

Observing Global Suffering from a Tiny Window

We heard and recited about COVID-19 endemic at China during its inception but never had perceived it seriously till it became a global problem. There is a saying, “Disaster never notifies but Warns”. We even ignored it and dialed to take it as a warning and global leader were busy making a joke calling it The Chinese Virus. And now, the world as a whole is suffering from the adversities. This global pandemic therefore calls for a time of solidarity and compassion.

I believe “**COVID-19 does not come inside our house itself, so do not go out and to invite it in**”. This resonates with the message of lockdown throughout the world. I personally, and on behalf of my organization would like to request people to stay at their homes, maintain social distancing and be calm and mature about the situation. Do not panic but be well aware of the preventive measures. Follow the precautions made available by a reliable source which can be the government or World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

On the 20th of March, Friday, as the situation was getting worse in the global context, I had to make a decision regarding my staff members. As an executive member of my organization it was not an easy task for me to let all the staff members stay at home. But being the responsible one for official decisions, on behalf of the staff members and organization, I decided to send them home. For me, the preventive measure prior hand seemed more reliant than a curative one. The staffs are our assets and safety of their life is of high importance at any given time. I was blamed for taking a decision at the heat of the moment but I was sure on the call I made and communicated the same to all staff members. When the government of Nepal announced a country wide lockdown and requested the citizens to stay at home, practicing social distancing, it proved that I made a wise decision.

By the grace of god and our high precautions, all the staff members are safe and at place where they are comfortable. In the beginning, I was very stressed on managing everything within a short period of time. Relying full day and night on the cell phone to contact staff at remote distance, I effectively managed to halt the work in a right way. It was not easy to stay at home, motivated to work and communicate due to lack of some foreseeable resources. But, the theory of adaptation works and we have to adjust with whatever we can to make the best out of this dreadful situation. I am in touch with all our generous donors, well-wishers, stakeholders, beneficiaries and staff members on a regular basis. I still worry about the pandemic and ways in which it can harm me or someone close to me. But, being a responsible member of organization, and in a bigger picture the world, I am trying my best to manage resources, and act wisely. It has been a process of self-discipline in practice as it is better to stay in isolation for nobody knows who could be the next carrier of virus and how or when could one be infected.

Hence, this is the moment to express global solidarity and have positive thoughts and feelings, spending quality time with our family members. We need to practice gratitude and remember that this shall pass too. All we need to do is follow certain sets of guidelines and keep ourselves from getting infected.

Also, putting in perspective and analyzing our suffering, we, the Nepali people have still not fully recovered from the devastating earthquake of 2015 and the India border blocked. A mindful Nepali citizen has not forgotten the impact of boarder blocked which hit us inhumanly during the times of the earthquake. But even through such hard times, we faced it head on and survived. I believe, that we will bounce back better in unity.

Let us hope, from all our precautions and government efforts, the situation will not get worse and world as one, will be able to overcome it soon. Where ever we are, lets try our best to spread positive message and information. Do not exaggerate and negativize the situation, for the ground reality is different.

Staying at home I remained curious about the perspectives of my staff members: what are they thinking and how is the coping measures at their end on their own?

Here are some thoughts of our staff members on their situation and experience, in their own words:

Narayan Dhakal
Executive Director
EcoHimal Nepal

My feeling_Lock Down

I am living in my rented flat in Kathmandu in lock down situation. I am not linked with the neighbors and friends nearby my house, but trying to be digitally connected. I am seriously following Government's request and public announcement "stay inside home, be safe". It is very difficult to imagine how elderly citizens living alone and people with disabilities will get through.

My days are savored as normal. I still have many small moments to relish. I am carrying out my official works with smell of tea and glasses of water. I usually sit for report works after my meal around at 10 am. My children are with my parents in Chitwan but my wife is disturbed and longing for their togetherness in such situation.

In my condition, mean of refreshment is social media. People's message on face book and twitter, people's reaction on them are so funny and some are positive. Source of resilience and immunity are in locked condition is enjoying sarcasm and humor on social media. I am keeping myself busy in writing and doing official tasks. Staying positive and engaged is helping me to be better at solving all the problems in digitalized world.

Keshab Raj Bhusal
Communication & Programme Coordinator
EcoHimal Nepal

My experience in Lockdown

Lockdown started from March 24, 2020 as announced by Government of Nepal. Amidst the situation of fear due to COVID-19 pandemic around the world, I personally felt happy to hear this announcement by government to its citizens. When Corona Virus was found in late December in Wuhan China, most of the nations including Nepal were relaxed in initial stage of spread. As Nepal is close to mainland of virus, it should have taken precaution in initial stage before any case appeared.

