



Nepal Impact Assessment

Executive Summary, Lessons Learned, &
Impact Highlights

Michael Kourabas & Leigh Meunier, March 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One year after the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal, Sadhana Shrestha, the former Executive Director of UUSC's partner, Tewa, predicted that "the most important achievement" of the work UUSC supported in Nepal following the earthquakes would be

building the self-confidence of the community, providing support to them as and when they needed it the most, transferring skills and knowledge ... to [help them realize their] competen[ence], confiden[ce], and str[ength]....

With UUSC's final earthquake-related projects concluding this year, we visited Nepal in February 2018 to assess the impact of our response. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the trip was seeing how Sadhana's prediction came to life in person.

Within
Tewa's communities:

Where *newly empowered women* can, for the first time, envision their own **involvement in local politics.**

Among the *Indigenous Tamang* living near the China border:

Where, with LAHURNIP's support, communities fight for **adequate compensation and community protections** from large-scale development projects.

Within the communities of
single women across Nepal
supported by **WHR**:

From which **nearly 100
single women** have been
identified as **political
candidates** by national
parties after participating in
WHR's trainings.

In Nepal's *remote Gorkha
district*:

Where five of Empower
Generation's women
entrepreneurs have gone
on to **win ward member
elections** since our
support began.



Members of the Srijansil Mahila women's group, supported by UUSC's partner, Tewa, met with us in the village of Dharmasthali.

Nearly three years after the devastating earthquakes in Nepal, this – the **empowerment and increased agency of traditionally oppressed groups**, including Dalits, Indigenous People, and women – stands out as the hallmark of the work UUSC supported there.

As one member of the woman's organization and Tewa grantee, Srijansil Mahila, told us,

Politics [in Nepal] are typically set up where women are expected to take the supporting roles, like treasurer or secretary. Now, we can fight for lead roles.


Over the course of the two-and-a-half year response, UUSC disbursed **fifteen grants to eight local partners worth \$360,350** to support relief, recovery, and the strengthening of human rights.

In total, according to data reported by our partners, UUSC-funded projects:

Benefited (directly or indirectly) more than **112,000** individuals

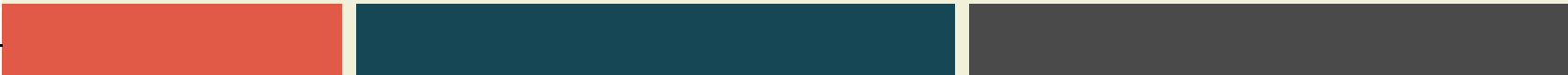
That amounts to **~\$3 spent per beneficiary**, and an average of **~7,450 beneficiaries per grant** – truly significant numbers.

Importantly, unlike the response of the larger international community, **more than two-thirds of the funds UUSC raised went directly to local Nepalese organizations** aiming to protect the rights of vulnerable populations and to support community leaders for long-term, sustainable solutions.



By and large, our local partners – Tewa, LAHURNIP, WHR, Empower Generation, DMEK, RHEST, and Chetana – **demonstrated measurable outcomes**. Moreover, these outcomes were supported by and observable in the communities we visited. Two of UUSC's partners, Tewa and LAHURNIP, introduced us to some of the men and women they supported in the wake of the 2015 earthquakes. These communities – specifically, women from low-income areas and Indigenous People – have been **historically oppressed in Nepal and were especially vulnerable after the disaster**.

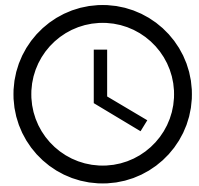
Nevertheless, those with whom we met demonstrated remarkably **clear understandings of their rights**; some even had ambitions to run for political office. They spoke at length about **holding duty bearers accountable** and gave specific examples of how, with our partners' support, they had done so. Not only are these outcomes significant, they are durable – and the fact that we observed similar impacts across our partners and their communities **indicates a replicability in their models**.



