



# S H A R E

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## FOCUS ~ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### From Desolation to Community

*Written and edited by: Jady Sit, Jojo Poon*

At noon on 25 April 2015, Nepal was hit by the strongest earthquake in 80 years. Countless families lost their loved ones, homes, and properties. Approximately one third of Nepal's population, 8 million, was affected by the quake. In the midst of ruthless disaster, people responded with love. Shortly after the earthquake, the world quickly pooled their resources to help. Yet, when global news coverage died down and emergency relief phased out, this was when we began to walk with the affected communities, helping them to rebuild and recover their communities sustainably for the long run.

In the last decade, CEDAR has been supporting partners' community development work in mountainous communities in Nepal. Our partners mobilised community members to bring gradual changes to their communities, from hygiene improvement to equipping women's livelihood skills, so they can live better lives. Though the 7.9-magnitude earthquake had destroyed most of the infrastructures and work in project communities, members and leaders of village committees villages assisted in aid distribution. Their help was vital to CEDAR and its partners to carry out post-quake response efficiently, and it also showed the fruits of development work – villagers' knowledge and collaborative skills.

### It all Started with Collaboration and Training

Samari Utthan Sewa (SUS), a partner of CEDAR, spent years in serving impoverished and marginalised groups, including the *Dalit* (meaning "the oppressed", who belong to the lowest social status in the caste system) and women. After the earthquake, SUS has been serving the Dalits and locals in one of the quake-affected communities in Kabilas, Chitwan district.

The destruction was widespread: schools, health posts, irrigation and water supply systems were damaged. Over 45% of the community households had their houses partly or fully damaged. Despite the fact that most families have settled in shelters and infrastructures have been repaired, the quake has disturbed the community's livelihood. SUS started a 2-year livelihood project in the community to help them become self-reliant and develop their community sustainably.

The local Dalits were mainly engaged in agricultural activities, so the earthquake has greatly affected their livelihoods. About 30% of the community only have food storage for more than three months. Farmers were also working individually without much collaborations with others to raise collective voice to claim their rights and improve their living conditions.

Community members' participation is a key factor in development work. SUS provided training on kitchen garden and livestock management and supplied seeds of cash crops, pigs, and goats for villagers. Our partner also helped villagers, especially women, to form their self-help groups in order to build a support network for better development of the community and agricultural activities. Revolving fund was also set up for group members to expand their income generating activities, so they can achieve self-reliance through sustainable income.

Sita is a housewife and takes care of a family of four. The family lost their house during the earthquake, and they were left with the land. Sita hoped to improve the lives of her family through vegetable farming. She became a member of the women group facilitated by SUS and began learning about Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The IPM techniques aim to reduce the use of chemical pesticides and utilise environmental-friendly methods for pest control, restoring the productivity of the soil. Sita applied what she learned and grew different kinds of vegetables such as beans, sponge-gourds, and pumpkins. She successfully sold 20 kg of vegetables from her kitchen garden. "I learned new skills and farming became easier," says Sita. She also realises that it motivates her to work harder for better life by being in a group ►



with peers.



*Sita shows her harvest*

We hope that the project will not only improve the livelihood of individual households, but to drive the whole community forward for its future development. Hence, SUS assists the community to establish a Community Resource and Service Centre which will create an enabling environment for small land holders to exchange relevant farming knowledge and techniques, and offer shared resources for better crops and livestock production. The Centre promotes shared responsibility among community members to manage the lands and make use of local resources, so that the community and its land can live in harmony.

### **The Power of Self-help Groups**

From SUS's work, we can see that the formation of self-help groups facilitated the livelihood project and it became a significant force for community development. Let's take a look at the work of Share and Care Nepal (SCN), also a partner of CEDAR, to learn how matured self-help groups can bring transformation to the community.

Sama (obscured) got married as a child and took up the burden of taking care of a family with four children. SCN came to Sama's village and launched a women

empowerment project. At first, Sama joined a training programme and later she began to participate in the Women Action Group. She became more engaged in different workshops and meetings. Sama has now started a small shop with the loan from the women's cooperative, and she is able to pay her children's education and daily expenses with her income.

Through various women's groups, our partner educated women about their rights and encouraged them to participate and care for community matters, for example, improving community's hygiene, constructing schools, and directing increased effort on anti-human trafficking in recent years to respond to the increased vulnerability of women after earthquake.

Today, Sama is the chairperson of the women's cooperative and leads more than 200 members in strategy planning, writing proposals, and adopting policies. She expresses her gratitude, "I give thanks to SCN for making me a successful leader in the community. They have empowered and transformed many through training and workshops, and they have offered us exposures and support. I am now a role model in my village, demonstrating confidence in my own self and effective leadership for the group and cooperative.

