

Nepal Education Cluster Earthquake Response Strategy

May – Sep 2015



classrooms destroyed
35,986



classrooms minorly damaged
16,761

children without a classroom
1,109,000



children with damaged classrooms
480,000

SITUATION

On 25 April, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck northwest of Kathmandu. On 12 May, a new earthquake measuring 7.3 magnitude struck. The epicentre was northeast of Kathmandu, an area already affected by the first quake. As a result, a total of at least 8,600 people were killed and 16,800 injured. As of 21 May, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a total of 494,717 houses were reported destroyed and 267,373 damaged.

The earthquakes have had a devastating impact on the education sector in the affected areas. An estimated 1,109,000 children aged 3 to 18 years have been unable to return to their permanent classrooms when classes resumed on 31 May, after the earthquakes destroyed over 35,986 classrooms.¹ A further 16,761 will require repair, affecting 480,000 children. In addition to the impact on facilities, children and their teachers require psychosocial support and the protective environment that emergency education provides. The Cluster anticipates that the level of damage and destruction will increase because of the monsoon, given the risks of landslides and flooding.

In response to the 25 April earthquake, the Ministry of Education ordered all schools closed until 14 May. The closure of schools was later extended by two weeks after the second major earthquake, with schools reopening from 31 May onwards. The Cluster has supported the structural assessment of all school buildings in 14 of the most affected districts, determining school buildings safe for use (green flag), while others are declared unsafe (red flag). Students that were taught in buildings that now have a red flag have to be accommodated elsewhere.

The earthquakes jeopardize significant educational gains seen in recent years in Nepal. The primary net enrolment rate (NER) for grades one to five has soared from 64 per cent in 1990 to 81 per cent in 2000 to 96.2 per cent in 2014. Likewise, access to ECD centers (children aged 3-4) have increased to 77.7% in 2014 compared to 60% in

¹ Department of Education reports 31,083 public school classroom. The Cluster estimates an additional 4,903 private school classrooms have also been destroyed.

2008. Important improvements regarding equity have been made: the gender parity index (GPI) of primary (grades 1–5) and lower secondary (grades 6–8) NER increased from 0.87 in 2004 to 0.99 in 2011, and from 0.84 to 0.99 respectively. Dalits' share in basic education enrolment has also increased from 12.5 per cent in 2004 to 18.3 per cent in 2014. While progress has been made in terms of access and equity, the quality of education is an issue; the repetition rate still stands at 9.1% for primary grades, and drop-out rate at 4.2%. At Secondary level, repetition is at 3.2% and 5.3% dropout. Moreover, issues of inequity become evident when data is disaggregated. For example, children from the poorest income quintile have lower access to education and early childhood development opportunities; while 99% of children between 5-14 years old from the richest quintile have ever attended school, 90% of boys, and 86% for girls from the poorest quintile have ever attended. This implies that the poorest girls suffer double effects of income and gender disparities.

An estimated 1.2 million primary and lower secondary aged children (5-12 years old) are not in school in Nepal. Out of school children are children who never enrolled in schools, or those who dropped out. Access to education is hampered by various factors including poverty and consequent child labour, discrimination or marginalisation based on social/ethnic groups or castes, disabilities, lack of parental awareness and gender stereotypes. The impact of the earthquakes has the potential to add a further layer of educational vulnerability to the areas worst affected. The risk of further increasing the number of out-of school children in the country is high and the devastation of the earthquake on education infrastructure, as well as the social and economic implications is likely to have a more severe effect on already marginalized groups in the affected areas.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The Education Cluster was activated on the 26th April immediately after the first earthquake struck Nepal. The Education Cluster is led by the Department of Education under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and is co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children. The Education Cluster grew quickly in the weeks after the earthquake, and is now made up of over 73 national and international organisations, including 37 International NGOs, 32 National NGOs and 4 UN Agencies on the contact list, with 30 of these organisations are reporting activities regularly to the Cluster's 3Ws.

