



Kavre Community Outreach Program, Nepal

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Project title: Kavre Community Outreach Program

Project location: Kavrepalanchowk (Kavre) district, Nepal



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Background

Kavre, one of the most underdeveloped districts of Nepal, is 45 km away from the capital city, Kathmandu. It is difficult to believe that a place as remote as Kavre exists, just ninety minutes' drive from a city as thriving as Kathmandu. RMF's project location includes 8 villages on the other side of the Bote Koshi River and is about a 5-hour drive from Kavre district headquarters in Dhulikhel. Every VDC (village development committee) has a village health post with health practitioners who are appointed on merit by the government through its own selection process.

It is rare to find a doctor or nurse in communities as remote as RMF's target VDCs. The government has created positions such as auxiliary health workers (AHWs), auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs), and community health workers (CHWs) who are trained medical practitioners, fully qualified to treat minor health issues. However, the small health posts in many VDCs (village development committees) do without AHWs, ANMs, and CHWs.

Additionally, the vast majority of health posts are understocked and do not have essential medicines and equipment. The small health posts in the VDCs are completely reliant upon the District Health Office, which in turn is reliant on the Ministry of Health, for funds and supplies to run the health centers smoothly. The lack of essential supplies and equipment can directly be attributed to the government's inability to keep the supply consistent as a result of lack of proper planning and funds.

Thus, people seeking emergency health assistance have to travel long distances to district headquarters or Kathmandu, or end up dying because of lack of treatment. Many people still believe in witch doctors and voodoo and don't always seek medicine or go to the hospital for treatment.

RMF's Presence

A preliminary assessment of Kavre district and its need for health services was performed by RMF's Nepal team immediately after the April 25, 2015 mega earthquake. We found that the health centers were in immediate need of health equipment and supplies, which would enable them to provide quality health services to area residents. RMF's headquarters in the USA immediately responded to these needs by dispatching a 40-foot container filled with necessary health equipment and supplies.

However, the container could not reach Nepal at that time due to an unofficial economic blockade created by the Indian government. Nepal is a landlocked country, and the only way for the container to enter Nepal was through an Indian customs port. With the Indian government blocking any container from entering Nepal, the supplies had to stay in the Port of Kolkata for almost 6 months.



In January 2016, RMF's Nepal team was finally able to receive the container. The equipment and medical supplies were stored in Dhulikhel (the headquarters of Kavre district). After having obtained necessary approvals from appropriate authorities to distribute the consignment to the village health posts of Kavre, our team conducted a small ceremony and handed over the consignment to the District Health Office.

Under RMF's supervision, another small distribution ceremony was held in Birta Deurali Health Post, where the medical supplies and equipment were directly handed over to health post supervisors in February 2016.

All in all, the consignment was distributed among 17 village health posts and Dhulikhel Hospital. The initial decision was to distribute among 8 VDCs in Kavre, but because of the overwhelming quantity of supplies, the consignment was adequately distributed among 17 VDCs and Dhulikhel Hospital.

17 VDCs received medical supplies and equipment:

1. Madan Kundari Health Post
2. Kattike Deurali Health Post
3. Pokhari Chauri Health Post
4. Gothpani Health Post
5. Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post
6. Majhi Feda Health Post
7. Nagre Gagarche Health Post
8. Birta Deurali Health Post
9. Simthali Health Post
10. Bangthali Health Post
11. Salle Bhumlu Health Post
12. Kolati Health Post
13. Phatlate Health Post
14. Bhumlungtar Health Post
15. Saping Health Post
16. Chaubas Health Post
17. Bekhsimle Health Post

RMF Follow-Up Finds Unused Equipment and Supplies: June 2016

Because of the high value and quantity of the medical equipment, instruments, and supplies distributed to health posts in these 17 VDCs (village development committees), it is imperative to track the consignment from time to time to ensure that it is used for the intended purposes and not appropriated for profit or laid aside unused at health posts.

In June 2016, RMF Finance Manager Suman Gurung visited the villages with Mr. Lekh Raj Gautam, a respected local political figure, to inspect the condition of the consignment. They observed that most of the consignment had been distributed among the health posts, but some of the VDCs were unable to take the supplies to their health posts. This was because of the overwhelming size of their share of the consignment and a lack of funds to hire a vehicle to transport it. The undistributed supplies were kept in two of the health posts, namely Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post and Birta Deurali Health Post.



Consignment kept at Birta Deurali Health Post



Consignment kept outside Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post in a tent

RMF's team instructed the supervisor of Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post to have the consignment distributed to the respective health posts immediately. It was also made clear that the transportation cost would be borne by Real Medicine Foundation should there be insufficient funds for the distribution.

