward chair gave this opportunity to the poorest people, like us.”**

Baburam Lama is the ward chair of the Indrawati Rural Municipality. He knows each of the 50 workers he has hired and keeps monitoring the progress of the project co-funded by UNDP, and the Prime Minister’s Employment Programme, that is run by municipalities.

“The beauty of this programme is that all the money we are investing goes directly to

the poor people. We have given priority to the most vulnerable people, as they are the ones who feel the first blow,” says Lama. “We have not even used any machines here, except for the push carts. From stones and tools to skills and engineering, everything is local. We don’t use cement or iron rods.”

UNDP’s latest study warns that if no concrete measures are taken, the COVID-19 crisis may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities pushing a significant number of people back into poverty. The study recommends the government strengthen social protection and livelihoods, reorient public finance to augment human capabilities, introduce measures to limit bankruptcies and create new sources of job-creating growth.

**“We at UNDP are keen to partner with municipalities for a shared purpose, to**

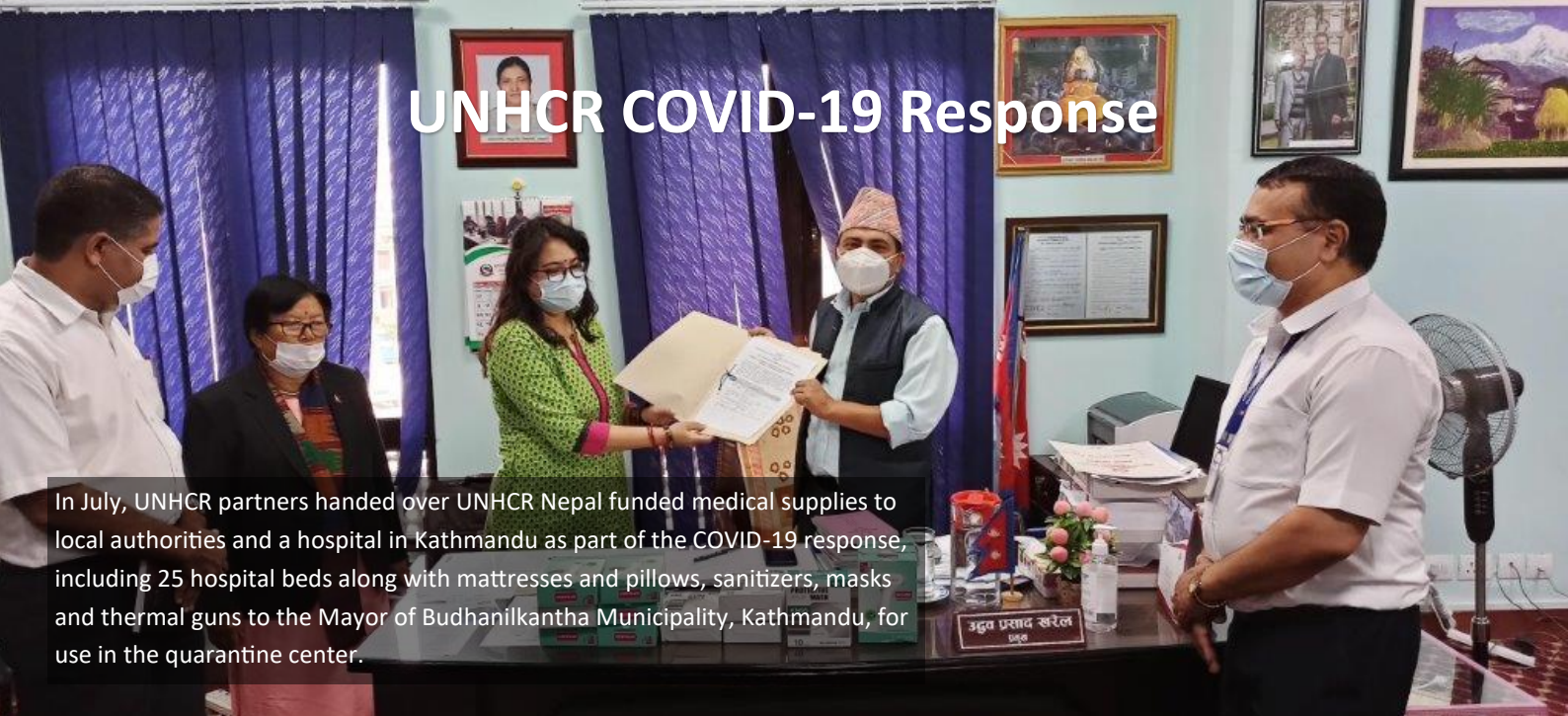
**create jobs for people struggling to cope with the social and economic stress of the current situation, due to COVID-19. A decent income will help these men and women make ends meet, using the opportunities at hand. And most importantly it will help them maintain their dignity,” said Ayshanie Medagangoda Labe, UNDP Resident Representative in Nepal.**

