

Monthly Update – August 2013

UN Resident Coordinator's Office Nepal



This report is issued by the UN RCO with inputs from its UN Field Coordination Offices and other partners and sources. The report covers August 2013. The next report will be issued the first week of October 2013.

CONTEXT

Political update

Preparations for the second Constituent Assembly (CA) election, scheduled for 19 November, gathered pace and momentum during August. Most importantly, several dissenting parties came 'on board' the process, significantly strengthening its inclusiveness and credibility. The first of these parties to join was the eight-party alliance led by Upendra Yadav's Madheshi Janadhikar Forum-Nepal (MJF-N), which signed a six-point deal¹ with the High Level Political Committee (HLPC). On 6 September, an agreement was signed between the HLPC and the Federal Socialist Party (FSP), led by Ashok Rai, including agreement that the next CA will maintain the same number of seats and proportional representation as in the previous CA. This addresses an important concern of many dissenting parties and others to protect the gains in the last CA of increased representation of women and other marginalised groups. The agreement with the FSP also includes a commitment for an all-party meeting (including all parties represented in the previously dissolved CA) 'so as to ensure the CA elections'.

The Election Commission has enforced the campaign Code of Conduct, which will apply until polling day, and announced more detailed information on further stages of the elections timetable. Most significantly, the submission of parties' election candidate nominations is due at the end of September. The Election Constituency Delimitation Commission completed its report, which recommended no changes to the existing constituencies. Although Madheshi parties in particular had sought adjustments, this decision has been accepted by almost all parties. Meanwhile voter registration was re-opened for one additional week in an attempt to include would-be voters who appear to be missing from the new voters roll. Long queues of people were reported in many locations in the final days of the exercise and over 168,000 additional voters were added to the roll. Political activity intensified at the national and district levels as all major parties stepped-up their internal preparations, especially in selecting candidates and assessing their prospects for local races. Party leaders have been busy putting together their election manifestos.

Operational space

Increased disruptions and *bandhs* were witnessed during August in comparison to the previous month, having a moderate affect on the operational space of Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) signatories.

In Central and Eastern *Tarai* districts, the Rajan Mukti-led Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) imposed a *bandh* on 4 August as part of its protest programme against Madhesh-based political parties². On 6 August, the Federal Limbuwan State Council-Sanjuhang enforced a *bandh* in the nine districts east of the Arun River in the Eastern Region to mark the day of Limbuwan's integration into Nepal in 1774. On 19 August, a splinter group of the Federal Democratic National Front³ carried out a *bandh* in the Limbuwan-Khambuwan and Tharuhat-Koch-Madhesh areas of the Eastern Region⁴. The group submitted

¹ This included keeping the number of proportional representation seats the same as the first CA.

² The JTMM was reportedly formed in July with the merger of 12 Madheshi armed groups. It has reportedly endorsed an 8-point action plan aimed at disrupting the CA elections and has threatened local leaders of seven Madhesh-based political parties, ordering them to close party offices in the *Tarai*. Other than the 4 August *bandh* and claiming responsibility for shooting and injuring an MJF-N district member in Jaleshwor (Mahottari District) on 25 July, the JTMM is not known to have reportedly carried out any other activities.

³ The splinter group of the FDNF is led by Kishor Biswas and Indra Khambu.

⁴ Although the Front lays 'claim' to a wide number of districts (Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Bhajpur, Udaipur, Sankhuwasabha, Dhankuta, Taplejung, Terhathum, Panchtar, Ilam, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Siraha and Saptari) as the Khambuwan-Limbuwan and Tharuhat-Koch-Madhesh areas, the *bandh* was reported to be effective only along the highway areas of Morang, Jhapa and Sunsari districts.

a 16-Point Demands to the government including a full proportional system for the upcoming CA elections and a guarantee for ‘ethnic-based’ federalism, amongst others. UN, donors and other blue-plated vehicle movements were affected only by the latter *bandh*. BOGs signatories and development and humanitarian partners imposed self-restriction on their movements during all *bandhs* in the regions.

