

## CASE STUDY

## Philanthropy in disaster: work 'twice blest'

Rita Thapa

**The disaster relief work we have done following the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal has convinced Tewa and its sister organization Nagarik Aawaz (NA) of the value of altruism in philanthropy. When all is lost, funding is needed but without love and care, the trauma is less likely to be healed. We learned that this work, as Shakespeare's Portia remarks in *The Merchant of Venice*, 'is twice blest'. It benefits both the giver and receiver.**

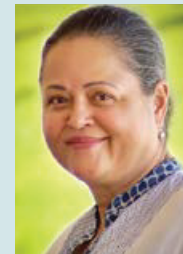
**T**ewa joined hands with NA for the disaster response work because it meant that the money was pooled. Both organizations worked beyond their capabilities by calling on volunteers, in Tewa's case, and youth 'peace ambassadors' in that of NA. Between them, they

mobilized over 250 people who undertook four or five outreaches a day into the affected rural areas in the first six weeks following the earthquake.

As a pilot initiative, Tewa's volunteers continue working to shadow women's groups and women in the affected districts. This has entailed cleaning rubble, rebuilding, farming, essential housework, and the care of children, elderly, and the ailing. And the double blessing? Not only did our women and communities find it easier to regain some level of normality, but the volunteers reported a great change in themselves – of feeling fulfillment and finding new meaning in their lives.

The most inspiring aspect of doing this work was that everywhere Tewa/NA went during

their outreach, the hospitality of the affected community was undiminished. When asked if they would contribute a small part of the money they received to a disaster relief fund, the answer was a resounding yes! From then on, we made philanthropy in disaster a part of our outreach. Those affected taught us that despite the shock and dislocation they had undergone, altruism remains their core value. When they give, they don't just build community assets and trust, they also feel true happiness.



**Rita Thapa** is founder of Tewa and Nagarik Aawaz. Email [ritathapa.patan@gmail.com](mailto:ritathapa.patan@gmail.com)

## CASE STUDY

## Community controlled grant-making at the Dalia Association

Aisha Mansour

**I had served at the Dalia Association for about four months when we organized a women's community evaluation meeting to discuss the last round of the women supporting women programme, our largest grantmaking programme.**



**Aisha Mansour** is chief executive of the Dalia Association Palestine. Email [aisham@dalia.ps](mailto:aisham@dalia.ps)

**I** met a women's group from the Farkha village who had received a small grant through the programme. The group president explained how they had used the grant money to purchase tables and chairs. *Huh? Why on earth would they buy plastic tables and chairs with the grant funds? What was the community of women*

*thinking when they voted for this 'project'?* I thought to myself as I smiled back. But the president went on to explain that previously they had to travel to a nearby village to rent tables and chairs every time they had a large community event. Now, the group rents out its chairs and tables within its own village, and donates them occasionally for community events such as the recent two-week training on developing an eco-village in Farkha. So the simple idea of purchasing chairs and tables enabled the group to ensure a source of income as well as provide a community service.

Through the Dalia Association's community programmes, the community identifies the priority or initiative that should receive grant support. We believe in the

community's right to control its resources and its development. Within this framework, community-controlled grants are awarded to resolve issues and priorities identified by the community through an open and transparent democratic voting process. Our community organizers work with the local community to make the process inclusive, ensuring that everyone in the community is aware of an open public meeting and invited to participate. Once the community votes for the organizations and projects to receive the grant funds, a community monitoring committee is established to oversee the implementation of the grant. It is the community's right to hold the grant recipients accountable.