

Building back better and safer schools in Sindhupalchowk

Interim project report



Project summary

This project will focus on rebuilding Bhimsenthan School in Sindhupalchowk district, directly benefitting 226 students. The school currently serves children from pre-primary school age (3 years old) up until higher secondary grade age (18 years old). The school will not only be able to benefit children now but also thousands of young children in the community will be able to access and benefit from an education with the redevelopment of this school for years to come.

Improved infrastructure is at the heart of building a culture of safety and keeping children protected while attending school. With your support, Bhimsenthan School which is located in a high seismic risk area will be more disaster resilient and provide greater safety for the children in the local community.

Because this school will be **Built Back Better** with your wonderful support, girls and boys at Bhimsenthan School will be learning in safe, quality classrooms, protected from disasters and hazards. The students enrolled, now and in the future, can receive an education with the peace of mind that they will not face the same dangers and disruption at school, as they did in 2015. **With your help, children in Nepal will resume their education in a safe, stable and supportive environment and make a positive step towards regaining a sense of normalcy.**

Progress so far

Over the past six months, Plan International Nepal has focused on pre-construction activities and putting into place the key agreements and the necessary procedures needed to begin the rebuild of the school. In order to do this, they have focused on three key areas:

- **Consultation and engagement**

Plan International Nepal has undertaken consultations with the local community in order to identify the best approach for project delivery. In line with our **Child Centred Community Development** approach, this included a workshop with 20 current students— who were asked to draw their 'dream' school. During the consultation process, some extra facilities were also proposed by local community members, which they felt would help provide a better learning environment for the students. This included a playground and a computer lab.

They also organised a one day start up workshop with other stakeholders to discuss the implementation of the project. 19 people participated in this workshop, including representatives from the School Management Committee (SMC) and the District Education Office of Sindhupalchowk District. The workshop provided an opportunity for a coordinated discussion on project activities as well as the development of an action plan to deliver the activities.

- **Signing the formal agreements**

Plan International Nepal has now signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nepalese Department of Education, and a subsequent agreement with the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) – allowing formal construction work to begin.



School children draw their 'dream' school as part of Plan Nepal's consultation about the plans

As the necessary approvals are now in place with these government bodies, Plan International Nepal have also been able to sign a partnership agreement with the National Society for Earthquake Technology

Building back better and safer schools in Sindhupalchowk



Interim project report

(NSET), who will provide technical support for the construction, including the development of the engineering plans and design plans of the school. NSET will also provide ongoing monitoring of the construction process, along with supporting the training of school staff, the SMC and community members on disaster preparedness.

As part of this process, agreement was also reached between Plan International Nepal's civil engineers, the Department of Education, NSET and the SMC on the coordination of the design of the school and monitoring of the construction activities. For example, it has been agreed that NSET will conduct a monthly monitoring visit and Plan International Nepal's Sector Coordinator and Sub-Engineer will be responsible for the day to day monitoring of the construction activities.

- **Assessments**

Plan International Nepal has completed two assessments: a **preliminary technical assessment** of the project site to determine the extent of damage and feasibility of reconstruction, as well as a **capacity assessment** of relevant stakeholder groups.

The preliminary technical assessment will help support the detailed technical assessment which has to be carried out by NSET, who have already conducted the site observation which is required for designing the school. One recommendation from the preliminary technical assessment has been the recommendation to include facilities for disabled students, teachers and visitors, such as ramps and separate toilet blocks. The capacity assessment focused on the SMC and other stakeholders such as teachers, students and the Parent-Teacher Association, identifying their roles and responsibilities in delivering the project.



The Temporary Learning Centre which is being used for classes while the new school is being constructed

Challenges

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) is the legally mandated agency for overseeing the recovery and reconstruction efforts in Nepal following the earthquake. It was formed in December 2015 and its goal is to ensure that all reconstruction works are completed in a “**sustainable, resilient and planned manner**”. As part of this, the NRA are required to oversee all reconstruction activities across Nepal including those of NGOs to make sure that they are properly coordinated, meet required safety standards and follow the **Built Back Better** principle – in order to help reduce the impact of any future disasters.

