



OUR COVID-19 RELIEF AND RESPONSE – PHASE II

A. Context of the Response

The world is suffering terribly due to the COVID-19 pandemic from the past two years affecting the rich and poor nations alike. In case of Nepal, the government did not take the second wave as seriously as the first one which in itself was not that strong. The infection and death rates during the first wave were comparatively manageable, even though it had and left a huge impact in people's health and economy. The second wave of the pandemic started all of sudden and there was no preparedness, which rushed the medical supply shortages and increased deaths; we were left with only empty oxygen cylinders as the COVID-19 patients remained helpless on a bed outside the emergency wards of all government hospitals in Kathmandu. Doctors warned of a major crisis as hospitals were running out of beds and oxygen. It was chaotic and helpless situation not only for the patients but also for the whole nation.

To escape from India's devastating Covid 19 wave, tens of thousands of migrant workers fled to the open borders of Nepal. This not only risked the lives of the migrant workers but also significantly increased the risk of transmission of dangerous new strands of Covid 19 virus to the Nepali population within the borders. Nepal has been completely dependent on its wealthier neighbors for nearly all medical resources. But due to its own crisis, India strapped for supplies and Nepal is facing a desperate shortage of oxygen, ventilators, and other critical equipment to combat the pandemic. The basic requirements for the hospitals and health workers, cannot be addressed within the country and the health system is paralyzed as health authorities are helpless. Per day death reached up to 225 and infection is in more than 10 thousand every day. Also, the infection rate is almost 50% which is most probably highest in the world. Neither hospitals nor the country has the resources to produce its own oxygen, and has not received oxygen shipments for more than two weeks due to border closures and India's crisis. The hospitals still remain unable to make use of their already insufficient bed capacities due to oxygen shortages and have started closing their services to patients.

Against this background, the health system and facilities in Solukhumbu are not enough to cope with the present need or to provide services to patients due to its limited resources such as essential medicines, health equipment and health personnel. Contact tracing and testing facilities were not available and people were left to fend for themselves. The hospitals in the central level as well as district/provincial level were already running out of oxygen, medicines, and medical supplies. It was expected to further worsen and go out of control if the condition of in-house isolated cases deteriorated, resulting in increased and uncontrollable need of medical assistance.

People with positive cases on the basis of their health condition were and are kept in Corona hospital and isolation centres established by local government. The patient with mild symptoms were recommended for home isolation. Respective local governments were managing isolation centres in their area but are not fully equipped with treatment facilities.

Considering the above mentioned problems and challenges, Nepal Hilfe Bonn e.V. (NHB) and EcoHimal Nepal launched a mission of COVID-19 relief and response in Solukhumbu District. The mission, also considering the desperate requests from local governments, focused on reaching out to the public health care facilities.

In addition, Social Welfare Council had appealed national and international non-government organizations to contribute and implement the programs on relief and responses for COVID-19 prevention and control in specified priority areas by the Government of Nepal and Ministry of Health and Population. The prioritized areas are:

- COVID-19 treatment support materials including oxygen, cylinders, liquid oxygen, oxygen concentrators, ventilators, ICU etc.
- Protective materials together with infrared thermometer, plus Oximeter and PPE
- Materials for COVID control including face masks, face shields, gloves and sanitizers
- Testing materials like PCR test, antigen test reagents etc.
- Quarantine and isolation centers management materials and programs
- Health materials to resume the halted health services delivery and programs

The local Government chief Mr. Asim Rai, the Chairperson of Thulung Dudhkoshi Rural Municipality states:

“In Nepal, the second wave of the Coronavirus is deadlier and more severe. The unpredictability of the new variant has left an entire nation gasping for breath. The healthcare system in the country is in shambles. As the virus has moved into the rural areas, the impact is worse. When the district administration offices of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur imposed prohibitory orders giving 2 days preparation time allowing migrants to return back to their villages from Kathmandu, the migrants brought with them the virus in the rural villages”

B. Response in 3 Rural Municipalities

The priority of response initially occurred in Mahakulung Rural Municipality (MRM), the remotest RM and one of the project areas of NHB. The chief of MRM sent the official request letters for materials support for preventive and protective health measures. (Request letter is provided in [Annex 1](#))

Based on the request, EcoHimal Nepal and NHB decided to respond with materials support to enable the coping capacity of rural health care institutions. EcoHimal team in leadership of the Executive Director managed the necessary medical supply procurement even in the times when the country has been in strict lockdown. Quotations from various suppliers were collected, the cost analyzed, negotiated with vendor for cost-effectiveness and quality assurance. The Saraswati Ratna Suppliers was selected as the best supplier in the context and preventive and protective health materials were ordered formally and purchased. Considering the high demand, less supply and shortage of materials in the market, EcoHimal immediately stored the materials in its central office and requested respective local government to manage transportation, since it needs formal authorisation or permit to send vehicle from Kathmandu to the respective sites. MRM arranged transportation permits from district administration office and the materials were transported to Bung. Materials and equipment of cost NPR. 1,399,162.00 (In words: One million three hundred ninety-nine thousand and one hundred sixty-two rupees) was supported to the MRM.

Thereafter, other local governments forwarded their concerns to EcoHimal Nepal, illustrating the immediate needs, organizational liaisons and expectations from EcoHimal. Mr. Narayan Dhakal as the Executive Director shared the issue with Mr. Namgel Sherpa, the Chairperson of NHB, Germany. Taking the matter serious immediately, NHB granted Euro 11,000.00 to support 3 more local Governments.

