

Anisha Shrestha holds baby goats outside a new livestock shelter, constructed using hygiene-promoting design principles. Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS



Lessons Learned

CASH ASSISTANCE AND EMBEDDED EXTENSION FOR
IMPROVED GOAT SHELTERS IN POST-EARTHQUAKE NEPAL

On the road to resilience

A year after the catastrophic earthquake, Anisha Shrestha was still living in a makeshift shelter and had no income. CRS helped her build an earthquake-resilient shelter and maximize the impact of the government cash grants that she and other affected families received. CRS provided Anisha with an additional grant to build an improved goat shelter and she now has a larger herd of animals. She used money she earned from a CRS cash-for-work program to finish her home and build another shelter for her growing goat herd.



Anisha Shrestha holds a healthy kid. More hygienic shelters mean healthier goats.
Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS



Earlier goat shelter design. The lack of ventilation and drainage resulted in unhygienic conditions that led to disease among the goats. *Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS*

For further information
info@nepal@crs.org

Katherine Price
Country Representative
katherine.price@crs.org

Krishna Mohan
Technical Advisor: Livelihoods
krishna.mohan@crs.org

Background

A massive earthquake in 2015 led to large-scale loss of life and livelihoods for communities in Nepal's Gorkha District. One of the key impacts on people's livelihoods was damage to livestock shelters, which led to distress sales and reduction in herd sizes, especially among vulnerable households for whom livestock was a key source of income. They could not afford to rebuild their livestock shelters due to lack of funds and other competing priorities, such as rebuilding their homes and restarting their agricultural activities.

After the earthquake, Catholic Relief Services conducted a field assessment, which showed that it would take families 2 to 3 years to save enough money to fully rebuild their goat shelters. Families living in Gorkha's rural, remote communities where CRS works, had little or no access to credit

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The poor design and management of goat shelters had led to cold and unhygienic conditions, disease among goats, low herd productivity and reduced income.
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from formal financial institutions. Credit from informal sources—such as savings groups or loans from friends and relatives—was either in limited amounts or had high interest rates. Most of the existing goat shelters had poor design (lack of adequate ventilation and poor drainage due to flooring too close to the ground) and management (lack of regular cleaning). This led to cold and unhygienic conditions, respiratory disease among goats, low herd productivity and, ultimately, reduced income for poor households.

CRS interventions and key results

To support the most vulnerable households to rebuild their goat shelters and adopt design principles for improved hygiene, CRS implemented a conditional cash transfer program. The twin conditions were that the selected households would participate in an orientation program focused on goat shelter design principles for improved hygiene, and would construct shelters based on the improved design. Considering the gaps in existing goat shelter designs and the poor economic conditions of participating families, CRS promoted two simple, cost-effective design principles:

- A platform raised to about 2.5 feet from the ground
- Adequate ventilation to address hygiene and respiratory disease issues

To minimize reconstruction costs and encourage the use of locally available material like stones, bamboo and wood, beneficiaries were encouraged to use materials of their choice—including salvaged material from their homes—and choose a shelter size based on their needs. In addition to orientation programs aided by illustrated educational materials, CRS constructed demonstration goat shelters to help communities visualize the new design.



CRS support consisted of a cash transfer of \$100 in two different modalities:

- **Modality 1** \$100 cash in two tranches of \$50 each. The first was provided upon selection of the participant, and the second upon completion of the shelter and its verification by project staff. The verification process sought to ensure that the participating household had adopted the improved goat shelter design.
- **Modality 2** A one-off payment of \$100 upon completion of the shelter and its verification by project staff. This modality was adopted in remote locations where multiple payments were operationally challenging.

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20-30%

Increase in herd size among most beneficiaries in the 8 to 12 months after introduction of the improved design

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CRS adopted two cash delivery mechanisms: one through a remittance agency for families in remote locations, and one through project partners, for locations not served by remittance agencies or other financial service providers. In both cases, cash-in-hand



was received at the community level. Beneficiary selection was participatory—involving communities, local leaders and elected representatives—and facilitated by project staff to ensure transparency.

