Preparedness to respond to emergencies proves its worth when disaster strikes. On 25 April when the earthquake struck, Dr Rasila Amatya, Medical Superintendent from Dhading District, in Nepal and her colleagues rushed to hospitals and health posts in the district.

As a flood of patients began pouring in, many with multiple fractures, spinal cord and head injuries, the situation was quite overwhelming. However, Dr Amatya was able to provide leadership to coordinate the triage efforts.

“I knew that in a post-disaster situation, unless a coordinated triage effort is maintained, the seriously sick can easily be overlooked and be left neglected queuing up behind the less seriously sick. Triage allows patients to be segregated according to the seriousness and urgency of their injuries. As I had been given a Triage management training some months ago, organized by WHO and the Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal, thankfully I could oversee the efforts of the health teams to ensure that the seriously injured received priority attention”.

Dr Amatya, sorted and moved patients between hastily-erected tents and the open space at the entrance, to operating theatres. Apart from ensuring patients received timely treatment, Dr Amatya also tasked groups of orthopedic surgeons, specialist surgeons, and paramedics that came to help.

Dr Amatya proudly showed the WHO team the triage cloth bands she used in the week following the quake. Triage cloth bands are given to patients to identify them based on the urgency of health care they required.