

Monthly Update

UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator's Office
Nepal



This report is issued by the UN RCHCO with input from UN Field Coordination Offices and other partners and sources. The report covers May 2011. The next report will be issued on the first week of July 2011.

CONTEXT

Political Update

At the national political level, the month of May witnessed an attempt by the parties to strengthen their negotiating positions ahead of the constitution deadline of 28 May. The Nepali Congress (NC) nationwide rallies reached a crescendo in Kathmandu on 20 May during which the party announced its ten pre-conditions for supporting an extension to the Constituent Assembly (CA). The fourth expansion of Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal's cabinet saw an almost complete government and his continued political consolidation as well as that of his allies the Unified Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (UCPN-M).

Intermittent discussions on the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist army (MaoA) personnel continued through political channels as the 'Special Committee for the supervision, integration, and rehabilitation of the MaoA' largely remained passive during the month of May. Opinion did coalesce amongst the main political parties on the concept of a separate, mixed force under the Nepal Army chain of command as the modality for the integration of MaoA personnel. However, the parties did not resolve the more contentious and critical technical details involved, which could impede further progress if not addressed. While previously successful in settling a number of outstanding issues in the constitution-drafting process, movement in the Constitutional Sub-Committee headed by UCPN-M Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal slowed significantly during this period. This was due largely to strategic negotiations on the extension of the CA but also to obstruction by the representatives of smaller parties dissatisfied with progress on drafting the constitution, particularly regarding federal restructuring and the rights of minorities.

Concerns regarding implications of a failure to extend the CA were relieved only at the very last moment, as the parties secured the 'Five Point Agreement' extending the CA's tenure for three months. This extension is shorter than many had expected and reflects growing impatience among political and interest groups with the prolongation of the constitution drafting process in the absence of meaningful progress. An 'informal' agreement is also currently under discussion among the main parties to serve as a more detailed blueprint than the Five Point Agreement for the next steps in the peace and constitution drafting process. Discussions on this, particularly as it relates to a timetable for the categorisation and regrouping of MaoA personnel as a precursor to integration and rehabilitation, are underway actively within the Special Committee.

Operational Space

The most significant operational space dynamic during the month of May concerned the surge in *bandhs* and protest programmes carried out in all regions, predominantly by identity groups demanding the timely promulgation of the constitution and the inclusion their respective political objectives by the constitution deadline of 28 May.

All of these *bandhs* affected normal life, with markets, shops, and education institutions closed and transportation halted. Although precautionary measures were taken for UN vehicle and field movements,

most *bandh* organizers allowed the vehicle movement of diplomatic agencies, ambulances, media, and human rights organisations. Movement by non-governmental development and humanitarian actors was reportedly restricted during the *bandhs*, particularly delaying humanitarian response from the Nepal Red Cross Society and other humanitarian organisations to hailstorm-affected people in Morang District.

It is of particular concern that the Chhetri Samaj Nepal and Khas Chhetri Ekata Samaj *bandhs* and transportation strikes in various regions explicitly restricted the movement of UN and diplomatic 'blue-plated' vehicles (with the exception of OHCHR vehicles). UN vehicles were stopped and prevented from moving on a number of occasions by Brahmin Samaj, Chhetri Samaj Nepal and Khas Chhetri Ekata Samaj.

EMERGING ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Local dynamics related to identity politics

As noted above, there were a significant number of organized *bandhs* and other disruptive protest programmes during the month, the most notable being conducted by identity and regional-based groups demanding the timely promulgation of the constitution and to ensure their respective political objectives were addressed.

A surge of action by Chhetri identity groups, with Chhetri Samaj Nepal undertaking its first disruption programmes, was a new dynamic. Chhetri Samaj Nepal also recently intensified its activities in the Far West to expand its grassroots networks by holding meetings and forming groups in rural villages in addition to district headquarters. It is significant to note that Chhetris make up 39% of the population in the Far West Region, as compared to composing almost 16% of the population across Nepal (CBS 2001). The emergence of Chhetri, regional- and religious-based identity groups creates a new dynamic, opposing the inclusion and state restructuring agendas of established indigenous identity groups, not just at the national political level but also locally. Additionally, leaders from some established indigenous identity groups have expressed their opposition to a perceived encroachment on their claims for special benefits and rights by newly mobilizing 'caste-based' identity groups.

