



OCHA Nepal Situation Overview

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Highlights:

- Humanitarian response continues to Koshi floods in Eastern Region and floods and landslides in Far-Western Region
- Flood water recedes and response activities stepped up, but gaps remain.
- Government unveils plans, releases budget
- Still no agreement on integration of CPN-Maoist combatants into the Nepal Army
- Government forms talks team, invites Terai armed groups
- Encroachment on private land, interference by groups linked to CPN-Maoists
- Strikes, bandh disrupt development and humanitarian activities
- Rising food, fuel prices trigger food insecurity in several districts

CONTEXT

Political situation

On 10 September, the President of Nepal presented the Government Policies and Programmes document to the Constituent Assembly sitting in its capacity as Legislature-Parliament. The policies and programs state among other things that the government's first responsibility is to guide the socio-economic transformation of the country in a progressive direction. It aims at strengthening the peace process including through implementation of key provisions of past agreements such as the integration and rehabilitation of CPN-M army personnel. It further notes that the main responsibility of the Government is to write a Federal Republican Constitution within the given time frame based on the desires of the people. The government policy document also set up 9 new commissions. These include: National labour Commission, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Commission to search disappeared people, High level Scientific Land Reform Commission, Landless squatters problem resolution Commission, Inclusion Commission to make state organs inclusive, State Restructuring Commission, Administration Restructuring Commission to convert bureaucracy into a Federal system and National Muslim Commission. The document further pledged to give Constitutional Status to National Women Commission, make Dalit Commission and Commission for Investigation and Abuse of Authority more effective; and restructure the National Planning Commission. The 90-page document has a major focus on reviving the economy and infrastructure development. The coming decade has been declared as the "Decade of Economic Development". To this end, major emphasis is placed on hydropower development; resource mobilization through public-private partnership and cooperative models at the village level.

On 17 September, the Finance Minister presented a 236 billion Nepali Rupees (NPR) budget in Parliament. The budget, which some analysts termed as 'ambitious' proposed to raise both the expenditure and resource mobilisation by 45%. The budget aims to put the economy on a double digit growth track within two years and increase revenue growth rate of banks to 32 % (15% of GDP). The Finance Minister doubled allocation for Village Development Committees (VDCs); encouraged cooperatives at the grassroots level and emphasized revival of ailing state owned industries through public private partnership. The budget earmarked large funds for education, health, roads and hydropower. The budget equally has a major focus on youths with provisions

for interest free loans for running independent business, youth employment and volunteer youth programmes.

During the reporting period, the Prime Minister completed two trips – one to neighbouring India and the other to New York to attend 63rd session of the UN General Assembly. The former trip resulted in immediate pledge of support from India of 200 million NPR for Koshi flood victims and a further pledge of 1.5 billion NPR for development assistance to Nepal.

The integration of the former Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-M) Combatants into the Nepal Army continued to be a controversial issue with different statements and positions expressed by Chief of Army staff, CPN-M and Nepali Congress. The Chief of Army, in a public statement on 21 September, ruled out the possibility of the army inducting anyone without meeting minimum recruitment standards. The Nepali Congress made similar statements saying that the CPN-M combatants should be integrated into the structure of the CPN-M or rehabilitated and given alternative security work. However, the CPN-M maintained that the former combatants must be integrated into the mainstream army in order to 'bring the peace agreement to a logical conclusion'. Meanwhile, the Cabinet increased the allowances of the CPN-M combatants currently residing in Cantonment sites. The government also released the pending salaries and allowances of the CPN-M combatants.