Launched in June, UNDP’s livelihoods recovery programme, co-funded by both the Royal Thai and Nepal Governments, aims to engage over 5000 women and men – especially the poor, vulnerable daily wage earners and migrant workers – in short-term manual work through small-scale community and tourism infrastructure projects led by the communities themselves.

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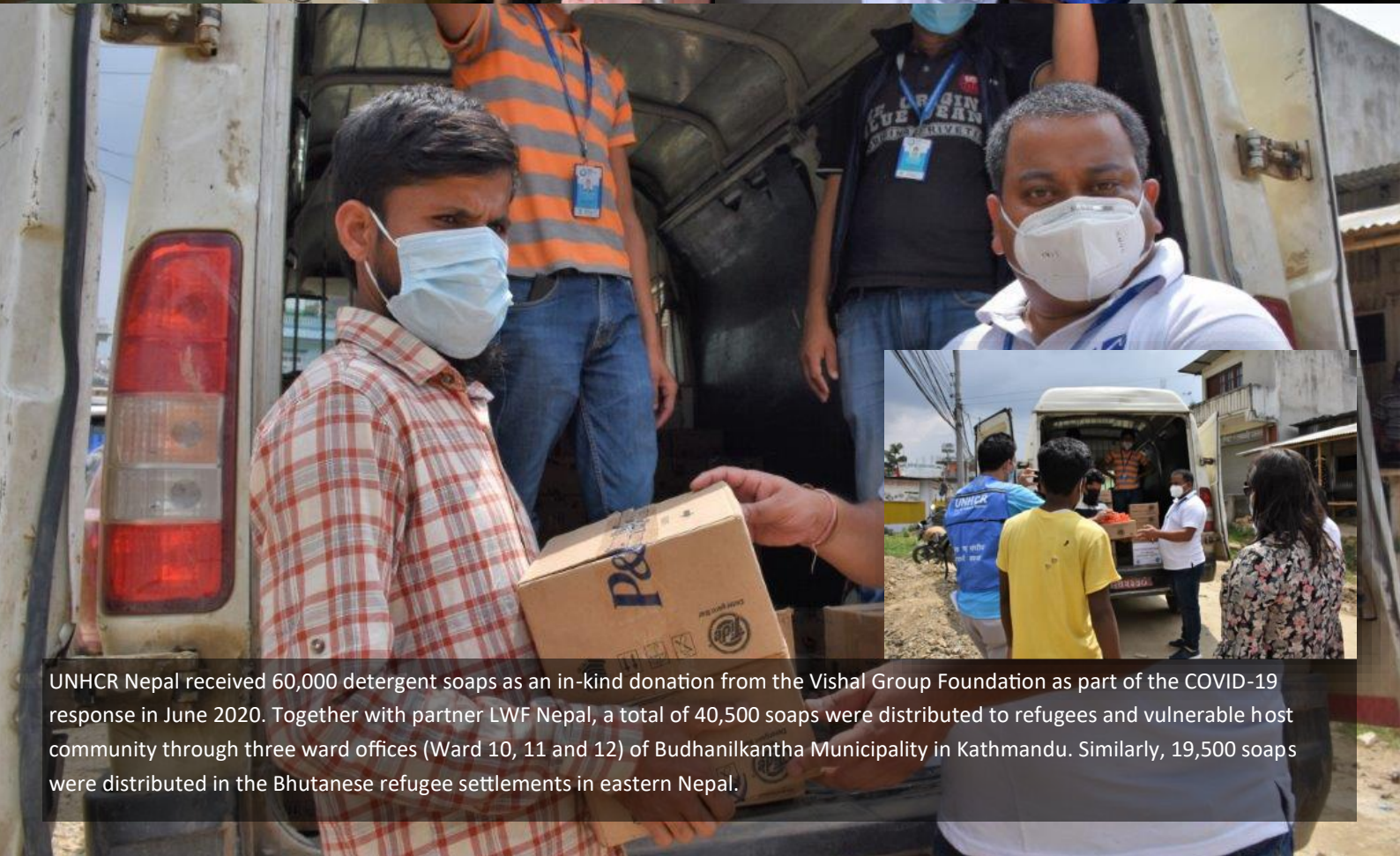
# UNHCR COVID-19 Response