In this emergency, effective coordination, led by the government through the Education Cluster, depends upon a mutually reinforcing cycle that is at once directly reliant upon, and beneficial to, all the Education Cluster partners. Partner participation in the Cluster will:

- Ensure a **full picture of the needs of Nepal's education system** are identified in the aftermath of the earthquake;
- Allow for concentrated **strategy development** to ensure all affected children are reached with the greatest possible efficiency;
- Institutionalize **monitoring of the response** that compiles and puts into action lessons learned to generate consistently better outcomes for children and accountability to affected communities.

This strategy is therefore a core part of the responsibility of the Cluster, and builds upon and capitalizes on the experiences of all actors involved in the education response thus far.

The Strategy has been developed through a consultative process:

- On 22 May, District Education Officers from 15 affected districts met in Kathmandu with the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education, Regional Education Directorates, National Centre for Education Development, and Examination Board representatives. Some of the key issues and themes that emerged during the discussion are addressed in the strategy.
- Education Cluster partners reviewed the ongoing response and contributed to the development of the Cluster's strategic objectives through an electronic survey and discussions in National Education Cluster meetings.
- Development partners also had the opportunity to contribute by completing the electronic survey.
- Colleagues working in affected areas have collected inputs from parents, teachers and children.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

The Nepal Earthquake Flash Appeal was revised at the end of May and include the following strategic objectives for the overall humanitarian response:

- Save lives and alleviate suffering by providing multi-sectoral assistance to those most affected
- Protect the rights of those most affected, and promote inclusive access to humanitarian assistance, with particular attention to the most disadvantaged groups
- Support the recovery and resilience of the most affected by protecting, restoring and promoting their livelihoods and well-being

As the Education Cluster, it is our responsibility to establish how the Cluster will contribute to these overarching objectives. We have developed the following objectives for the Education Cluster:²

- Girls and boys access early childhood, primary and secondary education in safe and protective learning spaces.
- Through quality, age-appropriate learning, girls and boys acquire lifesaving and disaster preparedness skills and psychosocial support to restore wellbeing and build the resilience of children and their communities.

The long term goal of the Cluster's interventions is to ensure the continuation of learning for affected children, including adolescents, who were in school before the earthquakes.

The Ministry of Education has collected data from 49 districts which have reported damage to educational facilities as a result of the earthquakes and have prioritized response to 14 districts. The Education Cluster partners are working in 17 districts³, and this strategy recognizes the needs that exist outside the priority 14 districts, as disasters of this kind do not respect administrative boundaries.

² 100% of surveyed Cluster partners agreed that these objectives were relevant. One cluster partner suggested a rewording of the second objective, which has been fully incorporated.

³These include the 14 DoE prioritized districts (Gorkha, Sindhupalchok, Nuwakot, Dhading, Dolakha, Kavre, Rasuwa, Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga, Kathmandu, Makwanpur, Sindhuli, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur) as well as as well as three additional districts (Lamjung, Solukhumbu and Kotang).

Priority Activities

The strategy outlined here is a continuation of the work that Education Cluster partners began after the first earthquake. The Cluster agreed on a standard package consisting of five activities that address the most immediate education needs of students and teachers:

1. Conduct structural assessment of schools to a) determine damage and b) designate them safe or unsafe.
2. Establish temporary learning centres for the most affected children to ensure they are in a safe place, can access inclusive, gender-sensitive WASH facilities and protection services and are provided with structure, stability and hope.
3. Distribute essential education in emergencies supplies to support teaching and learning activities and recreational opportunities to ensure children continue their education and recover from the stress and disruption caused by the earthquakes.
4. Train teachers and facilitators on psychosocial support and life-saving messages relating to disaster preparedness, protection, sanitation and hygiene promotion, nutrition and health.
5. Mobilize communities in order to restart schooling, including debris removal.

