



Movement for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Right to Development



AN APPEAL TO INDIVIDUAL DONORS, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS TO SUPPORT AND COPE WITH PANDEMIC OF COVID-19 IN NEPAL.

Dr. Arjun Karki, Executive Director

SITUATION OVERVIEW

After the effects of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in 2015 and a crippling protests and blockades not long after, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an immensely negative impact on the Nepalese population, especially on the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized communities in the country. Nepal's history is one of hardships and struggle, yet this pandemic has managed to push our country to its already strained limits. Nepal is in the midst of a compounding second wave of COVID-19 and cases are surging rapidly. The healthcare system is already struggling immensely to cope with the situation. The coronavirus is out of control in major cities of most districts, and so there are lockdown and/or prohibitory orders put in place by the government in these affected regions. Hospital ICU beds and oxygen supplies are in severe shortage. The progress of the vaccination campaign has been halted and all domestic and international flights have been stopped indefinitely.

By late March 2021, the impact of the pandemic in Nepal had trickled down to less than 200 infections and 2 deaths per day. Within a month, the rate of infection and deaths skyrocketed to 7388 daily infections, and 37 deaths per day, bringing the total tally since the beginning of the pandemic to 343,418 infections and 3,362 deaths by the first week of May 2021. Now, the whole country is reeling from renewed trauma and suffering from a disastrous second wave, made more calamitous by the emergence of multiple strains of virus variants.

The COVID epidemic is spiraling out of control in Nepal. The Red Cross has warned that the country is heading into the same direction as its neighbor India, which is struggling to contain the virus at a horrific cost.

MEASURING EFFECTS

Poor, vulnerable, Dalits, ethnic minorities, daily wages workers and laborers, and people employed within informal sectors are facing everything from exacerbated food insecurity, to lack of access to urgently needed healthcare services. Supply chains across the nation have shut down — borders are closed, food exports and imports are blocked. Basic facilities for health, education, and production and manufacturing have been disrupted, and transportation services are at a standstill.

As a part of the impact of this pandemic, the GDP of Nepal decreased by 1.9% in 2020, seeing an unprecedented 9% dip from a 7.1% rise recorded in the preceding year. Before this second wave, during a period of perceived recovery, the GDP was expected to increase by a cautious 2.7 % in FY '21 and 3.1 % in FY '22 (WB, April 2021). However, the second wave of the pandemic has nearly devastated these

FUNDING REQUIRED

\$ 3 MILLION



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expectations of economic recovery and its multiplier effects on the income and livelihoods of the vast majority of the Nepalese people.

Upon the announcement of the prohibitory orders (29 April, 2020) in Kathmandu valley, migrant workers returned to their rural roots en masse in an exodus that saw them leaving the urban center at a rate of 50,000 persons per day. More than one million people who were working in the informal sector are now jobless, with no alternative means of income or safety nets to meet their basic needs (food and shelter). These people have now been either relegated to slums within metropolitan areas or been forced to return to their rural homes. The Ministry of Health has since announced that the existing healthcare system cannot cope with the requirements of treatment and services for this drastic rise in COVID-19 patients. People are testing COVID-positive at a rate of more than 5000 daily infections recorded, and hospitals are facing truly distressing shortages in oxygen supplies and cylinders, beds, and medical personnel. It should be noted that the rate of positive-testing patients may be highly under-representative of actual rates of infection, as access to testing is also predicated upon location and personal economic resources.

Similarly, the pandemic has had serious impacts on the education sector, especially pertaining to learning and wellbeing among students. It has severely widened an already substantial gap between the privileged and disadvantaged in their access to consistent and quality education. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) plays a definitive role in education during the pandemic and is unfortunately not within the reach of the vast majority of school-going children that are reliant on the public education system in Nepal. Largely, it is the children in the private education sector that are most likely to have access to ICT. Thus, the pandemic has created an educational crisis due to a preceding and systemic lack of control and capacity the Nepalese government has over its public education system. Public schools and government-run universities are closed and no alternative ICT-based instruction is accessible to instructors or pupils for the purposes of continuity in learning. If left unaddressed, this gap in instruction and access could have devastating and reverberating

long term impact on the future of these students, the Nepalese economy, and the country's social fabric.

