

Understanding Vulnerabilities and Strengthening Response

Community-based Integration of Anti-trafficking and Human Rights Protections within Post-Earthquake Recovery Efforts in Sindhupalchok District, Nepal August - December 2015:

Report on learning from an action research project



Authors

Milan Dharel, Writu Bhatta Rai and Nanimaya Thapa

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Protection of women and children as well as marginalised populations is critical in emergencies. The April 2015 earthquake that resulted in an emergency situation in 14 districts of Nepal also led to high risks for women and children. Government and non-government organisations implemented a number of conventional protection interventions. However, many of these agencies did not avail themselves of the opportunity to learn from the community and frontline workers in order to define workable approaches, risk areas and key protection concerns. It is our hope that this report will contribute some measure to the knowledge that will allow a stronger protective response in future emergencies.

Swatantrata Abhiyan and Gramin Mahila Srijansil Parivar together with Free the Slaves and in financial and technical partnership with the Freedom Fund carried out action research to learn from affected communities about better protection responses in emergencies.

We are very grateful to all those who joined in the research, including participants in the scoping interviews, in the workshops and in the follow up interviews, for giving their time, effort and information. We are grateful to Tuki Federation, MANK and CDCEF for their coordination in gathering social workers together and supporting follow up.

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It would be our pleasure to receive constructive feedback on this report and to learn from other similar applications of this community-based response in future and other parts of the world.

Writu Bhatta
Swatantrata Abhiyan

Nanimaya Thapa
GMSP

Neelam Sharma
Free the Slaves

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Summary of Findings

Recognising the increased risk of violence, abuse and trafficking in earthquake-hit areas, Swatantrata Abhiyan, Gramin Mahila Srijanseel Parivar and Free the Slaves Nepal carried out action research following the earthquakes, with important technical and financial support from the Freedom Fund. The research aimed to understand changes in the dynamics or extent of human trafficking and other violence and abuse in the context of the disaster. The project aimed to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms and learn more about what results could be achieved through such mechanisms to prevent trafficking and violence. It explored whether frontline workers living in the area, themselves deeply affected by the disaster, could be consulted and trained during the aftermath, and what practical actions they would undertake as a result.

The action research consisted of preliminary desk review; scoping interviews with 18 key informants from Sindhupalchok district; consultative training workshops for 81 frontline workers of community-based NGOs; and follow up visits with 33 of these participants to map out the changes and learning.

The research found that the participants could provide valuable information on increased vulnerability to human trafficking, and could point to causes and risk factors including inadequate relief supplies, unsafe shelters, uncertain futures, delayed processing of government recovery assistance and the lack of information on relief services. The resulting desperation combined with unrestricted access to the affected populations offered an opportunity for organised traffickers. By sharing these pieces of information with each other, they generated the training content as the workshops unfolded.

With regard to violence and abuse against children, the study identified increased neglect and violence by parents following the earthquake, as well as early marriages and early pregnancy and risk of sexual harassment due to unsafe settlements and sanitation services. Participants also identified significant problems for unaccompanied and separated children in accessing education, adult protection and guardianship, finding alternative care, and protecting their rights to parental property.

Workshop participants and their communities were able to undertake a wide range of activities to help protect those who were most vulnerable, as a result of this training and action research. The action research results make a compelling case for a more deliberate and rapid focus by humanitarian relief agencies on consultation with and training of frontline, community-based workers – even if these fieldworkers are themselves profoundly affected by the disaster.

Key recommendations and learning points from the action research include:

- Areas where there had been protection activities before the disaster are more resilient to trafficking, violence and other risks.
- Community-based facilitation of access to state-provided social protection schemes for earthquake-affected populations enhances actual access and resilience.
- Quickly reviving and strengthening local mechanisms such as village child protection committees and enabling these committees to take collective actions has positive outcomes.

- It is vital to integrate protection activities across all of the cluster activities (e.g. water, shelter, education, etc.) in order to detect problems and intervene. All cluster interventions should use a protection checklist.
- Relatedly, it is highly effective to connect community-based protection interventions with the actions of the district-level humanitarian clusters. Information about risks and available services is vital yet people are most attracted to such information when it is accompanied by material relief.
- The critical local knowledge held by frontline workers is useful for effective provision of humanitarian services and should be regularly accessed through support for participation of such workers in the higher-level cluster meetings.

Based on these learning points, the research has 10 key recommendations including: enabling NGO frontline workers to come together to generate local knowledge about increased risks and to generate protective actions; activating official local committees for protection at community level; promoting integration of protection measures and frequent discussion of these issues among other clusters; and using a protection checklist by all cluster interventions. The recommendations are detailed in chapter IV below.

Chapter I: Introduction

1. The 2015 Earthquakes

The devastating earthquakes of 25 April and 12 May 2015 caused a huge loss for the people of Nepal, with 8,790 deaths, 22,300 people injured, and destruction of more than 500,000 buildings across 31 districts. The government of Nepal's Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) found that 14 out of the country's 75 districts were "crisis hit". The earthquake not only destroyed the physical infrastructure and displaced people but it also hugely affected the fabric of society, and people's physical and emotional health, as well as their livelihood opportunities. There were high levels of trauma and continued anxiety.