In addition to these primary activities, Education Cluster partners will pay particular attention to two additional issues with which certain communities are faced:

- Post-earthquake, certain areas have become host communities for families that left Kathmandu and returned to their districts of origin. Similarly, some families have moved to Kathmandu away from more severely affected areas, with some parts of Kathmandu now hosting displaced families. Children in these situations should not experience any barriers to education.
- In affected districts, certain schools are used as shelter, while others are used as storage for relief materials. The Education Cluster has developed guidance on those issues, which are being used by partners, including monitoring.

Flash Appeal Targets

In the revised Flash Appeal, the Education Cluster targets include:

- The establishment of 4,668 Temporary Learning Centres, including WASH facilities
- The provision of emergency education kits to reach 1 million affected children
- The training of 19,000 teachers on psychosocial support, disaster preparedness and lifesaving messages

In order to provide this package of emergency education interventions, the Education Cluster appealed for \$24.1 million dollars. As of 18 June, the Cluster is 47% funded. The Education Cluster partners are targeting only a proportion of those children affected by the earthquake, complimenting the work of the Government of Nepal and reaching approximately 40% of the total needs.

Summary Table

Cluster Objective 2: Girls and boys access early childhood, primary and secondary education in safe and protective learning spaces		
Activity	Indicator	Target
Establish safe, temporary learning centres (TLCs) with adequate WASH facilities	Number of TLCs established	4,668
	Number of children accessing TLCs	470,000
	Percentage of TLCs with appropriate WASH facilities	100%

Cluster Objective 1: Through quality age-appropriate learning, girls and boys acquire psychosocial, lifesaving and

disaster preparedness skills to restore wellbeing and build the resilience of children and their communities.		
Activity	Indicator	Target
Distribute Early Childhood Development (ECD) and emergency school kits	Number of children benefiting from Emergency ECD kits	250,000
	Number of children benefiting from emergency school kits	750,000
Train teachers on psychosocial support (PSS) and lifesaving messages	Number of teachers trained on appropriate PSS and lifesaving messages	19,000

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

To achieve its strategic objectives, the Cluster as a collective has to strengthen and scale up the ongoing response. In order to do so, the Cluster will use the following 6 approaches:

1. Community engagement

The underlying strategy of the Education Cluster is a community-based approach to education in emergencies. The more involved communities are in the response, the higher the quality and more sustainable the response will be. For education partners, School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations are logical entry points. Partners are also encouraged to engage communities in the actual establishment of the Temporary Learning Centres, for example through cash for work. Community engagement will continue to be crucial as we move into the reconstruction phase, as they will have an important role in oversight and accountability in terms of supporting local micro-level planning and ensuring rebuilt schools meet safety standards and comply with central Government designs and policy.

2. Teachers at the centre

Teachers are the most important element in ensuring access and quality of education in emergency situations, and they too are in need. Teachers whose houses are destroyed are busy rebuilding their own lives, teachers who are posted in a school away from their area of origin have gone home, some because their accommodation was destroyed or damaged. Other teachers have taken jobs with higher payment, for example with NGOs. Like many, teachers themselves have suffered the stresses and disruption caused by the earthquakes and may be in need of psychosocial support. If not addressed, for example by ensuring that teachers are provided with temporary accommodation, there may be a lack of teachers in the worst affected areas and the quality of education may be reduced. Teacher training is built into Cluster partners plans, but more sustained efforts may be needed to support teachers and ensure a continuing quality of education once the initial emergency phase has passed. Partners will need to work collaboratively with DEOs, Resource Persons and School Supervisors to ensure teachers are supported. Innovative methods to create supportive professional networks will also be explored using mobile technology.

3. Standardised but flexible approaches

Communities are faced with different levels of destruction and damage, and so are their schools. Furthermore, Nepal is a diverse country and the environmental and climate variations across the affected areas are pronounced. Therefore, flexible approaches are required to address the needs of individual schools. Some schools will need Temporary Learning Centres, while in others, minor repairs to existing schools will suffice. In some areas, a "Phase 1" TLC, made simply of tarps and minimal local resources will need to be constructed initially before a more durable "Phase 2" TLC is supported. In other areas, Phase 2 TLCs have been constructed immediately. Local resources, skills and knowledge will determine the approach that best suits each situation, particularly in the hardest to reach areas. While the Department of Education has developed standard designs for the establishment of Temporary Learning Centres, flexibility will also be required when implementing these designs, including the issue of CGI for roofing which is preferable in some locations, but may not always be available or affordable. Partners will work

closely with District Education Officers and local communities to ensure the most appropriate materials are used for the local context, making sure that designs are safe, inclusive and child-friendly.

