



## CAHURAST monitor helps to secure shelter for 100 households in Gorkha

In April 2015, Nepal was devastated by the worst earthquake to strike the country in more than 80 years. Over a quarter of the population – approximately 8 million people – were affected by the disaster. The death toll exceeded 5,500 with more than 10,000 people also injured. In addition, over 500,000 homes were destroyed and around 279,000 were damaged<sup>1</sup>. This has left many people homeless, injured or without basic services. Large sections of the population have become totally reliant upon aid to provide food and shelter. In the aftermath of the earthquake, Integrity Action’s partner in Nepal, Campaign for Human Rights and Social Transformation (CAHURAST), has been working to ensure that victims receive this vital support.

CAHURAST is a Nepali NGO committed to empowering communities to monitor infrastructure projects as well as services, and hold authorities accountable to improve service delivery for Nepali citizens. The organisation works closely with communities in Nepal to ensure that citizen’s voices and feedback are incorporated into the development process in order to improve state accountability and development outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mercycorps.org.uk/articles/nepal/quick-facts-what-you-need-know-about-nepal-earthquake>



In the municipality of Gorkha, Ward No. 2, 100 tents were provided through a Nepali Government programme to people whose homes had been damaged in the earthquake. This provided a lifeline in the form of shelter for families in need. However, there were allegations that some of the tents had not been allocated to these families. A local resident responsible for distributing 50 tents was refusing to provide 25 of those tents. A number of families were being deprived a roof over their heads, making them especially vulnerable during the monsoon rains and the winter.



In June 2015, residents from two villages in Ward No. 2 approached the CAHURAST helpdesk in Gorkha to raise the issue about the missing 25 tents. CAHURAST operates helpdesks in the districts of Dhading, Gorkha and Pyuthan. Local residents are informed about them through radio broadcasts which provide information about what services the helpdesks offer as well as where they can be found.

**CAHURAST helpdesks** are initiatives staffed by volunteers, which offer Nepali citizens free assistance to overcome everyday integrity issues, such as gaining access to vital health services, registering land ownership and securing official documentation. They often act as mediators between citizens and government officials, helping citizens secure vital services and entitlements which are dispensed at the local level.

The matter was taken up by CAHURAST community monitor Mr. Ram Babu Shrestha. In June 2015, Mr. Shrestha held a meeting with the man in charge of the tent distribution. He discovered that half the tents had not been distributed because local residents had been arguing over who should receive them. The remaining tents had been withheld in order to reduce conflict.



The CAHURAST monitor raised his concerns about the current situation, as well as the need to come up with a solution that could, on one hand, mitigate local conflict and, on the other, ensure that the tents could be used to shelter desperate families. It was agreed that the tents would indeed be released. However, this was on condition that, through further discussion, a proper strategy could be arranged to control the distribution process and prevent conflicts among local residents.

As part of the drive to come up with a strategy for tent distribution, the monitor held regular meetings attended by the local CAHURAST Citizen Concern Group, local political party representatives, and other officials from the Gorkha municipality. After several constructive talks, they decided that Ward No. 2 had to be divided into five smaller individual development forums, where chosen representatives would nominate the households in greatest need. If there were not enough tents, then community members would provide the financial assistance to purchase more. Not only would this strategy meet the needs of those without shelter. It would also manage disagreements by ensuring that less people in need of shelter or other kinds of relief would be forced to compete for it.

**CAHURAST Citizen Concern Group:** This is an initiative comprised of CAHURAST staff and local government officials who meet regularly to discuss and resolve local integrity issues.

The remaining 25 tents, along with the provision of another 50 (adding up to 100 in total) were distributed in July 2015 without any disputes. The 100 households which benefitted from this initiative contained approximately 670 people. Mr. Shrestha was able skillfully to bring various local stakeholders together to work through a desperate situation that was seriously threatening local peoples' livelihoods. He then successfully collaborated with these stakeholders to ensure that citizen's feedback was incorporated into a solution. Thanks to CAHURAST's use of Integrity's Action's Community Integrity Building approach, many more families now have protection from the elements and a place to stay.

***Integrity Action has worked with the Campaign for Human Rights and Social Accountability (CAHURAST) since 2010 when they began their Community Integrity Building work, empowering citizens and engaging with government and other key stakeholders to improve infrastructure, services and local governance for citizens in Dhading and Gorkha Districts. CAHURAST have trained 57 community monitors who actively monitor budgets and development projects in two districts of Nepal affecting more than 50,000 people.***