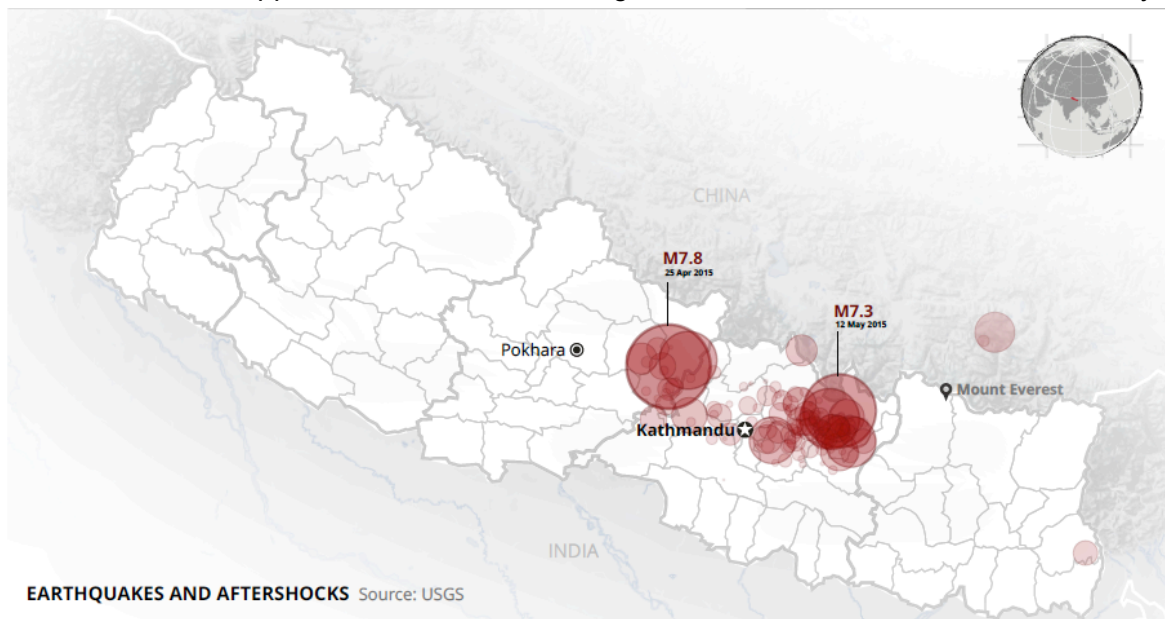


Figure 1: Nepal April Earthquake and Aftershocks profile map. Retrieved from <http://data.unhcr.org/nepal> on 18 January 2016.

Post earthquake conditions have posed unique threats to the survivors in communities: Erosion of social networks and lack of public assistance are making children, women and marginalized groups even more at risk. There is growing concern that thousands who have lost their homes and assets have become targets of human traffickers. Also earthquake survivors face higher threats of physical abuse, exploitation and sexual violence.

At the same time, the capacity of government, international and national relief agencies to offer protections in the worst hit areas has been limited: Isolated communities are hard to access, and the delivery of humanitarian assistance takes place against the backdrop of caste and gender discrimination that may not be apparent to humanitarian actors entering these areas for the first time. **In this context, the capacity of local residents to identify risks and take protective actions against trafficking and other forms of exploitation is vital.**

2. Sindhupalchok District Situation

The action research project selected Sindhupalchok District as the project location for its interventions and research. Sindhupalchok district has a Human Development Index (HDI- a measure of development across several domains where a higher value relates to higher achievement) value of 0.455 (the national average HDI value in Nepal was 0.540 in 2014)

with a population of 287,798 (in 66,688 Households). The PDNA estimated that the per capita value of losses in the disaster is NPR 233,370 in this district.

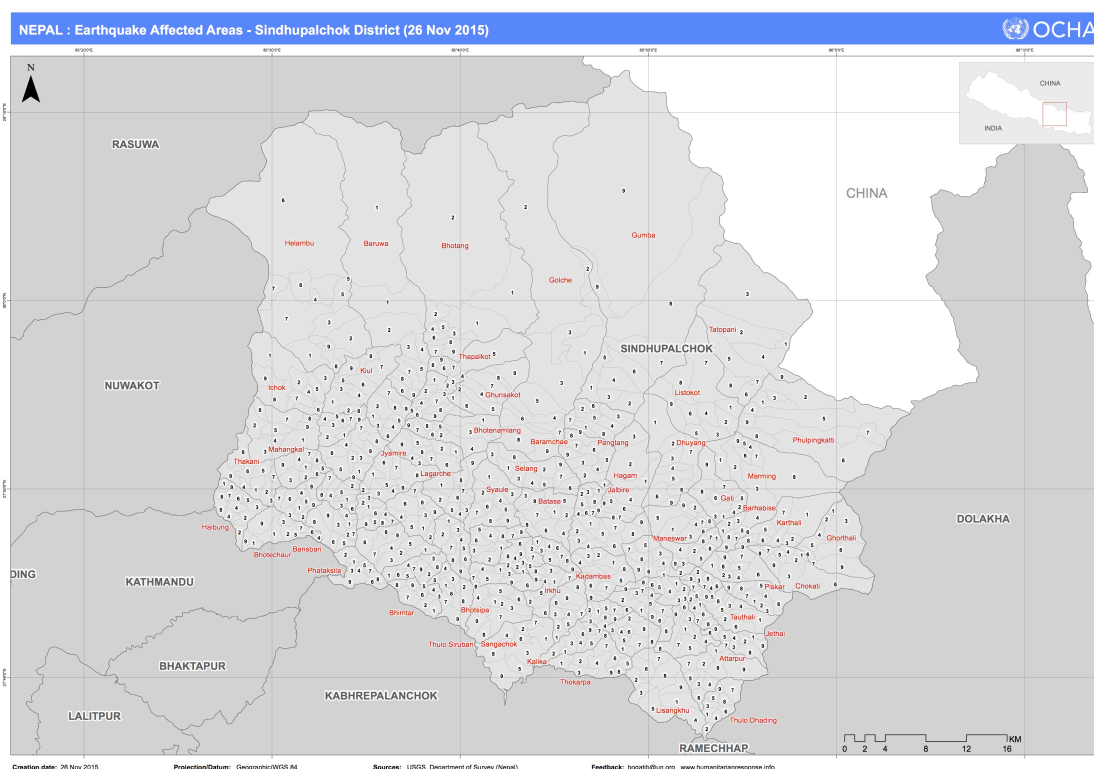


Figure 2: Map of Earthquake Affected Area in Sindhupalchok, Source: OCHA, 2015.

Even before the earthquake, Sindhupalchok was one of the districts severely affected by human trafficking, poverty and labour migration. The 2011 National Population and Housing Census reported that 19,712 individuals (13,035 male, 6,077 female) are absent from 13,778 out of the 66,688 households. In addition, due to its hilly geography and poor infrastructure, people are underserved by essential government services. The 2011 census also reports 6,600 individuals with a disability in Sindhupalchok.

As of 9 June 2015, the UN Nepal Earthquake Assessment Unit reported the following emergency situation in Sindhupalchok:

Table 1: Emergency Situation in Sindhupalchok	
Displacement:	
88% of the total population was displaced;	
39% of the population was living in makeshift shelters in scattered sites; 46% were in displacement sites;	
70% of the displaced persons will remain displaced for more than 6 months including the monsoon period	
Shelter:	
88% of houses were reported to be severely damaged or destroyed;	
Only 3% household started reconstruction	
Food Security	
80% of households had lost more than half of their food stocks;	
56% of households had lost all food stocks;	
Village Development Committees (VDC – lowest units of government administration)	

had on average 4 weeks of food availability.
Health
19% of existing health facilities were reported as closed due to damage or lack of staff
Education
92% of schools were reported to have been destroyed; Parents were hesitant to send their children to school due to their fear of aftershocks.
Water Sanitation and Hygiene
70% of the population currently does not have access to clean water; 50% of people are practicing open defecation, primarily due to the lack of toilets.
Cash and Financial Situation
In 41 VDCs of the 64 VDCs, less than half the shops or markets were open; The main source of cash before and after the earthquakes changed from banks, including cooperatives, to borrowing; In 50% of the VDCs covered, less than half of the needs can be covered through cash.

