

**(Part-II): VISIT TO KALIMPONG FOR DAMAGE ASSESSMENT & INTERACTION WITH
VICTIMS OF EARTHQUAKE**

After visiting the damaged church in the Leprosy Colony and the relief camp in Kalimpong-I block, we left for visiting the Kalimpong-II block along with the staff of **DISHA (Diocesan Integrated Society for Holistic Action)** and **DBSS (Diocesan Board of Social Service)**, under the Diocese of Eastern Himalaya, including Dr. Foning, Coordinator of DISHA. After driving for more than 1 ½ hours, climbing up the treacherous mountainous terrain in our vehicle we reached the village **Sangsay in Kalimpong –II Block**. This village has suffered heavy blows from the devastating earthquake of 18th. The houses are basically made up of wood, and are placed on the stone foundation. The impact of the earthquake has shifted the base of the houses by a foot or so. In some cases the stone foundations have given away. If the houses were made up of concrete, probably they would have been razed to ground. Call it the local knowledge of constructing houses in this region or the economic viability – the wooden structures saved a lot of lives. However, the houses at the moment are not livable.



(Houses with damaged foundations – only the wooden structure on top are intact, even though dislocated from the foundation)



About 7 families have moved out of their houses and are sheltered in the temporary tents provided by the local authorities. The rest are still staying in their partially damaged houses. The local panchayat leaders and the BDO (Block Development Officer) provided the victims tarpaulin sheets and blankets and some dry rations. In the community kitchen food is prepared for the victims who are staying in the relief camps and also for those who are not cooking food in their houses.



(families at the relief camp)



(Ms. Bishnu Maya- in white- at Relief Camp)

We interacted with a few inmates of the temporary shelters. One Nirmal Tamang, S/o dudha tamang, told us that his house (25' x 20') was damaged due to the earthquake and now they are in the relief camp with their families. An old lady Bishnu Maya, aged 69 years is also residing in the relief camp. She told us that its her first time experience in her entire life to face an earthquake. She thought it's the end of the world! Interestingly, the young ones

We also met one hearing impaired person in the relief camp. He is Nordos. He is also shocked after the quake. But he is not able to communicate with others, his fears and apprehensions. If we ask him anything, he just gives us a broad smile. Psycho social interventions also needed for the victims to gain back the self confidence. The village has a total of 65 families.



(Nordos – a hearing impaired man in the relief camp)

We interacted with them and told them that CASA is planning to provide the relief materials – non-food items, like blankets, tarpaulin sheets, utensils, hygiene kits, etc to the victims. They were really happy to hear that and are looking forward to it. The relief they have received already as non-food items are of rather inferior quality blankets and tarpaulin sheets. That too only 1 blanket per family, irrespective of the family size.

One of the CASA staff is expected to come back to Kalimpong again to finalise the victim's lists including visiting some of the worst affected areas, which we have not so far visited. This process will be completed with the help of DISHA and DBSS staff of CNI, Eastern Himalayan Diocese in Kalimpong.

-Reported by Dinesh Suna with the team of CASA, led by Mr. K.V.Thomas