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Communities of HOPE

*Insights for Regular Givers
International Nepal
Fellowship Australia*

SHARING STRENGTH

By Ben Thurley

It doesn't take much to remind us of our vulnerability. A cough or something worse. A painful fall. A difficult relationship. We are fragile creatures and things go wrong.

And we only have to turn on the TV or open a newspaper to be reminded that whole communities are vulnerable. When complex machines and systems aren't properly looked after, planes crash or trains collide with tragic impact. People are killed, displaced and terrorised, and whole communities are devastated by wars of greed and hatred. Creation itself sometimes seems to turn against us as bushfires, droughts, cyclones, floods and earthquakes cause calamity and upheaval.

We can see that it is almost always the poorest people who suffer the most in any conflict or disaster. They don't have the resources or freedom to pack up and leave. They don't have the savings or material needed to rebuild after they have lost everything. They often live in countries and communities with limited resources to respond.

Disasters also remind us that we are all connected. Anyone can be struck by disaster. We know, deep in our hearts, that those who suffer at the hands of "natural disasters" or human-caused catastrophes are people just like us who have been thrown into the worst of circumstances. We feel instinctively that something has gone wrong and that we are called to respond with practical actions of care and compassion.

Churches throw open their halls to shelter people made homeless by bushfires. Communities of all kinds make meals and distribute food to victims. People walk from

door to door (or even paddle through floodwaters) checking that their neighbours are safe.

This sense that a disaster is something gone wrong should be familiar to Christians. We pray that the Father's "will be done on earth, as it is in heaven". Which means, of course, that God's will is not perfectly done here on Earth right now. Not everything that happens is in line with God's intention for the world, and we pray in the sure hope that God will renew creation so that disasters will no longer strike. God will one day wipe the tears from every person's eyes.

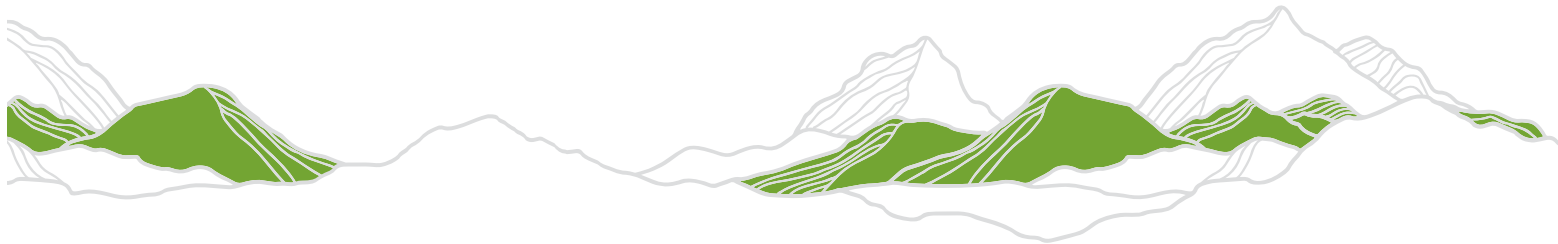
Disasters may literally shake the earth. They certainly shake us. They shake us out of any easy sense of complacency or indifference. They shake us in the direction of compassion and concern; God is passionate for His people to "defend the afflicted" and "rescue those in need" (Psalm 72).

For all these reasons, we respond at every point in the "disaster cycle". When disaster strikes, we act to save lives. In the aftermath, we help people recover and rebuild.

We also work before the next disaster, by helping communities develop the resources and resilience to protect people – especially the poorest and most vulnerable. We work with local governments to help them promote safety and protect human lives. And we work to limit the factors that drive disasters or make them worse, by protecting the local environment, helping communities assess and respond to risk, and supporting people to increase income.

Thank you for being part of this compassionate action.

PILOT PROJECT: PREVENTING DISASTER IN WESTERN NEPAL



“For over 20 years, women have used pumps to access groundwater for their kitchens, gardens and washing of clothes. But now they’re having to walk 2km for water from streams because the changing climate has dried up local sources.”

These are the reflections of Russ Hancock, INF Australia International Programs Manager, on return from his most recent trip to visit communities in Western Nepal. In the time in which Russ has been working with partners, the very real impacts of changing climate have begun to bite hard.