Source: District Assessment Sindhupalchok, 09.06.2015, Nepal Earthquake Assessment Unit, United Nations.

3. The Objectives of the Action Research Project

Recognising the high vulnerability of the disaster-affected population and the likelihood of severe human rights violations in the post-disaster context, Swatantrata Abhiyan Nepal (SAN) together with Gramin Mahila Srijansil Parivar (GMSP), with advice from Free the Slaves, and funding and planning support from the Freedom Fund initiated a program of action research in Sindhupalchok district.

The agencies undertook the project recognising that there are often assumptions made about increased human rights violations during humanitarian emergencies, but the specific issues actually emerging are often not documented and properly understood. Likewise, the integration of human rights protection measures within the delivery of relief is often constrained and patchy, especially due to the crisis itself, as well as the inaccessibility of populations, and sometimes due to the limited contextual knowledge and language skills of those planning aid delivery. **The initiative was therefore testing whether, despite the obvious challenges, it was possible to bring together field staff of local community-based NGOs to share their knowledge of the emerging human rights and protection issues that they were seeing, as well as to increase their abilities to help local residents to make a practical response to the specific risks of trafficking, violence and exploitation.** There was an expectation that any lessons learned from the action research might have wider relevance for strategies to be used in other humanitarian emergency situations.

The overall objective of the project was therefore to understand the changes in the nature and extent of human trafficking and violence especially against women and children, as well as protection issues affecting separated and unaccompanied children in the post-earthquake situation. At the same time, the project aimed to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms, and learn more about what results could be achieved.

4. Methods

The project used a qualitative approach to collecting and compiling information. The action research project was implemented between July – December 2015, and the methods included:

- i) An initial **desk review** of situation reports by NGOs as well as media reports (see short bibliography in the appendix 1).

ii) **In-person interviews** with frontline workers of 18 agencies, using open-ended questions on key themes (see list of agencies interviewed in the appendix 2).

iii) **Three training workshops**, involving 81 field workers and community leaders (31 male, 50 female) who were associated with four local NGOs: Mahila Atmanirbharata Kendra (MANK), Tuki Federation, Gramin Mahila Srijansil Parivar (GMSP), and Community Development and Environment Conservation Forum (CDECF). Due to travel difficulties, the workshops were held in the 3 different administrative zones of Sindhupalchok on 16 July, 28 July and 1 August, 2015.

The workshops were led by staff of GMSP and Swatantrata Abhiyan. Discussions at the workshops included:

- How to identify vulnerable individuals and human rights violations;
- Information on assistance available;
- How to reunite unaccompanied or separated children with caregivers;
- How displaced people in tents or camps can watch out for traffickers and for violence against women and children, and can know how to respond and report on these issues;
- How to boost local residents' awareness of these risks;
- How to make practical arrangements for coordination between local groups around these issues; and
- Other emerging issues from participants.

Each workshop included creation of action plans by participants. Conditions for these workshops were extremely challenging given that most participants and those leading the workshops had lost their homes and belongings, food provisions were in short supply, and transport in the area was not functioning. Nevertheless, the main objectives and necessary level of participation were achieved.

iv) Production and circulation of a **project information booklet** titled "*Vulnerabilities and Protection in Disasters*". This highlighted increased risks of trafficking and other forms of violence and exploitation; described provisions already in place to assist people in Nepal; and ways that local NGOs and parents could try to protect family members and local residents. 3000 copies were shared with local NGOs and interested organizations. Nepali and English versions can be downloaded from www.swatantrataabhiyan.org

v) **Post-training follow-up interviews** with a total of 33 frontline workers and 2 main local NGOs, in order to take an update on their identification of human rights protection issues and the responses that had been undertaken at local level. The follow up interviews were conducted in two phases: one after 3 months; and one after 6 months.

Chapter 2: Findings

The findings are presented under three headings: changes in the perceived extent of the problem and the reasons for vulnerability; strengths and gaps in existing responses; and any outcomes of the action research intervention, including any effective responses that were identified.

2.1 Changes in the extent of human rights abuses, and reasons for increased vulnerability

a) Human Trafficking

Given the difficulties of survival and absence of food and shelter, it was expected that community members would be targeted by traffickers. The study aimed to identify any evidence of increased activity by traffickers and community-level responses.

The desk review for this research identified multiple media and NGO reports of increased trafficking as well as of distress migration, and some of the reports specifically mentioned Sindhupalchok as a source area. **The implication of increased intensity of trafficking was confirmed during the initial scoping interviews and workshops.** In the interviews, 10 out of 18 respondents mentioned that human trafficking has increased after the earthquakes. However, many of them did not report specific evidence of an increase. An example of the experiences of distress migration and trafficking included:

“Families with children have been migrated; the number of children in school is not as before. We don’t know where they are. We are helping whoever is at the village” - A frontline NGO Worker, Sindhupalchok

Participants in the interviews and in the workshops identified **different reasons** for vulnerability to trafficking, methods of traffickers and key target groups, as well as the main destinations for trafficking from the earthquake-affected communities:

Need for shelter and income sources: The survivors of the earthquake are tempted if anyone offers them opportunities for employment, income and shelter for the family. Participants highlighted that inadequate relief supplies (food and clothes), unsafe shelters (open and in tents), uncertain future (school and income), delayed processing of government recovery and reconstruction process have all influenced people to find an alternative to secure their children’s well-being. As usual, relatives, family members and trusted intermediaries have been used to convince parents, children and youth to take up opportunities.

“As there is inadequacy of food, not conformity of opening of schools, and the temporary settlements are not safe for girls, it is easy for guardians and grown up children to be convinced with relatively better options. That is often to go to city for work with schools, foreign employment for [those ages] 15 years [and] above and even early marriage for girls.” - Participant of Chautara workshop

Lack of information about relief provision: There has been a lack of information among community members about support available from the government for disaster victims. This combined with confusion about how to replace lost official documents that were often essential for accessing such relief. There was also a scarcity of information about the government’s resettlement plan and policies. One local government official interviewed for the research explained as follows:

“People who lost their documents like birth certificate, citizenship, land certificate now find it difficult to get support. We are now confused on how to handle the problem” - Government official, Sindhupalchok

Ability of traffickers to have free access to displaced people: Participants highlighted that unmonitored access into the temporary shelters and camps of the affected community has been capitalised on by the traffickers. In the local areas this was not impeded by police activity. Participants emphasised the inadequate and untrained presence of police both at police stations and in communities.