We also found that some health posts had been storing equipment, such as wheelchairs and crutches, that should have been handed over to the needy, while other health posts had been distributing the equipment as needed and taking it back once the need was over. Furthermore, most of the boxes of supplies were unused and unopened, as the health posts were saving them for future use. We asked them to use supplies, such as antiseptics, hand sanitizers, surgical gloves, etc. and advised that RMF will try to replenish them in the future.



Tej Bahadur Ghising, in charge of Madan Kudari Health Post, with unused RMF consignment



Unused wheelchairs, crutches, and bed at Madan Kudari Health Post



Birta Deurali Health Post – During our visit, we met a local man who was using RMF-donated crutches. He was told to return them when he no longer needed them. He expressed his gratitude toward RMF for the crutches, which he could not afford himself.

We did find that some health posts had been making proper use of the equipment and instruments donated and were able demonstrate their use to RMF's team during our visit:



Kattike Deurali Health Post employees demonstrating the use of RMF-donated thermometer, nebulizer, supplies, etc.



RMF-donated maternity kit at Kattike Deurali Health Post—most were already used and only a few were left in stock.

Progress in Use of RMF Consignment: November 2016

The RMF Nepal team, including Program Manager Ganesh Shrestha and Finance Manager Suman Gurung, visited the health posts again during the last week of November 2016.

Goals of this visit:

- Track the consignment once more to ensure that supplies and equipment are being used effectively.
- Cement RMF's position in the community and with government health posts to operate our 5-year community health outreach program.



Left to right: Mr. Bal Krishna Gautam (in charge of Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post), Mr. Suman Gurung (RMF Finance Manager), and Mr. Ganesh Shrestha (RMF Program Manager) at Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post.

RMF team's findings:

- Previously undistributed supplies had been distributed, with the remainder to be given to the district hospital.
- Equipment was used effectively and some required maintenance.

The consignment stored at Dhuseni Siwalaya and Birta Deurali was distributed to the respective health posts. This was done by the supervisors of the respective health posts without RMF intervention.

We were informed that the medical instruments and equipment still stored at Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post were in the process of being handed over to Dhulikhel Hospital. The remaining machines were sophisticated, including phototherapy machines, audiogram, autosome, etc., which require highly qualified medical technicians to operate effectively. The sophisticated, expensive equipment was beyond the professional and technical capacity of local health practitioners, and the health post supervisors, as a committee, had jointly decided to hand over the machines to Dhulikhel Hospital with the approval of the District Health Office.

It is to be noted that since the consignment was handed over to the government of Nepal, it could not be moved without approval from the appropriate government bodies.

Some of the machines had been used extensively by the health posts and were now in need of maintenance to remain functional. Also, some equipment required restocking of supplies which the health posts did not have. For example, a nebulizer requires special medicine to be put to use. In the absence of such medicines, the nebulizer could not be used. It was also brought to the attention of our team that the health post employees need training from a technical expert to effectively use some of the equipment.



Mr. Ganesh Shrestha inspecting undistributed instruments to be handed over to Dhulikhel Hospital



Mr. Ganesh Shrestha inspecting undistributed instruments



Mr. Ganesh Shrestha inspecting an oxygen concentrator



Inspection of undistributed instruments

Real Medicine Foundation has listened to the requests of the health post supervisors and assured them that we will provide support:

- Have the equipment examined to keep it functional at all times.
- Consistently provide medicines needed to use the machines.
- Build the capacity of health post employees through training, including training from a biomedical expert, enabling them to use the machines effectively.

Some of the equipment that was not put to use during RMF's first visit was now being used. The boxes of consumables were all opened and use of the supplies was properly documented in each of the health posts.



RMF-donated bed is used in Madan Kundari Health Post. This was laid aside and unused during our first visit.



RMF-donated supplies used at Madan Kundari Health Post



RMF Program Manager Ganesh Shrestha inspecting the expiration dates of RMF-donated supplies at Gothpani Health Post

Consumables in the consignment such as rubber gloves, hand sanitizers, syringes, etc. were being used in each of the health posts. The RMF team was shown a ledger in each health post that recorded the use of such equipment and consumables, which provided sufficient evidence with regards to the effective use of the consignment.

The wheelchairs and crutches, however, were still in the possession of the health posts and were not used.