In Chitwan District (Central Region), the Young Communist League (YCL)—youth wing of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M)—enforced a *bandh* on 1 August demanding the release of cadres arrested for collecting ‘forced’ donations from the local business community. Also, on 8 and 9 August, the Tarun Dal—youth wing of the Nepali Congress (NC)—imposed a *bandh* in the district demanding the release of cadres arrested on charges of beating up an Indian national. In Surkhet District (Mid Western Region) various ethnic and religious groups⁵ enforced a *bandh* on 3 August protesting against the intended installation of a Lord Buddha statue in Kankrebihar (an archaeological conservation area) by members of the Buddhist community. During these *bandhs*, public vehicle movement has halted and markets and educational institutions were closed. Most BOGs signatories imposed self-restrictions on their movements; however, movements of UN and other blue-plated vehicles were not affected.

The month of August also witnessed increased reports of donation demands by certain political parties. For instance, a number of BOGs signatories reported receiving donation demands from the CPN-Maoist in Jajarkot and Surkhet districts (Mid Western Region). Transportation workers carried out a *bandh* on 16 August in Kailali District to protest against donation demands by the CPN-Maoist. The situation reportedly turned tense when UCPN-M cadres joined the protest; however, no untoward incidents were reported. The *bandh* affected public transportation and movements of BOGs signatories, UN and other blue-plated vehicles. Lastly, on 20 August, CPN-Maoist cadres demanded one month’s salary from staff of an international hydropower project in Darchula District, with one staff member reportedly manhandled for refusing to pay. The project staff stopped working for almost a week following the incident, apparently only returning to work after assurances of security by the local administration.

EMERGING ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Clashes between members of the Hindu and Muslim communities in Siraha District

On 3 August, members of the Hindu community accused a Muslim youth in Siraha District of eve-teasing⁶ a group of female Hindu pilgrims on their way to a local Lord Shiva temple. In an attempt to address the issue, members of the local Hindu community reportedly organized a meeting on 4 August with the presence of local police. Alleging that the meeting was merely organized to humiliate them, representatives of the Muslim community did not attend. In reaction, a number of Hindu youths went to a Muslim settlement in Sarswar VDC, Siraha District, on 6 August to search for the Muslim youth who were allegedly responsible for the incident. A minor clash reportedly then occurred when some Muslims attempted to stop Hindus from entering their houses—two persons were reported as severely injured.

Following the clash, the local administration reportedly deployed additional police personnel in Sarswar VDC. Despite these measures, a large group of Hindus from Siraha and Dhanusha districts reportedly attacked and vandalised the Muslim settlements in Sarswar on 9 August—coinciding with the Muslim celebration of *Eid al-Fitr*, the last day of Ramadan. Additional security personnel were deployed from neighboring districts and police resorted to baton charges and ‘warning shots’ to regain control of the situation. The police arrested 25 Hindu youths, including one for possession of a firearm. The same day, the Siraha Chief District Officer imposed a 12-hour curfew to prevent the situation from escalating.

In the aftermath, many Sarswar Muslim families took shelter in nearby Muslim villages. On 11 August, local political parties and civil society initiated a dialogue between the Hindu and Muslim communities in order to address the tensions in the district. The dialogue resulted in a 5-point agreement⁷ and the

⁵ Hindu, Muslim and Christian religious groups and identity-based organizations such as Chhetri, Thakuri, Dashnami and Brahmin Samaj in Surkhet District.

⁶ In Nepal the phrase ‘eve-teasing’ is usually used as a euphemism for public sexual harassment.

⁷ These points include: 1.) unconditional release of the all arrested persons in the scuffle; 2.) government to provide free medical treatment to the injured persons; 3.) government to provide compensation for the damaged properties; 4.) set up armed police force unit in the tensed area; 5.) social punishment to the eve teasers.

holding of a peace rally. Following the agreement, all those who had been arrested were released on bail (except the individual arrested on possession of a firearm). Meanwhile, the situation has improved and Muslim families have reportedly started to return to their homes. Nonetheless, local human rights defenders and district authorities raised concerns that tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities are deeply rooted and, when triggered, may potentially lead to further conflict in the future. Also, in the context of the upcoming CA elections, some felt that the divide between the communities could potentially be exploited by vested interest groups and political actors.

Continued protests by political parties opposed to the CA elections

With the CA elections approaching, political parties at the district level are reportedly accelerating their election preparations. For instance, the UCPN-M unveiled the formation of a 'Production Brigade' on 25 August, while the Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal formed a National Youth Front on 26 August. Both youth wings will reportedly support their mother party in election related activities. Formation or re-activation of political party youth or sister wings is a common feature during Nepal elections.