Though in the mid of January, we made official visit to one of our project areas, Sankhuwasabha. We were there till the end of this month. Until this time, I had no fear at all, there was nothing to worry. As soon we returned from Khadbari, food and supplies shortage started in Hatiya and Chepuwa where we work. These areas are close to china border, Kimathanka. Our senior management announced a halt to its every project, since all the people in community were panicking to fulfill their shortage of basic needs.

Personally, talking I am in regular official leave from my regular work but I was happy to see my team working in field areas to create awareness on COVID 19 in Kavrepalanchok. It was a very critical time to conduct awareness in other areas. I didn't join the awareness campaign, second reason I was suffering from dry cough since Holi festival. In fact, my whole family was suffered at the same time. Meanwhile, my father came from outside to home in official leave. I sometimes used to feel, that we family members are suffered from COVID-19, but I did not force my family to have a blood examination. I don't feel okay with the time and health facility being not responsible. I felt like people hate if somebody is seen positive. I felt happy, other family members got recovered soon but I still suffered. This time, I had benefit of doubt that corona virus is asymptomatic. So is my condition. As I studied thoroughly about its symptoms, no any symptoms

within me except dry cough. Then I started home medication to increase immunity and confidence. I was into developing my healthy habits like drinking hot water frequently.

Since government announced lockdown, I felt like I am in prison. But when I see the outer world, I was happy to see people inside their house, since it is only the one antibiotic to prevent ourselves from corona virus. The news broadcasted in television sometimes disappointed me, because people were in the road and shopping malls, as if everything is going to collapse, they are only the one to survive. Before a day of lockdown, I was panicking and bought some household chores no matter the price hiked surprisingly. I didn't think of the situation that sanitizer could go out of stock so fast, I didn't find any of them. I consoled myself that hand washing with alcohol-based hand wash is better while we stay at home. Anyhow we have to survive until further notice.

The 1st and 2nd day were so boring and I could not resist seeing all the news and happenings in YouTube and news portal. Rather I was so interested to see the statement from one of the scientists from America, he predicted that soon corona virus pandemic will disappear. There was a ray of hope inside me. The next morning (3rd day) I woke up and felt like a normal morning which used to be before in our past days. I started writing my experiences how I felt.

It sounds good as I contacted staffs and got, they are at their own house with their family, it's a relief for me.

The fourth day, as regular the day was passing, I limited my time to see news and social site. I went to buy vegetable stuff in nearby market. I felt like world is stopped, no touching and no conversation in between people. I was aware and had so much fear to touch any items in market. Even though I had to take change back from shopkeeper. When I came back, I washed all those with warm water, sanitized myself, sanitized items and wallet, changed my clothes, and stopped panicking. My sister was with me to accompany to buy in market, I remember she sneezed suddenly, benefit of doubt she got infected.

Some useful things that I did frequently while staying at home;

- Limited my social site visit and watch news from authentic source;
- regular communication with my parents as they are far from me right now;
- washing hands and rubbing with alcohol so often;
- cleaning more;
- staying in sun;
- drying clothes in sun for whole day, assuming the heat will kill virus.

Besides when I tried to study something, it was quite difficult to focus on subject, I had many more to study this time.

Day after day, I started stopped worrying and panicking. I just take care of myself staying inside house and spreading information as much I know. That's only the effective solution. I learned that washing hand is important to break a chain of virus spread from one to another. Let's think about this, if an individual is aware, its impact is seen in his/her family, and then to outer world. In case of Nepal only countable number of cases, until I am writing this.

Day by day, my hope rises that this pandemic sooner going to end, as more people have been aware and they started home quarantine, they have adjusted themselves to stay in home. People who have travel history from abroad with COVID-19 symptoms are in contact with hospitals for their blood test. Slowly government is tracing their past contacted people, lots of news in media to search and identify people who have travelled in these periods outside the country. Government is also providing incentives to people who helps to find out such people.

The only thing that comes in my mind, for those who earns in daily wages are going to be suffered a lot until and unless government declares free food and supplies to its citizens. I am hopeful that the Nepal government makes a good decision in benefit of people.

