

Welcome to the twenty-fifth issue of **OPEN MIC NEPAL** bulletin. The Open Mic project captures rumours and perceptions on the ground to eliminate information gaps between the media, humanitarian agencies and local people. By providing local media and outreach workers with facts, Open Mic aims to create a better understanding of the needs of the earthquake-affected communities and to debunk rumours before they can do any harm.

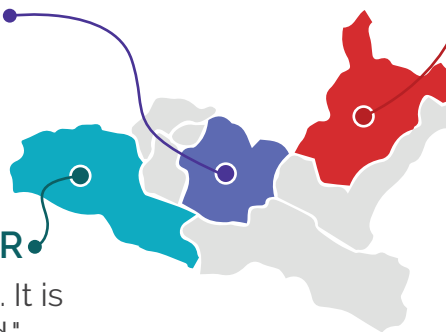
CONCERNS

MAHADEVSTHAN, KAVREPANCHOWK

"They say the government is implementing a special programme for new mothers. Is that true?"

NAMTAR, MAKWANPUR

"I am five-months pregnant. It is difficult because of the cold."



NAMDU, DOLAKHA

"It is difficult to save pregnant women and new mothers from the cold. People are suffering from fever, headaches and swollen feet, face and body."

ANSWERS

The government does not have plans to implement special programmes for pregnant women and new mothers in the earthquake-affected districts. Regular programmes such as free delivery services are being implemented in all districts.

Organisations such as the United Nations Population Fund are running reproductive health camps to provide antenatal and postnatal checks ups, delivery services and psychosocial counselling upon request from District Health Offices.

The organisation has also been distributing dignity kits consisting of items such as warm shawls, petticoats and medicine to women in the reproductive age group, prioritising pregnant women, followed by new and lactating mothers.

Immediately after the earthquake, such packages were distributed in all severely affected districts. Now, they are being distributed in five earthquake-affected districts. If you are a pregnant or a new mother and need one, contact a volunteer or the closest female friendly space.

If a pregnant woman or a new mother has severe headaches and excessive swelling in the face, hands and legs, she should be taken to the closest healthcare facility immediately and have her blood pressure checked. A high blood pressure could be the symptom of preeclampsia, which could lead to eclampsia, a life-threatening condition characterised by brain haemorrhage and seizures.

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CONCERNS

KUBHINDE, SINDHUPALCHOK

"After the news of the earthquake-affected people dying from the cold became public, people here are scared that they might die as well because dew drops from the CGI sheets all night."



RAYALE, KAVREPALANCHOWK

"They say people have died from the cold in many places. How are we going to save ourselves from the cold?"

ANSWERS

During winter, exposure to extremely cold weather and lack of appropriate protection can cause hypothermia, which could lead to death in some cases. According to the Ministry of Health 1500 adults are estimated to die of hypothermia each year in Nepal. Hypothermia is also a leading cause of death among newborn babies.

Hypothermia occurs when the body's core temperature falls below 37 degrees Celsius. It affects the body's vital organs such as the brain, heart and lungs.

Elderly people are particularly vulnerable to hypothermia. Children are also susceptible, as they lose body heat more quickly than adults do.

Insulating critical heat loss areas—head and neck, sides of chest, armpits and groin—can prevent hypothermia. Body heat can be preserved by wearing appropriate clothing such as those made of wool. Rooms and shelters can be insulated by using locally available materials.

Symptoms of hypothermia include shivering, poor coordination and mental sluggishness. As hypothermia progresses, shivering stops, coordination is severely impaired and the affected person becomes extremely lethargic and can lose consciousness.

You can help restore body heat in a hypothermia victim by covering them with dry clothing and blankets. Move the person to a warm environment and avoid re-exposure to the cold. Protect the person from wind, especially around the head and neck. Hot water bottles and warm non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated liquid can also restore heat.

Hypothermia victims with moderate to critical symptoms should be taken to a medical professional as soon as possible.