In July, UNHCR partners handed over UNHCR Nepal funded medical supplies to local authorities and a hospital in Kathmandu as part of the COVID-19 response, including 25 hospital beds along with mattresses and pillows, sanitizers, masks and thermal guns to the Mayor of Budhanilkantha Municipality, Kathmandu, for use in the quarantine center.



Similarly, UNHCR Nepal, through partner LWF and Worec Nepal, provided support to the health workers and the One Stop Crisis Management Centre (OCMC) for Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) survivors at the Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital in Kathmandu. Medical supplies including 100 sets of PPEs, 1000 sets of surgical masks, KN95 mask, examination mask, surgical gloves, examination gloves, surgical caps, 50 thermal guns and 200 sets of dignity kits were handed over to the hospital management team.



UNHCR Nepal received 60,000 detergent soaps as an in-kind donation from the Vishal Group Foundation as part of the COVID-19 response in June 2020. Together with partner LWF Nepal, a total of 40,500 soaps were distributed to refugees and vulnerable host community through three ward offices (Ward 10, 11 and 12) of Budhanilkantha Municipality in Kathmandu. Similarly, 19,500 soaps were distributed in the Bhutanese refugee settlements in eastern Nepal.



# COVID-19 Response: Learning Moves from the Classroom to Radio in Nepal



“ We must continue learning by taking this challenge as an opportunity.” These are the words of a secondary school science

teacher Mahesh Prasad Koirala from Nepal, during an interview carried out by Radio Pathshala, a radio education programme that was recently launched with UNESCO’s support to teach learners remotely during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The radio programme reached out to teachers and learners to hear how they have been affected by the school closures and to hear their views on the radio programme.

To ensure that secondary-level students continue to have access to education, UNESCO, through the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Programme, joined forces with Nepal’s Education Development Directorate, and Prime FM Radio. In May 2020, they launched Radio Pathshala, a pilot radio lesson initiative broadcast in the Bagmati Province, with teachers providing educational content and live call-in support to students.

Through CapED funds, the initiative has now been scaled up through community radios in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Nepal’s Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB) covering 77 districts in seven provinces throughout the country.

*Radio education for secondary school students during COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Photo: © ACORAB*

The country’s mountainous landscape and its remote hard-to-reach communities made distance learning through radio, a suitable way to maximise continuity of learning. Tara Devi Adhikari Koirala, a secondary school teacher (grades four to seven) echoed the merits of radios as a platform for education. During the interview she said that, “Radio education programmes are very effective in times of crisis as not all families have access to the internet, television, mobile, etc., it can be heard far and wide in the remotest nook and cranny.”

Likewise, Mahesh Prasad Koirala said, “In such circumstances, radio education programmes seem to be the most effective solution in a country like Nepal which has a unique social environment, social structure, and geographical inconveniences.” He believes that although educators are no longer able to see their students face to face, they continue to play a vital role. “We, the teachers, need to create an engaging environment by constantly keeping in touch with our students and their parent”, he said.

Manisha Lama, a grade 10 student from Namo Buddha Municipality, who was also interviewed by Radio Pathshala, misses her

usual school-days. She appreciates the radio programme but misses the discussions that one can have with teachers when he/she doesn’t understand a topic’. A grade nine student Nireesh Thakuri from the Panchkhal Municipality also misses the usual school experience. However, he said, “I love radio education very much because even during the lockdown, FM Radio is teaching us with their hard work.” He is also glad that the radio lessons follow his school curriculum that he thinks will be beneficial.

Through CapED funds, a rapid assessment of the programme was conducted after broadcasting for ten days. One hundred and eighty-eight individuals took part in the assessment from all seven provinces. The findings so far are positive, indicating that the radio lessons are helping students continue their education.