4. Public and private schools

The ongoing structural assessment of schools, led by the Department of Education, covers both public and private schools, while the Government's education in emergencies response focuses primarily on public schools. The humanitarian imperative, however, implies the right to receive assistance for all learners, independent of the school they attended before the earthquake. Education Cluster partners will ensure children are not discriminated against because of the type of school they attend.

5. Inclusion and equity

Emergencies can provide opportunities for positive change. Nepal's Education Sector has an excellent framework for addressing inequities in educational opportunities, and the Cluster will seek to apply the equity lens to the humanitarian response, ensuring that the most marginalized are fully included and benefit from education interventions. The Cluster partners will likely play a role in providing information to guide micro-level planning at the district level, as well as advocate at district and national levels from an equity perspective as plans are made for longer-term reconstruction. The Ministry of Education has also included the issue of school rationalization as an area for further consideration as more longer-term reconstruction plans are made, which may in some cases have implications on prioritization of TLC establishment. The government is encouraging local actors and partners to look for opportunities to equitably rationalize TLC provision and not assume that every damaged school necessarily requires repair or reconstruction if the number of children attending the school is minimal and other schools are easily available. Education partners will facilitate this decision making wherever possible, ensuring the equity and inclusion perspective is fully considered. Furthermore, the Education Cluster will look for windows of opportunity to more fully include children with disabilities in learning opportunities given the additional risks and barriers these learners face.

6. Resilient relief and recovery

The Education sector has a unique role to play in ensuring that lessons are learned from the disaster and efforts are made to educate children with resilience and safety as a priority. The Cluster will work to capture these lessons and systematize them into a revised contingency plan and national government preparedness policies and processes. Learners themselves are a valuable resource and can play an important role in identifying risks in their surroundings and developing strategies to keep themselves and their families safe and protected from natural hazards and other dangers. Teacher trainings will focus on supporting learners, teachers and school communities develop or improve their School Safety Plans and map and respond to hazards in their local environment. Similarly, hardware such as TLCs and WASH facilities will need to be carefully located and constructed (using roof overhang, drainage, elevation etc.) so that further risks from monsoon and landslides do not endanger school-going children.

CROSS-CUTTING AND CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES

Education response in an emergency can provide a platform for the provision of key services relating to other sectors. Furthermore, as a basic and enabling human right, the education response needs to be particularly aware of priority cross-cutting issues that have implications for the wider social and economic recovery of the country.

Child Protection

From the very start, the Education Cluster response has been integrated with the Child Protection response. Attending Child Friendly Spaces and Temporary Learning Centres offers protection, as children are provided with psychosocial support and lifesaving messages that strengthen critical survival skills and coping mechanisms. Guidance has been developed for Education Cluster partners on the transition from CFS to TLC, with clear emphasis on the important physical and psychosocially protective elements of both interventions. Teacher training materials were reviewed by the Child Protection Sub-Cluster and guidance on the processes for referral of protection concerns to appropriate authorities will be developed by the two clusters in the coming weeks.

WASH

The WASH and Education Clusters have also worked collaboratively from the earliest stages of the emergency response. In order to ease coordination, a joint decision was made that the majority of WASH needs for schools would be provided through Education Cluster partners, in line with the Government of Nepal's approach during non-emergencies, where the DoE is responsible for WASH in schools. The WASH Cluster partners are offering technical support at the district level and, where their resources and capacity allow, WASH agencies may take on responsibility for WASH provision when agreed with Education actors. Coordination will need to continue as WASH and Education Cluster partners work in VDCs together to address the contextual needs of each community. In terms of the software component of the WASH response, the Teacher training materials contain key lifesaving information relating to good sanitation and hygiene.