On 3 October, the government invited the armed groups active in the Terai plains to the negotiation table. A cabinet meeting formed a three-member committee to hold talks with the groups involved in violence in East and Central Terai. The committee, headed by Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, Janardhan Sharma, includes Minister for Local Development Ram Chandra Jha, and Minister for Education Renu Yadav. Following the government invitation for talks, a meeting of various armed groups in the Terai announced "ceasefire" for the Dashain festival and said the groups would sit for talks if the government created conducive atmosphere for the talks, including guaranteeing the security of the talks teams. Media reports indicate that a meeting organized at an undisclosed place in Bihar state, India, and attended by 14 armed groups including Representatives of Jantantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM Jwala Singh and Goit), Madheshi Tigers, Terai Madhes Mukti Tigers, Terai Cobra, Terai Liberation Force, Madheshi Virus killers adopted a 15-point understanding. The groups are reportedly working on how to unite and some groups have responded to the government invitation for talks by seeking fresh demands including a declaration of "Madheshi"

as an autonomous state and release of all people who are currently facing trial for past activities linked to the groups.

Meanwhile the government made steps toward reaching a decision on releasing political prisoners of the Madheshi movement and those whose cases are pending from CPN-M armed conflict. A cabinet meeting directed the Ministries of Home and Law to study the status of the cases of the affected prisoners and take appropriate decision.

Safety and security

During the reporting period, a noticeable reduction in the activities of various criminal groups was recorded in Eastern and Central Terai, partly due to declaration of 'ceasefire' by the groups owing to the religious festival season and also an invitation for talks by the government. Fewer cases of extortion, violence and killings were reported. However, incidents of encroachment on private land and interference by certain groups and individual linked to CPN-M continued. In September, supporters of CPN-M reportedly encroached in several hectares of National forest and Community land to resettle landless squatters in Nawalparasi and Dhading Districts. Locals and various political parties protested the move as a bid to distribute public land to their supporters. Similarly CPN-M affiliated rickshaw pullers organization 'captured' private land in Hetauda for purpose of constructing a garage. Activities in Siraha District were crippled because of a 13 day strike by Madheshi People's Right Forum after CPN-M supporters forcibly captured private land to resettle Dalits of that community in Mirchaiya area of the district. The strike was withdrawn on 15 September after the Home Minister ordered forceful evacuation of the illegal occupants. Similarly in Bara district, private land belonging to former Kings' sister was reportedly seized and redistributed to 61 squatter families.

On 16 September, The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued a statement urging the government to control activities that violate human rights, specifically right to life and property and to take strong legal action against anyone involved in violent activities. The NHRC took note of reports that political parties are considering training youths who are involved in unlawful activities like capture of homes and property, illegal interference in other people's affairs, kidnappings, forced donations and stopping vehicles in public spaces, shutting down of highways and lock up of governmental and public buildings. The NHRC further noted with concern the serious effect on public life and security resulting from violent activities and vandalism in clashes between these groups.

Bandhs and strikes continued. On 10 September, Indian based multinational company Dabur sought permission from the Government to suspend production, citing insecurity resulting from ongoing disruption of operations by CPN-M affiliated workers Union. The Union had been leading a strike for ten days prior to the notice, demanding bonus. On 28 September, Rastriya Janamorcha Political party called a nationwide *bandh* in order to protest against federalism and to support nationalism. The *bandh* was widely observed, although, as opposed to previous practice, the police sought to allow free circulation of vehicles by intervening where roads were blocked. In Kathmandu, a number of rallies were held, tyres burnt and several vehicles vandalized.

On 4 October, Muslim community of Eastern Region closed down markets and obstructed transportation in Sunsari and Morang districts to protest against the recent bomb explosion at the Jamia Masjid mosque located in Morang. In the incident four persons were injured. No one has claimed

responsibility for the incident. On 14 October, 3 people were reportedly killed and others injured when a stray bomb exploded at a busy market in Chandranigahapur, Rautahat District. In protest to the explosion, local residents subsequently blocked the road, vandalized vehicles and houses

On 17 September, the Government allowed the retirement of 11 senior police officials including the Inspector General (IG) and appointed a new IG.