The scale and scope of disruptions leading up to the constitution deadline of 28 May demonstrates that differences regarding the terms of federalism in Nepal remain deep; they are also potent issues around which to mobilize disruptive action. Differences over federalism present not only a major national political challenge, but a potential divider over ethnic, linguistic, religious and other identity lines at the community level. Although many actors will be following central political developments as Nepal approaches the new constitution deadline of 28 August, it will also remain important for stakeholders to observe how contention over federalism impacts on inter-identity relations at the community level.

Obstruction of voter registration in Eastern hills and some Tarai districts

The second phase of the voter registration process has met with instances of obstruction by identity groups in Eastern Tarai and hill districts. District authorities, human rights defenders and journalists confirmed that Federal Limbuwan State Council-Lingden (FLSC (Lingden)) cadres vandalized voter registration equipment and seized voter registration documents in five VDCs across Sunsari, Dhankuta, Jhapa, and Sankhuwasabha districts during the month and a FLSC (Lingden) central committee member has stated that they will continue disrupting voter registration until a 'Limbuwan autonomous state' is in place. It is important to note that another faction of FLSC, led by Sanjuhang Palungawa, has stated that they are not opposed to the voter registration process.

District authorities also reported that cadres of the Madheshi Peoples Rights Forum-Nepal disrupted voter registration in 12 southern VDCs of Morang District, protesting against the requirement to present citizenship certificates for registration as a voter. Nonetheless, while the need to present citizenship certificates for voter registration could still be used as a tool for political mobilization in the future, there are currently few structured public programmes to disrupt the process by mainstream Madheshi parties in Eastern Tarai districts. The obstruction of voter registration is much more significant and organized in districts with sizeable Limbu populations; indications are strong that ongoing obstruction will continue in these areas.

As a result, there has been mixed progress by local authorities in Eastern Tarai and hill districts in implementing the voter registration process during May. District Election Offices in Taplejung, Panchthar, Ilam, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Dhankuta, Tehrathum and Sankhuwasabha districts have temporarily halted the process. However, the Chief District Officer of Saptari has confirmed that there have been no serious obstructions in the district and the District Election Offices in Bhojpur, Khotang and Okhaldhunga have completed voter registration in almost half of VDCs without obstruction from Khumbuwan and Kirat groups.

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

Disaster Preparedness and Contingency Planning

The Guidance Note 2011 for preparing Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan (DPR Plan) is being finalized through extensive consultation with the Government of Nepal (GoN) and humanitarian partners and is being taken as the comprehensive guidance for preparing the DPR plans at regional and district level. Three regional and one national workshops completed during May drew the attention and commitment of government, international organisations, UN agencies and private sectors working in disaster preparedness and humanitarian activities. The workshops developed a set of different recommendations to be implemented by regional and district based agencies. As of now, more than 54 districts (see map at Annex) have already started updating/preparing their DPR Plan according to the agreed standards for 2011.

UN Field Coordination Offices (FCOs) in Biratnagar, Bharatpur, Nepalgunj and Dadeldhura are in close contact with the District Lead Support Agencies (DLSAs) and the District Disaster Relief Committee in the respective districts and closely supporting the process. Moreover, the Nepalgunj, Dadeldhura and Biratnagar FCOs (with the support of HSU, Nepal Red Cross and INGOs) have trained 40 DLSAs and disaster focal persons from their regions to facilitate the process of response preparedness. The Bharatpur FCO is currently facilitating the process in its region.