Despite increased election preparations in the regions, protests against the upcoming CA elections were continued during August by the CPN-Maoist-led alliance of 33 parties (which includes the Federal Limbuwan State Council affiliated with the Federal Democratic National Front) and the FSP (though, the FSP since joined the elections process as of 6 September). Protest programmes included burning copies of the election Code of Conduct, hoisting black flags, distributing pamphlets and holding rallies. Furthermore, the 33-party alliance announced a series of *bandhs* and rallies across the country that will culminate in a nation-wide *bandh* on 25 and 26 September. The ongoing protest programmes have raised concerns among political cadres and common people around the country about security for the elections and the possibility of holding elections.

Despite the protest programmes, voter registration that was re-opened by the Election Commission from 17 to 23 August was reportedly concluded without any obstructions. However, according to officials of some District Election Offices in the Central and Eastern regions, overall turnout was lower than originally expected⁸. A Biratnagar-based journalist noted that, particularly in Morang and Jhapa districts (Eastern Region), a number of people were unable to register due to lack of time and resources available in the District Election Office. Some interlocutors at the registration site stressed the need for an additional voter registration drive and mobile voter registration teams for rural areas (as registration was focused mainly in 'urban' areas).

Tensions continued regarding intended installation of a Lord Buddha statue in Surkhet

Various ethnic and religious groups⁹ staged a sit-in-protest in front of the Surkhet District Administration Office (DAO) and imposed a *bandh* on 3 August to protest against the intended installation of a Lord Buddha statue in the district. As reported in the May Monthly Update¹⁰, a confrontation had taken place between members of the Buddhist community and police on 25 May, during which 17 Buddhists and six police personnel were injured. Following the incident, the Buddha Gumba Construction and Protection Committee (BGPC) and Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) enforced a three-day *bandh* condemning the disproportional use of force by police. NEFIN and members of the Buddhist community also staged a sit-in protest and hunger strike in Kathmandu during July. On 4 August, the Chairperson of the Kankrebihar Conservation Committee filed a case in the Appellate Court against the installation of the Buddha statue. Reportedly, the court issued a verdict that no statues can be installed in the area. In response, the BGPC warned it would raise the issue to national and international levels.

Tensions between Buddhists and non-Buddhists over the Kankrebihar area date back to 2003 when the Department of Archaeology (DoA) carried-out excavations in the area. Stones with carvings of both

⁸ For example, in the Eastern Region, additional new registered voters per districts were: Jhapa 6,068; Morang 6,406; Sunsari 3,485; Saptari 1,019; Siraha 880; Taplejung 329; Panthar 774; Udaypur 862; Khotang 446; Solukhumbu 241; Okhaldhunga: 470; Sankhuwasabha: 317; Ilam 902; Bhojpur: 358; Dhankuta 927. In the Central Tarai, additional new registered voters per districts were: Parsa 2,060; Bara 2,017; Rautahat 2,422; Sarlahi 2,329; Mahottari 1,068; Dhanusha 2,554.

⁹ These include Hindu, Muslim and Christian religious groups and identity-based organizations like Chhetri, Thakuri, Dashnami and Brahmin Samaj in Surkhet District.

¹⁰ RCO Monthly Update of May 2013 (<http://un.org.np/headlines/nepal-monthly-update-covering-period-1-31-may-2013>).

Buddha and Hindu deities were recovered and, as a result, both groups made historical claims over the area. While the BGCPC had acquired permission from the DAO, DoA, District Development Committee and VDC in 2010, the District Forest Office prevented the installation of the statue on basis of the Forest Conservation Act. Local observers¹¹ fear that if the demands of the Buddhists are met, other groups may feel motivated to establish a statue of their deity in the protected area as well, which may lead to further tensions. They noted that the Kankrebihar issue has polarized communities in the district and, in the lead up to elections the issue could potentially become politicised.