Reach of the State

During the reporting period, limited presence of State especially in Eastern and Central Terai districts, partly due to criminal activities of different groups continued. On 19 September, a Section Officer at the District Administration Office, Parsa district was shot dead by JTMM (Jwala Singh) cadres. The CDO of the same district also stated that an underground outfit had been asking him for 'donations' for sometime. The presence of government officials in Parsa district shrunk significantly compared to the large presence during the election period, which was mainly found in the district headquarters. Civil Servants deputed to various government offices in the district and other adjoining districts are living in fear of extortion and concerns over personal security. Many of the offices are either empty or understaffed. According to Nepal Government Employees Organization, since April 2006, 13 Government employees have been killed by various armed groups for not giving donations. The VDC Secretaries remain displaced from their villages and there have been no local bodies in place in Parsa since 2002.

Kirat Janabadi Workers Party (KJWP) was reported to be extorting money from the locals in areas adjoining Bhojpur and Dhankuta districts in Eastern region. KJWP has been threatening people in the two districts with arms to meet their demand for federal restructuring of the state along ethnic lines. On 14 October, a shop was looted and burnt down in Raj Biraj, Saptari district after the owners reportedly refused to pay 'protection money' to the armed groups

On 5 October, six Cadres of JTMM (Jwala Singh) were arrested at Sadapul, Paltuwa of Rautahat district by the Armed Police Force (APF) when they were found forcibly collecting taxes' from the locals. Similarly, three cadres of JTMM-(Pirthivi) were arrested by police from Surjaha VDC-5, of Parsa district. Raw-materials used for making various explosive devices were also found in their possession.

Operational space

Heavy rains have stalled construction of a 10 km canal for diverting the mainstream of the Saptakoshi River to its original course from waterlogged villages of western Sunsari district. As of 29 September, only 3 km had been completed, Humanitarian organisations continue to rely on the UNMIN helicopter providing weekly flights across the river. Boat service across the river is not recommended, following reports of after several accidents.

Strikes continued to affect daily lives of people in Terai and other districts due to various political, religious and security related issues. In Saptari, strikes called by Madheshi Mukti Tiger and Janamorcha Nepal affected humanitarian work from 27-29 September. During the strike, two motorbikes (one belonging to the DPHO Saptari) were burnt by protesters. In a separate incident, a group of people tried to vandalize Oxfam and MSF vehicles parked outside the Star Hotel in Rajbiraj (which is also Oxfam's field office). Local

authorities report that criminals were trying to extort money from INGOs before Dashain. The CDO has been asked to provide increased security support to them.

During the reporting period, a number of groups erected temporary roadblocks at different locations to collect money for the religious festivals.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Most humanitarian activities are concentrated in the Sunsari and Saptari Districts in the Eastern region as well as the Mid/Far Western districts of Kailali, Kanchanpur and Bardiya owing to floods. On 25 September, the UN and partners issued a Floods Appeal to meet needs in the east of the country. The appeal seeks USD 15.5 million to cover the needs of at least 70,000 people over the next six months. Working in close collaboration with the Government, which is leading response operations in each of the affected areas, the humanitarian community has prioritised ten clusters/sectors in this appeal. The appeal includes 6 NGO projects, and 27 UN agency projects. OCHA Nepal supported a successful application for funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). CERF allocated USD 2.5 Million to kick start the eastern region floods response. The flash appeal is currently 48% funded at USD 8.2 million, leaving a shortfall of USD 7.3 Million. Coordination of flood response in the Mid-Far Western region of Nepal was also stepped up (Further information on the floods in both locations is available on the Nepal Information Platform: www.un.org.np/floods)

Koshi River breach Floods, Eastern Region:

Since the breach of the Koshi river embankment on 18 August, water levels have gone down significantly and Government of India and Nepal efforts to redirect the river to its original course have begun. This includes digging a channel along the original river path and re-enforcing the eroded embankment. However, it will be several months before the river is fully restored to its original course and the East-West Highway repaired. Some families may be able to return due to the reduced water levels, but crops, homes and livelihoods have been destroyed. There remains a population unable to return. This population is housed in host families, schools, and spontaneous and planned camps in Saptari and Sunsari Districts. The displaced population is estimated at more than 60,000 people of whom 42% are Indian nationals. High mobility of the displaced population and the lack of a rigorous registration and verification exercise (to eliminate duplicate registrations and address concerns about discrimination / access to registration) have made it difficult to update population figures. After an initial surge of activity, humanitarian response slowed down due to national holidays. Gaps persist in water and sanitation, shelter, nutrition, and health surveillance with services in some areas far below Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.