### **Core of Community Development**

By looking at the post-earthquake rehabilitation work or women empowerment project in Nepal, we can conclude that development work is not merely bringing outside resources into a community; more importantly, we should bring different members of the community, including the poor and marginalised, to work together on discovering local resources, planning and executing development plan, so that they can be united and empowered to sustain development achievements.

*Fund raised for the Red Packet Campaign this year will continue to support community development work in Nepal. Give a red packet this Chinese New Year to send blessings to needy families in Nepal and help them to walk out of poverty!*

*For details, please visit [www.cedarfund.org/red\\_packet](http://www.cedarfund.org/red_packet) (Information available in Chinese only)*





## BACK TO THE BIBLE



### Sow in Tears Reap in Joy

*Written by: Lisa Chai (Former CEDAR colleague, currently involved in community development work in Myanmar)*

We are in the midst of a global refugee crisis. From Syria to Iraq, DR Congo to Yemen, and today we are witnessing the world's largest growing refugee influx across the border of Bangladesh after violence broke out at northern part of Myanmar in Rakhine State in late August last year. As of 12 November 2017, the UN estimated that over 610,000 people have fled to Myanmar and the number is still growing. How do we react to all the violence and suffering in the world when their impact comes so strong and destructive?

In the book of Lamentation we read of the prophet's despair and distress as he witnessed the fall of Jerusalem by the siege of the Babylonians. Children begged for food, princess became forced labourers, starvation was so bad that women had boiled their own children as food to eat. The prophet expressed his sorrow by crying out in tears, crying for the destruction and crying for God to intervene: "My eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of the daughter of my people. My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, until the Lord from heaven looks down and sees" (Lamentation 3:48-50) How often do we weep in tears for the suffering and injustice around us till He looks down from heaven?

I believe there is power in our tears. In the story of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21:15-18, we see how God has responded to their cries. In a seemingly hopeless situation the voice of the young boy and Hagar's weeping moved God to bring about change in the circumstance. There are many modern day Hagars and Ishmaels who are expelled, despised, unwanted or forced to abandon their homes and land. Let us pray and cry with them and believe those who sow in tears will reap in joy. (Psalm 126:5)

As a development practitioner, if we want to bring hope to those we serve, we ourselves must believe that there is still hope in desperate situation. In the case of the Rohingya refugee crisis, there is no sight it is going to end soon. In fact, according to one source, it takes an average of 17 years before a refugee returns home or resettles in a new place. However the resilience, creativity, and self-empowerment of refugees living in camps are usually very strong particularly if they are given the opportunity. A holistic approach can be adopted, just like any other community development work, to cover humanitarian action, protection, and development.

Refugees could be included into the national development plans of host countries, to help them live in dignity, contribute and find hope by, for example, providing refugees land to farm and allowing them to move freely and run businesses.

In a world in turmoil, we need to have sight of faith to spread hope where others find pain, we give hope and direction. For the Government of Bangladesh and the Rohingya people, the path to rehabilitation and recovery is going to take many years, and throughout the process, there will be many sorrow. Remember the Lord keeps track of our sorrow. He will collect all our tears in a bottle and record each one in our own book. (Psalm 56:8) The day will come when He will reconcile our book of tears and he will bring restoration.

## JOIN HANDS JOIN HEARTS



### Bringing Light to the Youths Living in Darkness

"Left-behind Children", a term describing over 60 million children in China who stayed behind with their grandparents in rural areas while their parents are working in the cities.

While not all left-behind children suffer from poverty as their parents work far away from home, they all suffer the lack of parental care and love, and bear emotional burdens due to this long-term void.

CEDAR's partner in Sichuan, Chengdu Fuyi Community Services Centre, began supporting youths in quake-affected communities through caring and training programmes after the 2008 earthquake in Wenchuan, Sichuan. Two more earthquakes happened in Ya'an, Sichuan and Zhaotong, Yunnan in 2013 and 2014 respectively, leading to the expansion of our partner's service to the youths in those areas. Over 30% of the children in these areas are single-parented or left-behind children.

Xiaobo is one of the trained leaders of a youth group. He met a new member who was about his age at a youth camp. As the two quiet young men shook hands, Xiaobo was surprised by the roughness of the newcomer's hand. He later found out during a family visit that the boy was living with his grandma in a cramped and poorly-lit clay house. Xiaobo was struck by the heaviness of the unnoticed burden put on his friend for his entire life without anyone to share with. That incident prompted Xiaobo to start caring for left-behind children. He also helped his friend to establish a support network.