Increased activities of political party youth wings

Political party youth wings increased their activities during August. The increase in activities may be attributed to parties demonstrating their political strength in the lead-up to the scheduled November elections and as a means of raise election campaign funds. In many cases, police reportedly released cadres arrested for illegal activities under pressure from political parties. For example:

- On 30 July, police arrested six YCL cadres who were reportedly involved in the forceful collection of donations from the local business community in Chitwan District. Following the arrests, YCL cadres demonstrated in front of District and Ward Police Offices and enforced a *bandh* in the district on 1 August to demand the release of their cadres. Police arrested an additional 15 cadres for vandalizing of a Nepal Telecom office and an ambulance in Ratnanagar Municipality during the *bandh*. Meanwhile, all cadres have since been released apparently due to pressure from political leaders.
- On 7 August, police arrested two cadres of the Tarun Dal in Chitwan District on charges of beating an Indian national. In response, Tarun Dal cadres organized a torch rally and enforced a *bandh* in the district on 8 and 9 August, demanding the release of their cadres. On 9 August, during the *bandh*, a clash occurred when the police attempted to arrest Tarun Dal cadres for vandalizing of a truck and two motorcycles. Police arrested 34 cadres, though all were released the same evening. Tarun Dal cadres in Nawalparasi District had enforced a one-hour transportation strike in support of the *bandh* in Chitwan District. Reportedly, all cadres were released after pressure from political leaders.
- On 12 August, eight YCL cadres were reportedly injured in an attack by Tarun Dal and Tharuhat Tarai Party-Nepal (TTP-N) cadres in Dang District. The YCL District In-Charge claimed they were attacked with weapons, though the NC District Secretary denied this. In protest, YCL cadres filed a case against the Tarun Dal and TPP-N cadres involved and conducted a protest rally. On 14 August, the district police office reportedly arrested one TarunDal cadre in connection with the incident. A district-based human rights activist reported that confrontations and tensions between political parties have increased since the election campaigning has started.
- On 15 August, cadres of the CPN-Maoist reportedly vandalized the Nursing College in Butwal (Rupandehi District) on accusations that the College charges tuition fees higher than the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) standards¹². A College representative noted that the police had been informed of the incident, but no arrests had reportedly been made thus far. A district-based human rights activist claimed that the CPN-Maoist has been targeting schools and colleges to demonstrate its presence and expand its student unions. Earlier during May, the CPN-Maoist affiliated All Nepal National Independent Student's Union-Revolutionary had enforced the closure of private schools in Palpa and Nawalparasi districts, demanding regulation of tuition fees and provision of scholarship to students from marginalized backgrounds, amongst others.

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

Update on monsoon related-incidents

Monsoon related incidents continued during August, reportedly causing the death of 14 people. Incessant monsoon rainfall caused flash floods in Darchula District (Far Western Region) and landslides in Rukum

¹¹ Including journalists, human rights activists and representatives of local NGOs.

¹² Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) constituted in 1989 (2045 BS) is a national autonomous apex body of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector committed for the production of technical and skilful human resources required to the nation (see: <http://www.ctevt.org.np/page.php?page=1>).

and Dailekh districts (Mid Western Region). On 15 August, a landslide in Bisalla VDC of Dailekh swept away the houses of nine families. The Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) provided non-food items (NFI) and tarpaulins to the affected families and an assessment team was deployed to the area. The District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) provided immediate cash support. In Rukum, a landslide swept away four houses and thirteen shops at Bairagithanti bazaar rendering seventeen families temporarily displaced. The DDRC provided cash support to the affected families and NRCS supported NFI.

Outbreaks of bird flu (H5N1) have been witnessed in the Kathmandu Valley and Nawalparasi District (Western Region) during August. To control the outbreak, the government deployed rapid response teams to affected areas. Poultry in affected areas have been culled and poultry products disposed. Also, the Government imposed a week-long ban on the import, export and distribution of poultry products during the first week of August to control the outbreak inside the Kathmandu Valley. During the second week of August, Bhaktapur District was declared as a 'Bird flu Emergency Zone'. Meanwhile, few cases of H5N1 were reported in Kavre District. There is no lab confirmed case of human transmission so far.

Post-July flood situation

In Kailali District, the DDRC with support of the NRCS completed a detailed assessment of the flood affected area. According to the assessment, a total of 5,768 families were affected and the houses of 317 families were completely destroyed by the July floods. A number of families are still in need of food support as well as support in the reconstruction of their houses. Flood victims from Darchula District reportedly formed a struggle committee and are demanding compensation for their lost property from the government. They have been staging demonstrations in the district headquarters and recently met with the Chairperson of the Interim Election Administration advance their demands.