CALL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTIONS

Humanitarian and healthcare sectors and services are already struggling to continue at normal capacity, to say nothing of meeting the additional task of ramping up capacity to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Without additional support mechanisms, the fight against COVID-19 in Nepal faces a severely bleak, dark outcome. The lives and livelihoods of millions of rural people that have already been reliant on humanitarian support in the pre-pandemic era, now face exponentialized risk. On 3 May, 2021, the Prime Minister of Nepal issued a statement urging the national and international community to support and contribute towards controlling the rapidly deteriorating COVID-19 crisis in the country. Following this announcement, on 10 May, 2021, the Ministry of Health and Population issued a call for support to its local and international partners to join in the country's efforts to combat this second wave of COVID-19. Similarly, the Social Welfare Organization (SWC), which is the government agency in-charge of regulating INGO/NGOs in Nepal, asked domestic and international relief organizations to extend humanitarian aid by diverting 5-10% of their pre-established resources for pandemic relief. The NGO Federation of Nepal, which is the umbrella organization of NGOs in the country, made an appeal for solidarity and support to cope with the ravages of pandemic in Nepal. In tandem with these appeals and calls for support, RRN is reaching out to our donors and stakeholders for help and aid in order to directly target the pressing needs that have emerged in this crisis.

International media sources like CNN, BBC, and the Guardian have brought much needed attention to the effect of creating impetus for humanitarian actors and international donors to better understand the need for their solidarity and the immense impact it would have. As stated in the Guardian, "The situation is out of control and people are in a helpless situation" (5 May, 2021). Despite government efforts, due to the constraints of resources and infrastructure, the pandemic is turning out to be an overwhelming burden. In light of



these strained and compelling circumstances, Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) appeals to the entirety of our funding partners, stakeholders, national and international network, to support us in this effort to address these urgent needs faced by vulnerable and impoverished families, women, and children in rural Nepal at this time of global pandemic.

RRN ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY TO RESPOND

RRN is Nepal's leading non-profit organization in the human rights and development fields. Since its inception in 1989, RRN has been working with impoverished and marginalized people in rural Nepal to empower them in fulfilling their basic needs, improving livelihood, and building local, community-based institutions. All development programmes of RRN focus on the four-fold approach of Rural Reconstruction i.e. **Health, Education, Livelihoods** and **Self-Governance** as the foundation upon which its programme and project activities are based on. These integrated forms of activities substantially contribute to rural people's empowerment and the socio-economic reconstruction process by embracing rights-based approaches to development. RRN has been granted the Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations since 1997.

Over the years, RRN has implemented over 175 diversified programs/projects in 66 out of the 77 districts across Nepal, directly benefitting more than 1.5 million resource poor and vulnerable households.

Initially, RRN was conceived in order to lend structure and oversight to the process of emergency relief support and for the rehabilitation and resettlement of flood victims in the Eastern Chitwan region of Nepal in 1993. Emergency relief and socio-economic rehabilitation for disaster affected communities has remained a major component of RRN's operational directives for the duration of its twenty-eight-year history.

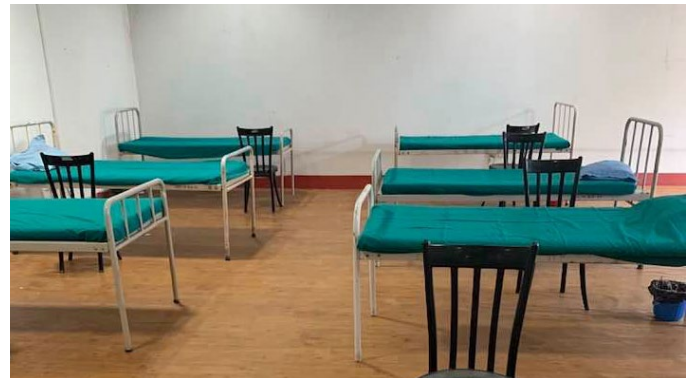
- **As part of 2015 Gorkha Earthquake response**, RRN provided emergency support to 39,062 households and 190,834 direct beneficiaries in 10 highly affected districts.

