

Monday, 04. May 2015

Shortly after six O' clock we landed on Tribhuvan International Airport, the only international airport of Nepal. There were only three cargo planes in the airport. I was puzzled; taking the present scenario into consideration and the helps that were being offered by different large organizations and nations I had imagined differently, there were a few stacks of relief supplies around. Our plane was occupied only one-third with passengers. After some formal process at the immigration desk, we could drag our suitcases full of medicine to a taxi.

We could reach to Kritan's parents home through amazingly smooth roads in good condition in less than twenty minutes. The number of vehicles was relatively less in numbers because more than 800 000 people had left the city as explained by Kritan. This is bad for the city and for the economy, but good for the charities, which would allow for the better movement of the people moving around for the relief works.

Many well-built homes had very little or no damage sustained by the earthquake and it's more than 120 aftershocks. Having said this of course we also saw some collapsed building.

After two hours of communication with Kritan's parents we could see their house also had sustained some minor damage from the

first aftershock. Kritan's father is a doctor. He works in a hospital in Kathmandu. He, his mother and his sister had prepared things for our stay here. So there were already sim cards for the phone, there was something to eat and drink and we get a scooter made available so that we could move through the city. After the small break we set off immediately and start our help.

In the immediate vicinity we saw the first former four-story building that had buried eight people under it that could only be recovered dead. Currently, there are more than 7,500 deaths recorded and many injured.

Almost everyone we met knows someone in the relatives,

neighbors or acquaintances where was dead or wounded. Many Nepalese were very much frightened because of the small aftershocks. Some still were not willing to go inside their home and rather preferred to stay outdoors. Nevertheless, in most families normality has returned and they are moving along with their routine works.



The very poor Nepal and its people need revenue and we may not blame it to the people, when they desperately want tourists back to their country. People have some kind of fear that after this devastating earthquake in the country there won't be much tourists visiting to the country. We walked through the tourist area Thamel, which normally would always be crowded before the earthquake. Now we saw hardly any tourists and that's tough for traders who require tourists not only for their regular income, but also to rebuild damages that the earthquake had left on their goods, some of them also needed to move out from their former place and have to find a new place. All this of course will cost extra money, which many simply do not have.



Damage in the central Kathmandu, was very obvious (see Hanumandhoka Royal Palace in the picture). Many historical buildings were completely destroyed; some city-parts looked like a place after bombing. The Nepalese army now secures the building, so as to ensure that nothing gets stolen and nobody is further injured.

We kept on moving around because we want to help immediately. In Kathmandu, however, it looked many people were already involved in the rescue operations including some of the foreign teams, especially Chinese team. We passed over several temporary camps. National organizations were taking care of the the people who had lost their homes. The situation is going to get even worse in a few weeks time after the monsoon comes, and then will rain for a long time a lot.

With the scooter, we were making good progress. Debris has made the road impassable for cars. Everywhere one could see hardworking people cleaning up diligently.

At present many people in Nepal want to help. We meet 12 young Nepalese helpers on scooters who were just shopping in a supermarket. They were buying foods to be distributed subsequently. Kritan knew one of them and very soon we were close to them. After just a few hours in Nepal we were already part of a team of local helpers.



Kritan and I along with these helpers went to Lubhu, just few kilometers away from Kathmandu. Here there were no foreign aid organizations, but we found a Nepalese NGO, who had set up camp in front of the collapsed houses, food issues, they offered medical examinations and distributed medicines. We gave the medicines that we had to the organization that was providing health services and food and we also exchanged our mobile numbers, so that we could inform and support each other.



In Lubhu we met a Nepalese guy working actively in earthquake relief activities. He showed us a place that was 10 to 15 km away from Lubhu where no help had arrived yet. We spontaneously decided to drive with the scooters this place Lamatar. Before that we looked around at several more small shops to buy food and also some chocolate for the children.

We drove through small villages and talked to people. Although they saw that we were with supplies here, but no one begged. They explained to us where the earthquake had most of its effect. The very much worse thing is that in between of these broken houses the people were still vulnerable. This is what we could learn from, a small village just 15 km south-east of Kathmandu.