RECENT MAPS AVAILABLE

The RCHCO IMU produced a number of mapping products, some of which are listed below and also available on the UN Nepal Information Platform (<http://www.un.org.np/resources/maps>):

Nepal: Report of Security Incidents August 2013
<http://un.org.np/maps/nepal-report-security-incident-1-31-august-2013>

Nepal: Reports of Bandh/Strikes August 2013
<http://un.org.np/maps/nepal-reports-bandhs-strike-1-31-august-2013>

Nepal: Saptari District Security Incidents 2011-2013
<http://un.org.np/maps/saptari-district-security-incidents-2011-2013>

RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE

Some of the recent reports available on UN Nepal Information Platform are listed below:

RCO Field Bulletin-Issue #59: Caste based discrimination in Nepal-A local level perspective from Dadeldhura
<http://www.un.org.np/headlines/rchco-field-bulletin-59>

National Disaster Response Framework (Nepali version)
<http://www.un.org.np/reports/national-disaster-response-framework-nepali-version>

United Nations Development Assistance Framework of Nepal (UNDAF) 2013-2017 (Nepali version)
<http://un.org.np/reports/undaf-2013-2017>

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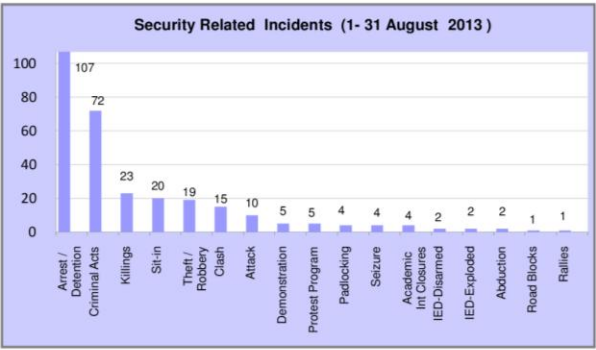
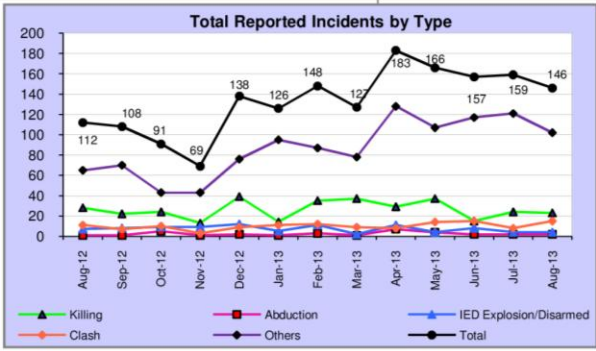
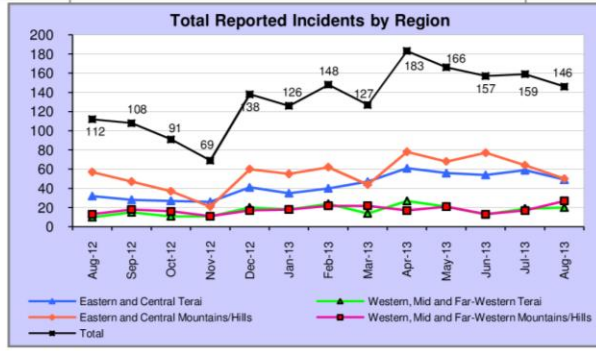
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Visit the UN Nepal Information Platform at www.un.org.np

Disclaimer: The information in this report is consolidated from media, UN, NGO and other development and humanitarian partners, subject to availability of data. Although the RCO aims to confirm reports independently, occasional factual inaccuracies can occur.

NEPAL - Reports of Security Incidents

1- 31 August 2013



Legend

Administrative Boundaries

- International
- Development Region
- District

Types of Incidents

- Reports of Abductions
- Reports of Killings
- Reports of Clash
- Reports of Criminal Acts
- Reports of IED-Disarmed/Explosions

Number of Reported Incidents

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 9
- 19
- No incidents reported

Action Initiators (Symbol Colour)

- UCPN-M/YCL
- Terai Groups
- Political Parties/Locals/ Students/Teacher Union/Transport Union
- Kirant/Limbuwan
- Tharuhat/ Bramhan Samaj/ Chhetri Samaj
- Other/Unidentified

Map Produced by RCHCO with information consolidated by UNDSS.