- **During 2017 Terai Flood response**, RRN supported 8,887 households with relief items.
- **During the first wave of the pandemic in Nepal**, RRN was responsible for setting up the logistical backbone for the COVID-19 response in Nepal, which included the establishment of national and international networks to mobilize humanitarian aid, health supplies, and personnel to the areas where they were most needed. This includes support to set up isolation centers by lending strategy and logistical expertise, and by giving use of our various training centers and their physical infrastructure to house and serve COVID-19 patients in need of isolation and health services.
- Additionally, our organization was the **major contributor across rural Nepal for health safety services, basic health services, and food distribution to poor families impacted by coronavirus**. Concurrently, we continued to implement our ongoing COVID-19 programme and other livelihoods and food for work projects in order to foster employment and income during a time where the livelihood of the rural public was most at risk. Our reach extended to tens of thousands of vulnerable families in various districts including Shankhuwasabha, Morang, Sunsari, Bara, Parsa, Saptari, Shiraha, Chitawan, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Accham, Banke, Bardiya.
- **As a huge request from local and provincial government, RRN is in process of establishing a temporary COVID-19 isolations and quarantine centres at various strategic locations such as Morang, Chitwan, and Banke districts targeting to Nepali migrant workers coming from India.** In Morang, the service started from 15 May 2021 in close coordination with the provincial government. To ensure the effectiveness of service requirements, RRN has its own well-equipped office buildings and training centers with dedicated hygiene and sanitation facilities well suited for the purposes of an isolation and



quarantine facility.

- **Vulnerable and resource poor communities need a robust support from the local and federal government as we navigate the response to this pandemic and to help foster the economic recovery that is ahead.** RRN receives additional requests of support for a diverse range of activities to respond COVID19 from other vulnerable districts such as Bara, Parsa, Siraha, Saptari, Sankhuwa Sabha, Dailekh, Surkhet, etc; Due to the constraints of resources and infrastructure; we are unable to reach them to address their needs.



RRN STRATEGIC APPROACH

We have immense gratitude for our funding partners, stakeholders, local authorities, beneficiaries/participants, and our team-members. They represent the foundation of our hope and give us the strength to continue our work in Nepal. The global health community and the world at large has come together to face the COVID-19 pandemic in perhaps the greatest show of solidarity in known history. We want to evoke this sentiment in appeal to our funding partners, stakeholders, development network, and like-minded citizens and governments across the world. We want to leverage our track-record, pre-existing resources, and our substantial network of individual donors and national and international partners to achieve the following goals for the desperate, poor and vulnerable urban and rural people of Nepal during this second wave:

RRN has been a lifeline to millions of people across Nepal's provinces, many of which are among the most vulnerable to the effects of this pandemic. We continue to provide food and nutrition assistance to these populations, in addition to our current efforts to ramp up healthcare and ICT access. The RRN team has maintained its track-record of being the NGO with the most extensive experience in the nation and continued to demonstrate consistent and exceptional commitment to work in emergency situations during the first wave of COVID-19. Our team stood strong, working with communities across districts to provide protective health services, food supplies, in addition to creating employment and livelihood opportunities to mitigate unemployment precipitated by the pandemic.

1. PROTECTION AND PROVISION OF BASIC HEALTH SERVICES

- Provide basic personal protective equipment to local health centers, clinic and local communities such as oxygen cylinders, face masks, PPE, gloves and hand sanitizers as essential;
- Provide basic COVID kits such as basic medicine, oximeter, thermometer, soap, towel etc;
- Support to establish isolation centers as essentials; and
- Provide psychological counselling on posttraumatic stress disorder.

Funding Required

\$ 0.5 Million

2. ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Provide basic food support through voucher system to the poor, vulnerable and insecure rural and urban families;
- Provide small grants support to the vulnerable communities for quick impact income generating activities; and
- Create mechanisms for cash for work/food for work projects that fosters employment and income.

Funding Required

\$ 1.5 Million



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3. FOSTERING MODERN ICT TOOLS AND EASE ACCESS TO ONLINE EDUCATION

- Provide ICT related infrastructure (such as digital boards, e-learning platforms) and internet connectivity in public and underfunded schools
- Provide low cost computers and laptops and other ICT equipment to resource-poor schools and students; and
- Develop capacity and access to continuity in education, instruction, and learning among school age children that belong to poor and marginalized communities.

Funding Required

\$ 1 Million

All interventions proposed in this appeal with total estimated budget USD 3 million are in line with the Country Preparedness and Response Plan of Nepal. With this quick response mechanism, RRN aims to contribute to the government of Nepal and their sectoral partners preparedness and response efforts for COVID-19 to help mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the health, livelihood, and education sectors in the country.

We hope that this statement of appeal is effective in communicating the dire and pressing need for targeted funding and aid in Nepal. As a leader among the INGO/NGO community in our country, RRN has built itself by consistently demonstrating the ability to effectively and efficiently channel funds and resources to those most in need. By supporting our efforts during this pandemic, you will be directly impacting the health, education, livelihood, and wellbeing of millions across Nepal.

You can reach us via;

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Thank you for your continued generosity and compassion in this most trying of times.



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