We reached to Lamatar after a 2 hour drive after an adventurous route with scooter. It's hard to believe even it was so near from the Kathmandu city no help had arrived yet. This was the place where every second houses were severely damaged or completely collapsed.

Amazingly, there were no deaths in Lamatar with just and few injuries, so was medical help here was not necessary. The water here comes from a spring, although I didn't drink it been drinking. The inhabitants believed, however, that one could drink the water, but they said it tasted different after the mountain quakes. I suspect that the rocks have been loosened by the quake in the mountains, which pass into the water.

We distributed food, just some small packets of biscuits and instant noodles from supermarket. The people were happy about it and their gratitude towards us was incredible. In the coming days we plan to get several bags of rice



supply to some of the families who have lost their stocks in the rubble of their homes.

The children, of course, were delighted with the chocolate and also the cookies that we distributed. In the countryside, they have indeed often home-grown food, which was also destroyed in the earthquake that unfortunately remained under the collapsed houses. Not everything of course could be rescued from the rubble. The response from the people was priceless. The people running to us together did not beg for more food, but just thanked us. They were so grateful that they were not forgotten and were emotionally very touched with that a mixed team of Nepalese and German.



My work here on the first day was a different experience that I had imagined it before. I had imagined it to be like a war zone. Even though so many buildings have been destroyed, people are full of hope, the children full of vitality, the sun is shining, the flowers are blooming.

They help each other, encourage themselves and are collecting the stones from the rubble and are slowly trying to get up. They want to build their homes again as quickly as possible, before the monsoon comes.

The setting sun was shining still strong in the mountains. The thermometer shows 30 degrees, birds were flying around us and chirping, flowers were blooming everywhere in their full glory.

Namaste, so we welcome us. Kritan translated the conversation. People here were mostly warm, but a few, often elderly, sitting distraught in front of the ruins. Nevertheless, they ask us to their land and we talk about what has happened to them. Many houses have collapsed from the main quake, others only by the aftershocks, which were still very strong, especially in the first few days.

People in Lamatar were very happy about our presence. They were pleased with the food, the children with the chocolate. For them it was important to talk about the fears that they had. Even the people who were lucky enough that their homes are still in terror, they are living under a tarp in the open, because they are afraid of a strong aftershock that could destroy their home and get themselves buried underneath.



Every time I talked to people I got very warm feeling, because we meet so many nice people. Here it was clear that we could really help people and still can make a big difference. It's not just the big organizations that could make a difference with their help but rather flexible, highly mobile and very communicative operating small organizations, such as the GESINAS Foundation from Bösel, which focuses particularly on the networking of organizations could bring a change in people's life in a positive way.

We saw and felt that our help is needed from day one and that they will be gratefully accepted and we are welcomed. One should be very careful when government agencies from Nepal say that they do not need the small charities and rather should flow to them the money in Germany. In such a corrupt country like Nepal certainly much money are flowing into the pockets of a beneficiary. As an easy option one could also support or help us make it through personal involvement through GESINAS Foundation. The fundation ensures you that the donated funds would be properly used and would be to support the needy.



need medicine for the injured and for the many infectious diseases that are spread now. They also need assistance to support them mentally, even though they sometimes laugh, they are traumatized and anxious.

Shortly before sunset we went with our scooter back to Kathmandu. The bad roads were still a challenge. We did not realize that a stronger aftershock at about 17 O' clock restored fear in people and certainly it will lead to the collapse of some damaged buildings.

Translator: Kritan

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What should have been better?

We could have used a few helping hands from Germany! I had a few more people motivated to come with us to Nepal. The number of German workers is low. In the airplane, with which we had come, two-thirds of seats were still available. During another event of a crisis, we should ask more people from our home, to report to the GESINAS Foundation, if they are willing to go to crisis areas.

The Nepalese to build their own houses again, they need, is support for the production of clean drinking water, they