Department of Safety and Security

Map Doc Name: Security_Incidents_August_2013_130905_v1

GLIDE Number: n/a

Creation Date: 5 September 2013

Projection/Datum: UTM 44N/WGS84

Web Resources: <http://un.org.np/resources/maps>

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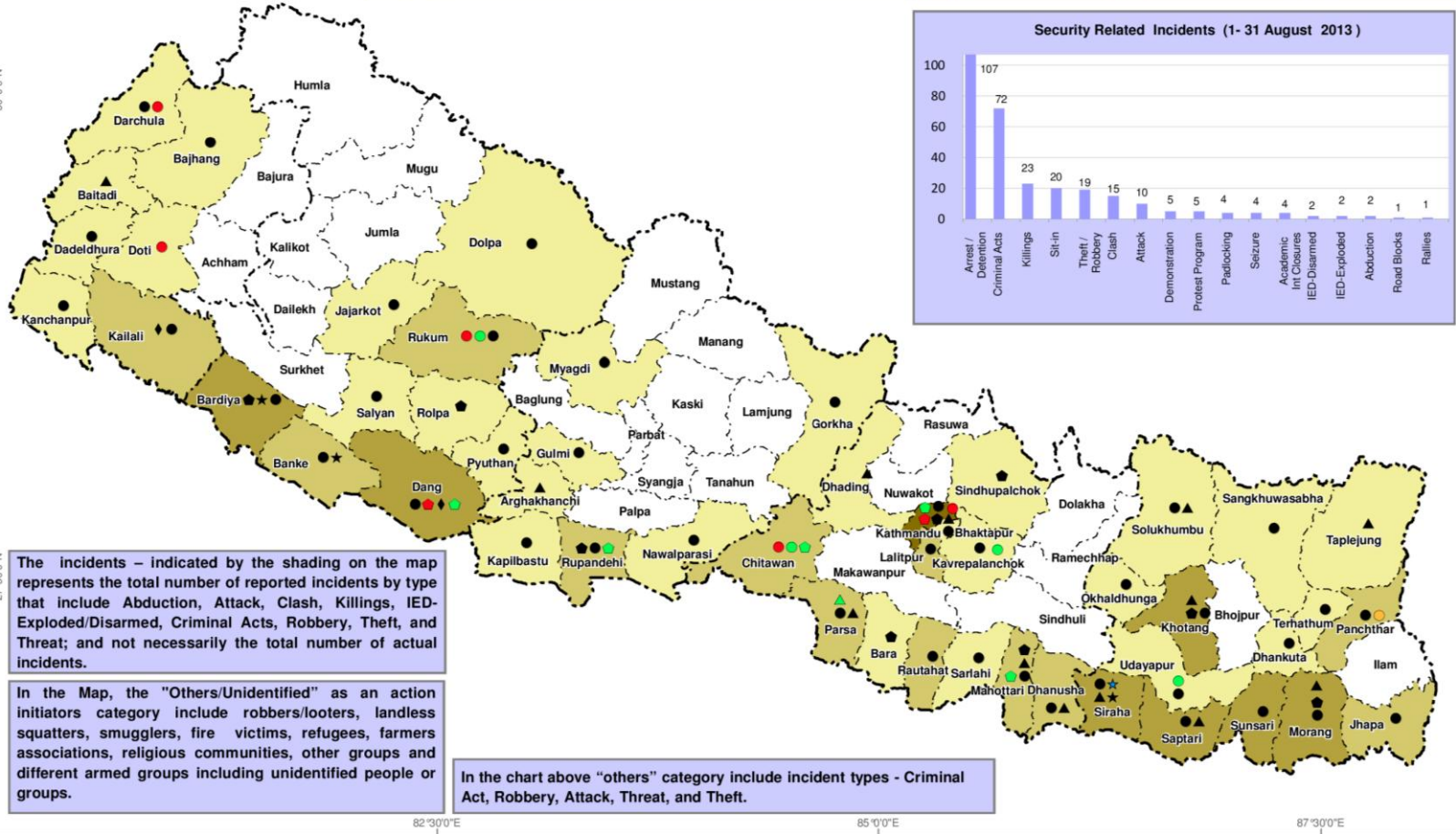
Map data source(s): International and domestic media and field reports from UN Agencies, DFID-GIZ/RMO, Donors and I/NGOs. Geodata: GIST, ESRI, UNOCHA COD/FOD http://cod.humanitarianresponse.info/search/field_country_region/154 <http://un.org.np/resources/common-data-repository>

Projection/Datum: Modified Transverse Mercator

Disclaimers: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Transition Support Strategy UN RC Office, Nepal

A service of the United Nations Country Team in Nepal.



