



# The Rotary Club of Kathmandu Mid-Town

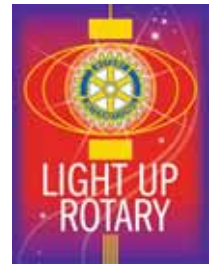
*Celebrating 25 Years in Rotary*

RI District 3292, Club No 26776

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Venue: Fridays at 7:30AM, Hotel de l'Annapurna, Kathmandu, NEPAL



## Earthquake Relief Assistance Report #1 25 May 2015

### Introduction

This is the first in a series of progress reports on earthquake relief assistance prepared by the Rotary Club of Kathmandu Mid-Town. We submit this report to you, our very generous donors and partners, including our sister Rotary clubs abroad. We are very grateful for your solidarity and support at this time of great national calamity in Nepal. Your help has made a big difference in the lives of many victims of the earthquake, particularly women, children and the elderly.

As we indicated in our initial appeal for help, and following the receipt of your generous commitment of financial support, we count on your understanding to accept this collective progress report, and several subsequent reports we will be sharing with you, as our formal accounting and report for your help. Given the heavy workload that our club members are undertaking in delivering the urgent life-saving and protecting work, we simply do not have the capacity to prepare individualized reports for each donor, contributor and partner. But we will keep proper accounts of all income and expenses which will be subject to review by our club's Board and by our independent auditor in accordance with Rotary's standard norms in dealing with humanitarian assistance in the midst of an urgent and on-going crisis situation.

### What items (and how many) were distributed soon after the earthquake?

The first few days after the April 25<sup>th</sup> earthquake there was so much uncertainty, different reports were coming in from the field and phone communication was intermittent. The one constant was that everyone who was asking for help was asking for some kind of shelter or cover from the elements for people who had lost their homes.

Both tents and tarpaulins were in very short supply since Nepal does not manufacture these items. Nepal is a landlocked country –so, some tents and tarpaulins were airlifted by the Red Cross, UNHCR, and other foreign aid agencies. Even in airlifting there were limitations since we only have one international airport and it only has one runway (which is used for both international and domestic flights).

RC KTM Mid-Town worked quickly to secure more than 1300 tarpaulins: including 400 donated by UNHCR; and about 375 donated by our own Rotary International District 3292. Eventually when wholesale supplies became available from India, we purchased about 600 tarps through our members with business contacts in India using the money donated to RC KTM Mid-Town by various donors, partners, and our own club members.

### Where were relief materials delivered and how?

In the three weeks following the earthquake, we distributed tents and tarpaulins to the districts listed here. This is only a partial list since our efforts are still ongoing: Sindhupalchowk: 450; Gorkha: 350; Kavre: 170; Nuwakot: 94; Makwanpur: 50; Kathmandu: 75; and Dhading: 100. Most of these items,

together with 150 solar lamps (donated by UNHCR), were delivered by truck, while some transport was donated, in most cases RC KTM Mid-Town paid for the transport. In one case, where the roads were blocked and we heard the situation was dire, we delivered some 150 tents to the most affected areas in Sindupalchowk by helicopter.

### **How easy is it to transport relief materials to affected villages?**

For many mountainside villages, the devastation has been great and many of the roads are still blocked by the debris left over from landslides and rock avalanches. To date, response teams have identified over 3,000 landslides, and assembled a database of over 250 identified landslides and other large mass movements. The terrain is still fragile and geologists warn of the impending threat of avalanches and rock slides over the next few months. (For a summary of geo hazards see <http://www.icimod.org>). Nepal simply does not have the resources or the heavy equipment to remove the rubble. We expect that many roads will remain closed for a very long time. In many places, supplies will have to be carried on foot or airlifted by helicopter – the task is overwhelming.

### **How did we identify where to donate items?**

Communication and coordination are a continuing challenge and this was especially true during the first two weeks after the first earthquake of April 25. Our strategy was to first work with our three RCC (Rotary Community Corps) and the villages where our Interact Clubs are located since we have a long standing commitment to them. Good communication with these groups means that we were quickly able to assess their needs and dispatch goods to them. We also coordinated with the RID 3292 'disaster desk' who were in communication with the government, and we had a good response from them. It helps that several of RC Mid-Town's past presidents are active at the district level. RID 3292 was also able to coordinate well with the government and with the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) which were relatively well-organized and active during the early days after the quake.

### **What items are communities most in need of?**

The biggest concern is shelter. Tents or tarpaulins - during the early days immediately following the first earthquake we delivered whatever was first available, both tents and tarps. Tarps are easiest to deliver and are cost-effective for immediate relief. One tarp costs about \$10 (without strapping or bamboo) whereas tents are more expensive and more difficult to transport and install, but are somewhat more permanent.

We acquired both pre-cut tarps and bulk rolls (50 tarps per roll) which the villagers were able to cut to the right size according to their needs. The frames are made of simple bamboo logs or from materials that survivors could salvage from the rubble. Where appropriate, we provided them with some funds to purchase bamboo logs. The first two weeks were also difficult because the pre-monsoon rains had started and shelter from the rain was an immediate preoccupation. The weather seems to have stabilized now into the usual pre-monsoon hot and sunny, but the full monsoon rains are only a few weeks away. Farmers tell us that if they cannot plant crops into the ground soon they may be in danger of missing the fall harvest. So this becomes another priority for the coming weeks.

