

# Monthly Update – August 2011

## UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator's Office Nepal



*This report is issued by the UN RCHCO with inputs from its UN Field Coordination Offices and other partners and sources. The report covers August 2011. The next report will be issued in the first week of October 2011.*

### CONTEXT

#### **Political Update**

August was a month of transitions. Prime Minister Khanal resigned on 14 August after having failed to generate the multi-party consensus he had sought throughout his tenure. The reluctance of the Nepali Congress (NC) and Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) to serve under the leadership of the other prevented the parties from achieving their stated objective of a unity government. Instead, it propelled a Legislature-Parliament (LP) majority vote for the next head of government on 28 August. Although the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) supported the NC candidature, the critical weight of the Madheshi parties behind the UCPN-M's candidate, Baburam Bhattarai, secured him the majority he required to become Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Bhattarai's election was welcomed with considerable enthusiasm and great expectations that the peace process should enjoy significant gains in the months to come. Prime Minister Bhattarai was able to claim an early success with the transfer of weapon container keys to the Special Committee for the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist army combatants. There has also been progress, informally, on some ideas regarding integration and rehabilitation issues, although not yet a formal endorsement of these.

On 28 August, the Supreme Court responded to a writ petition by confirming that the previous extension of the Constituent Assembly (CA) (from 28 May to 31 August 2011) was legitimate and should be upheld. Amidst minimal controversy and public debate, the LP on 29 August voted overwhelmingly to extend the tenure of the CA for a further period of three months until 30 November 2011. There is, however, greater uncertainty and debate regarding the possibility for another extension at the end of November, particularly if a final draft of the constitution is not completed by that time.

#### **Operational Space**

Operational space was negatively affected by landslides caused by the monsoon, in particular in the Far West Region.

#### **Bandhs**

Most of the strikes and *bandhs* called by various groups during August were fairly regional in focus and effectiveness. Disruptive protests were generally organised as civil protests related to specific incidents, such as the killing of a young woman in Lalitpur, or *bandhs* by ethnic groups protesting central level political development (or the lack thereof). Such actions nevertheless disrupted life for large parts of the population with public and private transportation coming to a halt and markets and schools remaining closed in many places. The UN and INGOs were generally exempt from the *bandhs* and allowed to move freely. Nevertheless, project and programme implementation was negatively affected as many implementing partners had to postpone activities scheduled for the days of *bandhs* and protests.

#### **Improvised explosive device incidences**

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in August continued to affect mainly state actors and offices, public spaces and businesses – disturbingly, three incidences occurred at schools. During the month, a total of IED 21 incidences were reported across nine districts in the country, including four explosions. The overall number of events increased from the 16 that occurred in July and is above the average of 17 per month for the previous two years. However there has been a 23 percent reduction in IED incidences from June to August this year as compared to last (down to 53 from 69). The greatest concentration of incidences during the month (seven) occurred in the Eastern *Tarai* area, mostly the five reported in Sunsari District (which included the only casualties for the month: three persons injured). Sunsari has seen a notable spike in IED incidences, with the eight events of August and July making up almost half of all 18 incidences in the district over the last two years. There has also been a spike in Pyuthan District, where five of the total six IED incidences over the past two years happened in just August and July. The overall IED trend for 2011 remains roughly level with that of the previous two years.

## EMERGING ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

### Continued reactions to the establishment of new municipalities

Following on from what was noted in the July update, widespread reactions to the creation of new municipalities continued throughout August in different parts of the country<sup>1</sup>. This seems to be based on a feeling amongst parts of the civil society and the population at large that creating new municipalities is premature as the future structure of the state is yet to be agreed upon. Those who seek to be included in newly formed municipalities are generally under the impression that it will lead to more resources and services. As noted in the July Update, the high degree of opposition, tension and sometimes misunderstanding surrounding relatively minor instances of state restructuring does not bode well for the much more fundamental and ambitious changes that will eventually take place through the federal state restructuring process.

### Emergence of new groups in the Far West Region

A number of new organisations advocating for issues of concern in the Far Western Region emerged during August. To date, there have been limited public reactions to their emergence and activities and there are so far no signs of coordination between the groups. Although public support for the organisations is difficult to gauge at this stage, there is a general feeling in the Far Western Region that the region has been neglected.

