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SUCCESS STORY

Non-Structural Mitigation Critical to Earthquake Safety

USAID support for NSET's disaster risk reduction activities improves community preparedness through earthquake safety trainings.



Photos courtesy of NSET

In addition to improving the earthquake preparedness of her own household, Ms. Shrestha used her NSET training to raise awareness increase the preparedness of other community members and local institutions, including schools and health facilities.



Fuel tanks affixed to the wall illustrate non-structural mitigation.

As the magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Nepal's Gorkha District on April 25, 2015, Namrata Shrestha stood on the second story of her home next to a large cupboard that was securely fastened to the wall. While her home shook, Ms. Shrestha dropped and took cover, thankful that she had attended a USAID-funded earthquake safety workshop organized by the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET). Throughout her home, family members remained safe from objects that could have fallen on them had Ms. Shrestha not put into practice the lessons learned at the workshop, which included securing household items to avoid being struck—a leading cause of injuries during earthquakes.

Along with 16 women from the Thankot Women's Cooperative Network, Ms. Shrestha attended an NSET non-structural mitigation workshop in 2012, where attendees learned techniques to fasten and anchor household items to walls and floors. Following the workshop, Ms. Shrestha and other cooperative members taught the non-structural mitigation techniques to other people in their communities, including staff at local schools, health clinics, and one of Nepal's largest hospitals, the Patan Teaching Hospital.

Non-structural mitigation workshops play a key part in community preparedness by reducing the number of casualties at the household level. Furthermore, education and training empower people to spread awareness messages and safety techniques throughout their communities, allowing them to exert a measure of control over the effects of earthquakes. Ms. Shrestha's story of implementing the non-structural mitigation techniques that helped her family remain unharmed during the April 2015 earthquake is representative of the experiences of hundreds of households that NSET has reached with earthquake safety trainings.

NSET conducts non-structural damage mitigation trainings through the USAID-supported Nepal Earthquake Risk Management Project (NERMP), which aims to institutionalize disaster risk reduction activities in Nepal through earthquake-resistant construction trainings, seismic vulnerability assessments, homeowner consultations for household retrofitting, and community-based earthquake safety awareness activities. During the April 2015 earthquake, communities involved in NERMP activities demonstrated increased awareness of appropriate safety practices, reducing the earthquake's adverse impacts.