The incidents – indicated by the shading on the map represents the total number of reported incidents by type that include Abduction, Attack, Clash, Killings, IED-Exploded/Disarmed, Criminal Acts, Robbery, Theft, and Threat; and not necessarily the total number of actual incidents.

In the Map, the "Others/Unidentified" as an action initiators category include robbers/looters, landless squatters, smugglers, fire victims, refugees, farmers associations, religious communities, other groups and different armed groups including unidentified people or groups.

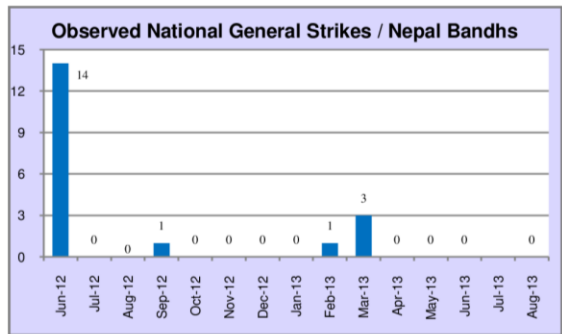
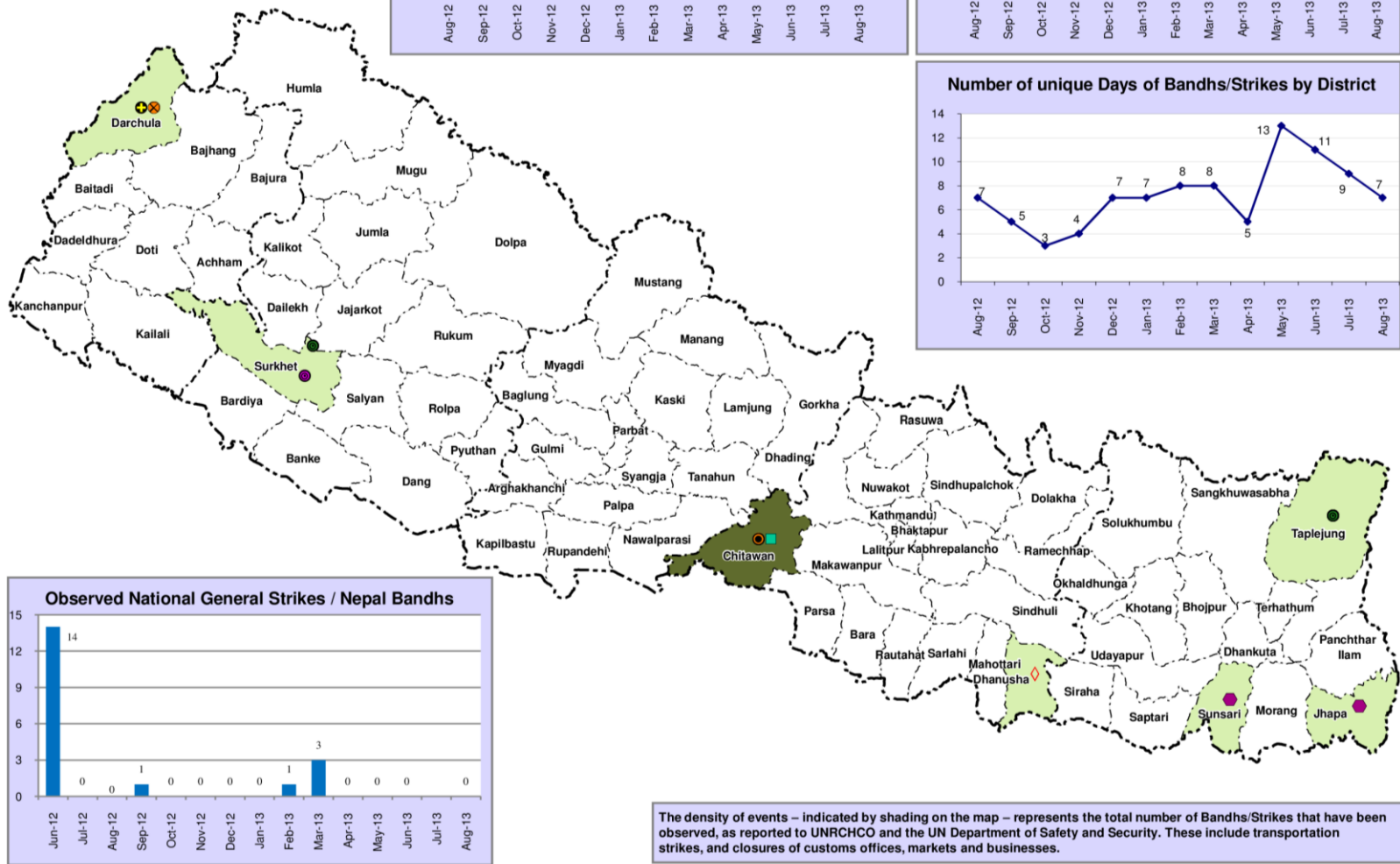
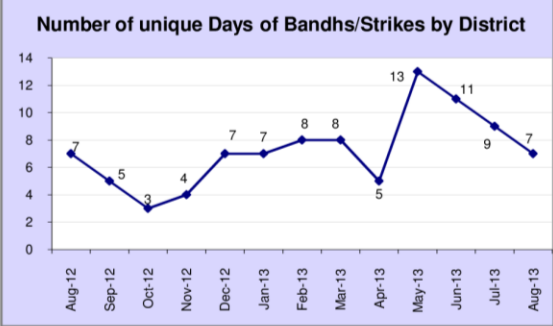
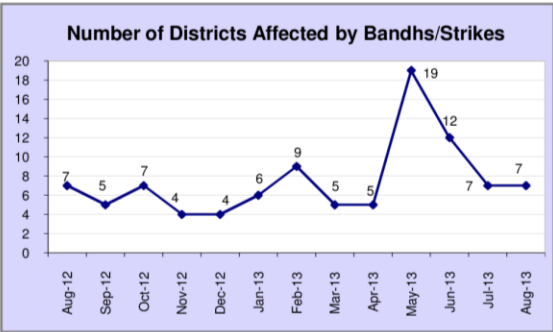
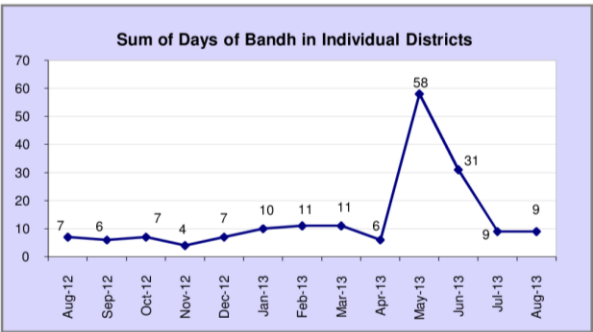
In the chart above "others" category include incident types - Criminal Act, Robbery, Attack, Threat, and Theft.