On 6 August, the newly formed 'Far West Pressure Group' issued a 21-point set of demands<sup>2</sup>. The pressure group intends to advocate for the Far Western Region and to put pressure on the authorities to address these. In an interview on 25 August, the group's Chairperson noted that the Far Western Region is lagging behind the rest of Nepal in terms of development and claims this is because of the state's discrimination in allocating resources. A total of 101 organizations (including political parties, NGOs, trade unions and civil society, student and teachers' associations) are said to have shown their solidarity with the pressure group. The pressure group organized a peaceful rally on 6 August in Dhangadhi and an 'interaction programme' in the Kailali DDC hall the day after. They also submitted a memorandum with their demands to the Prime Minister through the Kailali District Administration Office on 7 August and placed boards with their demands in government offices and public places in Dhangadhi.

In addition to the above group, other new Far Western Region entities, such as the Far Western Awareness Forum and *Sayukta Lokrantik Paribesh*, were also active in attempting to raise awareness of the situation in the region and advocate for more investments.

This recent increase in political activity and regional-based activism may be linked to the feeling amongst actors that the publication of the draft new constitution is in sight and it is their impression that they have not had their voices heard as much as other, mainly ethnic, groups. It is therefore possible that this type of activity will increase, and possibly spread, in the coming months.

Similarly, the Eastern Region continued to see protests and activities conducted by Limbuwan and Madheshi groups. Issues raised were mostly related to the drafting of the new constitution and federalism.

### New Tharu party established

On 12 August, the Chairperson of the Tharuhat Autonomous State Council (TASC), Laxman Tharu, announced the names of a 31 member strong central committee of the newly formed 'Tharuhat Tarai Party Nepal' (TTPN)<sup>3</sup> with the central demand to establish a Tharuhat Autonomous State with the right to self-determination. A protest programme in support of this demand was announced<sup>4</sup>, with the *bandh* on 1-2 September being effective. Although the concept of "*Ek Madhesh, Ek Pradhesh*" was strongly criticized during the inaugural session, Laxman Tharu stated that the TTPN remains open to their alliance with the Madheshis. It remains to be seen what type of relationship with the above mentioned Far Western Region groups, if any, may evolve.

There has been limited public reaction to the establishment of the TTPN. Although it is too early to assess TTPN's future activities and strategy in national politics, there is concern regarding possible obstruction of development activities in the areas inhabited by Tharus if there are further protest programmes.

<sup>1</sup> For specific details see the RCHCO regional updates

<sup>2</sup> For further details see the RCHCO Far Western Region Update

<sup>3</sup> Chairperson: Laxman Tharu, Vice-chairpersons: Bhanu Ram Tharu and Harinayran Tharu, General Secretary: Nanda Kumar Tharu and Treasure : Khadka Bahadur Chaudhari

<sup>4</sup> The protest programme includes a mass gathering, dissemination and preparation for further protest programmes in Tharu inhabited districts (Kanchanpur, Kailali, Bardiya, Banke, Dang, Kapilvastu, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Rautahat, Siraha, Saptari and Sunsari) on 23-30 August, a torch rally on 31 August and a strike and *bandh* on 1-2 September.

## Attacks on and threats against journalists in Eastern Nepal increasing

The past two months have seen a worrying trend of journalists being assaulted and threatened, mainly in the Eastern parts of Nepal. This began with the alleged assault on the *Nagarik Daily* journalist Khilanath Dhakal by Youth Force Nepal (YFN) cadres in June, and is taking place despite police action. On 8 August, the Siraha correspondent of the *Rajdhani Daily* was allegedly threatened by a cadre of the *Jantantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Rajan Mukti)* through a Facebook message, which was followed by threatening phone calls from India. Three days later Kishor Budhathoki, a journalist associated with the *Himalayan Times* was severely beaten by a criminal gang in Sankhuwasabha district, allegedly for reporting about their crimes and involvement in contract allocations in the district. He is still undergoing treatment in a hospital in Biratnagar.

Condemnations of such violence have been made by the head of the OHCHR Nepal mission, as well as national level politicians and editors who fear that that, unless political interference to protect alleged criminals ends, the situation for journalists will further deteriorate along with that of the rule of law. Journalists in the Mid Western *Tarai* have also expressed their concern of what they feel is a forced self-censorship due to threats, especially when reporting on criminal cases.

## HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

### Floods and Landslides

#### Current Situation

This year's monsoon rain triggered flash floods in several rivers since June causing various degrees of damage to communities and crops located near flood plains or embankment breaches. According to the National Emergency Operational Centre (NEOC), during the month of August, a total of 87 families (452 people) were affected<sup>5</sup> by monsoon related calamities. Floods and landslides claimed 65 lives with 35 people reported missing in 54 of the 75 districts of Nepal (12 people killed and 5 missing in the Eastern Region; 22 people killed and 15 missing in the Central and Western Regions; 21 people killed and 5 missing in Mid Western Region; and 10 people killed and 10 missing in the Far Western Region).

According to the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM), accumulated rainfall was 276 millimetres during the month of August. According to the precipitation trend, peak rainfall was received during the period of 22-24 August followed by 15-18 August and 5-6 August (see attached map with graph). Likewise, the highest rainfall was received in the Eastern Region, followed by Western Region and Mid Western Region. However, no significant incident or damage was reported according to the UN Field Coordination Office (UNFCO) Biratnagar and WFP Field Monitors.

#### Response to Date

The District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC), Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and District Lead Support Agencies (DLSAs) coordinated well among all concerned partners and civil societies in responding to flood and landslide affected people across the flood affected districts.

NRCS has closely coordinated with the DDRC and other International agencies to plan a response in the affected areas in different districts.

Remote terrain in the hill districts caused delays in collecting information and conducting a timely response. Further flooding, water logging and inundation is anticipated as the monsoon season has not yet ended.

In all regions, District Administrative Offices (DAOs) have provided immediate relief assistance to the victims of the landslides and floods according to the national norms. They mobilized the Nepal Army and the Nepal Police jointly with District Public Health Office as necessary.

Humanitarian agencies including the Nepal Red Cross Society, have played key role in mobilizing responses together with the DDRC/DAO at the district level. UN Field Coordination Offices (UNFCOs) are monitoring the responses and supporting coordination and information management. The meeting coordinated by the UNFCO Nepalgunj was able to bring the humanitarian actors together and agree on some next steps in responding to the effects of the Mugu landslides. The OCHA Humanitarian Support Unit is coordinating at the central level with IASC clusters and with the Ministry of Home Affairs to support the UNFCOs.

### Disaster Preparedness

<sup>5</sup> Affected indicates those families whose house has been damaged by floods, landslides, fire etc. (but not included deaths, injured and missing)

Disaster Preparedness (DP) is taking momentum in terms of awareness raising and institutionalizing the DP initiatives that have been happening in a comprehensive way during past few years in Nepal. Most notably, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) led the process to develop "The Guidance Note on Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning 2011" with support of humanitarian partners working in Nepal. The Guidance Note is an official document and the basis for preparing Disaster Preparedness and Response (DPR) Plans across 75 districts. The MoHA has instructed all district authorities to prepare DPR Plans jointly with humanitarian agencies working in the districts. It is widely believed and acknowledged that these preparedness activities have strengthened district-level capacities, ensuring effective, timely and coordinated responses by the relevant authorities and humanitarian partners to the recurring floods and landslides.

UNFCOs are providing support to DDRCs and DLSAs across five regions for support on Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning. As requested by DDRCs and DLSAs, UNFCOs have supported DDRCs directly in several districts and provided follow-up / review support to the other districts. As of 26 August, 44 districts have prepared District Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans and 31 districts have already started the planning process with the support from DLSAs.

## Cluster Update

### **Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock**

The Food Security Cluster focused on follow up activities relating to prepositioning food items, and the work of the Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (AMER) technical working group.

Regarding the prepositioning of food stocks in the Kathmandu Valley, a team (including the UN DSS engineer) visited Nepal Food Corporation warehouses in the valley to assess their capacity and condition in general as well as their capacity to withstand an earthquake. The report will be presented at the next Food Security Cluster meeting.

## UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS

For more details, please visit Meeting Schedules at UN Nepal Information Platform (<http://www.un.org.np/WebCalendar/month.php>).