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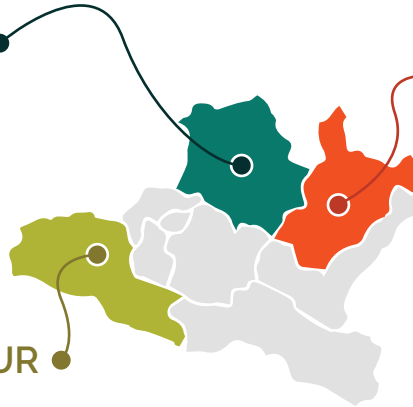
CONCERNS

IRKHU, SINDHUPALCHOK

"Since we've heard that the grant of Rs 200,000 is only for those with a landownership certificate, the grant feels like a noose for the affected."

HANDIKHOLA, MAKWANPUR

"What and how much is the government going to give us for the reconstruction, they should determine that soon."



BARUNESHWOR, OKHALDHUNGA

"They say they are going to provide us house designs and money at the same time. Also, they say we can receive the grant from the village and build a house in the city."

ANSWERS

The government released the new procedure for the disbursement of the grant of Rs 200,000 or the cost of building a house, whichever is less, in December last year. The grant will be provided in three instalments. However, it has not been announced when the distribution will begin.

Families who lost their houses in the earthquake and do not have an alternative place to live in qualify for the grant. While applying for the grant, a qualified family will have to submit a copy of either the citizenship certificate or the Voter's ID or the landownership document or the earthquake victim ID card.

The Ministry of Urban Development is currently translating the catalogue of rural house designs into Nepali. The Ministry plans to provide three copies of the catalogue and about a dozen copies of individual house designs to Village Development Committees (VDCs) and municipality offices starting in mid January.

The procedures for the disbursement of the grant does not mention if a family can receive the grant from one administrative unit and build a house in another.

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RUMOURS



BARPAK, GORKHA

"They say those who do not plan to build a toilet will not have their blueprint for the house approved."

FACTS

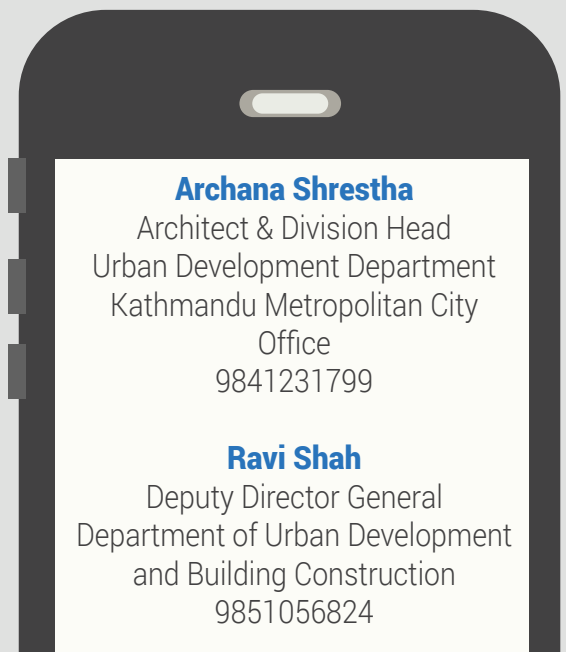
Neither the procedure for the disbursement of the grant nor the catalogue of rural house designs makes it mandatory for households to plan to build a toilet in order to get their construction blueprints approved.

The procedure states that the household will get the third/last instalment of Rs 200,000 to build, among other things, toilets.

Before receiving the grant, a household will have to sign an agreement with the VDC office, stating which model of the house they will build. The catalogue of rural house designs does have toilets in its site plan, but it is not included in the house blueprint.

Some municipalities such as the Kathmandu Metropolitan City require households to submit the layout for toilets when building houses larger than 3000 square feet in area.

Regardless, it is highly recommended to build a toilet or ensure access to a toilet even if it is not directly attached to the house.



The rumours and issues presented here were collected by frontline workers from partner organisations and #quakehelpdesk volunteers based on their face-to-face conversation and community hearings with around 900 people in 11 districts between 24 - 31 December. The selection was done on the basis of prevalence and relevance. The information presented here is correct at the time of issue.

Open Mic Nepal presented by:

