



## RECOVERY FROM EARTHQUAKE BRINGS WATER TO HOMES

Three years after a massive earthquake, Nepal struggles to rebuild. With help from Oxfam and our partners, some Nepalese are getting easier access to water.

BY KATE BENSEN | SUMMER 2018

Tirsana Acharya, now 24, says that when the 2015 earthquake hit her village in Nepal, she and her husband and daughter ran from their home just as it was about to collapse. "We stayed out in an open field for two or three days," she says. "It was difficult to find water, let alone clean water. Even finding dirty water was difficult."

Immediately after an earthquake, water-borne diseases pose the greatest risk to survivors. That's why Oxfam concentrates on helping people with clean water, latrines, and hygiene items like soap. In the weeks and months following the earthquake, Oxfam worked with local organizations in the Sindhupalchowk region of Nepal to improve the water situation in Acharya's village and many others.

### LACK OF WATER BIG PROBLEM

Even before the 2015 earthquake, many villages already lacked a decent, convenient supply of water. Betra Bahadur Khadka is the chairman of the water committee in a town called Jugepani, a small village populated with mostly older people. He says the town had a poor water supply, but, "We were managing somehow. ... The earthquake made our situation worse; it caused our small water source to dry up, and after that we faced a big problem."

Oxfam worked on repairing water systems in Jugepani, in consultation with the local water committee led by Khadka. "Every household in the community thought that it will be much easier to have individual

taps," Khadka says. He and his committee raised money from the community members to help cover part of the costs. "So, with our own contribution, we installed taps in our houses," he says. "It has made a very big difference. Now we don't have to go far from the house for water."

Latrines were another major concern in the days following the earthquake. Hundreds of latrines in Jugepani were damaged and unusable, Khadka says, so Oxfam worked with a local group called Srijanshil to build temporary toilets, repair others, and build new ones. "Every house has a toilet now," Khadka says.

## WATER HELPS WOMEN AND GIRLS

The 2015 magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Nepal killed nearly 9,000 people and injured 22,000. Oxfam responded immediately in seven of the 14 hardest-hit districts with clean water, hygiene items like soap, installation and repair of sanitation systems, and emergency food and shelter. The three-year response assisted 400,000 people.

Oxfam's work in water and sanitation was first designed to avoid massive outbreak of disease. Our efforts were also focused on helping communities build better water and sanitation systems to help address the longer-term public health conditions across Nepal that made six out of 10 children sick with diarrhea on a regular basis, and finds 65 to 75 percent of households lacking a proper supply of clean water, according to World Health Organization and Asia Development Bank statistics.

A more convenient and healthy supply of clean water is also a significant form of assistance for women and girls, who are routinely tasked with carrying water, a time-consuming and physically difficult chore. Females are also frequently the ones responsible for caring for sick family members. Clean water, provided in a more convenient way, reduces the burden on women and girls, improves family health, and reduces medical costs on poor families.

Tirsana Acharya's family is still living in a temporary shelter—but carrying water is



ABOVE: Til Kumari Khadka gets water from a tap Oxfam helped install at her home in Sindhupalchowk after the 2015 Nepal earthquake. Abbie Trayler-Smith/OxfamAUS

less of a burden for her. "After the earthquake, Oxfam constructed this new water supply system and tank, which is nearby," Acharya says. Previously, she used to walk for nearly two hours to get water and return home, and she had to make this trip several times each day.

Since the earthquake, she says, her family is still struggling to rebuild their home and business providing room and board for passing truck drivers. But at least, she says, "I don't have to spend time collecting water. ... We have a water

source so near; it is so much easier to cook food for my child before sending her to school, ... I don't need to stand in a queue for water. Water comes to our house."

"Thank you for giving us water."



PHOTO: COCO MCCABE/OXFAM AMERICA

## DO ONE MORE THING TODAY

As you read this, Oxfam is continuing to help communities affected by the earthquake in Nepal, and assisting people recovering from disasters and war in Puerto Rico, Yemen, Guatemala, and South Sudan. Please consider an additional donation to Oxfam's Saving Lives 24/7 Fund so we can carry on our work, and be ready to respond to the next disaster: [oxf.am/savinglives247](http://oxf.am/savinglives247).



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