I am a woman, literally in our country context, during our first menstruation, girls are not allowed to stay in their own house, they move to either relatives or friends house (I am not an exception to this situation). We are not allowed to see our seniors, especially father, brother and whoever is a male in or around the house. Not allowed to enter kitchen, have to take bath before others come and see us washing our clothes, and cannot be exposed to sun. We had to take help from our sisters to dry our clothes, being untouchable, food is served in separate utensils and later it should be washed and dried ourselves without touching the source of water. Having faced this critical time, I wonder why I worried during first two days while we stayed in home quarantine. I realized quarantine is far better than the days in our first menstruation. The only difference now we are facing is getting spread of COVID-19.

Anisha Kharel
EcoHimal Nepal
District Coordinator

My experience regarding the Current Situation

Firstly, I would like to thank a lot to our management team and our respected sir Mr. Narayan Dhakal for taking a prompt action regarding the COVID-19 precaution and supporting work from home method. These days have been worrying me quite a bit because of the current chaos all over the world regarding the newly found corona virus. I am Pratik Timalisina and I am assigned as a civil engineer in our organization. My permanent home is in Birganj, Parsa and I live temporarily in Chardobato, Bhaktapur. As the news of the lockdown was formally announced by the government, our organization took an immediate decision to enforce the work from home mechanism regarding the safety of its staff. After the decision from the government I decided to go to my permanent home Birganj. I travelled Birganj on Sunday on my bike as I could not get the tickets and also thought that it would be safer in bike rather than going in a crowded vehicle where social distance couldn't be maintained. It was a 6-hour ride from Kathmandu and I arrived home safely on the same day.

Present Scenario of My Place

I live in a community where there are people of mixed religion like Hindu, Muslim and Christian. In my community majority of the people are Muslims and then comes Hindu and there are also few Christians. On the first day of the lock down, as I gazed outside of my balcony, I could see people were not taking the pandemic seriously. People were roaming outside as in normal days without any masks and without social distancing. I could see people gathering in tea shops. The lack of awareness among the people left me quite dazzled and worried while the major part of the world was threatened by the pandemic COVID-19. Maybe due to the illiteracy and lack of awareness among the people resulted in the ignorance of the people. On the second day of the lockdown, the people seen in the road were less. Maybe it was due to the announcement that was done a day before by the local government regarding the precaution to be taken to be away from corona virus, symptoms shown during its impact and its effect. The local government did a commendable job as they distributed one mask, one sanitizer and one soap per household. I asked the distributing team that we have three members in the family, why are you providing just one set. They kindly said that only one member of the family was allowed to go outside for buying of necessary stuffs. I was impressed that the local government was acting quite responsibly now. However, during evening some people were seen outside of their house maybe to purchase their required goods. Good thing is that people were wearing masks and were out in less numbers. Till today, most of the people are following the lockdown but some people can be seen outside may be to purchase the required goods. Another

commendable job is been done today by the local government. I heard that they are distributing the required goods like rice, lentil and vegetable to the poor family. The situation is improving here. The seriousness regarding the lockdown is increasing among people. But being in border area it is always risky that infected people from India may migrate here due to lack of proper security in border area.

How I feel

I have been feeling traumatic seeing the world fall apart to the COVID-19. It indicates how uncertain life is and how we are just a normal creation of the earth that is impotent to a small virus. On a positive side I have read much news which says that mother earth is healing and the ozone layer of earth is getting cured. I feel really sad hearing the number of victims increasing of suffering from corona virus. European countries that have the best medical facilities have been unable to find the way to mitigate the spread of corona virus. So, seeing the present condition of our countries medical treatment facilities it is really dreadful imagining the case like Italy, China, USA and other European countries that are being epicenter for the corona virus. So, it would be much better if we are able to stop its spread in initial stage. I want to give my condolence to all the people who died of the virus. I want to thank all the medical personals who are risking their life in order to save the mankind from this inevitable pandemic. I just wish that they are safe and they keep the world safe. Indeed, they are the present god in life form. I feel like when this all will be over and we will be free to breathe and walk again. This isolation is hard but together we can. Since the cure is not found yet the only way to stop it is to break the link of it from spreading. And the best way to stop its spread is by staying at home. I feel exhausted being in a lockdown as well as feel determined that this all will be over soon and we will be back in our normal life.

Pratik Timalisina
Technical Officer
EcoHimal Nepal

Fear of Death (COVID-19)

It is very likely to feel uncanny by everything we are hearing about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Word itself is causing much stress among people and they are panicking when they are seeing lots of distributing, news and images on TV and online sources. Sometimes it feels like the crisis is all around us. The crisis is not because of the Virus but is more lacking awareness of “Fear of Death.”

I feel there is a great difference between panic and awareness. With awareness, there is a sense of responsibility, a respect for the scale of the problem, and a calm consciousness of what needs to be done. But with panic, sound mental status is lost.

