

News and Current Events :: 3 Months After: Illness, Hunger Close in on Earthquake Survivors in Nepal

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Following Nepal's massive April 25 and May 12 earthquakes, villagers who have lost their homes are spending hours lugging corrugated metal sheets up mountains to protect their families against torrential rains. Given what precedes the mountain treks and what follows, trudging for two days up muddy trails with the unwieldy sheet metal may be the easiest part of survival.

Preceding the treks can be near riotous competition for the coveted corrugated iron. After arriving at remote villages, they must then find a way, despite the absence of other structural materials, to utilize the sheet metal to shelter hungry family members. Three months after the first 7.8-magnitude quake, food aid remains a high priority. Lacking food and clean water, adults are increasingly despondent, and children frightened, as hunger and intestinal illness grow each day, indigenous missionaries report.

Indigenous ministries that already have distribution channels in place, the necessary permits and the cultural understanding and contacts to provide aid have been critical in keeping the unhoused sheltered and fed, said Christian Aid Mission's South Asia Director, Sarla.

She returned last week from her second visit since the first earthquake to provide aid to Nepali ministries.

Christian Aid Mission is an evangelical missionary organization that seeks to establish a witness for our Lord Jesus Christ in every tribe and nation by assisting indigenous missionary ministries through prayer, advocacy and financial support. Christian Aid supports 12 ministries in Nepal.

"There are a lot of NGOs in Kathmandu right now trying to bring help, but the lack of coordination and assessment â€" where and who has lost what and how much, and who really needs to get help â€" has not really been done properly," s he said. "So everybody is waiting for something to happen."

The indigenous Christian organizations, by contrast, have been distributing rice, salt, soya bean, noodles, cereals and other items to people who are struggling to protect themselves from monsoon rains. A team from one of the indigenous ministries had the means and the knowledge to conduct a two-week assessment of needs in one area, and local missionaries had the contacts and established governmental relations to glide through red tape and get relief to victims, Sarla said.

"We are sending funds to local agencies that are already aware of these issues â€" they know how to go about it, they know what needs to be done to get to a village, they know how to get the permits you need, they know who to call in the village, they know how to make these assessments," she said. "They are in much better position than somebody going from the outside and trying to find some local connections here."

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