Health

Key health messages have been developed and shared through facilitator and teacher orientation and training materials, including critical warning signs of serious illness in children, WASH and immunization messaging. Psychosocial support messages for both teachers and children also partly fall into the remit of the Health Cluster, and referrals will be made to medical professionals in the small number of incidences where this might be necessary. The Clusters will continue to monitor the health situation of school children and will coordinate fully if further risks of outbreaks occur.

Nutrition and Food Security

The nutritional status of school-aged children will be met through the Food Security Cluster's emergency response strategy which includes household food distribution to those areas with limited food availability. This means that school feeding will not be provided in initial emergency phases, as this would be duplication. Nutritional information is shared through teacher training materials, and early childhood parenting education materials will also include basic nutritional guidance.

Youth

In Nepal, children and youth (15-24 years of age) represent more than half (55 percent) of the total population while adolescents (10-19 years) account for 24 percent. Adolescents and youth, especially girls and those in early adolescence (10-14 years), are vulnerable to various risks concerning their development, protection and participation, which became even more significant after the earthquakes. It is essential that adolescents go back to primary and secondary education and continue structured learning in safe and protective environment. Pre-earthquakes, the NER for lower secondary and secondary level was 74.6% and 56.1% respectively, demonstrating the challenges already existing that may be exacerbated as a result of the disaster. Livelihood opportunities for families will be provided considering adolescents' educational and developmental needs and without jeopardizing school completion. The risk of child marriage is also likely to have increased since the earthquake, given scarcity of resources and interrupted livelihoods -- data from 2011 showed nearly one-third of adolescent girls aged 15-19 were married, of which 5 percent were married before 15 years old. In the emergency response activities throughout sectors and clusters, including the Education Cluster, a special focus will be needed on families from disadvantaged groups with adolescent girls, who may push child marriage as an economic choice. The specific WASH needs of adolescent girls, in particular related to Menstrual Hygiene Management will need to be addressed. Including adolescents and youth in assessments, programming and decisions making adds value and can empower them. Ongoing monitoring and needs assessment of adolescents and youth are required to better understand their specific needs, issues and opportunities as response and recovery efforts evolve.

Gender and Inclusion

As mentioned above, Nepal has wide disparities in terms of access, participation and achievement in education, but also a strong basis for addressing these inequities, through application of the Equity Strategy to the current emergency context. Cluster partners will work to ensure both male and female teachers are trained on materials that are gender sensitive. Partners will also collect gender disaggregated information relating to school-going children, and will aim to monitor the inclusion of particularly disadvantaged groups. The Education Cluster will promote good practice relating to inclusion, sharing examples of inclusive programming and encouraging

expansion and scale-up of such initiatives. Opportunities will be sought to capture good practice to inform future emergency planning and response.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

National-level

At the national level, the Education Cluster currently has weekly Cluster meetings at the Department of Education. This overall coordination group is being supported by a number of technical working groups who meet on an ad hoc basis on particular topics:

- Child Friendly Spaces (jointly with the Child Protection Sub-Cluster) (no longer meeting since the reopening of schools)
- Structural assessment of school buildings
- Teacher training and Support
- Community mobilisation and Communications for Back to School

There may be scope for other technical working groups on topics such as early childhood development or equity and inclusion, as the emergency needs change and the response gets further underway. Similarly, phasing out of some of the above technical working groups may naturally occur.

District-level

At the district level, the Education Cluster has been activated in 14 of the most affected districts, where response efforts are coordinated by the DEO, with the support of a District Focal Point Agency and a number of other cluster partners. The District-level coordination mechanism is critical, allowing for decentralized decision-making, shortened response time, adaptation of responses to local contexts, and strengthened accountability to affected people by working closely with local communities. The National Education Cluster relies on District Clusters to ensure that the education response is needs-based and equitable, and supports District-level actors through the development of policy, guidance tools and capacity building. Dedicated roving district Cluster Coordinators are also under recruitment to support the (double-hatting) District Focal Points in their role.