The EcoHimal management team made an assessment of medical goods and equipment through telephone communication with the chief of Thulung Dudhkoshi Rural Municipality (TDRM), Sotang Rural Municipality (SRM) and Solu Dudhkunda Municipality (SDM). The 2 RMs requested the materials support to reduce the risks in prevention, protection and control of COVID-19. (The request letters from TDRM and SRM are provided in *Annex 2*). SDM requested to support in its Corona Fund considering its current position of medical supplies and one door policy of health facilities arrangement. Considering our financial capacity and remoteness of the RMs, two RMs (Thulung Dudhakoshin and Sotang) were selected in consultation with Mr Sherpa and taken immediate action for support. The SDM is under consideration if we have further funding capacity.

All procurement procedures were fulfilled, and medical supplies organized and transported to the project sites. Supplies of NPR 790,054.00 (in words: Seven hundred ninety thousand and fifty-four rupees) to TDRM and of NPR 636,527.03 (in words: Six hundred thirty-six thousand five hundred twenty-seven rupees and three paisa only) to SRM provided. In total, NPR 2,825,743.03 have been supported to 3 rural municipalities as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Materials/equipment support

S.N	Materials/equipment	Unit	Quantity	Amount in NPR
1	Surgical Masks (3 ply)	Pics	20,000.00	58,000.00
2	N 95 Mask	Pics	1,100.00	14,300.00
3	Sanitizer 5 Litre	Pics	5.00	5,000.00
4	Examination Gloves	box	600.00	660,000.00
5	Pulse Oximeter	Pics	65.00	68,250.00
6	Nebulizer Machine	Pics	7.00	16,100.00
7	Stem Inhaler Machine	Pics	5.00	3,000.00
8	PPE Set Head To Toes reusable	Pics	70.00	85,000.00
9	Antigen Kit	Pics	700.00	387,500.00
10	Gown set	Set	10.00	5,000.00
11	Face Shield	Pics	900.00	61,000.00
12	Surgical Gloves	pairs	2,500.00	98,012.00
13	Hand wash (500 MI)	Pics	20.00	5,200.00
14	Oxygen Concentrator (5 ltr) portable	Pics	6.00	670,200.00
15	VTM Kit	Pics	100.00	10,000.00
16	Disinfect liquid	litres	25.00	10,000.00
17	Sprayer for disinfect (18 ltr)	Pics	1.00	2,800.00
18	Infrared thermo meter	Pics	22.00	24,200.00
19	Isolation bed	set	10.00	127,000.00
20	PPE _reusable with boot, head cover & goggles	sets	50.00	110,000.00
21	PPE-disposable	sets	100.00	101,702.03
22	Hand sanitizer (500 ml)	Pics	150.00	34,500.00
23	Surgical Cap	Pics	300.00	1,500.00
24	Shoe Cover	pairs	50.00	1,250.00
25	Oxygen mask -Adult	Pics	20.00	4,100.00
26	Oxygen Mask-Child	Pics	20.00	4,100.00
27	Nebulization Mask - Adult	Pics	20.00	4,100.00
28	Nebulization Mask-Child	Pics	20.00	4,100.00
29	Bain Circuit	Pics	1.00	3,100.00
30	Magili's Forceps	Pics	1.00	475.00
31	Chloride Solution	Litres	100.00	47,000.00
32	Vital sign monitor	set	2.00	193,000.00
33	Digital thermo meter	pics	50.00	6,254.00

Sub-Total	2,825,743.03
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RMs wise materials and equipment support is in *Annex 3*.

All 3 RMs have acknowledged the support either through social media or with official letter. SRM has thanked us with the letter provided *as Annex 4*.

C. Coverage and impact:

The total population of three Rural Municipality is 40,654. Details of the population is presented in the table below:

S.N.	Rural Municipalities	Total Households	Population		
			Male	Female	Total
1	Mahakulung Rural Municipality	2,450.00	5,619.00	5,833.00	11,452.00
2	Thulung Dudhkoshi Rural Municipality	4,240.00	9,431.00	10,241.00	19,672.00
3	Sotang Rural Municipality	2,048.00	4,700.00	4,830.00	9,530.00
Total		8,738.00	19,750.00	20,904.00	40,654.00

The Support was channeled through the health section of the Rural Municipality to its isolation centres, Primary healthcare centres, Health Posts and Sub Health Posts. This has facilitated the local government in providing a better service to the COVID-19 infected patients and people in the isolation centres. Also, it has boosted the courage of the local health professionals and the government itself. All the three local governments are grateful and highly appreciated the effort from EcoHimal and NHB during this adverse situation worldwide.

Mr Asim Rai wrote in his social media:

“We are in the fight against Covid. Thulung Dudhkoshi government is handling and coordinating with inter government and various allies to keep its citizens safe. In this order, EcoHimal Nepal has provided much needed health products worth about a million rupees as well as in coordination and initiative of my close friend and businessman Mr. Kiran Sjb Rana, the oxygen concentrator worth about two lakhs fifty thousand. You all are very helpful from Siddharth Vanasthali Group. I want to express my heartfelt thanks and respect to the helping hands.”

D. Media coverage:

The unofficial translation and Nepali language version are provided in a separate document.

Narayan Dhakal and Team
EcoHimal Neapl