Due to the late formation of the NRA and its condition that any reconstruction work conducted by NGO's had to meet their as well as the Department of Education's approval resulted in an unexpected delay to our planned construction date which was set for September.

Building back better and safer schools in Sindhupalchowk

Interim project report



However, I am pleased to report that the project is progressing towards the construction phase and Plan International Nepal have now signed an agreement with the NRA enabling construction to begin in January 2017. The NRA's approval highlights that this project will meet the set requirements needed to ensure it is **Built Back Better** and how Plan International continue to be recognised as a valued partner within the national reconstruction efforts in Nepal.

Community participation and sustainability

The long-term success of our work is dependent on the active engagement of the people we aim to help. Our community-centred approach puts people at the heart of our activities, making the most of existing networks and strengths. Therefore, it is important that this project ensured the full participation and input from all stakeholders. Plan International Nepal has ensured this by consulting frequently with the SMC, teachers, parents, community members and project partners:

- Plan International Nepal held a series of consultation sessions with the **local community** to help support the design phase of the project. They also hold regular meetings to update the community about any issues affecting the project and to discuss ways to address these. Simultaneously the local community has proactively been involved in the project, for example they helped clear away the debris from the old school, a crucial pre-construction activity.
- The **District Education Office**, the local government body responsible for education, will also help coordinate and monitor this project.
- **NSET** who are a widely recognised organisation for their expertise in earthquake resistant technology will develop a safe school design plan and secure the necessary approvals from the Department of Education to put this into place. NSET will also support with the training on safe school procedures and disaster preparedness for the SMC and relevant stakeholders. In addition to this, NSET will regularly monitor the construction activities to ensure it aligns with the design plan.
- The **Nepalese Department of Education** has an agreement with Plan International Nepal at a central government level and is accountable to the project. They will ensure that the school is built according to the approved plan and will help carry out an evaluation of the school build after construction is completed.
- The **NRA** have an agreement with Plan International Nepal and are also accountable to the project. They will ensure that the project is completed according to the national standards for reconstruction.

Next steps

As pre-construction activities are complete, the next steps of the project will now be focused on the below:

- **Formation of a new SMC**

In 2001, the Nepalese government made the formation of SMCs mandatory in all schools across the country. In order to make them more inclusive and better functional, they have in recent months reassessed the format and structure of the SMCs. In June 2016, the government passed an amendment to the Education Act which included various reforms, including existing SMCs being required to disband and be reformed according to their approved new structure which requires that they must consist of nine members, include members nominated by different sections of the community and include at least three women. The SMC for Bhumisthan School had to be disbanded as a result and plans are in place for the Head Teacher and District Education Office to appoint the new SMC this month.

Building back better and safer schools in Sindhupalchowk

Interim project report



- **Finalising school design and budget**

Now that all agreements have been signed with the relevant government authorities, the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) is finalising the design plans for the new school. NSET is also finalising the Bill of Quantities which will detail the quantity and cost of the specific construction materials, this has resulted in the original project budget having to likely change. We expect that the final design plan and budget will be completed by the end of November, with construction beginning in January 2017.

Budget

Expenditure has been minimal to date, as construction constitutes the majority of the project budget and this has not yet begun. A full and final project budget will be provided to you in December once the design plan and budget has been completed and provided to Plan International Nepal by NSET.

Mukesh's Story

Mukesh (right) is 10 years old and studies in Grade 7 of Bhumisthan School. He particularly likes computer science and learning Nepali. He wants to be an engineer when he grows up. Mukesh participated in the student consultation meeting for the project and is looking forward to taking classes in the newly built school.

He enjoyed being part of the consultation process and says **"it was a new practice to us. I have never participated in this kind of activity to collect the idea and voice of children"**. He thinks that it will help students take greater ownership over how their school is managed and will empower them in the process.

He is pleased that the new school will have boundary walls to protect the school from strong winds and rain; and access ramps to help children like himself who have a disability. Mukesh says that not all schools in the local area can cater for children with disabilities and is happy that this school will have the facilities to do so. With your support, we are able to support young children like Mukesh who may struggle to access an education go to school not only now but for many years to come.



**On behalf of the students of Bhimsenthan School, thank you
for your wonderful support!**