The problems left-behind children experienced – poverty, loneliness, lack of social skills and self-esteem – are not caused by themselves nor their parents, but because of ►

greater social factors, such as limitations of the household registration system, dislocation of resources, distorted social values, and lack of community support. Our partner is committed to support the youths in need by providing appropriate life skills education and mentorship with the help of local churches; they train up youths to become leaders who could give back and bless the society.

We at CEDAR would like to continue our support to the poor and neglected children through our partner, and ensure these children are entitled to the rights to survive and be protected, and rights to participate, particularly opportunity to participate in their communities' development. These were not only stipulated under the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations, but also how we should treat each and every child as they reflect God's image. May the lives of more children and youths who are living in loneliness and darkness be brighten.

## TAKING ACTION



### This is Community Development

Written and edited by: Jojo Poon

I enjoy hearing stories and sharing of different development workers very much. If we put their sharing together, then we would get a complete picture of God's purposes for the poor and the world. For this issue's "Taking Action", we invited CEDAR's staff from different eras to share about their learnings and experiences along the way to put together a blueprint for CEDAR.

"We were in Gansu's Hui village working on the project. When we conducted home visits, we would ask: 'Is anyone home?', and if there were only women in the house, they would answered: 'No!'" shares Alice, who served in Gansu, China. "We spent half a year to build relationship with the locals. After we have gain trust from the village ladies, they said they would like to raise chickens...As a result, children had eggs for meals, the families' income increased, and women were recognised." Alice believes that community development is to enable the struggling poor to uncover their God-given potentials, break free from worldly chains, just like the Hui women she encountered in Gansu.

Rebecca, who spent four years monitoring African projects, shares what she learned about development work, "We often came across results that are different from our expectations...We had implemented a development programme in a village for over a decade. Though we couldn't

see any much differences from our perspective, the little grocery stores made of mud were actually important achievements by the villagers, after forming self-help groups, setting up small loans, and learning to run businesses." Rebecca stresses, "We need to look at development from the perspective of the locals and recognise their struggles and needs."

Bonnie and our former colleague Cee Foong had been serving at CEDAR for over 20 years. Although they worked in the supporting role at the office, through sharing and stories brought back by programme colleagues, they witnessed the beauty of development. "We often find God's light in the lives of the beneficiaries," Bonnie shares, "Their stories are ever encouraging—they are the living testimonies of God's miraculous work." Cee Foong was very impressed by the concerted and committed effort community members put in responding to the needs of their communities, a difference both Bonnie and her saw when comparing to traditional charitable acts. Grace, who previously worked in the field, explains that development work is not just all home visits and distribution of material aid, but helping the poor to learn about their rights and helping them to actively participate in changing their lives.

"How does development relate to missionary work?" This is a question we are often asked. Our programme colleague, Fountain, says, "In John 20, it says: *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.* This is The Mission. How the Father has sent the Son to live among the poor, full of grace and truth. The Son also sends us, the Church, to live among the poor, bringing transformation. This is development."

Visit <http://bit.ly/cedar-share227-hk-e> to read all five of the interview articles.

## FULL VERSION OF THIS ISSUE



## 2017/2018 OPERATING STATEMENT

(Our financial year is from 07/2017 to 06/2018)

				Jul – Nov17
<b>Income</b>	Donations	HK\$		3,588,051
	Grants			122,537
	Appeal for Relief			46,948
	HK Government Disaster Relief			2,883,000
	Fund (for flood relief in India)			
	Other Income			28,804
		HK\$		<b>7,092,340</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	Projects	Asia		2,900,138
		China		1,157,840
		Africa		1,693,636
	Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation Projects			357,959
	HK Government Disaster Relief			2,883,000
	Fund (for flood relief in India)			
	Education & Promotion			886,434
	Administration			356,765
		HK\$		<b>10,235,772</b>
	Surplus/(Deficit)	HK\$		<b>(3,143,432)</b>

### Remarks:

- The annual budget for 7/2017 to 6/2018 is HK\$17,449,570.
- From July to November, there is a total spending of over HK\$5.7 million, and reserve fund was used to cover deficit. At the same time, CEDAR is also responding to crisis in Yemen and drought in central India.
- The Hong Kong Government Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee has approved a grant of HK\$2.8 million for CEDAR to conduct flood relief work through its partner in northern India.
- Please support CEDAR's and its partners' work with prayers and donations. 🙏