



# TOGETHER ALBERTA

## Rainbow of Hope for Children Commits to a Plan for Assistance in Nepal

With a population of nearly 30 million, Nepal is one of the least developed and most densely populated regions of the world. In the devastating Gorkha earthquake of 2015, [nearly 9,000 people died and thousands injured](#). More than [600,000 homes were destroyed](#) and a tragic 2.8 million people displaced. When Director of Rainbow of Hope for Children (ROHFC) Joe Gubbels travelled to Nepal in 2018 to monitor ongoing projects three years later, he witnessed the poverty of many families still recovering from the disaster.

A 2018 Multidimensional Poverty Index report showed that 28% of Nepal's population was multidimensionally poor, which chalks up to almost 8 million people. **In the last few decades, the rate of poverty in Nepal has been declining, but since the earthquake, the people of Nepal are considerably vulnerable to disaster.**

Two short years after Gubbels' time in Nepal, the entire globe is caught off guard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the global south and the global north are under the stress to find ways to stave off the spread of the virus while keeping their economies alive. The compound effects of the catastrophic earthquake with a global pandemic puts Nepal at serious risk.

**Nepal is one of the highest risk areas for the pandemic, and also one of the least prepared.** Nepal's inadequate levels of education, health care and sanitation combined with its dependency on employment from tourism and foreign employment weaken its ability to quickly bounce back from a global crisis.

In a proposal for support by the High Himalayan Community Development Centre (HHCPN), president Harikrishna Devkota wrote,

*The Nepali healthcare system is not fully prepared to deal with a large-scale pandemic that is straining healthcare systems even in developed countries... There is a lack of sufficient*

*resources and not enough manpower for the massive testing and treatment of people that may be needed... There is not a specific agency to deal with the pandemic, such as the Centers for Disease Control that exist in some countries, nor has Nepal done any long-term planning to deal with a pandemic. Last time when Nepal faced a serious crisis — the earthquake of 2015 — the international community rushed to offer support. But with this crisis, the powerful and well-resourced countries that had previously assisted Nepal in its hour of need are themselves facing the same crisis. They are not in the same position to offer assistance.*

A [World Bank Report published in April, 2020](#) reported that due to the numerous effects of COVID-19, **"a significant share of vulnerable households face the risk of falling back into poverty."**

One month into lock down, president of the High Himalayan Community Development Centre (HHCPN) Harikrishna Devkota has seen a struggle among the community to find basic living necessities:

There have been several reports from reliable sources, locals and concerned citizens, that homeless people are unable to find any source of food and daily wage workers unable to purchase groceries for their families. Both we and our partners believe and sadly know to be true that the more imminent threat to these people is starvation, second to that of Coronavirus should the lockdown continue longer than initially expected. And even if this lockdown is lifted on the 27th of April, which we doubt, these people will still suffer starvation as they will not be able to recover from this lockdown immediately and make an income straight away to buy food.

The lack of any social protection program by the State to protect the homeless and low-income daily wage earners from slipping down into abject poverty makes the situation even more threatening.

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## Rainbow of Hope for Children

**Rainbow of Hope for Children (ROHFC), an Alberta non-profit, has recognized Nepal's need for support and has committed to a plan for assistance.** ROHFC's mission is to help people globally create a more just world for themselves, their families, and their society. The organization's most recent projects include financially supporting a preschool in Brazil and helping the people of Izalco, El Salvador develop biointensive agricultural training in the community.

Although ROHFC is a very small society involved in international development in specific areas, it has a Disaster Assistance Policy for emergency needs. In the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Directors received requests for assistance from both Nepal and El Salvador, where ROHFC has active development projects. The board passed a motion to support the two requests to the amount of \$50,000. **Although both requests merit an urgent response, ROHFC decided to primarily focus on the extreme need in Nepal.**

### The Project

ROHFC's relief project focuses on the Rasuwa district of Jibajibe Village area in Nepal, and will deliver essential supplies packages to local families. With the country-wide lockdown, there is a huge problem of shortage of food and basic supplies especially by the homeless, landless, low caste families and daily wage workers.

**One package will feed a family of four for three weeks, and includes food and cooking staples and soap.**

These essential supplies packages will be distributed on a triage basis: the most vulnerable families will be addressed first. The ORG estimates about 600 families in the area alone in need of basic support, and will work alongside local authorities and police to distribute the supplies.

In addition, HHCPN, with the support of ROHFC, plans to organize isolation and quarantine beds, medicine, medical staff and equipment, and food directly addressing the pandemic.

With the support of ROHFC, Devkota and the local community will be able to address the immediate obstacles faced by families either living in poverty or threatened by it in Nepal. However, the long term effects of disaster on communities such as the Rasuwa district will be felt long beyond the final stages of this program. Populations such as those in Nepal need the ongoing support and attention of countries fortunate enough to withstand the pressures of a global pandemic.

You can help support the people of Nepal through ROHFC programs: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/rainbow-of-hope-for-children-society/>

More information about Hari and High Himalayan Community Projects Nepal: [www.hhcpn.org](http://www.hhcpn.org).

### Citations

Bhattarai, Kamal Dev. "Nepal Cannot Fight Coronavirus Alone." *The Diplomat*, April 1 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/nepal-cannot-fight-coronavirus-alone/>

