

In The World

Update on the Acupuncturists Without Borders Nepal Earthquake Relief Project

Acupuncturists Without Borders (AWB) has sponsored an ongoing trauma healing program in Nepal since 2009. To date they have trained over 70 Nepali health workers to provide simple ear acupuncture treatments in rural health camps, women’s organizations, and community groups that rescue young people from trafficking for sex, organs and labor.

The recent series of earthquakes in Nepal have created extreme hardship for a people already struggling with poverty, governmental corruption, civil war, and high rates of human trafficking. Not only are they dealing with physical hardship, but deep mental and emotional pain that



Children at Maiti Nepal Receiving Ear Acupuncture
Photo: Thomas Kelley

will last for decades to come. While disaster relief organizations provide food, water, temporary housing, and medical care, there is very little assistance for the mental health needs of survivors. And yet it is post-traumatic stress that remains after survival needs are met, preventing true recovery and often extending into the next generation. This is why AWB’s trauma healing work is so powerful and so necessary.

Due to AWB’s ongoing work in Nepal, a trauma healing “infrastructure” has been put in place, with trained practitioners already on the ground. This is a huge gift to Nepal’s recovery. AWB Nepal practitioners are deepening their skills as community organizers/healers through this disaster response. And yet, more help is needed. AWB Nepal has asked for acupuncture supplies, practitioner stipend support, and training for more Nepali health workers to increase their capacity to serve more people, especially those in underserved rural areas. They have also asked for volunteer acupuncturists trained in disaster relief to come to Nepal to help over the next months. AWB is facilitating volunteer collaboration, future training, raising money, and sending supplies.



AWB Nepal Team members

This is a long-term recovery effort and Nepal needs your help.

The AWB Nepal team of acupuncturists, affiliated with the Nepal Acupuncture Association, has been working tirelessly since the first earthquake on April 25th, **providing over 2500 treatments** in mobile clinics in the “Forgotten Communities” at the edge of Kathmandu, including Khokona, Bungamati, Hari Siddhi, and Sindi Palchowk. In these areas, the homes and buildings that were destroyed were mostly in Newar settlements populated by the indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley.

Treatments have also been provided at the Tundikhel Army Camp for first responders; at the Kritipur Hospital for medical staff; in the fishing village of Ramechhap Manthali populated by “lower caste” fishermen who receive scant governmental/medical support; at the Saathi Women’s Center for women and their babies displaced by the disaster; and at the Dhapasi Deurali Youth Club. 2500 treatments in one month were provided by a team that is also highly impacted itself by the disaster.

Here is a brief chronological summary of the activities of the AWB Nepal Earthquake Relief Project since the April 25th earthquake, in the words of AWB Team members on the ground:

APRIL 29, 2015

“We had been to Khokana / Bungamati yesterday (to) distribute face masks. More than 4500 people are living in free space, getting health problems, no proper hygienic foods...there are about 95 camps with 28-180 people in each camp...our clinic helps them with relief stress and pain...”

- Dr. Shyam Maharjan, AWB Nepal Team



Dr. Shyam Maharjan treating several days after the earthquake

MAY 3, 2015

“I am looking to AWB for more supplies. Due to lack of supplies, we are not capable to organize more programs. I hope you will send to me as soon as possible. The supplies are totally finished. So we need - ear seeds, ear needles, sanitary liquid, alcohol cotton, gloves, and containers to dispose needles.”

- Dr. Shyam

MAY 2 - 5, 2015

“With (the) support of Acupuncturists Without Borders-Nepal, post-traumatic stress recovery (clinics were) set up in 3 different camps at Harissidhi Village, Lalitpur. We also distributed first



Clinic in Khokana/Bungamati

phase medicines - paracetamol, d-pain, Dactol gel, Jeevan Jal (ORS), mosquito repellent, CTZ tablets, water purifier, mask.

80% of the historical houses are destroyed. Cemented houses are okay. But people are still in trauma. Its trauma from every side. 3000+ people living in camps. 1st phase helps with shelter and food is satisfactory. Many people have lost their family members and friends. Since, the trauma is still high, they have not been able to grieve properly. Post trauma relief program and counseling is very important. Headache, dizziness, nightmares, insomnia and back pain is common problem. No# of people treated: 883. “

- Priti Thapa, AWB Nepal Team



Dr. Shyam treating in Harissidhi Lalitpur

MAY 8, 2015

“We had a successful clinic at Kritipur hospital for the earthquake victims, their family and nurses/ doctors of the hospital...we treated around 130 people including hospital staffs. Most of the patients were from Sindhupalchowk district, which was highly affected by the earthquake. They were rescued by Nepal Army’s helicopter. Sindhupalchowk has so far seen the highest number of deaths with 2300. Everyone has lost at



Treating at Kritipur Hospital

least one member of their family. But they have not lost their hopes. They shared their stories with us, they still get nightmares, but want to surpass the sadness and bring strength. Most of them wanted to get treated and wanted to go back to their family as soon as possible.

It was amazing seeing the positive vibe. We were there to relieve their pain but they become a motivator to us. Everyone thanked us and asked us to continue with our work. The hospital staff were very cooperative. We encouraged them to get the treatment, and they were happy to get it. they wanted a follow up program for them and the patients.”