Participants suggested vulnerability factors, methods of the traffickers, target groups and destinations for traffickers as follows:

Table 2: Trafficking Dimensions in Earthquake-Affected Communities			
Vulnerability Factors	Methods of traffickers	Target group	Destination for trafficking
Death and loss of guardians/parents; Existing connections with urban areas (mainly Kathmandu); Residing in temporary shelters with free and unmonitored access of outsiders; Lack of protection information; Inadequate mobilization of police in the area; Dire need of daily essentials (food, and money); Fear of further victimisation and disaster (landslides, flood, more earthquakes, volcanoes); Collapse and destruction of local government offices and their records.	Offers of relief support (food and essentials) Offers of skill training and jobs; Provision of loans for labour migration; Mobilizing local spotters (to identify potential victims); Falsifying birth certificates and making passports; Offering marriage to foreigners.	Youth and adolescents (both male and female) Mainly from isolated locations;	Kathmandu and other cities; Gulf Countries; and India. In following sectors: Multiple types of labour migration (unsafe and falsified); child labor mainly domestic work, hotel and restaurants; entertainment industries (cabin restaurants and dance bars); commercial sex work; institutional care.

Source: Workshops with frontline workers and in-person interviews

b) Violence, Sexual Abuse and other Exploitation

Desk research identified various indicators that this would be an area of concern. For example, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) identified an expected increased risk of gender-based violence against women and girls following the earthquake. They estimated 28,000 women in Nepal would require post-rape treatment¹. A Child Rights Officer from the District Child Welfare Board also provided information that an estimated 800 plus children were identified as children at risk of abuse and violence due to their personal and settlement circumstances in the post earthquake situation.

During the scoping visit and interviews, participants shared that there is an increased incidence of violence, sexual abuse and other exploitation. Shortages of food and

¹ #dignity first Nepal Earthquake: 5 month progress report of the humanitarian response, 25 April-30 September, 2015, UNFPA.

resources, unemployment and low resilience have made people feel distressed, leading to more abusive behaviour. Key issues were as follows:

Violence and neglect by parents: Respondents said that harmful parenting practices, especially the use of corporal punishment, have become rampant. Violence and exploitation was also often linked to increased alcohol consumption. One respondent explained:

“Many people in distress have started high level of alcohol consumption in the name of relief of stress. Both parents are found drunk and they do not feed and care for their children properly.”

- Training Participant from Melamchi

A further cause of this neglect was that after the disaster, adults have to work harder for survival and cannot stay near their children.

“Due to post disaster, people have to work more than they used to. As a result they have to leave their children and elderly people at home which creates a risk of less parental care and abuse from outsiders.”

- Participant of Chautara

Early marriage and early pregnancies: According to the respondents, the same difficulties of families to provide for children, and the struggle to protect adolescent girls, is leading to increased early marriages and early pregnancies. One gave the following example:

“In Mankha VDC, a girl who fell in love with a boy got pregnant. But her boyfriend and family don’t want to accept her. Both of them are adolescents. Protection of the girl and her baby has become a big challenge to us.”

- Training Participant from Mankha

“A 17 year old dalit girl was found with pregnancy in community. When she was asked about the incident, it was found she was forced to have sex with a villager while they were on the way to receive relief support. She has been threatened not to share this with any one by the abuser. As the girl is scared of stigma and risk to her family, she doesn’t want to make a complaint in police.”

- Story shared during training

Risky shelter and sanitation arrangements: Shelter conditions after the earthquake have posed unique threats to survivors. The contributing factors for sexual violence against women and children include: multiple households in shared temporary shelters, lack of private bathing facilities, lack of lighting in and around the camps, and absence of police. One fieldworker explained:

“The disaster made us more in problem than men. It has been difficult for us to change our clothes and sanitary pad while living in the same shelter or tent. It is even more difficult for girls/adolescents in community.”

- Community Facilitator, local NGO

To summarise, the following patterns of problems were listed by participants in the interviews and training workshops:

Table 3: Violence, Sexual Abuse and Other Exploitation	
Key Problems	Major Facts and Cause Factors
Physical violence against women	Unemployment, financial crisis, uncontrolled use of alcohol, increased male distrust against female partners

	while living in shared shelters.
Physical violence against children	Mainly in schools and family; not reported; Common practice before earthquake; Absence of psychological care for parents and teachers
Sexual violence against women and girls	2 cases of rape were reported to district police of Sindhupalchok after the earthquake through August, 2015. Unsafe settlements; lack of safe toilet facilities for women and girls, lack of light at nights; free alcohol consumption; inadequate police service.
Early Marriages, early pregnancies	Financial crisis, food deficiency, school drop out, adolescents in close living arrangements in camp without reproductive health knowledge; loss of parents

Source: In-person interviews and training workshop.

c) Separated and Unaccompanied Children

The risks for separated and unaccompanied children were generally well-recognised by the government after the earthquake due to Nepal's past concerns regarding institutionalisation of children as well as some harmful past practices in child adoption. During an interview in August 2015, Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB) reported that it had identified 2,021 children as separated (266), orphaned (156) or lost one parent (father lost- 751, mother lost- 735) and unaccompanied children (113). In Sindhupalchok, the District Child Welfare Board (DCWB) identified 34 children as orphaned, and 501 children as unaccompanied and risking separation. The DCWB also identified 42 child-headed households in the district.

The research participants identified the following recurrent and important problems regarding unaccompanied and separated children:

- Managing and continuing the education of children;
- Ensuring adult protection and guardianship for children;
- Increased risks of violence and abuse, and in the case of girls, early marriage;
- Protecting children from being automatically moved to child care homes, and instead, finding ways to provide alternative non-institutional care of good quality;
- Ensuring access to relief and reconstruction support and other social protection schemes for child-headed households, orphaned and semi-orphaned children, often in the absence of legal documentation of identity;
- Protecting children's rights to their parents' property. This was an issue in some cases because extended family members and relatives would attempt to take over the parental property of children and single women, and would also conceal the existence of children in order to benefit from the government support schemes for deceased family members. It was important to obtain legal documentation in order for children in these circumstances to access compensation and relief support.

Community-based care practices for orphans and unaccompanied children are not well-established in most areas, and the remaining relatives are also heavily affected by the earthquake, so promoting alternative non-institutional care for the children is a challenge for the community workers. It has been hard to sustain a means of income to support the children, and for them to feel safe and protected to stay in their communities.