LESSONS LEARNED

Despite these successes, the program also suffered from some shortcomings.

First, a **longer time commitment** would have allowed UUSC to continue to strengthen this very nascent movement toward engagement in local politics by a new generation of leaders. In the future, longer-term, empowerment-driven strategies could capitalize on the **human rights opportunities created by humanitarian disasters**.



Second, prior to our impact and learning meeting in February 2018, UUSC's Nepal partners had never been all together in the same room. At the end of the meeting, each and every partner expressed a **strong desire to collaborate**. UUSC should strive to bring partners together at the beginning of a program and explore with them opportunities for collaboration and learning in an ongoing way.



Despite these limitations, however, UUSC's Nepal earthquake response once again demonstrated the strength and value of UUSC's unique approach to grantmaking in humanitarian disaster contexts. It would be wise to keep in mind the direct impact of our emergency-related grants on local partners and the historically oppressed communities they serve as we make determinations about the scope of our future emergency response work.




HIGHLIGHTS

- UUSC’s partner, Tewa, **reached 7,116 postpartum women, pregnant women, elderly women, and children**, and distributed nearly \$500,000 worth of in-kind and cash support to local communities.
- Tewa helped **form 32 women’s groups with more than 1,000 members** in total, and provided livelihood training to more than 3,300 women.
- One woman with whom we met in Dharmasthali told us, *“We were asked, are you ready to take on organizing and all of its challenges? Our response was very much, yes, we’re ready.”*
- About Tewa, a preschool teacher told us, *“It changed my life, it changed my perspective.”*
- Empower Generation **trained 112 Dalit women in Gorkha** as sales agents, building entrepreneurial skills for long-term income generation, and supported two entrepreneurs in launching a joint-enterprise for the last mile distribution of solar energy.
- Over the course of the two-year grant period, Empower Generation’s entrepreneurs **sold 139 solar products, earning NPR 1,17,078, giving 625 people cleaner and safer light**, saving families \$2,540 in household energy expenses, and displacing 2.24 tons of CO₂.

- After becoming an Empower Generation entrepreneur, Gita Pariyar, a Dalit woman and one of the two women entrepreneurs supported by UUSC's grant, **was elected ward member in a local election in 2017.**
- Four other Empower Generation entrepreneurs have gone on to **win ward member elections** as well.
- Empower Generation's work in Nepal inspired it to **launch similar last mile distribution projects in Burma and India.**
- UUSC's support allowed Empower Generation to launch its **first entrepreneurs in Gorkha district**, an extremely remote area. Ultimately, **10,995 solar lights, mobile chargers, and home systems were distributed in Gorkha** following the earthquake, **reaching 72,343 survivors.**
- WHR used UUSC's support to raise awareness of gender-based violence and other issues facing single women among **at least 1,000 individuals; document 35 cases of gender-based violence;** and map numerous "safe spaces" and their functionality.
- WHR **developed a district-level strategy for addressing gender-based violence**, which was included in the Saptari district's most recent strategic planning document and will be implemented by key stakeholders there.

- After the earthquake, DMEK noticed that most single Dalit women in Gorkha did not have proper birth certificates or other proof of citizenship. In light of geographical difficulties in Gorkha (it is a three-day trip to/from Gorkha to get one's birth certificate certified), most women were incapable of making the trip. In response, **DMEK brought government officers to the district and registered the women as citizens.**
- With LAHURNIP's assistance, Indigenous communities in Nepal have **formed 36 total “struggle committees”** to advocate for the collective rights of populations affected by large-scale development projects.
- As a result of LAHURNIP's work, affected community members have become aware of their rights and asserted these rights in order to, among other things, **receive compensation for land** acquired by hydro-development projects.
- In the four months following the earthquake, Chetana **enabled over 2,300 students to return to school** by setting up temporary classrooms in districts with large populations of historically oppressed minorities.





*For the full assessment or more information,
please follow-up with Michael at
mkourabas@uusc.org*