This programme is one of many digital learning resources that have been developed by development partners, the private sector, and other government agencies in Nepal before and since the COVID-19 pandemic. To avoid duplication of resources being developed, UNESCO also conducted a mapping of existing digital learning resources to inform the government and development partners on gaps so that new vital education resources can be developed.

In addition to this initiative, as part of the CapED COVID-19 response, UNESCO has been supporting the Education Cluster initiative to reach learners in remote and hard to reach areas by printing and distributing of home-based learning materials benefitting some 12,000 learners from Early Childhood Education to grade three. UNESCO has also provided technical assistance to the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) to develop a guideline for teachers and parents to facilitate remote learning and is also alongside the Confederation of Nepali Teachers, training a team of teachers to deliver distance learning.





*From the Right – IOM Nepal Chief Migration Health Officer Dr. Vasil Gajdadziev, Thai Embassy in Nepal Charge d’ Affaires Ms. Utoomporn Ampaivit, Mayor of Changunarayan municipality Mr. Som Prasad Mishra along with municipality and IOM officials with the newly constructed multi-purpose community center on the background.*

*Photo: IOM*

# IOM Hands Over Multipurpose Community Center at Changunarayan to Municipal Authority

**6 July 2020, Kathmandu—**

**T**he newly constructed multipurpose community centre at Changunarayan municipality of Bhaktapur district has been handed over to the municipal authority on 6 July 2020. The building will be used as ‘coordination hub’ by the municipality as part of its crisis preparedness and response efforts including the COVID-19.

The building was constructed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with financial support from Thailand with purpose of supporting the Nepalese people to recover from Nepal Earthquake 2015.

“It gives a feeling of accomplishment that we were able to complete the earthquake-resistant structure within the set time frame and the building can now be an added value to Local Government’s efforts to respond to the current pandemic,” said Dr. Vasil Gajdadziev, Chief Migration Health Officer of IOM Nepal.

The earthquake displaced approximately 2.8 million people. Some 117,700 people in the 14 worst-affected districts were forced to find shelter in makeshift camps.

Similarly, the impact of the ongoing pandemic in Nepal has been increasing daily

with hundreds of thousands of migrants returning home from India after it eased its lockdown from 1 June.

The Government of Nepal has started repatriation of Nepalese stranded abroad since early June as Nepal had imposed nationwide lockdown effective 24 March.

As of 6 July, number of confirmed cases in Nepal stands 15,964 and 35 deaths. Majority of confirmed cases to date are returnee migrants.

“This is an auspicious moment for both countries - Thailand and Nepal - as this represents the former’s support to the latter in its efforts towards building a resilient nation,” said Charge d’ Affaires a.i. of Thai Embassy in Nepal Ms. Utoomporn Ampaivit speaking at the event.

Recalling that in the year 2019 Thailand and Nepal marked 60th anniversary of establishment of the diplomatic relations between the two countries, she expressed her confidence that cooperation and partnership between the two countries and friendship between the people of both sides will keep growing ever stronger.

She then informed that the fund for the project was donated by the Thai people under the Thai Heart for Nepal programme which supports Nepalese people in their

recovery efforts from the damages of the 2015 Earthquake.

Thanking the government and the people of Thailand for their support to build the community center, the mayor of Changunarayan municipality Mr. Som Prasad Mishra assured his further steps in making his municipality a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Champion municipality in the country.

At the onset of disasters, the centre will be used to provide shelter for displaced people with priority given to the most vulnerable, including pregnant women, children, people with special needs and the elderly. The centre will also serve as a venue for community and municipal activities, including women and youth groups, community-based training, recreational pursuits, information dissemination and income generating activities.

Under the same project, IOM has been building similar multipurpose structures in seven other municipalities in earthquake affected districts – Shankarapur municipality of Kathmandu district, Lalitpur Metropolitancity of Lalitpur district, Gorkha of Gorkha, Neelkantha of Dhading, Gosainkunda of Rasuwa, Chautara of Sindhupalchowk, and Bhimeshwor of Dolakha. The project is under the leadership of the Government of Nepal, mainly the Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration.

As co-lead for camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster in humanitarian emergencies, IOM Nepal contributes to government’s efforts in disaster risk reduction and building resilient communities.