

<b>GURKHA WELFARE SCHEME UPDATE: OCT-DEC 2015</b>
Report as at 31 Dec 2015

1. **General Situation** (GWS's perspective of wider situation including GoN's activities, wider relief operation and any event/news of significant importance):
  - Finally, the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) cell has been established headed by the new CEO Sushil Gyawali. It is hoped the disaster relief work will move forward as anticipated by the EQ victims.
  - District Disaster Relief Committees (DDRC) have been established in the 14 districts declared most EQ affected. DDRC have the delegated authority to approve any new domestic rebuilds. NRA have issued the building codes.
  - Until recently, the authority for any new school builds was given by the Dept of Edn, Ministry of Education. The latter have now taken back the role.
  - The fuel crisis brought on by the Indo-Nepal border blockades continues now for over 4 months. Although the situation has slightly improved with some goods vehicles including fuel tankers entering via other entry points, the main entry point at Birgunj/Raxual remains closed due to the Madhesi movement. This has resulted in a significant rise in black marketeering as well as prices of food commodities.
  - No cooking gas is available in the market and occasional limited distribution results in long queues.
  - Electricity load shedding has now gone up to 15 hours a day and is likely to increase again, especially with it being a very dry winter this year. With no cooking gas available, there is a massive surge in the use of electricity when there is no load shedding, which has resulted in overloading the transformers and burning them out.
  - The shortage of fuel has necessitated austerity measures, resulting in a lot of movement by vehicles being curtailed.
  - The arrival of tourists has significantly decreased.
  
2. **Current Activities:**
  - Qtrly WP/SP payments were completed successfully in Nov/Dec 15 as were the payments of the winter allowance.
  - Back to normal activities after breaks for Dasain, Tihar, Christmas/New Year.
  - All water and school projects ongoing as scheduled.
  
3. **Future Intent:** GWS' main effort remains the construction of pensioner houses destroyed in the earthquakes of 2015; this will be complemented by additional aid in the community and in particular an increase in the construction of major schools from 2 to 12 schools annually. All AWOs in affected areas, whether part of the EQRT or not, have concentrated on kickstarting the process of reconstruction alongside more routine activities, in particular identifying those areas of assistance that support our domestic rebuild strategy. At the end of Feb 16, it is the intention to take stock of this activity and to further regulate the process having had chance to collect some data. It is also the intention to add an extra 40 RWSP Projects to the existing schedule of 80 in order to support earthquake-affected areas and to meet the increasing need.

The HQ is in the process of staffing a business case to DFID for approval and at the same time has begun the recruitment of the 'social staff' required to begin the preparation phase in early '16. Additionally, the HQ is undertaking a modernisation study in order to improve the electronic working practices and reducing the administrative burden on the AWO. It is the intention to formalise this into a Programme and to begin delivery of the related enabling projects during the final quarter of the year prior to its adoption during the next financial year.

4. **Earthquake Response:** The Government of Nepal (GoN) has now passed a bill giving authority for the establishment of a National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) and on 25 Dec 15 Sushil Gyawali, former Executive Director of the Town Development Fund, was appointed as CEO. This should allow the disbursement of the Rs 200,000.00<sup>1</sup> per damaged household and the start of rebuilding according to approved building codes. With winter setting in, however, many are starting to rebuild without waiting for GoN funds or approval.

Work has started on rebuilding seven schools (3 in Jiri, 3 in Gorkha, 1 in Lamjung) identified by the GWS Earthquake Response Team (EQRT). These support local AWC Community Aid programmes, with the aim of gaining CDO consent for the larger objective of rebuilding individual pensioners' homes. This has been complemented by the Op MARMAT 2 deployment which has so far completed two 3 x classroom blocks in Sindhuli and a 4 classroom block and annex to the damaged AWC in Jiri. QGE has now redeployed to Lamjung and Gorkha where work is well advanced on a further two schools and one community hall.

The mobilization of the GWS EQRT in November had an immediate effect on the programme to rebuild around 1,100 individual homes. EQRT AWOs/AAWOs have continued to confirm and update initial survey reports, some of which were conducted hastily in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes. Home owners have been briefed on the GWT rebuilding strategy, how they will qualify for both financial and material assistance, and the recommended designs that are to be adopted for rebuilds. Priorities for rebuild have been amended where necessary and initial payments of both hardship grants (in the case of those houses requiring only repair) and rebuild assistance for those requiring complete demolition and reconstruction, have been made. By mid-December, work was underway on some 45 houses and site clearance was taking place on a further 80 sites, pending digging of foundations.

The fuel crisis has raised the price of materials in some areas but has not proved as disruptive to progress as first expected. AWOs have been directed to pay the full cost of the GWS designed two room house, but to seek a contribution from owners where a larger house is requested, while ensuring the entire structure is built to earthquake resistant standards. To date, approx. £130K has been disbursed in support of individual house rebuild/repair grants; this is in addition to around £700K budgeted for the seven school rebuilds and to those funds disbursed in support of Op MARMAT.

The earthquake response has now really taken off. Whilst the fuel situation is having an effect on pace and on price in general AWCs are making headway. After an untidy 'kick-start' designed to deliver effect and to buy time, it is the intention to do some detailed planning

GoN is still paralysed by having to deal with the political unrest and is making very slow progress with regard to reconstruction. The lack of clear leadership is affecting CDOs' appetite for progress. However, at a local level, the AWOs are pushing forward with reconstruction.

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<sup>1</sup> House owners in receipt of grants from other donors (including GWT) will not be eligible for this GoN grant