– Priti Thapa



Treatment of army personnel

MAY 10, 2015

“AWB Clinic at Tundikhel Army camp, mainly focusing on the Nepal Army who has been in field continuously since the 25th April disaster. Nepalese armies were the first to respond to the earthquake relief and their efforts have been commendable. Opportunity to treat them was one of a kind. The armies personally thanked us for inviting them for the treatment.”

“One man in the army said, “we see so many organization coming forward for the earthquake victims, and it’s good. But, you are the first group

to invite us for the treatment. Thank you. We hope to see you again.” We have to put our efforts to organize more AWB’s Post-Traumatic stress recovery and relief clinic for the Earthquake relief workforce- Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and I/NGOs volunteers. No. of People treated: 64.”

– Priti Thapa



MAY 12, 2015

Second Earthquake – Additional deaths, damage to homes, displacement, and escalating trauma levels.

MAY 16-18, 2015

“AWB-Clinic at Khurkot, Manthali, Ramechhap. It’s a village of Majhi (Fisherman). The 2nd big earthquake of 6.8 on Tuesday, 12 May, affected the place more than the first one of 4/25. We too were hit by 5.5 magnitudes on our way back home that day which caused roadblock near Floodway, our team helped the locals to clear the road. Mud houses are not livable. Few cemented houses are okay.

Local Majhi said, “There is news on possible lake outbursts, but we are still living on its bank, with utter fear. However, I feel and hope the news is fake.”

Thanks to AWB, we were able treat 212 people, distributed tents to 50 families who lost their homes and first aid medical supplies.”

– Priti Thapa



Child with ear seeds at Ramechhap Manthali Clinic

They belong to so called “lower class” and we learnt that the high caste group like Brahmin has been receiving more relief than them. But the community has stayed strong with (a) few amazing leaders from their own caste.”

– Priti Thapa

MAY 19, 2015

“We are visiting SAATHI WOMEN CENTER tomorrow. SAATHI has been giving shelter to new mothers and babies who have lost their homes from in and out of the valley, but since their own building has some cracks, everyone is forced to live outside in tents.”

– Priti Thapa

MAY 23, 2015

AWB-Clinic at of Dhapasi Deurali Youth Club:
“Though this particular area was not damaged as much as other part of the valley, we learnt through the Youth club that the level of stress was more, especially with kids. So, we decided to focus more on kids. A 12-year boy said, “The earth is still moving, looks like it wants to go somewhere else in Universe, what if we all die. What if my dad dies and I live...I don’t want to live alone. Since, the last earthquake I always go to the temple with my grandmother and pray. I don’t want to watch TV. My school is also closed. I want to go to school, so that I don’t have to think more about it.”



Treatment at Dhapasi Deurali Youth Club



Women receiving treatment at AWB mobile clinic in Nuwakot

“The level of PTSD among children above 7 is really high. Our volunteers had counseling session with kids and their parents also. They also taught them about the pressure points for relaxation. Number of people treated: 138.”

– Priti Thapa

MAY 24, 2015

From Dr. Bill Wulsin, AWB volunteer who worked in New Orleans with AWB, as well as last year’s Oso, WA mudslide relief effort, who just arrived in Nepal:

“You (AWB) are on target about the collective stress level of people here almost 30 days after the April 25 event. Though KTM was in no way physically affected the way NOLA or Haiti was, life here is shaken to the core...Responding to the trauma left in the wake of recent earthquakes and inevitable from future Monsoon related tragedies is front and center among priorities for AWB-Nepal.”

Photo credits: AWB Nepal.

Link to many other incredible photos of AWB Nepal’s work: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bnog2ama8v3keqp/AACdZ_BnoyUyhO__pUF9Yy7Ra?dl=0

YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT IS NEEDED MORE THAN EVER!

To contribute to AWB’s Nepal Earthquake Relief effort, please visit: www.acwb.info

For background information about AWB’s program in Nepal, please watch this video at: <http://youtu.be/YFhpHpQWQTs>

For up-to-date information as we receive it, please visit the AWB Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/acuwithoutborders?ref=ts>



Beginning to Rebuild in Nepal, Photo: Thomas Kelly

Bios:



Melanie Rubin, M.Ed., NADA Acudetox Specialist is Co-Director of Acupuncturists Without Borders. She has been a trainer, business coach, marketing consultant, and author working with acupuncturists and other health practitioners for 25 years. Melanie manages AWB's Haiti, National Disaster Relief, and National training programs, and is based out of the organization's main office in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Carla Cassler, DAOM, LAc. is Co-Director of Acupuncturists Without Borders and manages the organization's Community Service Clinic, Israel, and Development programs. She has practiced acupuncture and Chinese medicine for 30 years, specializing in women's health, pediatric, orthopedic and trauma treatment. Carla is an instructor and clinic supervisor at ACTCM in San Francisco, where she also coordinates a free clinic for veterans. Her private practice is located in Kensington, California.



Diana Fried, M.Ac., M.A., NADA Acudetox Specialist is the President of the Board and Founder of Acupuncturists Without Borders. She has worked in and supervised disaster relief efforts in multiple locations throughout the U.S. including California, Louisiana, and Hawaii, as well as internationally in countries such as Haiti, Nepal, Mongolia, Ecuador, and Mexico. Diana created and now coordinates AWB's World Healing Exchange Program. She is based in Sandia Park, New Mexico.