People everywhere are experiencing the impact of earth’s rapidly changing climate, resulting in global temperature increase, rising sea levels, land-based ice melts, floods and fires. But Nepal’s diverse landscapes make the country particularly vulnerable to these changes, which has only exacerbated the risk of natural disasters such as floods, landslides and drought. With the added dimension of poverty, these impacts are devastating for many of the families and communities with whom we work.

Our local partner, INF Nepal, has just launched a 6 month pilot project that aims to work with communities to reduce the impact of climate change and increase their capacity to adapt to it.

Hari Bandhu Aryal, Disaster Risk Reduction/Climate Change Adaptation (DRR/CCA) Coordinator at INF Nepal, echoes Russ’ observation that water levels are decreasing, leaving many without access.

“It is especially the poor and marginalised who are impacted by this, as they cannot afford the resources required to dig deeper holes into the ground,” Hari says. “Depleting water ponds, untimely rainfall and increase in insect infestation is negatively affecting the community, resulting in damage to crops, houses and livelihoods.”

INF Nepal is addressing these issues by working with the community as well as experts to raise awareness of these issues and provide solutions on how to mitigate their impact.

Planned activities include:

- ◆ Setting up the community with access to GeoKrishi, an application linking farmers to resources and assistance about crops and markets.
- ◆ The preparation of community hazard maps.
- ◆ The training of Climate Change Adaption and Disaster Risk Reduction Focal Persons.

Along with this, INF Nepal plans to introduce other activities directly related to agriculture production and storage, the maintenance of irrigation systems, and the creation of a model farm.





These activities have been planned to empower communities in identifying what hazards are present, while also building their capacity to respond to them. It will lead to communities protecting their water ponds, using rainwater for household and agriculture use, and using a forecast based action approach to identifying and preparing for disasters.

Your generosity helps make this possible. To date, over \$57,000 has gone directly to INF Nepal for this climate change initiative, while an additional \$34,000 has gone to our partner Welfare Association for Children Tikapur (WACT) for their own climate initiative.

INF Nepal hopes to use insights from this project to develop future climate change related initiatives which address the ongoing threat of climate change in Nepal.

How your generosity has helped respond to disasters

Since 2020, INF Australia has helped partners respond to ten different disasters in Nepal. These have ranged from floods and fires to landslides and COVID-19.

Preventing disasters before they occur

Your regular giving also helped us provide \$46,000 to INF Nepal to train more than 400 people who work in INF projects in Rolpa, Jumla, Bajura, Kalikot and Kapilvastu. Alongside members of local governments, these skilled leaders will collectively support thousands of people to reduce the risk of climate related disasters, saving lives and creating stronger futures in some of Nepal's most vulnerable regions.



How your donations have assisted

	FLOODING	LANDSLIDE	FIRE
REGION	Banke Bardiya Bardagoriya Kailali Manang	Rolpa Pokara	Rolpa Jumla
COST	\$33,375	\$15,200	\$21,500
HOW MANY SUPPORTED	555 households	98 households	85 households
WHAT WAS PROVIDED	Volunteer mobilisation, operations coordination, rice, oil, lentils tarps, hygiene kits and masks	Gabion wire, stone and labour cost to prevent future landslides, rice, oil, chickpeas and lentils	Tin sheets for house roofs, rice, oil, sugar and lentils

RESPONDING TO DISASTERS: TWO ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES OR SCHOOLS

ACTIVITY 1

Choose which disasters affect Australia and which disasters affect Nepal and place them on the map. (You could use a photocopier to enlarge the images below.)

Are there some disasters that only affect one country and not the other? Why?

What would it be like to experience one of those disasters? What should you do in that situation?



Bushfires



Droughts



Floods



Landslides



Earthquakes



Tornadoes



Hurricanes



Tsunamis



Diseases



Glacial melt



ACTIVITY 2

Read the following things that INF Australia is doing in different areas to help communities prepare for or respond to disasters. For each one, discuss which disaster this could help with and how it would help.

- Making stronger buildings for houses, schools and clinics
- Training people about handwashing and hygiene
- Helping people grow more healthy food
- Providing cooking stoves that use less firewood to stop people cutting down trees
- Helping build bridges and roads that are above the flood level
- Providing communities with blankets, tarpaulins, bandages and food rations
- Helping families build toilets for their houses
- Providing oxygen cylinders, masks and gloves to health posts in remote places
- Training people to identify areas in their community that could be damaged in a disaster
- Talking to people and governments about climate change so that countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions
- Teaching people to grow crops that need less water to grow

Further information about disasters in Nepal is available at www.inf.org.au