### **What items will communities in earthquake affected areas need next?**

In the immediate aftermath of the quake the debate was whether to provide tents or tarps. Now that things have settled down a bit, we are hearing from villagers that corrugated iron sheets would provide them better protection for the longer-term. These standard 2ft.X 9ft. sheets are a common building material throughout Nepal as they are relatively easy to transport and are very versatile. These sheets can be used to quickly erect semi-permanent shelters and can then also be recycled to eventually be part of more permanent structures. We are now already actively involved in helping to purchase and distribute these sheets.

We anticipate that the situation will continue to change and that the needs will evolve, especially in a few weeks' time when the monsoon rains begin in earnest. We are now better organized and planning to utilize the donated funds to respond to evolving needs. In addition to responding to immediate needs, we are also meeting regularly to see if we can anticipate needs. One idea that has been put forth is to focus on the needs of schoolchildren. As many schools, including those that our club had assisted in the past have been destroyed or seriously damaged, we plan to help in the rehabilitation, reconstruction and retro-fitting of these buildings with earthquake-resistant designs.

### **How were Mid-Town's Rotaracts involved in the relief effort?**

Our Rotaracts have been a great asset in the disaster relief work. They have been always ready and eager to help. Many of them happily helped to load and unload trucks that went to remote locations – riding in the back with the cargo that they were accompanying. They were also involved in the 'heritage cleanup' – in areas where temples and other heritage buildings collapsed. The clean up was conducted mostly by hand in order to be able to salvage the woodwork, statues, and other precious artefacts buried in the rubble. Many Rotaracts are engineering college students – and they assisted the Nepal Engineering Association with rapid assessment of buildings.

Our Rotaracts helped with this painstaking work with special interest since many of them are from the Newari ethnic community who are the indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley whose ancestors created this style of architecture and built these historic monuments and temples. Rotaracts also helped conduct candlelight vigils on the 13<sup>th</sup> day after the quake – the 13<sup>th</sup> day after the death being a memorial day for the deceased in the Hindu-Buddhist culture of Nepal.

We are very proud of our Rotaracts, and grateful to them for their unselfish dedication in the true Rotary spirit of 'service above self'.

### **What is RI District 3292 doing to help with earthquake relief activities?**

Our Rotary District 3292 is still a relatively new district and we do not yet have a 'headquarters' office. Almost immediately after the quake a generous Rotarian offered the use of one floor of his office building with phone communications, storage area, and other amenities that could be used as a Rotary Earthquake Relief Headquarters. Our District Governor, District Secretary, and other District Officials set up office and established a makeshift 'disaster desk' in this building and began fielding phone calls.

The number of inquiries that came into that office (both requests for help and offers of help) during the early days was crushing --especially for a team that was dealing with their own personal tragedies and with the underlying stress of wondering whether another quake would hit. Sadly, three Rotarians and one Rotary Ann lost their lives while attending a Rotary meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Our District 3292 has pledged to work with Rotary International to help rebuild 1,000 homes. Last week, past RI President Kalyan Banerjee visited Nepal on Tuesday May 12<sup>th</sup>, a fateful day when Nepal was struck with a second deadly and devastating earthquake. He was supposed to visit several sites where Rotary is delivering relief supplies (including two sites where RC KTM Mid-Town has been active). Unfortunately he was not able to complete his site visits because of the second earthquake. He was ordered to return home by RIP Gary Huang. Before he returned home, he pledged RI help to rebuild 1,000 schools in Nepal.

### **Is RC Kathmandu Mid-Town still accepting donations?**

Yes, we expect that our relief work will continue for some time. Although the needs are both for cash and in-kind support, currently we simply do not have the capacity to receive goods in-kind. Customs clearance formalities also continue to be very complex and time consuming. At this time we are also unable to receive volunteers or specialist manpower as organizing logistics for their services is extremely difficult. We therefore request all contributions to be received in cash. Your monetary contribution can be sent to our club's bank account as follows:

**Account Name:** ROTARY CLUB OF KTM-MIDTOWN

**Name of the Bank:** Nabil Bank Limited

**Account no.** 0110010688401 **SWIFT:** NARBNPKA

**Address:** Nabil Center, Beena Marga, Durbar Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Telephone:** 977 01-4221718, 977 01-4227181; **Fax:** 01-4226905

Yours in Rotary,

Kul Chandra Gautam (President 2014-15),  
Isabella Bassignana Khadka (Secretary 2014-15),  
Rabi Karmacharya (Club Service Chair and Chair of the Action Committee)

Photos below courtesy of Past Pres Rtn Dr Lekha Tuladar, Rtn Navyo Eller, and Rtn Shushma Kongara (RC Hyderabad).



Our Mid-Town Rotaracts helping to deliver tarps in Nawalpur VDC, Sindhupalchwok





Mid-Towners helping to deliver parcels of aid donated by UNHCR to villagers in Tistung, Makwanpur District– these parcels contain one tarpaulin and blankets.



People gathering to collect tarpaulins – a makeshift sign acknowledges the donation by RC KTM Mid-Town.



Distribution of pre-cut tarps.



When tarps were delivered in wholesale 'roll' form the Rotracts and local volunteers helped to cut the sheets to appropriate lengths and insert eyelets for the strapping.





A scene from our RCC in Lele Village, Lalitpur (only a few kilometers south of Kathmandu) where RC KTM Mid-Town has been active for about a decade. In the foreground, corrugated galvanized iron or steel sheets, (colloquially CI sheets) rescued from the rubble.



This photo shows how displaced villagers cope. Note how corrugated iron sheets are used for roofing in temporary shelters. The discarded orange tarp (at the left) will probably be reused to make provisional siding.