NEPAL - Reports of Bandhs/Strikes

1 - 31 August 2013

Note:

The number of unique days of Bandh observed in each month at individual district is summed and presented in above graph as an indication of the severity of Bandhs based on duration and geographic coverage .



The density of events – indicated by shading on the map – represents the total number of Bandhs/Strikes that have been observed, as reported to UNRCHCO and the UN Department of Safety and Security. These include transportation strikes, and closures of customs offices, markets and businesses.

Legend

- Administrative Boundaries**
 - International
 - Development Region
 - District
- BANDHS**
 - 1
 - 3
 - No incidents reported
- Groups Calling for Bandhs/Strikes**
 - FNCCI (Fed. Of Chamber of Commerce and Ind)
 - Local Communities
 - Other/Unidentified
 - UCPN-Maoist Affiliated Groups
 - Political Parties
 - JTMM Related Groups
 - Kirant/Limbuwan/Khumbuwan

Map Produced by RCHCO with information consolidated by UNDSS.



Map Doc Name: BandhStrike_August_2013_A4_130906_v01
GLIDE Number: N/A
Creation Date: 6 September 2013
Projection/Datum: UTM 44N/WGS84
Web Resources: <http://un.org.np/resources/maps>

Map data source(s): International and domestic media and field reports from UN Agencies, DFID-GIZ/RMO, Donors and INGOs. Geodata: GIST, ESRI, UNOCHA COD/FOD http://cod.humanitarianresponse.info/search/field_country_region/154 <http://un.org.np/resources/common-data-repository>
Projection/Datum: Modified Transverse Mercator

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