The lack of a coherent national policy on support to Indians displaced into Nepal, registration of affected households and interim relocation for displaced people has hampered efforts at the district level where GoN strategies are often ad hoc and influenced by political parties. Government, UN, and NGO relief efforts have faced few security concerns during the humanitarian operation. However, in recent days dissatisfaction amongst the local population (many of who hosted displaced people in their homes) has led to the blocking of construction of a temporary hospital in Saptari and a planned relocation camp in Sunsari district.



Boys fetching water at Laukhi-camp: Photo courtesy OCHA

Floods in Far-Western Region

On 19 September, heavy rains hit several districts in Mid and Far Western regions of Nepal. The incessant rains caused floods and landslides in Bardiya, Banke, Dang, Dadeldhura, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Doti and Salyan Districts. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Nepal Red Cross Society and other humanitarian partners on the ground, the floods, which had the greatest impact in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts, temporarily displaced 180,000 people. A majority of the population displaced in the immediate aftermath of the flash floods in Kailali and Kanchanpur Districts have since returned. Flood waters receded quickly in most areas, enabling families to voluntarily return to their place of origin prior to the floods only to find their homes, food stores, gardens and crops, property and livelihoods, as well as local infrastructure and public facilities, damaged or washed away. Returning households require immediate humanitarian support for food, non-food items (NFI), water supply repairs, sanitation supplies, hygiene promotion, livelihood support, house reconstruction, crop rehabilitation and winter seed distribution. Although the Government was unable to release additional funds prior to the holiday, some food was provided by international NGOs and distributed by the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) to VDCs identified as most urgently in need. The national Red Cross Society is conducting a household survey to assess damage and began the distribution of the 1,922MT WFP food contribution to the flood-affected households from 15 October. CERF allocated USD 1 million to WFP under its rapid response window to provide immediate food assistance. For further updates on needs, response and gaps, please visit www.un.org.np/floods



NRCS NFI distribution preparation-Kanchanpur: Courtesy OCHA

Food security

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), due to high food and fuel prices, 2.5 million people are in immediate need of food assistance, with an additional 3.9 million at risk of being food insecure. The effects of high food prices across the country have been further compounded by natural disasters in the East and West Terai regions, traditionally areas that are the bread basket for Nepal. Furthermore, this situation has created bottlenecks affecting the import and flow of commodities in the country. WFP says that 33 districts are reeling from severe food insecurity as a result of high food prices affecting more than 6 million people.

World Bank extended NPR 2.6 Billion support to tackle the present food crisis, of the assistance NPR 2.23 billion is in grant assistance and the remaining NPR 360 million is on loan. The assistance will be provided under the Nepal Food Price Crisis Response Programme of the World Bank, which was developed to help Nepal mitigate the impact of rising food prices by improving access to food and strengthening agricultural production, particularly for food insecure districts and small landholders. WFP will receive NPR 1.2 billion of the World Bank grant to address immediate food needs in 33 districts, mainly in the Mid- and Far-Western Regions of the country. A portion of the grant will be used to support a nutrition intervention to address alarming levels of acute malnutrition in the same districts in partnership with UNICEF.

The majority of the flood affected population is residing in camps and will be completely dependent on humanitarian aid to meet their basic food needs for at least six months. The cost of the WFP's operation in the east is \$7 million, of which \$3 million has been raised so far (including about \$1 million from the CERF).

In response to flooding in Mid and Far-Western Nepal, WFP will provide food assistance to the worst affected populations in three districts of Kailali, Kanchanpur, and Bardiya. To jump start the operation, the Nepal Country Office activated an immediate response mechanism to procure food up to USD 0.5 million. An additional USD 2 million (of which

USD 1 million has been received from the CERF) is required to support the operation, which will provide a 15-day to 30-day food package to the most severely affected population.