One of my friends from the Far Western Region shared the practice after the outbreak of COVID-19 that has been following in her region. She told me they dig a mud near their door and the coal inside the mud is used as a god blessing and is put as a tika believing it will protect them from this pandemic virus. She, herself being a devoted worker in our office couldn't aware her society against such fear, as the fear of death, is deeply rooted. The social networking sites were people are not able to differentiate the authentic and fake post, the supernatural stories from missionaries in remote places stating the cure of virus dig the believers into the quicksand of such panic.

However, as said one always sees the other side much greener. This has created much awareness among the people who believe the scientific research and are educated. They believe the mother earth is adopting herself to neutralize the ecological imbalance. The awareness about personal hygiene and its effects in the environment, societies and in-country has ramped.

As a program officer for Kavre District, with the supervision from EcoHimal Head office, to eradicate the taboo's on viruses and to aware the local people, I ran district wise miking program in Kuntabesi Kavre. I found there is a lack of awareness among the people, they are not much prepared to handle and cooperate the current lockdown situation and social distancing. As a part of the organization whose aim is to achieve

sustainable development through community empowerment. The community and society are always the appetites of such awareness program from us. I believe we are more responsible and should practice some awareness program from our position. One can be aware of the coronavirus, aware of what needs to be done to minimize its spread, one must learn from the experiences currently facing by European countries where the health services are ranked the best.

However, with the countrywide lockdown, we have halted the door to door social awareness program. Being, an integral part of the society and part of an organization whose ethical goal is to improve the social standard of socially marginalizes communities with sustainable development initiatives, I am participating in the direct interviews with local FM program and spreading the awareness messages via social networking sites to consolidate the genuine and related precaution and preventive measures that need to be taken to overcome the “Fear of Death.”

Shristi Neupane
Program officer
EcoHimal Nepal

Situational Statement

In this time the whole world is struggling with Corona Virus (COVID-19). It is a very difficult situation for the whole country, as per the government's decision to prevent this situation not to leave the house except of most emergency task. Now the whole Country is in LOCK DOWN situation. In order to prevent this situation, we must take initiative and follow the decision of the government, as I have to say about my situation now, I'm staying at field office Kavrepalanchowk and the situation is not very complicated here. I am staying safe here and I am working from home according to the direction of the organization. It has been a bit awkward for me to stay 24 hrs at home/office but under this healthy emergency I have to stay safe and support to my organization and the government as best I can and I have committed for this.

Stay safe from Corona Virus (COVID-19)

Chhabilal Rana
Program officer
EcoHimal Nepal

My experience on Novel Corona virus-2019

Since the last week of December 2019, the destructive Novel Corona virus, which has been identified in the Wuhan province of China, has spread to more than 197 countries of the world so far, and more than 5 million have been infected leading death of more than 25 thousand people. Neither our country Nepal could resist the burden of this pandemic.

I express my sincere gratitude to Executive Director of my organization Shree Narayan Dhakal, for honoring the integrity and being more conscious and sensitive towards the health of the staff and community people working for the organization while Novel Corona Virus was terrorizing the world. While the state has declared a lockdown and issued undeclared curfew, appealing citizen to protect oneself from virus infecting them, all the staff members belonging to my institution have stayed at home. In this transitional situation, our executive director has been in regular contact with the staff members showing the sympathy towards their health. The empathy shown by him towards the employees is incomparable. For this, I again would like to express my gratitude EcoHimal Nepal and Executive Director Mr. Narayan Dhakal.

From being actively involved in any program organized by my organization to awaking people through social sites, I am endeavoring to help community to prevent and protect from COVID-19. During this lock

down phase, I am being more responsible to my community by disseminating the knowledge about COVID-19 and measures to protect oneself from this virus.

By nature, we are expected to remain safer as the crowds in my village is low and the migration rate of outsiders is very less. Besides, the efforts made by the local level, the administration and the concerned body to make the lockdown successful is also commendable.

Almost all communities of Solukhumbhu district rely on their own products, except the most essential products so are less likely to be exposed to the black market of consumable daily goods. However, the products necessary to protect and prevent individual from the virus such as Mask, sanitizers etc. are shortage in market.

Lastly, as a responsible citizen, I personally and professionally will devote myself for the awareness and safety of my family and community under circumstances and I will always be responsible for the projects and programs under my responsibilities. *Translated from Nepali language. Translation credit to Shristi Neupane*

Hari Kumar karki
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EcoHimal Nepal