RMF Program Manager Ganesh Shrestha checking the condition of RMF-donated wheelchairs in Madan Kundari Health Post



Checking the condition of RMF-donated wheelchairs at Majhi Feda Health Post



Unused wheelchairs at Birta Deurali Health Post

Wheelchair Distribution Program: December 2016

During RMF's second visit to Kavre district health posts, our team found that many RMF-donated wheelchairs were not being used. In fact, they were laid aside and had not even been moved since the day they arrived in the health posts. The dust accumulated on the wheelchairs gave us a clear indication that the health posts were not using them. However, upon closer examination, the wheelchairs were found to be in perfect working condition.

RMF's team called for a meeting with supervisors of the health posts and asked for an inventory of the unused wheelchairs. RMF's team visited each of the health posts to inspect the use of supplies and equipment and also to oversee the use of wheelchairs and crutches. Villagers who were in serious need of a wheelchair were shortlisted in the meeting, and a decision was made to have the wheelchairs distributed among the people who need them, rather than leaving the valuable equipment unused at the health posts.

A program to have the wheelchairs distributed among the shortlisted villagers was organized for December 2nd, 2016 at Madan Kundari Health Post. The program was chaired by Mr. Jhanka Gautam, chairperson of the Madan Kundari Health Post Management Committee. RMF's team used our vehicle to collect all of the unused

wheelchairs from the various health posts of Kavre district. However, we ensured that each of the health posts had at least one wheelchair remaining in their inventory.



Wheelchair collection at Madan Kundari Health Post for distribution to shortlisted villagers in various VDCs

The program was hosted by Mr. Tej Raj Ghising, the supervisor of Madan Kundari Health Post, and attended by supervisors of most of the Kavre district health posts in RMF's program location, FCHVs (female community health volunteers), RMF's team, Nepal police (for security), and the beneficiaries and their families.



From left: Mr. Basu Dev (Gothpani Health Post), Mr. Bal Krishna Gautam (Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post), and Mr. Tej Bahadur Ghising (Madan Kundari Health Post)



RMF Program Manager Ganesh Shrestha (center) with the FCHVs of Madan Kundari Health Post

Involvement of FCHVs (Female Community Health Volunteers)

The FCHV (Female Community Health Volunteer) program was initiated by the government of Nepal in the late 1980s to promote healthy behaviors among mothers and community members. FCHVs are dedicated, permanent residents of the VDC where they work. FCHVs are selected by a mother's group for health (MGH) in conjunction with the staff of local health posts. After receiving basic training and supplies, FCHVs provide health education, supplements, basic medicines, and contraceptives to community members. They also refer community members to primary health care centers, as well as explaining and encouraging health seeking behaviors.

The involvement of FCHVs is critical to RMF's objective of establishing a sustainable, affordable, reliable healthcare system and outreach that can cater to the health needs of the community. RMF's 5-year program in Kavre district will depend on and revolve around the involvement of these volunteers, as they are focal persons in the community when it comes to educating, training, mobilizing, and providing health services and referrals to the health posts and district hospital. FCHVs hold a highly-respected position within their community, and their involvement is imperative to the success of RMF's health outreach in remote settings of Nepal. FCHVs can influence and motivate community members to adhere to the health education we provide, and they have invaluable information about the community, such as its demographics, geographic location, population, child birth, pregnancies, etc.

Wheelchair Distribution

During the distribution program, the host, Mr. Tej Bahadur Ghising, expressed gratitude on behalf of the community and the Health Post Management Committee for RMF's overwhelming support and expressed his hope for continued support in the future. Mr. Ghising also welcomed RMF's 5-year program in the district and declared the community's continued support to RMF's objective of creating a sustainable, affordable, reliable health system in the district.

Before the commencement of the distribution program, RMF's team visited some of the beneficiaries to assess their medical condition and the severity of



RMF's team, local health post supervisors, and Mr. Tamang in front of his house rebuilt after the earthquake

their disability and to get a holistic view of their situation for possible support in the future. The beneficiaries included 9 disabled people. Receiving a wheelchair is a lifechanging event for these people:

Beneficiary: Kashiman Tamang

Address: Madan Kundari - 3
Age: 73
Sex: Male
Economic status: Poor
Family members: 7

History of disability: Mr. Tamang had a serious fall in 2013 that resulted in dislocation of the hip. He was kept in the hospital for 20 days and also had hip joint replacement surgery. Mr. Kashiman Tamang had been bedridden since his accident and could not move on his own. It was not possible to bring him to the program, so RMF's team, along with the health post supervisors, went to his home to personally hand over the wheelchair to him. At first, Mr. Kashiman was shocked at our arrival and could not believe this was happening to him. When we finally put him in the wheelchair and said, "Sir, now you should take a stroll around the village and start meeting people," he starting smiling and could not be filled enough with gratitude.