2.2 Strengths and Gaps in Government and NGOs' Existing Responses

As of 30 September 2015, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) identified 38 NGOs working on protection issues in Sindhupalchok:

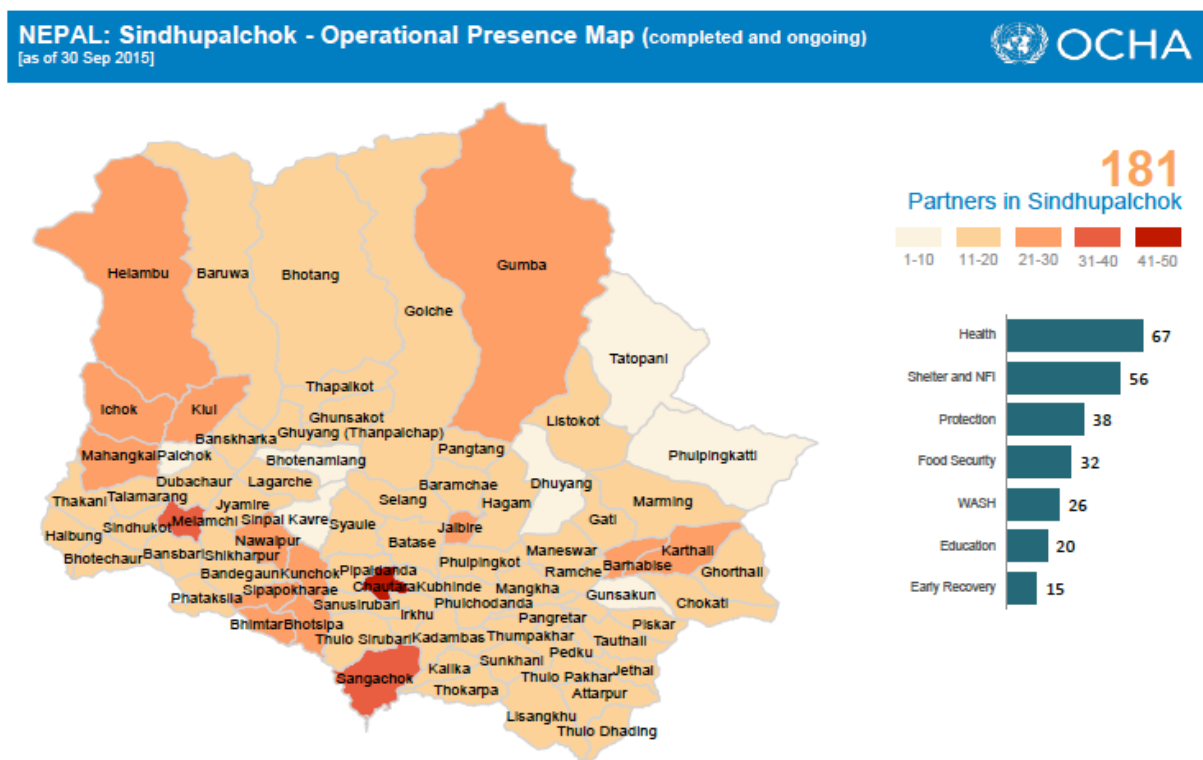


Figure 3: NGO presence map as of 30 September 2015 in the Village Development Committees of Sindhupalchok. Provided by OCHA, (30 Sept. 2015)

Government and NGOs took a range of specific actions in response to **vulnerability to human trafficking** after the earthquake. For example:

- The government of Nepal stopped new adoption approvals and also stopped the creation of new childcare homes.
- Nepal police instructed local police stations to monitor the situation and trace any cases.
- At police checkpoints, children traveling with unknown individuals were intercepted and efforts were made to stop suspected trafficking for child labor.
- NGOs also operated checkpoints. They raised awareness and worked to revitalise community groups for vigilance and response to trafficking.

In response to concerns about **preventing violence and sexual exploitation**, state agencies and NGOs created protective interventions such as Child Friendly Spaces, Female Friendly Spaces, Listening Points, Checkpoints, and training for local social workers as well as wider public awareness. The following table describes some of the government and cluster interventions in Sindhupalchok district in response to these issues, as described in the interviews:

Table 4: Interventions to address Violence, Sexual and Other Exploitation in Sindhupalchok district	
Interventions and number	Results
Child Friendly Spaces -65	Benefitting around 10,000 children (District Child Welfare Board (DCWB))
Female Friendly Spaces and Outreach - 3	Reached 7,000 plus women and girls including through the outreach program (GMSP)
Listening Posts	Found 6 boys sent to child labor from two villages, who were freed and reintegrated in family (DCWB)
Checkpoints - 3	Intercepted at border and found 91 children traveling to unknown destination, who were stopped and reintegrated in family. (DCWB/MANK)
Training and Workshops	Through a number of community-level orientations more than 1000 people are educated about protection risk and required actions. The training was focused on preventing trafficking and domestic violence against women and girls. (District Women and Children's Office (DCWO))
Public Awareness	Number of NGO shared messages on trafficking reaching almost all affected population through FM radios, leaflets and flyers distribution. (DWCO)

Source: In-person Interviews.

In response to concerns about **unaccompanied and separated children**, the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB), immediately after the earthquake, banned inter-country child adoption, did not allow the opening of new childcare homes and did not permit children to travel with unknown persons. CCWB also took the lead in documenting data of unaccompanied and separated children. With the help of Nepal police, CCWB took efforts to check transport in 22 spots in order to identify children on the move. Out of 2,021 separated and unaccompanied children identified through different methods, CCWB was able to reunify 353 children with family, provided temporary stay in childcare homes for 88 children, and 73 children were supported for longer-term childcare home stay, through the District Child Welfare Boards.

Participants in the interviews and workshops identified the following **gaps in the existing interventions**:

- As indicated in the map above, the relief and protection efforts were heavily concentrated in the southern and more accessible areas of Sindhupalchok, with the highest number (61) in Chautara (the district headquarters), leaving populations in remote areas at increased risk.
- The humanitarian cluster system worked without adequate coordination and communication among the different sectoral clusters. Further the inability of Nepalese organization to actively participate in cluster meeting due to financing for travel and language barriers also caused neglect to local knowledge and practices.
- Human trafficking and other risk issues were not well incorporated into education, health, water and sanitation, shelter, food and non-food relief clusters. Given that residents are more attracted by deliveries of relief and reconstruction supplies than by information and awareness sharing about protection issues, more use could have been made of relief deliveries to provide human rights protection advice.
- The protection cluster mainly worked on raising awareness through information materials (leaflets, flyers and radio messages) and establishing checkpoints and

providing assistance for reported cases, but has not been sufficiently pro-active on community engagement and early detection of cases.