By request of the GoN, the Secretariat of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), under OCHA, organized a scoping mission in May to provide an analysis of the current institutional and operational environment for developing national Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capacities, based on the existing emergency services. The scoping mission identified priority areas in which the donor community can partner with the GoN in an effort to improve and strengthen national USAR response capacity to disasters as well as the day-to-day emergency services. The recommendations include the identification of concrete projects and follow-up activities, requirements for funding, timelines and necessary resources and institutional arrangements. The report will be shared with relevant stakeholders and the recommendations will also be presented in regional and global INSARAG forums.

Out of ten clusters, the Education, Nutrition, Logistic Health and Protection clusters have already prepared their draft Cluster Contingency Plans; the Food Security, Shelter, CCCM, WASH and Emergency Telecom

clusters are finalizing their draft plans by mid-June 2011. OCHA HSU will then compile the IASC Contingency Plan (Chapeau) that can be used as national level contingency plan for emergency response.

Disaster Incidents and Response

150 houses and three schools in Baliya and Fulbari VDCs were damaged by a heavy storm on 18 May in Kailali District. NRCS Kailali provided non-food relief items to 15 highly-affected families and a detailed needs assessment is in process. A hailstorm on 19 May in Dadeldhura District damaged vegetable and fruit crops in Bagarkot and three other VDCs, with an estimated loss of more than NPR 9,300,000 (US\$129,167) and 452 ropanies¹ of crops belonging to 247 farming families were destroyed. The District Agriculture Development Office is assessing the impact and although no humanitarian needs have been flagged by district authorities, the damages may result in reduced supply and increased prices of produce in area markets.

The windstorm of 1 May in Morang District affected nine VDCs (including 16 schools, a VDC building, a police post, an NRCS sub chapter building, a few stalls and cowsheds. In addition three people were seriously injured). A total 1,248 families were affected according to an NRCS Initial Rapid Assessment (IRA) carried out in four VDCs (though some frustration has been expressed by those in the five VDCs not assessed). The District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) coordinated with NRCS, I/NGOs, UN and other stakeholders in a timely manner. There is a shortage of about 1,000 tarpaulins, temporary shelter cooking utensils for 30 families and clothing for 10 families; around 200 tarpaulins have been distributed through NRCS. Plan Morang have distributed tarpaulins and Save the Children/WVI may supplement these initial distributions. DDRC/NRCS is still seeking more support from humanitarian partners to fulfill the remaining gaps.

Food Security and Livestock

The Food Security Cluster held an Earthquake Preparedness contingency planning workshop for the Cluster members. The workshop received substantial support from GoN, with presence from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and National Food Corporation (NFC). In addition, the NRCS and FAO were also heavily involved. Through scenario testing and input from experts in the WFP Bangkok regional bureau, the workshop resulted in a set of Standard Operating Procedures following a major disaster, as well as the revision of the Multi Sectoral Initial Rapid Assessment tool for earthquake scenarios. At the same, discussions were held around how to procure, deliver and handle food into Kathmandu valley in coordination with NFC, the Logistics Cluster and NRCS. A report from the workshop will be available by mid-June.

The food security of 106,000 vulnerable households in the ten most food insecure districts² are continually experiencing improvement due to bumper production of wheat and pulses. The farmers of those districts reported nearly double the production of wheat and lentil due to improved seeds distributed by FAO and favourable climate conditions. During this spring/summer cropping season, the distributed paddy and maize seed have been transferred to the field. The predicted early monsoon will support plant growth and so the September/October harvest is forecasted to be good. At the same time, goats provided to landless farmers in Dolpa, Jumla, Shinduli and Udayapur districts are starting to produce offspring, promising a better future livelihood for the poorest in the rural community. FAO has organized a series of trainings on Livestock

¹ 1 hectare= 19.66 ropanies

² Doti, Kailali, Bajhang, Baitadi, Darchula, Kalikot, Jumla, Dolpa, Shinduli and Udayapur districts.

Emergency Guidelines and Standards to 120 staff from government and civil society, providing information on local services and improving the ability to save livestock-based livelihoods in the aftermath of disasters.