Mr. Kashiman Tamang receiving his wheelchair

Beneficiary: Hira Maya Lama

Address: Madan Kundari - 1
Age: 30
Sex: Female
Economic status: Poor

History of disability: Unable to walk, hear, or speak from birth.

Ms. Hira Lama's disability meant that she could not express her feelings, but her mother was very happy to receive a wheelchair for her daughter. She said, "At least I will not have to carry her around all the time now, and we can move around more easily."



RMF Program Manager Ganesh Shrestha with Hira Maya Lama and her mother

Beneficiary: Arunima Lama

Address: Madan Kundari - 1
Age: 14
Sex: Female
Economic status: Poor
Father: Arjun Lama, agriculture, labor
Family: 4 (father, mother, and brother)

History of disability: At the age of 3, Arunima began having problems with her hip joint, and received physiotherapy at Dhulikhel Hospital. She was kept in the NCO children's home, Naxal until 2015. After the earthquake in 2015, Arunima returned home.



Arunima Lama and her father with Mr. Ganesh Shrestha

Ms. Arunima Lama was the happiest among the recipients, which could clearly be seen in her jubilant expressions throughout the program. She had always needed her father to move around, and now she could move on her own without her father's help.

Beneficiary: Buddha Lama

Address: Madan Kundari – 9

Age: 21

Sex: Male

Economic status: Poor

Father: Sher Bahadur Tamang, agriculture

Medical history: Unable to walk or speak from birth.

Other beneficiaries:

- Sunil Pathak
- Pradeep Pathak
- Nima Lama
- Anish Waiba
- Bhimsen Gautam



RMF's team with supervisors of the health posts, Mr. Buddha Lama, and his father



Beneficiaries of the wheelchair distribution program with their guardians, RMF's Ganesh Shrestha, and health post supervisors after the distribution program

Nepali Media Coverage

The entire event was covered by the local media and published in a national weekly newspaper.

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Translation: Wheelchair Distribution in Madan Kundari



Madan Kundari – Wheelchairs have been distributed in a remote village of the Kavre district: Madan Kundari. On Friday, December 2nd, 2016, wheelchairs were distributed to 9 physically disabled people of Madan Kundari. The program, organized by the Madan Kundari Health Post, was chaired by Mr. Jhamka Gautam, the chairperson of the Health Post Management Committee. The program was conducted by the chief of the health post, Mr. Tej Bahadur Ghising.

Mr. Ganesh Shrestha was the chief guest and the program administrator. He is the Nepal representative for the organization that donated the wheelchairs, Real Medicine Foundation. Mr. Shrestha expressed his happiness to be able to provide medical supplies and equipment to remote areas east of Koshi in Kavre district.

The chairman of Madan Kundari Health Post, Mr. Jhamka Gautam, expressed that he expects to receive similar humanitarian help from Real Medicine Foundation in the days to come as well. The program administrator and representative of Real Medicine Foundation, Mr. Ganesh Shrestha, has committed to providing assistance on the request. He also informed us of the five-year plan being developed to benefit 8 Village Development Committees (VDCs) east of Koshi in Kavre district.

The physically disabled, their guardians, and their representatives were provided with 7 wheelchairs, and the 2 individuals who were not able to be present at the program received wheelchairs when representatives visited their homes. Also, 5 wheelchairs were previously distributed through the assistance of Real Medicine Foundation in Dhuseni Shivalaya. Similarly, we were informed that wheelchairs were also sent to Gothpani, Pokhari Chauri, Kotali, and Birta Deurali through the program.

During the program, the welcome speech was given by Mr. Norbu Lama, a member of the Madan Kundari Health Post Management Committee. Mr. Basudev Dhakal, Chief of Gothpani Health Post, praised the humanitarian support. Similarly, Mr. Balkrishna Gautam, acting Chief of Dhuseni Shivalaya Health Post who works as a coordinator for a medical equipment distribution program in the Koshi area, praised the exemplary role played by Real Medicine Foundation after a massive earthquake.

Original article:



RMF's wheelchair distribution program covered by the local media

Addition of a Public Health Expert to RMF's Nepal Team

Real Medicine Foundation has submitted a proposal to the government of Nepal to continue its support in Kavre district, seeking to strengthen the healthcare system and operate a 5-year community health outreach program. The program will run in coordination with government facilities and will be aimed at strengthening the health system for a positive impact on the overall health of the community. Mr. Ganesh Kumar Shrestha joined RMF's team to oversee the program's implementation and the accomplishment of program objectives.

