



**SAFE**

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR  
CLEAN COOKSTOVES

COORDINATING ENERGY ACCESS IN EMERGENCIES:

**A CASE STUDY ON THE  
NEPAL EARTHQUAKE**

# The SAFE Humanitarian Working Group facilitates a more coordinated, predictable, timely, and effective response to the fuel and energy needs of crisis-affected populations

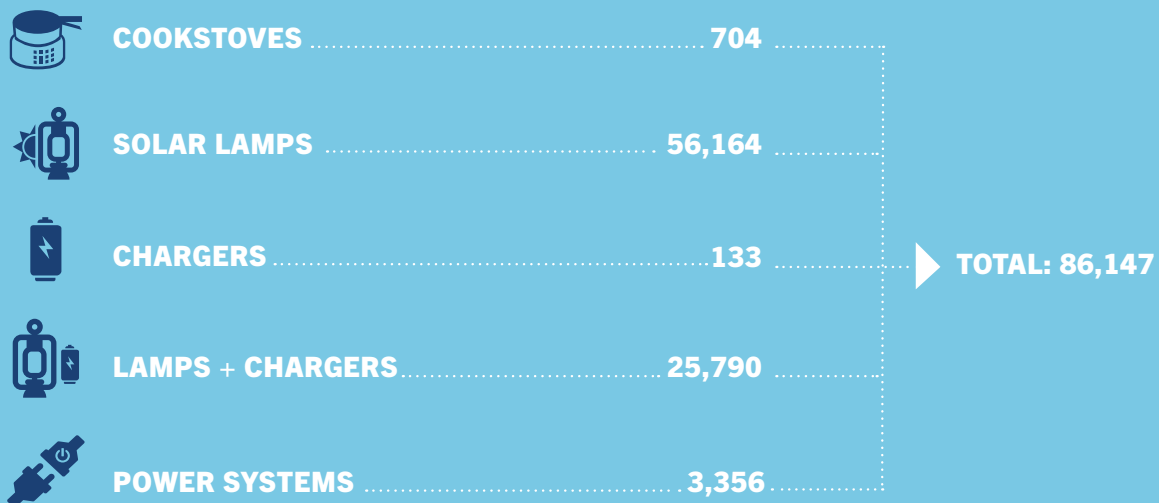
On April 25, 2015, a massive 7.8-magnitude earthquake devastated Nepal, affecting 39 of the country's 75 districts and causing 8,622 deaths and 16,808 injuries, as well as significant damage to homes, buildings, health facilities, and cultural heritage sites. 2.8 million people were displaced, and thousands of families instantly lost access to household energy for cooking, lighting, heating, and powering. Without power to charge mobile phones, families could not reach loved ones or call for help. Lack of lighting made it unsafe to venture outside at night, and limited critical activities such as working or studying after dark. More than 75,000 households saw their cooking technology damaged or destroyed, leading to an inability to prepare nutritious meals for their families.

“Coordination is vital in emergencies. **Good coordination means less gaps and overlaps in humanitarian organizations' work.** It strives for a needs-based, rather than capacity-driven, response. It aims to ensure a coherent and complementary approach, identifying ways to work together for better collective results.”

- **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

In response to the crisis, numerous humanitarian and energy stakeholders mobilized to provide support and access to energy for earthquake victims. Without a central coordinating body, however, these agencies risked duplicating efforts, wasting resources, and providing uneven or ineffective assistance across communities. In response to this need, the **Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves (Alliance)** – in its capacity as co-chair of the **Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) Humanitarian Working Group** – coordinated efforts among humanitarian response agencies, community-based organizations, international NGOs, private companies, and the Government of Nepal to assess energy needs and respond accordingly with distributions of solar lamps, fuel efficient cookstoves, off-grid power systems, mobile charging units, and other critical energy supplies to earthquake survivors.

## ENERGY PRODUCTS DELIVERED TO EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS THROUGH SAFE COORDINATION



## ENSURING A COORDINATED AND EFFECTIVE GLOBAL RESPONSE

Despite the essential need for energy access in humanitarian crises, and its relevance to numerous sectors, this issue area has not yet been formally incorporated into the UN OCHA humanitarian **cluster system**. In order to fulfill this crucial coordination role, the Alliance led the SAFE Humanitarian Working Group in facilitating the delivery of timely and effective energy access assistance to Nepali earthquake survivors, increased collaboration between donor and implementing agencies, and created a cooperation model that can be applied to future emergencies. Key components of our coordinated response include:

- **INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION** – The Alliance hosted weekly coordination calls for humanitarian implementers working on energy access in Nepal to report their activities, share product and service needs, and discuss challenges, relevant data and information, and formulate successful strategies. The Alliance also ensured the active participation of the Government of Nepal’s Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC) and worked with them to begin hosting local in-person coordination meetings in Kathmandu. As a result, implementing agencies were able to coordinate activities and broadcast energy product needs, which were in turn fulfilled by manufacturers that had product stock already in place locally.
- **MAPPING & RESOURCES** – The Alliance created a webpage for **Nepal energy response**, which served as the go-to resource for energy needs on UN OCHA’s Nepal response website. The page features an energy project map, a resource sharing platform, and the schedule and notes from coordination meetings. This resource made it easy for agencies to connect and coordinate with others conducting similar activities in the same areas.
- **NEEDS ASSESSMENTS** – The Alliance encouraged humanitarian implementers to include energy access questions in their rapid assessments to determine the scope of needs. Consequently, both Mercy Corps and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) integrated energy questions into their rapid assessments. The data collected through these rapid assessments helped the agencies make the case internally that they should be responding to energy needs.
- **GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION** – Coordination with local authorities is often crucial to effective humanitarian assistance. The Alliance ensured that all energy access response activities were coordinated with the Government of Nepal’s Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC), and worked closely with AEPC to ensure that the cookstoves procured and distributed to affected households met minimum performance criteria based on International Organization for Standardization (ISO) tiers.



Information sharing coordinated by the SAFE Working Group was useful in a number of ways, helping to generate a map of response activities and avoid duplication of efforts, promote information sharing including assessment results, coordinate donations, build a sense of camaraderie and morale for each organization’s part in the larger response effort, provide guidance on procurement and assessments, and importantly helped validate the appropriateness of the free distribution approach through the active involvement of Nepali distributors and private sector energy service providers.”

- **Shanti Kleiman**, Mercy Corps



Photo Credit: Tom van Cakenberge, Mercy Corps

### MERCY CORPS & D.LIGHT

As part of its broader Nepal response, Mercy Corps made a critical decision to upgrade their standard non-food relief item (Nfri) kits with four solar lantern models from d.light, a private lighting manufacturer. Mercy Corps’ initial assessment shows that among 181 households, 99% of respondents report that they feel safer at night now that they own a solar light, and 76% are using the new lamp on a daily basis.

Mercy Corps reports that the SAFE Humanitarian Working Group’s Nepal response platform was useful for fact checking, as well as match-making between donors and implementing agencies in the field. Most importantly, SAFE was instrumental in ensuring that the various sectors shared information, preventing the “market spoilage” that might otherwise result from free product distribution.

# Long Term Outcomes

- **OWNERSHIP:** AEPC has now taken over facilitating coordination and partnership with local and international implementers, bringing an important component of sustainability to future energy access projects in Nepal. The leadership of AEPC also ensures that local markets are not unnecessarily and negatively impacted by emergency response efforts.
- **STRENGTHENED RELATIONSHIPS:** Having established partnerships through the Nepal response platform, donors, implementing agencies, and private sector actors have a better understanding of each other's roles, facilitating future collaboration.
- **IMPROVED AWARENESS OF PRODUCT QUALITY GUIDELINES:** During the coordination calls, members of the SAFE Working Group encouraged humanitarian agencies to set and comply with minimum performance criteria for energy products like cookstoves and [solar lanterns](#). As a result, both humanitarian agencies and the private sector became more aware of existing quality assurance guidelines and standards for energy products.
- **CONTINUING IMPACTS:** In addition to the **86,147** products already distributed, several organizations have planned further distribution in 2016. Currently, planned products include 61,240 more cookstoves through AEPC, Practical Action, and Envirofit; 1085 more solar lights and chargers from Waka Waka, and 10,000 more solar home systems through AEPC.

The following organizations provided assistance in the 2015 Nepal earthquake response coordinated by the SAFE Humanitarian Working Group, and contributed content for this case study.



The activities of the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves in the SAFE Humanitarian Working Group during response to the Nepal earthquake was made possible due to generous support by UK Aid from the UK Government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.



The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves is a public-private partnership hosted by the United Nations Foundation that seeks to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women, and protect the environment by creating a thriving global market for clean and efficient household cooking solutions. The Alliance's 100 by '20 goal calls for 100 million households to adopt cleaner and more efficient cookstoves and fuels by 2020. The Alliance is working with its public, private and non-profit partners to accelerate the production, deployment, and use of clean cookstoves and fuels in developing countries.