- 1 September. NRRC Steering Committee Meeting, EOC, Singadurbar, Kathmandu, (15:00-17:00)
- 2 September, DIPECHO partners meeting, Handicap International, Maharajgunj, Kathmandu 14.00-17.00hrs
- 15 September, Contact Group Meeting, UN Conference Room, Kathmandu, (10:30-11:30)
- 23 September, Operational IASC meeting, UN House, Kathmandu (10.30-12.00hrs)
- 29 September, IASC/HCT Principal Meeting, UNDP Conference Room, Kathmandu (10:30- 12:00)
- 20 October, HCT Principal meeting, UN House, Kathmandu (10.30-12.00hrs)

## 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/>).

Nepal: Disaster Preparedness Activities 2011 (as of 26 Aug 2011)  
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-disaster-preparedness-activities-2011-26-aug-2011>

NEPAL: Flood and Landslide Affected Areas( 01 Jun-23 Aug, 2011)  
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-flood-and-landslide-affected-areas-01-jun-23-aug-2011>

Nepal: Operational Space 01 May to 31 July, 2011  
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-operational-space-01-may-31july-2011>

## RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE

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

UNESCO's new 3-year country programme supports Nepal's peace and development process  
<http://www.un.org.np/reports/unesco-three-year-country-program>

United Nations Peace Building Strategy for Nepal 2011-2012

<http://www.un.org.np/reports/united-nations-peace-building-strategy-nepal-2011-12>

RCHCO Field Bulletin: Myths and Realities of Land capture: Some stories from the Eastern District, Issue #16

<http://www.un.org.np/headlines/rchco-field-bulletin-16>

RCHCO Field Bulletin: People without citizenship certificates in Central Tarai: the unregistered next generation, Issue #15

<http://www.un.org.np/headlines/rchco-field-bulletin-issue-15>

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Visit the UN Nepal Information Platform at [www.un.org.np](http://www.un.org.np)