Protection Cluster

An inter-agency Gender Based Violence (GBV) Capacity Development project has been rolled out in Nepal as a global initiative³ of GBV Area of Responsibility under the framework of the Protection Cluster with the aim of organizing, facilitating and supporting the introduction of core tools for better GBV programming and coordination in the event of emergency. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of field-level humanitarian staff, GBV sub-cluster leads and partners (including GBV professionals) to effectively manage and coordinate inter-agency, multi-sectoral GBV programmes and GBV interventions in an emergency. The project intends to develop a culture of working together in teams and has trained 11 ‘capacity promoters’ from Nepal (including government, civil society and the UN staff) on necessary skills and knowledge to work as agents of change. These capacity promoters will work within the existing GBV or humanitarian coordination mechanisms and will be supported by the Regional Project Coordinator in Bangkok.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

In addition to the 64 identified open spaces of Kathmandu and Lalitpur District to be used for humanitarian purposes in case of a disaster, IOM has begun exploring open spaces in Bhaktapur District, so far identifying 18 potential open spaces that could be used for IDP camps.

The report on Identification of Open Spaces for Humanitarian Purposes in Kathmandu Valley was translated in Nepali and submitted to MoHA for comments and endorsement. The Ministry endorsed the report and will submit to the CNDRC for GoN approval.

Education Cluster

The Education Cluster reviewed its 2011 annual work plan and Contingency Plan for 2011-2012, submitting both to OCHA. Among various initiatives in preparedness, the cluster has completed the preliminary work to produce the artwork for the Meena Earthquake awareness booklet in Nepal, preparing concept notes to organize cluster orientation for the cluster members, preparing a psycho-social teachers/facilitators training manual on Education in Emergency and processing for the collaborative work with the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) and RED CR for the implementation of Earthquake Preparedness program in Kathmandu valley. NSET conducted a seismic vulnerability assessment of 15 public school buildings in Kathmandu valley and orientation on DRR/earthquake school safety program to 20 parents of a private school in Lalitpur. World Vision conducted 14 Early Childhood Development Center centers in four VDCs in Sunsari District benefitting about 150 children

UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS

- 12-15 June, Nepal-US Military Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) Table Top Exercise (TTX) in Hotel Radisson, Kathmandu
- 20 June, Central Region Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning Workshop- in Armed Police Force Training Center, Kathmandu (08:30-17.30hrs)
- 1 July, Contact Group meeting, UN House, Kathmandu (10.30-12.00hrs)

³ The program focuses on nine countries in three regions: Francophone Africa (Chad, Central African Republic, and Cote d'Ivoire), Asia-Pacific (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nepal) and the Arab States (Palestine, Iraq, and Sudan).

RECENT MAPS AVAILABLE

The RCHCO Information Management Unit produced a number of mapping products, some of which are listed below and also available on the United Nations Nepal Information Platform (UN NIP) -

<http://www.un.org.np/resources/maps>

- Reports of Security Incidents – 1 to 30 April, 2011: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14691>
- Reports of Bandhs/Strikes – 1 to 30 April, 2011: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14692>
- Status of Disaster Preparedness Activities in 2011 – as of 31 May 2011: available on request

RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE

Some of the recent reports available on UN-NIP are listed below.

- An Overview of the Western Development Region:
<http://www.un.org.np/content/overview-western-development-region-nepal>
- An Overview of the Central Development Region: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14666>
- An Overview of the Mid Western Region: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14667>
- An Overview of the Far Western Region: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14662>
- An overview of the Eastern Region: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14661>
- RCHCO Field Bulletin: State of stateless citizens: A case study on citizenship and landlessness issues of the Santhal community, Issue #5: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14693>
- RCHCO Field Bulletin: Informally employed workers in two Tarai cities, Issue #4:
<http://www.un.org.np/node/14657>
- RCHCO Field Bulletin: Empirical case-study of VDC Secretary absenteeism and related service delivery in 45 VDCs in rural Nepal, Issue #3: <http://www.un.org.np/node/14655>

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

NEPAL - Status of Disaster Preparedness Activities in 2011 (as of 31 May 2011)

