

OPM pivots support in Nepal: Covid-19 response

The unprecedented fallout of covid-19 has impacted low- and middle-income countries including Nepal. To deal with the pandemic, the Government of Nepal has adopted WHO recommended 3T strategy of testing, tracking, and treating. Testing for covid-19 is extended to all the seven provinces in Nepal along with setting up of a dedicated call centre to keep citizens informed of the government's response.

Reaffirming OPM mission, our Nepal office has worked closely with the government by providing support across thematic areas of expertise in dealing with the pandemic.

Social protection: Amid pandemic both government and citizens have to face and respond to unforeseen and rapidly changing scenario. In this context, we supported the Ministry of Health in a policy-based costing exercise by developing cost estimates for detection and treatment of infections. This helped the ministry prepare estimates and seek additional budget, and also contributed to formulation of 'Financial Guidelines for covid-19'. Our advisory support resulted in the 'Health Sector Emergency Response Action Plan for covid-19' that sets out identification of a covid hospital, role of health sector authorities, resource requirements and costing, and HR planning.

Amid economic downturn resulting in job losses, the Government of Nepal has worked on roll-out of a digital cash transfer initiative through the Prime Minister Employment Fund Programme. We've contributed to the design of an MIS platform under the programme.

Health finance and systems: Financial planning in the times of a global crisis mitigates a host of challenges. In an advisory role to the Ministry of Finance, we developed covid-19 budget for the new fiscal year, and a post-covid response plan with the National Planning Commission. The response plan factors in both impact and long-term response actions on the economy, employment, social, and manufacturing sectors. While a group of experts drawn from different sectors are going to deliver this, OPM provided inputs on health sub-section in the social sector. We have facilitated weekly health cluster meetings with development partners and tracked donor funding to understand where, how and when the funding will be utilised to maximise its value.

We are contributing to the 'Incident Command System' (ICS) design for the health ministry by working with operations, and planning and budgeting departments. ICS is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organisational structure.

Clinical Decision Analysis (CDA) is a committee of clinicians that recommends laboratory, therapeutics, and clinical diagnoses. We sketched a scope of work for the committee and provided orientation on clinical analysis. Based on CDA's recommendations, the health ministry released interim guideline for case management.

To conclude, we are also assisting the Government of Nepal understand and study the course of covid-19 in Nepal. In partnership with Oxford University, experts from both the UK and Nepal offices are developing epidemiological modelling of covid-19 spread and informing on the impact of mitigation strategies such as hand washing and social distancing. As the situation evolves in Nepal, we continue to keep a close watch and help the Government of Nepal.