

Colleagues struggling in Nepal

The first few days after the April 25 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Nepal passed in a state of disbelief and frayed nerves. We held our breath as we started to hear from colleagues over patchy phone connections and brief tweets. Miraculously, none of the more than 150 people employed by The McConnell Foundation's projects in Nepal were injured.

The McConnell Foundation's funding in Nepal supports projects working to build peace, justice and inclusion. We focus on community-level peace and conflict issues because the national government and justice systems are not fully operational and the country is in a constant threat of instability. Since our efforts have gone to building local capacity, supporting civil society networks and fostering a culture of peace, the work we have supported for the past decade is not eroded by the earthquake. On the contrary, many of the established networks are now engaging to provide lifelines to isolated communities devastated by the quake.

As government aid is slow to reach the remote areas, there is a huge show of "people helping people" in Nepal. Individuals, student groups, and non-profit organizations are



stepping up to assist in any way they can. Some are volunteering to bring free medicine; others are forming lines to remove bricks and debris; others are building toilets where people are camping out in fields. Even in the face of personal loss, there is strong motivation among our project partners to be part of the solution. They are again showing their resourcefulness and resilience and a refusal to be deemed victims. Prabhu Bhandary, Kathmandu-based auditor, said, "People are now collectively rebuilding their homes; (they are) not waiting for government relief."

Many colleagues in Nepal have suffered irreplaceable losses of their homes, friends and close family members. Our hearts are very much with them. There also have been over 170 aftershocks measuring above 4.0 since the initial earthquake. They are still continuing nearly two weeks out. The shaking is keeping everyone tense.

Colleague Eric Lama, of

Kathmandu, shared this, "The aftershocks are really harassing us and have become too much for everyone to deal with. Some of us have already started to live inside (our) homes, but many more have yet to gather the courage to go inside. Many are suffering from the trauma, and even the slightest shaking of chairs and tables makes us worry, and (we) do not know how long it will take us to come out of it."

Please pray that the earthquake settles down so that we can settle down and start a normal life. Sleeplessness is hurting us badly as we can hardly sleep due to constant fear."

Additionally, the approaching monsoon season will add a new level of risk for those without adequate shelter. The heavy rains also trigger landslides that can make remote villages even harder to access.

The McConnell Foundation is not a relief organization. However, we do feel a responsibility to do what we can to help our colleagues and their beneficiaries get back on their feet and regain some level of normalcy. The McConnell Foundation has allocated funds for earthquake relief to each of our current grantees in Nepal. These funds empower the Nepali nonprofits to more effectively use their local

systems of response, to access and distribute food and supplies, and reach isolated areas that are desperate for help. We have also contributed to Give2Asia and The Asia Foundation to help with their national-level coordinated response efforts.

Recovery from this disaster, in a country where livelihood and infrastructure are already so tenuous, will be a long process. For now our thoughts are on the immediate needs for lifesaving relief. Please consider giving generously to Give2Asia or the relief agency of your choice to help our Nepali neighbors recover from this devastating earthquake and rebuild their society.

There are many challenges to the recovery and rebuilding of Nepal, but George Varughese of The Asia Foundation also offers this optimistic perspective: "Nepalis are stoic and resilient. I wouldn't be surprised if they recover sooner than predicted."

Lee W. Salter, president and CEO, and Jesica Rhone, director of international programs, are with The McConnell Foundation. McConnell funds in Northern California and the countries of Nepal and Laos.

Go to redding.com to see photos of Nepal submitted by the McConnell Foundation.