CRS achieved the following results:

- 100 percent of the 3,304 households that received the cash transfer reconstructed goat shelters adopting the hygienic shelter principles promoted by the project.
- Participating families coinvested an average of \$80 to \$100 in addition to the \$100 received from the project.
- Strong ownership of the goat shelters was evident in the regular maintenance observed over the subsequent 18 months.
- Community members not involved in the project began adopting the improved shelter design principles after witnessing a reduction in respiratory disease due to the improved design.
- The sizes of herds owned by participating families increased by 20 to 30 percent in the 8 to 12 months following the introduction of the improved design. This was due to the availability of safe shelter, a reduction in morbidity and a decrease in distress sales.



Examples of goat shelters reconstructed using locally available materials and hygiene-promoting design principles. *Photos by CRS staff*

Lessons learned

CRS held a qualitative participatory reflection exercise to identify the key lessons learned from the cash assistance. A needs assessment helped evaluate the appropriateness of the cash modality for goat shelter reconstruction. The shelter interventions and cash transfers were grounded in community needs and context, and hence garnered strong support from local government and leadership. The assessment showed that participating households preferred cash to in-kind support as it provided the flexibility of choice for quantity and quality of material. Cash also enabled the families to pay for skilled labor for the construction.

A cash transfer—or the promise of cash, in the case of the second modality—nudged participants to prioritize goat shelters and catalyzed faster reconstruction (40 to 50 days on average for each shelter). In the absence of cash support, the participating families would likely have taken 2 to 3 years to rebuild the shelters by saving slowly. The cash support motivated them to coinvest and build better by using quality materials and skilled labor. Many beneficiaries built shelters larger than their damaged ones to address future needs.

Providing cash in two tranches was preferred as it helped more vulnerable households use the first tranche to buy material and labor. As payment of the second tranche was done on a cluster basis, it contributed to peer support to expedite the construction process, especially for the most vulnerable households, such as the elderly and women-headed households. The one-time payment was generally effective, but in some cases led to a delay in construction completion as families struggled to make the initial investment on their own.



Yadunatha Bhatta rebuilt his goat shelter using CRS' design to promote hygiene. Photo by Jennifer Hardy/CRS

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The promotion of improved shelter focused on design principles and did not call for specific materials or shelter size. Providing this flexibility empowered participants to choose materials that were locally appropriate, promoting their use, and reducing cost. In most cases, households chose locally available materials like wood, stone and bamboo for construction, thus making future maintenance easier and cheaper. Demonstration goat shelters in the project areas helped community members understand and better adapt the design principles to their specific needs.

Project participants reported reduced respiratory disease and diarrhea and an overall improvement in goat health after the construction of improved shelters. The cash assistance covered about 20 percent of the total households in the project area. This large-scale coverage created momentum within the community, which

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Community members not involved in the project began adopting the improved design.

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facilitated wider awareness of the improved design. It was observed that community members who were not involved in the project started to adopt the improved design after 6 or 7 months, based on their observation of positive results, largely in terms of disease reduction in goats. Adoption was also reported to be easy owing to the simplicity of the design.

Participation of ultra-poor households in the goat shelter intervention was challenging due to a lack of adequate space for construction and their inability to invest additional cash. The possibility of a higher cash limit should be explored to assist such families to benefit from these critical cash transfer programs.

Conclusion

Earthquake recovery provided CRS with an inroad to strengthen the livelihoods of poor households through goat shelter reconstruction using hygiene principles. Use of cash assistance for goat shelters is a relatively new and innovative in Nepal, and provided a comprehensive learning opportunity to identify factors that can influence the success of such interventions in future. The cash assistance met the twin objectives of restoring the livelihoods of participants and improving the health of their animals through adoption of improved shelter design. Along with cash support, the project's approach, of promoting simple design and locally available raw materials, proved to be crucial in adoption and replication by community members who were not a part of the project, thus extending its impact. Key lessons learned are that cash distribution in two tranches, promotion of improved shelter design features and demonstration goat shelters can be applied in other contexts with necessary adaptations.