Ganesh Kumar Shrestha

Mr. Shrestha has been a valuable addition to RMF's Nepal team since September 2016. Ganesh Kumar Shrestha is a health professional dedicated to bettering the lives of underserved and vulnerable people, and has more than 12 years' experience in the public health sector. Ganesh began his career as a community health instructor at the Western Technical Institute, Pokhara, and then worked as a government health assistant from 2002 to 2008. In 2006, Ganesh earned his Bachelor of Education from the Tribhuvan University, Dhangadhi, and in 2010, he completed his Master of Public Health degree at the Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology, and Sciences. Ganesh has been



Mr. Ganesh Shrestha

honored with the Nepal Biddhya Bhushan Kha (awarded by the president of Nepal) and the Gold Medal from the Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology, and Sciences.

After completing his education, Ganesh worked as a lecturer at Lumbini Medical College, and as a training coordinator for the Integrated Development Foundation (a Nepali NGO working in health, nutrition, and research) and MaxPro (a private company working with health, WASH, nutrition, and social marketing). In 2014, Ganesh was employed as a national adult learning expert for Practical Action Consulting South Asia, and in 2015, he became involved in earthquake relief efforts in several districts, working as a project manager with the Nepali NGO, Integrated Development Foundation, to reestablish health facilities and birthing centers, provide psychosocial counseling to female community health volunteers (FCHVs), and distribute relief kits. Ganesh is now RMF Nepal's Program Manager. He speaks Nepali, English, and Hindi.

RMF's Future Plans in Kavre District

Real Medicine Foundation proposed a 5-year program to the government of Nepal to strengthen the healthcare system in Kavre district and help develop a system that will be sustainable, affordable, and reliable for the community. RMF's goal is to strengthen existing health posts by providing them with training, capacity building, and equipment and medicinal supplies, improving the overall health and wellbeing of communities and obviating their need to travel to Kavre district headquarters or even Kathmandu for medical treatment.

Program Objectives

- To provide quality health services by strengthening the health system to improve the health status of people living in selected VDCs of Kavre district.
- To enhance the capacity of people living in selected communities of Kavre district, improving their livelihoods through income generation training.

Planned Program Activities

- Operate a model birthing center in a village in Kavre district, which will act as a model to other villages. In this context, RMF's team has secured a birthing center at Dhuseni Siwalaya Health Post, which will be an RMF-supported birthing center. Real Medicine Foundation will fully equip and staff this birthing center to obviate the need to travel to the district hospital, which is a 5-hour drive from this area. Also, this will be the only fully operational birthing center in RMF's target villages of Kavre district.



Waiting room of birthing center at Dhuseni Siwalaya



Delivery Room at Dhuseni Siwalaya

- Conduct health camps.
- Provide essential medicines and equipment to health facilities.
- Conduct awareness programs on hygiene, child nutrition, prenatal and postnatal care awareness, and first aid issues in the community.

- Support a midwifery and nutrition awareness program.
- Train government health workers for quality health services.
- Support regular MGM (mother's group meetings).
- Conduct interaction and health education program for pregnant women.
- Conduct interaction and health education program for mothers-in-law of pregnant women.
- Conduct interaction and health education program for husbands of pregnant women.
- Provide training to strengthen and empower HFOMC (health facility operation and management committee) teams.
- Support regular HFOMC meetings and implementation.
- Support follow-ups for implementation of HFOMC decisions.
- Support counseling for mothers on proper hygiene, IYCF (infant and young child feeding), maternal health, sanitation, and nutritious foods.
- Refer sick children to government based rehabilitation centers with provision of transportation costs to needy patients.
- Develop and demonstrate necessary IEC materials for health education.
- Support the construction and management of placenta pits at birthing centers.
- Use apps on mobile phones to track cases, assist in counseling families, record keeping, and referral mechanisms.
- Train FCHVs to conduct MGM on various topics.
- Conduct video screenings which include local role models who have adopted best health practices and show nutritious cooking demonstrations.
- Establish a nursery: plant rearing facilities for local farmers.
- Establish cooperative societies in Kavre district to foster agricultural business within the villages with the help of locals.
- Train the cooperatives on effective management of the nursery, plant rearing skills, cash management, subsidies and benefits awarded by the government, marketing and sales, transportation, etc. for proper and independent management of the cooperative.
- Train members of the cooperatives with regard to their roles, responsibilities, and authorities.