

ADVOCACYNET 364

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COVID-19 Devastates the Tharu People in Nepal

[AP appeals for \\$2,500 to strengthen communities](#)



The Advocacy Project (AP) is seeking \$2,500 to help the Tharu people resist a devastating surge of the coronavirus in Midwest Nepal that has infected tens of thousands of villagers and now threatens children. AP has donated \$1,000 from core funds to kickstart the program.

The program will be managed by Backward Society Education (BASE), a longtime AP partner that works from the town of Tulsipur in Dang district and has deep roots in the Tharu villages.

BASE approached AP in late May shortly after two BASE Board members died from the virus. At the time, infections were outstripping hospital beds and patients were receiving oxygen on the sidewalks. (Photo)

Pinky Dangi, a senior manager at BASE, described the crisis in vivid terms: “I am spotting all of these painful stories in my village. Yesterday a mother died and today her daughter also. I become helpless because my place, my country is unable to manage sufficient supplies for the infected peoples. It hurts me so badly.”

The crisis has since eased in towns but not in the villages, where a third of those tested are infected and vaccinations have slowed to a crawl. Government officials are also noticing an increase in the Delta variant and the first cases of

mucormycosis, a frightening infection associated with coronavirus that causes blindness and is known as “black fungus.”



Infections have risen sharply among children and the threat is so serious that 20% of all hospital beds are reserved for children. The government is also warning that a third wave is likely on the way.

The BASE program will operate in 60 villages, with a combined population of over 12,000. Sixty BASE volunteers will be trained to promote social distancing, identify the sick, accompany elderly people to health centers for vaccinations, and set up ambulance visits. They will also distribute 6,000 face-masks that have been commissioned from ten women tailors.

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Parallel to this, a 5-person medical team will visit all 60 villages and administer Antigen tests that can be diagnosed on the spot, as well as treat villagers for fever (photo below). The government has provided BASE with 500 Antigen kits, with the promise of more to come.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and oximeters to government health posts that double up as isolation centers.

The program will also strengthen the partnership between BASE and the local government by providing



BASE and AP hope that this community-led approach will fortify the villages against the current wave, while also facilitating the eventual distribution of vaccines. Out of the 548,000 inhabitants in Dang, only 36,661 have received a first shot, and 7,039 second shots had been given out by last week. The vaccine is reserved for people over the age of 62, but there are complaints that well connected

families appear exempt from this restriction.

The BASE program will run for two months with the possibility of an extension if goals are met and funds are available. It will be managed from Nepal by Ms Dangi, with support from Prabal Thapa, a Nepali Peace Fellow currently in the US.

Mr Thapa has worked with AP on past projects to support wives of the disappeared in the Tharu region, and is watching the tragedy unfold in his country with alarm. He will help Ms Dangi to monitor activities every week through an “output tracker” that allows AP partners to follow start-ups and make adjustments as needed.

AP has sent **56 Peace Fellows** to work with partners in Nepal, including BASE, and developed a strong bond with the Tharu people. Three AP Board members have visited Tharu districts in person.



Photo: Funding from this appeal will enable BASE to conduct testing and provide emergency medical care in 60 villages on the front lines.

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