Health

During the reporting period, Health sector response (of the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) and World Health Organization (WHO)) has been focused on disease prevention in the flood hit areas of Eastern and mid and Far Western Regions. WHO has been part of the coordination and monitoring meetings with Emergency Health and Nutrition Working Group in Kathmandu. WHO provided its pre-positioned stocks (4 Inter Agency Emergency Health Kits, 1 Italian Diarrhea Kit, 1 Malaria Kits, 50 sets of outbreak response emergency medicine, 1 tent and 60 mattresses) to Department of Health Services for rapid response. It also supported MOHP on the procurement of medicines and support to the mobilization of health human resources. WHO completed a measles and polio vaccination campaign in Sunsari and Saptari districts including the distribution of Vitamin A to children.

MOHP has allocated resources for 20 bed temporary hospitals in Sunsari and Saptari district to support the ongoing response activities. WHO/Epidemiology and Diseases Control Division (EDCD) has already established disease surveillance system in these affected districts. MOHP mobilized a specialized team from centre to support the district health offices in these flood affected districts. WHO team conducted an observation visit in Saptari and Sunsari and noted that there is adequate supply of medicine with district health outlets in the district.

Education

On 29 September, UNICEF launched a collective signature campaign amongst the women Constituent Assembly members to enlist their commitment to eliminate social discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for girls in education as a follow up to National Education Day/ International Literacy Day. The campaign is a joint initiative of Ministry of Education/Department of Education, United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) Nepal. On the same occasion, UNICEF also launched a report on Child Friendly Schools Initiative.

On 16 September, the Government of Japan announced a grant of USD 8.23 million for construction of 300 classrooms in Baglung, Kaski, Dhading, Lalitpur, Gulmi, Palpa, Rupandehi and Surkhet district as part of their support to Education for All programme.

Camp Coordination and Management (CCCM)

With coordination between IOM and Oxfam, CCCM Displacement tracking teams have been actively collecting data on the displaced communities who are currently residing in various camps, spontaneous settlements and collective centres, (26 in Sunsari and 30 in Saptari). Accurate data collection as well as registration, however, is hampered by fluid population movements within these environments.

The de-stabilization of the affected populations is due in part to over crowding of formal sites and grazing land for their livestock, families wishing to be closer to their places of origin, reception of humanitarian assistance, closure of collective centres and poor service provision in the formal sites.

Protection

Jointly with OHCHR, OCHA organized a one and a half day Protection Seminar on 23 and 24 September. The objectives of the Seminar, which targeted humanitarian and development actors in Nepal including cluster leads and donors, included fostering a common understanding of protection among humanitarian and development partners in Nepal, developing inter-agency strategy to address protection challenges including responding to the current floods and sharing experiences learnt in other contexts. Participants included UN-HABITAT Disaster expert from Nairobi, UNICEF Gender experts from New York and OCHA Sri Lanka. A more operational planning seminar is planned for mid November.

COORDINATION

Central level coordination is taking place regularly through various cluster leads focused this month on the flood and landslides. The cluster approach, formalised by the HC in consultation with the IASC country team, is operational and implemented for response to the floods situation. Coordination meetings based on the cluster approach are being held in both Eastern and Mid / Far Western regions as well as at the central level in Kathmandu to coordinate response and work out ways of filling gaps/challenges.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Contact Group Meeting, Kathmandu, 15 Oct, 1030, UN Conf. Room , contact: Aditee Maskey (maskeya@un.org)
- Inter Agency Standing Committee Meeting , 17 Oct , 11.30-13.00 hrs UN Conf. Room , contact: Aditee Maskey (maskeya@un.org)
- Central Disaster Relief Committee (CDRC) 15 oct MOHA
- WASH cluster meeting, 17 October 1600 hrs, OCHA

Disclaimer: The information in this report is consolidated from media, UN, NGO, and other humanitarian partners, subject to availability of data. Although OCHA aims to confirm reports independently, occasional factual inaccuracies can occur. For inputs, questions or comments please contact: Vincent Omuga, Humanitarian Affairs Officer on ph. 9851072870, omuga@un.org

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