- Limited efforts were put into reviving the official groups that are based within local communities, such as Village Committee for Controlling Human Trafficking (VCCHT) and Child Protection Committee (CPC), and there has been limited engagement of the ward citizens' forums that could take the protection agenda into the affected area.
- There were not enough child friendly spaces and female friendly spaces and the standard was inadequate.
- Psychosocial training provided to schoolteachers was short and not adequately utilised.
- NGOs did not coordinate well and operate a referral system.
- NGOs/INGOs often did not communicate about their community level activities.
- Staff deployed in Child Friendly Spaces and Listening posts sometimes needed more training and experience.
- Cases including sexual violence tended to be resolved through community mediation rather than holding perpetrators to account.
- There were insufficient police officials available to report and handle cases. Police posts were not properly able to handle cases of violence and abuse.
- There were not enough facilities for transitional care and shelter for survivors of violence.

2.3 Outcomes of the Workshops

One of the main purposes of the action research was to learn more about what it was possible for community-based groups to do, in terms of providing practical protections, within the context of this humanitarian crisis. Tracking the actual activities carried out by participants was therefore a key part of the research.

After the training, participants were asked about what they had actually done as a result of the training. They reported that the trained participants from the NGOs intervened at a local level in relation to **prevention of human trafficking**, integrating the component of detection and referral actions on human trafficking problems. Prevention efforts were focused within education work, shelter management and other humanitarian assistance. Specific findings from the 33 interviews are provided below:

Table 5: Action Plan and Actual Activities by Frontline workers	
Action Plan	Follow Up findings on activities
Reviving community-based groups - <i>Child Protection Committees, Children's Clubs and Village Committee on Controlling Human Trafficking</i>	20 participants mentioned that they helped to reorganise Child Protection Committees, Village Committee to Control Human Trafficking and children's clubs. They did this in more than 30 places. They trained these committees and now many of them are active.
Monitoring Local Spaces - <i>Child Friendly Spaces, Temporary Learning centers and Schools</i>	16 participants reported that now the people staying in temporary shelters inform them if strangers or any new agencies enter into the camp area. Residents have identified early the cases of children who have left the village for work, or women who are in an unsafe process of labour migration.
Raising Protection Awareness: <i>in Camps,</i>	All 33 respondents organised community meetings and awareness programs at local level reaching more than 4000

Relief Service Delivery, Schools and other cluster work.	people.
Referring cases of human rights violations and human trafficking to the related authorities	Respondents reported that despite the identification of human trafficking cases, it was hard to ensure legal action, because victims don't want to file cases; or the traffickers tended to use political influence so that there was informal mediation between the offender and victim.
Other engagement reducing vulnerability	11 participants mentioned they helped affected community members, including students to access to government social protection schemes (such as immediate relief support of NRs.15,000 per family, winterisation support of NRs.10,000 per family) reaching more than 165 people.

Source: Post training follow up interviews.

The following are case studies of anti-trafficking actions taken as a result of the training workshops provided for local NGO fieldworkers. It is to be considered that the participants were not provided any additional material resources to take follow up actions; all the acts were done on their own or mobilizing local resources.

Rescue of trafficked 15 year old

In Baramchi, after earthquake, people were living together in open places, which became a golden opportunity for traffickers. A person who was wanted by police for alleged human trafficking showed his face in the community and was able to convince a 15 year old girl for a better job in Kathmandu. He even gifted some money and a mobile phone to her and some relief support to the family. He took her to Kathmandu promising to provide a better job without informing girl's family. The social worker at Baramchi came to know about this. She was trained on protection action by this research project. She quickly suspected trafficking. Thus she coordinated with a villager who was retired police officer and helped family to file an application in local police post. Later on Area Police Office of Bhaktapur arrested the trafficker and finally girl was saved. The girl is currently assisted by an NGO transit service in Kathmandu.

– Story Shared by Social Worker, Baramchi

Prevention of sex trafficking

In Pangtang VDC, after the earthquake 5 women were convinced for working in foreign land with free visa and processing. All of them made passports and were dreaming of a better future of their children in crisis time. Meantime the agent asked Nrs. 50,000 from each person for visa processing and travel expenses, which made these women take loans from their relatives and neighbours. Finding out about the risk, local women informed VDC level women's protection group that had been formed after the earthquake to monitor trafficking and other cases related to women. The protection group members met and discussed with the women who were in process of migration about the legal procedures of getting a visa and work permit. When they found out that the process they went through was not legally right, three of the women immediately cancelled their plan; whereas two of them still went with agent. One of these women was the second wife of the agent and other was a relative. A month later, the relative woman came back with a story of how they were sexually exploited and entrapped, and how she managed to escape from Delhi with the support of another Nepali person.

- Participants during Follow Up interviews

With regard to **preventing violence and sexual abuse**, following the training workshop, the frontline workers of the NGOs were able to undertake various actions. For example, one of the workshop participants explained:

7 Year old Boy Prevented from Unnecessary Institutionalisation

In order to avoid the difficulties of managing daily necessities, and influenced by traditional cultural practices of sending children to religious institutions, a couple in Navalpur, Baden Gaun had decided to send their 7 year old boy to be monk in monastery without the agreement of the child. As the Government has not allowed the taking of children out of the district without approval from government authorities, the couple went to VDC secretary for approval letter to take the child out of the place. Reaching to the village office, the trained participant identified the case and recommended that the District Child Welfare Board should intervene. The child was prevented from separation from his family and support was provided to the family by DCWB.

– Story Shared by Participants at Melamanchi.

Strangers Suspected and Controlled in Mankha

After training, a social worker of GMSP educated the people in the camp that they should be cautious with strangers coming to the camp and should have close monitoring of their activities. In Mankha VDC, one stranger used to visit the camp frequently during the evenings, which was suspicious. Later on, 35 people from the camp informed the police about the stranger and quickly the police interrogated him and asked him not to visit camp in such a way. The police inspector appreciated the efforts of the camp people and provided his direct contact number to them for complaining whenever required. In addition the inspector also deployed three times patrolling in the camp area to ensure safety of girls, and security in the settlement.