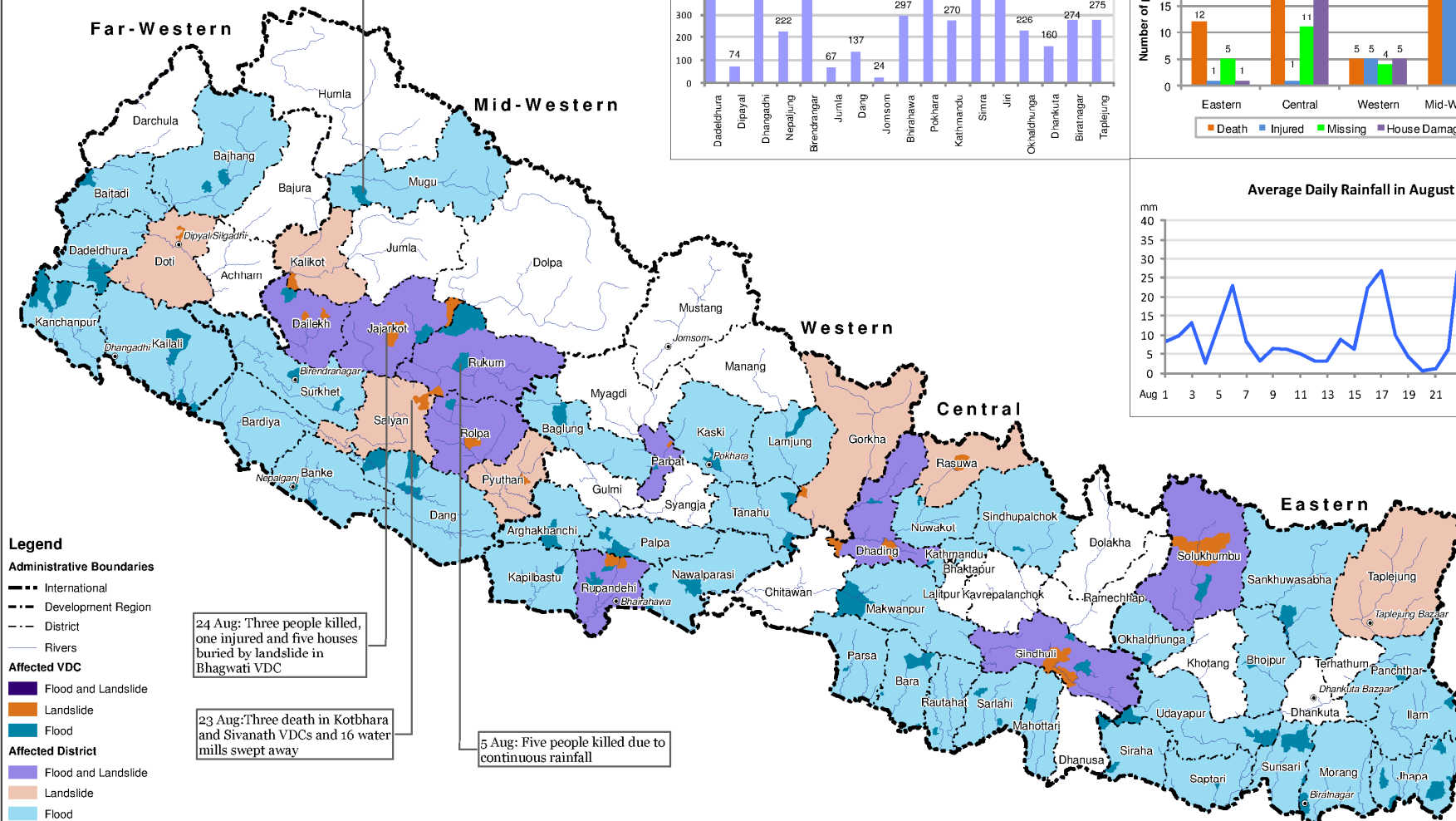
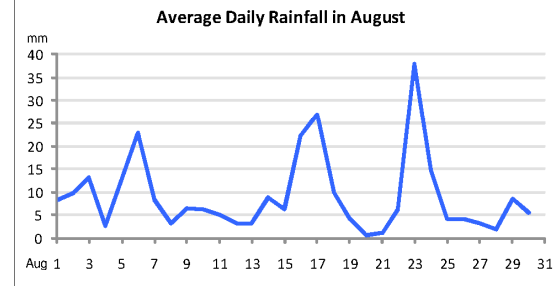
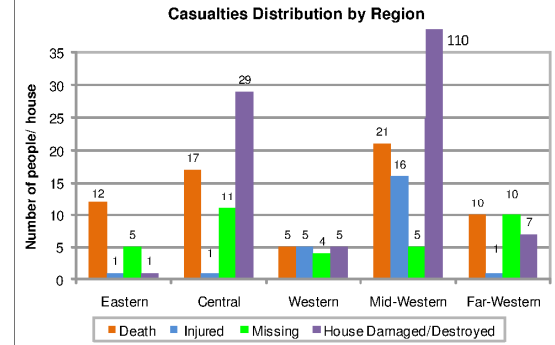
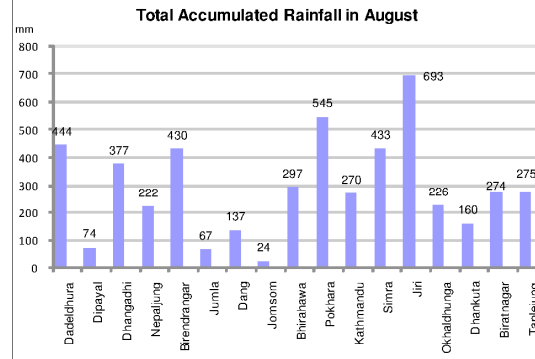
***Disclaimer:** The information in this report is consolidated from media, UN, NGO and other development and humanitarian partners, subject to availability of data. Although RCHCO aims to confirm reports independently, occasional factual inaccuracies can occur.*

# NEPAL - Flood and Landslide Affected Areas

Period Covered: 1 August - 31 August 2011

24 Aug: In Rowa VDC 27 families displaced, In Seri VDC five houses completely damaged and whole VDC is high risk of landslide and taking shelter at the local school

Total District Affected: 54  
Deaths: 65  
Missing: 35  
Injured: 24  
Affected Family: 87  
Houses Damaged/Destroyed: 110



24 Aug: Three people killed, one injured and five houses buried by landslide in Bhagwati VDC

23 Aug: Three death in Kotbhara and Sivanath VDCs and 16 water mills swept away

5 Aug: Five people killed due to continuous rainfall



A service of the United Nations Country Team in Nepal.

Map Doc Name: Nepal\_FloodLandslide\_Affected\_Areas\_A4\_2Sep2011\_v1  
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Web Resources: <http://www.un.org.np>  
Projection/Datum: MUTM/Everest 1830  
Map data source(s): GIST, ESRI, DoS/GoN  
Disaster data: National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC), MoE/DHM



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