[Insert map of partner presence at the District Level]

Monitoring

The Education Cluster maintains a 3W Matrix (Who is doing What, Where) that monitors the activities corresponding with this plan being implemented by Cluster partners. It is critical that partners participate in this regular monitoring to ensure strong coordination. This will continue to allow the Cluster to analyse and visualize gaps and needs, build partnership and collaboration, and advocate on behalf of the entire sector. As the 3W includes both planned and ongoing activities down to the school level, it also allows analysis to prevent or respond to duplication.

Monitoring of partners not within the cluster system, including local communities themselves as well as non-traditional actors, such as the army, police and political parties will also be necessary in order to capture a fully picture of the needs, gaps and response. In particular, the Cluster will need to play a role in monitoring the quality and sustainability of some of these interventions, to ensure affected children receive a full package of services that meet the minimum standards set by the government.

LINKAGES WITH LONGER TERM SECTOR PLANS

The Education Cluster seeks to mitigate the impact of the earthquakes on the education of children in affected areas. Given the gains in education in Nepal in recent decades, it is particularly critical that an emergency education response is quickly funded and implemented, as any delay in the resumption of education for affected communities could have a detrimental effect on if and when children are able to return to formal schooling. The work of the Education Cluster exists within the overall framework of the development agenda of the education sector of Nepal and part of the Cluster's role is to seek to ensure strategic connections are made between the emergency response and longer term development plans and processes.

The Education Cluster has supported the Post Disaster Needs Assessment process through the provision of data and information relating to the emergency response and associated costs. The Cluster will seek to ensure that the findings of the PDNA and resulting government plans and processes are connected to the emergency response and that a continuum between relief and reconstruction is maintained so that children affected by this disaster in Nepal continue to access their right to education. This will include advocacy on the need for semi-permanent solutions to replace Temporary Learning Centers in areas where reconstruction is likely to be particularly challenging due to scale or logistical constraints. Efforts to build resilience into the education system through policy-making, planning and budgeting will also be influenced by the experience of Cluster Partners working directly with communities on issues relating to emergency response and disaster preparedness, and the Cluster will work to ensure these lessons and experiences are captured and systematically and strategically shared.

The Education Cluster has existed in Nepal since it was activated in response to the Koshi floods in 2008. It is activated during acute emergencies which are beyond the emergency response capacities of local authorities. The Education Cluster is a temporary emergency coordination mechanism that works to ensure that the emergency education implemented by the government and partners in response to the earthquakes in Nepal is coordinated, predictable, equitable and evidence-based. Because of the large scale of need and numerous partners who are now working to respond to those needs, the Education Cluster aims to ensure that the emergency response is comprehensive and inclusive of all children while also avoiding duplication and inefficiencies.

Given the temporary nature of the Cluster, this Strategy recommends that at the end of the emergency response phase, a full review of the Education Cluster is carried out and that a transition should be planned as emergency programming evolves into reconstruction and preparedness activities. Envisioning the deactivation of the Cluster does not imply a loss of emphasis on the importance of education in emergencies and associated preparedness interventions, indeed it forces a more mainstreamed and institutionalized approach to these activities. This Strategy proposes that the existence of the Education Cluster as a response coordination mechanism is reviewed at the end of 2015, with a view to formal deactivation of the Cluster and transition, as per Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance as soon as appropriate.⁴

The role of education in emergencies, school safety, disaster risk reduction and preparedness activities should be fully considered as part of the new sector planning process. Timing is fortuitous, and a review of the Education Cluster's achievements and lessons learned and the coordination mechanism for future work on disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness should be a key component of the sector planning process. Any future structure should be able to quickly reactive the Education Cluster in order to coordinate any future large-scale emergencies, particularly as the type of shock that is currently keeping children out of school cannot be ruled out in the future.

⁴IASC, [Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level, 2013](#)