– NGO Facilitator from Mankha

*“In my Child Friendly Space, after training, 60 children got psychosocial services, I referred 3 cases to office for further support, gave support to identify 2 missing children and kept data of children attending my class from a nearby area.” - **Social Worker, Phulphing Danda***

The actions undertaken by the participants, and the outcomes are as follows:

Table 6: Action Plan and Actual Activities by Frontline Workers to Address Violence	
Action Plan	Follow Up Findings on Activities
Identification of cases of violence and sexual abuse	Participants of the training referred 37 cases of gender-based violence to GMSP and MANK. Participants of the training referred 10 cases of physical violence and psychological distress to Tuki.
Identification and action on early marriages	3 cases of early marriage were reported to police and prevented.
Identification and referral of cases, or of persons at	Referred more than 300 families and children for required services to the district level agencies.

risk	
Reducing risks at community and camps	<p>23 participants shared that they monitored the camps and settlements management, and arranged lights and safer toilets for women and girls.</p> <p>In 5 communities participants worked to ban sale of alcohol till late night, around camp area and to the children.</p> <p>In 7 camp areas, participants worked with police to have regular patrolling in the evenings and daytimes.</p> <p>Facilitated individuals to access social protection schemes;</p> <p>Ran psychosocial training in schools for teachers enabling them to provide psychosocial first aid for students.</p>

Source: Post training follow up visits

The following are case studies of actions taken against violence and sexual abuse, as a result of the training workshops with local NGO fieldworkers:

Counselling for traumatised child

A 6 year old girl was identified with psychosocial problems while attending Child Friendly Space. Information about her father's death had been received just before the earthquake. She lost her little sister in devastating earthquake. The incidents of life shocking and surroundings made it difficult for her to accept the changing scenario in short span of time. She has been quiet and not engaging within society. She was referred to a counsellor from the Child Friendly Space. However counselling stopped after project finished and now she is living with her mother.

- Child Friendly Space Facilitator

Stopping domestic violence due to alcohol abuse

In Pangretar village, the women safety group found a woman has been continuously victim of domestic violence by her husband. The husband often gets drunk, and even misused the relief amount received from government. With the facilitation support from the social worker, the women safety group called the husband made him accept his mistake as well as to apology with his wife. Further the safety group also requested police not to allow selling alcohol round temporary settlement. After these incidents, the women safety group reported, some other cases of domestic violence also stopped.

- Social Worker from Pangretar in Follow Up Consultation

Support for abused child

A case of discrimination by a stepmother was reported to the facilitator of a Child Friendly Space in Mankha VDC. A girl aged 5 used to yell and bite her friends. In addition to that, she used to get irritated and was more unusual than other children in community. During investigation on her behaviour it was found that she had been neglected within the family. Neighbours also reported misbehaviour from her family. Later on with support of facilitator, she got educational and economic support. With regular communication and counselling, she started to follow the instructions given by facilitator.

- Social Worker from Mankha

Although the issue of **unaccompanied and separated children** is relatively new, and the practitioners at community-level were not familiar with methods of providing alternative care, they took some practical actions to assist unaccompanied and separated children. The following table provides examples of the interventions by the trained community workers in relation to unaccompanied and separated children:

Table 7: Action Plan and Actual Activities by frontline workers on Unaccompanied and Separated Children	
Plan of Actions	Follow Up Findings on Activities
Identification of separated and unaccompanied children	330 children (unaccompanied, separated, orphan and semi orphan) were identified and referred to District Child Welfare Board.
Identification of orphan, semi orphan and at risk children	
Assisting children to obtain legal identification and enable them to claim compensation and relief	5 children's birth registration cases were facilitated through the Child Protection Committee 51 children got education support 26 got education and additional child grant support of NRs. 5,000 each
Reintegration of separated children	26 children were reintegrated with family
Support for separated and unaccompanied children	30 children (unaccompanied, separated, orphan and vulnerable) were accommodated in the child care centre of MANK 15 children with disability were referred to Karuna Foundation

Source: Post-training follow up visits.

The following are case studies of actions taken for **unaccompanied or separated children**, as a result of the training workshops with local NGO fieldworkers:

Girls returned home

Two 15 year old girls ran away from home to avoid deprivation and risks in the village and ended up working in a fabric store as sales girls. Local social workers were informed about the missing girls in community. They made a complaint through the police. Realising that the girls might have been alone or without parents' concern, the employer informed the police about the girls. The communication between police stations about the missing girls meant that they could find them quickly, and finally with the help of police and employer, the girls were reintegrated in their families. One of the girls continued school after returning and another girl is referred for counselling service.

- Participant in follow up

Obtaining Legal Documentation

A 14 year old child whose father had died long back and mother has been to Gulf as a migrant worker, lost his grandmother in the earthquake. He was denied an identity card because he doesn't have a birth certificate or any supporting legal documentation. His relatives did not show any interest to refer the case and help him. The community group contacted his uncle living in Kathmandu and put pressure on him to come back to the village and present himself as a witness for making the child's legal documentation. Finally the boy got an identity card, was able to open a bank account and claim ritual relief support, compensation for deceased family and also was able to protect his parental property.

– Participant from Bande Gau-8

Chapter 3. Learning

The action research project ensured that there was continuous engagement between the study team and the frontline workers. This has meant that collectively, there has been significant learning. **The following learning points could be applicable for strengthening protection interventions in other locations in future.**

3.1 Learning

The key question for this action research was whether a conscious and targeted consultation with and training of frontline workers - those who live and work in the heart of disaster-affected communities, facing similar survival issues - was feasible, and whether it would have worthwhile results in terms of addressing trafficking, violence, exploitation and child protection issues. **The voices and perspectives of the participants highlighted in this report, and their evident capacity to intervene and even to instigate collective actions, strongly advocates for a more deliberate and rapid focus on this approach during humanitarian crises.** In Sindhupalchok district, the research participants were by no means the only actors who were mobilising in order to prevent hunger, trauma and homelessness from leading to coercion and exploitation. But the workshops' supportive exploration of what might be possible allowed the participants to feel more confident and able to respond, with the sense of being part of a wider network.

Other key points of learning included:

I. Pre-disaster protection action contributes positively to reduced vulnerability after a disaster

There are strong indications that areas where there had been protection interventions before the disaster are safer than the ones which had not. Information provided for this study showed that where there had been earlier anti-trafficking interventions, activities on violence against children, and where the communities were organized through Village Committees to Combat Human Trafficking and Child Protection Committees, these areas have fewer incidences of violence and exploitation and fewer trafficking cases in the post-earthquake context.

For many years before the earthquake, in some of the areas, these activities had been characterised by sustained community group self-management, issue identification and creation of pressure on local government for proper formation of official committees and delivery of protective services. Group members themselves had taken responsibility for spreading awareness within the community about trafficking and child labour, as well as creating resistance to violence against women. There was already experience in how to identify and trace cases of trafficking.

This meant that in the pre-earthquake project area of GMSP, MANK and Tuki, participants were able to quickly engage with protection actions, and people had better sensitivity and understanding of the issues as well.

"In the project area where we have been running reintegration of child labour project, we found no parents were sending their children into child labour despite the difficulties faced; but in other locations, children were found at high risk" - MANK Official

II. Facilitating access to social protection schemes strengthens resilience of affected population

Participants shared that they have been able to reduce risks of trafficking and exploitation of women and children through assisting with their access to social schemes and relief services. **Without this, if they only provided awareness about risks, then it would not be possible to protect women and children from trafficking and other exploitation.** Without knowledge of the help that is available, people are likely to be enticed by the traffickers.

During the study, many participants mentioned that they frequently used the information provided in the workshops about social protection schemes, and the booklet that was published as part of the action research was also popular because it included details of such schemes.

“Affected communities are in need of physical and financial support; therefore just giving information on protection issues does not convince them. We adopted ideas to educate them not just on protection issues but also available social protection schemes and linked them with relief providers, which worked better.” - Participants in follow up.

III. Strengthening Local Monitoring and Collective Actions

Another lesson learned from the study is that strengthening the work of local groups who can monitor assistance being provided, and can undertake collective actions to address emerging problems is highly effective. During the scoping study, 12 out of 18 respondents highlighted that many of the officially-mandated bodies within the communities had become disorganised, including for example Village Committees for Combating Human Trafficking, Child Protection Committees and other groups such as savings groups. After the workshops, participants revived these local human rights protection mechanisms, enabling them to take collective actions. These actions resulted in many positive outcomes in prevention, correct use of relief resources, detection of abuses, and referral.

“After the training workshop, we visited four schools regarding the NRs.1,000 Education Support schemes for earthquake-affected population. We found that each student’s budget had been reduced NRs.150-200 in the name of school reconstruction support. We threatened the management to complain at district level, and finally management agreed to pay back the remaining amount to students”

- Participants from Baramchi.

“Protection action required more time and engagement rather just giving out money and physical support as in other actions. After training, we engaged with mothers’ groups, camp management groups and we have been able to improve conditions to be safer, with separate sleeping place for adolescent girls, lights in toilet, arranging police patrolling, putting latches in toilets”. – Participants in follow up consultation

IV. Integration of protection issues within all humanitarian actions works better

Integration of awareness and information campaigns on protection issues alongside other humanitarian interventions for example, education, health, shelter and water, brings positive results. For instance, participants worked at Child Friendly Space, Temporary Learning Centres, at schools, with Camp Management Groups and local

relief coordination groups to ensure protection of women, children and persons with disabilities, to identify and take practical local actions.

V. District Level Cluster coordination on protection issues is required

The training workshops led to the frontline workers taking many protective actions, but they reported a gap between these actions and the district level cluster coordination. Participants suggested that there could have been good results if the district cluster coordination issued guidelines and a checklist to frontline workers in each of the thematic clusters, requiring reporting on the status of protection issues.

“I did refer five cases of violence and abuse against girls from my VDC to the district level for taking actions; yet I have heard nothing about progress on that. The referral process is very lengthy and does not have a system to communicate back to the community. This causes a loss of trust by the community.” - **Participant from Pangtang VDC**

“We have cluster approach in humanitarian interventions, which is good. But often NGOs come up with only their project activities and hardly discuss on building a sustaining system. In addition, protection issues are rarely consulted about in other clusters. It has become a project rather than a concern.” - **Central Child Welfare Board**

Chapter 4. Recommendations

Based on the learning from the study, the following recommendations have been suggested for future protection interventions within humanitarian response:

- I. Relief efforts should consult with frontline local NGO workers, living within the affected communities, about the risks of trafficking, violence and exploitation, and about the protection needs of unaccompanied and separated children, given the context of the area. If possible, these individuals should be brought together to generate ideas for activating community-based mechanisms and strategies for protection. On-going communication should be sustained as they try to implement what they have suggested.
- II. Revive community organizations (CPCs, VCCHT, Child Clubs etc.) that are mandated for protection, and mobilize them through proper training and support regarding prevention, monitoring, detection and referral.
- III. Sensitize non-protection community mechanisms (camp management committee, WASH groups, child clubs, women's groups, saving groups etc.) on protection risks, practical protection actions and how to make referrals.
- IV. Strengthen dialogue about protection concerns within meetings of other thematic clusters - not just in the protection cluster.
- V. Provide a protection integration checklist to other non-protection relief workers.
- VI. Enable local workers to improve the affected communities' access to state-provided social protection and emergency relief schemes in order to reduce vulnerability to trafficking and other exploitation.
- VII. Promote local security and policing actions (patrolling, recording visitors in camp area) to ensure protection of people living at temporary settlements.
- VIII. Alongside transit care facilities for victims of violence, offer legal aid and ensure that there is communication back to the community on the assistance given.
- IX. Ban or regulate the sale and distribution of alcohol near to the camp settlements and to the affected people's shelters.
- X. Provide information to the wider public on protection actions such as: making toilets safer, making camps safer, monitoring strangers' visits, identifying missing children from school and Child Friendly Spaces, action options for unaccompanied and separated children, accessing government social protection schemes, sources of authentic information etc.

APPENDIX 1: Bibliography

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Example: Christian Aid Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, Nepal Earthquake 2015, May 2015

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Various updates from the Nepal humanitarian cluster system were also reviewed.

Example: Protection: Nepal Earthquake Cluster Brief, June 2015.

<http://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/protection-nepal-earthquake-cluster-brief-june-2015>

Appendix 2: List of agencies interviewed for initial scoping

1. Bal Krishna Basnet, Child Rights Officer, District Child Welfare Board, Sindhupalchok
2. Bhishwa Adhikari, District Police Office, Sindhupalchok.
3. Hemanta Dangal, Save the Children District office, Sindhupalchok
4. Sarita Dahal, UNFPA District Office, Sindhupalchok
5. Sandhya Rajeshwori Shahi, Women and Children Development Officer, District Women and Children Office, Nepal Government.
6. Samita Shrestha, IOM, Sindhupalchok
7. Rajubhai Shrestha, District Development Committee Office, Sindhupalchok
8. Bijaya Rai, Pourakhi Nepal, Kathmandu
9. Dani Lohar, UNICEF Nepal Country Office
10. Tarak Dhital, Executive Director, Central Child Welfare Board
11. Shova Kharel, Officer, Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare
12. Kamal Thapa Chhetri, Program officer, National Human Rights Commission
13. Bijaya Prasai, Department of Women and Children, Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare
14. Dilip Koirala, Shakti Samuha, Kathmandu
15. Dr. Meena Paudel, IOM Nepal Country Office
16. Kirti Thapa, Save the Children Nepal Country Office
17. Dr. Kiran Rupakheti, Undersecretary, Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare Nepal Government
18. Mr. Kumar Bhattarai, CWIN Nepal, Kathmandu