



# OCHA Nepal Situation Overview

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## Highlights:

- Government begins to implement support to Koshi Displaced Returns
- WFP announces reduction in food rations for Koshi floods Displaced
- Strikes and explosions disrupt activities in several Terai Districts
- Protests against Integrated Administrative Service Centres
- Introduction of ordinances by government provokes strong reactions from Political Parties
- Government declares control on Avian Influenza outbreak

## CONTEXT

### Political Developments

On 5 February, the Army Integration Special Committee (AISC) whose objective is to supervise, integrate and rehabilitate Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) army combatants held its second meeting. It decided to proceed with the rehabilitation of the 4,008 disqualified UCPN-M combatants before beginning the integration and rehabilitation of the 19,000 verified UCPN-M combatants. The Committee indicated that it will be seeking international assistance including from the United Nations, during the rehabilitation process.

Public statements continued to further fuel the tensions between the Ministry of Defence and the Nepal Army (NA) over the recruitment of 2,800 new NA personnel. On 4 February, the media quoted the Defence Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa as stating that the government had instructed Chief of Army Staff (COAS) to stop the recruitment process. However, on 8 February, the NA reportedly published the list of successful applicants and an unnamed army spokesperson was quoted in press reports saying that the new recruits would be given appointment letters and sent for training within a month. Earlier, speaking at the Reporters' Club on 30 January, UCPN-M army Commander Nanda Kishore Pun "Pasang" had warned that if the NA did not halt recruitment, the UCPN-M would also recruit until it was back up to its original strength of 32,000. Upon request, on 11 February, the Defence Minister appeared before the Parliamentary State Affairs Committee over the issue and stated that the NA had not sought permission from the Defence Ministry before announcing the recruitment. On 13 February, the COAS was quoted by the press urging political leaders not to drag NA into political controversy.

On 9 February, a meeting of 18 of the 25 political parties represented in the Constituent Assembly (CA) asked the Prime Minister to call a parliamentary session at the earliest opportunity to convert the recently issued ordinances into bills. The Political Parties, who attended the meeting convened by Nepali Congress (NC), opposed the government move to issue ordinances arguing that it would weaken democracy by by-passing the legislature and undermining parliamentary norms. On 10 February, the President promulgated the three ordinances that were introduced by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) led government on 28 January. The cabinet had submitted the ordinances brought in to make the public services inclusive, search the disappeared and amend the electoral name-list to the President's Office for approval on 8

February. On 10 February, the Minister for Information and Communications Krishna Bahadur Mahara stated that the 18 political parties were trying to topple the government.

The situation in the Terai remained tense as different groups continued pressing for their demands by peaceful as well as violent means. On 5 February, the Tharuhat Autonomous State Council (TASC) held a press conference in Dang district, during which they gave the Government one month to recognise Tharus as an indigenous group and end an alleged exploitation of local natural resources. The Tharu Welfare Assembly (TWA) also called a general strike in the Eastern Terai district of Sunsari on February 7 and 8 to protest what they claimed was the categorization of Tharus as Madheshi in the ordinance on representation of historically-marginalised groups in public service bodies.

Protests continued regarding the Government's proposed establishment of 52 Integrated Administrative Service Centres (IASCs) to bring essential services closer to local communities in 48 districts around the country. The proposed establishment of the centres in the Terai districts of Bara, Sarlahi, Mahottari and Rautahat faced protests by groups who were opposed to the establishment of such centres as well as demonstrations by those who supported the initiative. On 8 February, the seven major political parties represented in the CA met at the Prime Minister's office and agreed to convene all party meetings in the concerned districts to reach agreement on the establishment of the centres before taking any further action.

### Safety and security

Incidents of bomb explosions, strikes/bandhs and killings continued to be reported, mainly in the Terai districts. On 9 February, an unidentified group shot and injured the Personal Assistant of the Prime Minister at Koteswor in Kathmandu District. On 8 February, the Siraha district in-charge of an underground group, Madhesh Rastra Janatantrik Party Krantikari was killed reportedly by cadres of the same group on charges of going against the party's policy. On 6 February, an unidentified group attacked a CPN-UML Constituent Assembly (CA) member at Golbazar of Siraha District. Bomb explosions aimed at public places also notably increased during this period. On 4 February, two IEDs were found at a bus stand in Birtamode, Jhapa District. One of the IEDs exploded when a cleaner threw it away while cleaning the area, while the other was disposed by the Nepal Army Mine Disposal Team. On 13 February, a socket bomb exploded in the office premises of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepalgunj, Banke District (see below). On 13 February, an unidentified group detonated a pressure cooker bomb at the Nepali

Congress (NC) office in Dhangadhi Municipality. The explosion caused minor damage to the NC and adjoining offices. Similarly, on 14 February, a group of people detonated two IEDs inside the compound of Chanamasta distillery in Dhanusha District. Madhesh Rastra Janatantrik Party Krantikari claimed the responsibility for the explosion. On 14 February, an IED found at the Banke District Development Committee (DDC) office was diffused by police. On 15 February, two Bombs placed by an unidentified group at two junctions in Janakpur scared residents and disrupted traffic movement in the area until they were diffused by security forces.

Extended Strikes (*bandhs*) due to various reasons continued to disrupt humanitarian and development activities as well as affect the daily lives of individuals in most districts of Nepal. From 30 January to 11 February, different groups blocked the East–West Highway in several Central Terai districts of Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat and Bara to protest against the government proposal of opening United Administrative Service Centres (see above). From 2–3 February, the construction of the Shreepur-Bhantabari section of the East-West Highway in Sunsari District was obstructed by the Koshi Flood Victims Struggle Committee demanding the fulfillment of 13-point demands. The various bandh throughout the District and neighbouring Districts also delayed the recovery and reconstruction efforts of the flood response. On 6 February, Madheshi students affiliated to the Madheshi Peoples Rights Forum (MPRF) obstructed public vehicle movement at Duhabi, Sunsari District, on the Biratnagar-Itahari route for several hours, protesting against a previous incident where students were beaten up at Purbanchal Engineering Campus in Dharan, Sunsari District, on 2 February. On 5 February, an estimated 200 Madheshi students of Purbanchal Engineering Campus in Dharan left the campus citing security reasons. On 12–13 February, students affiliated to MPRF blocked the roads and executed a two day transportation strike in Biratnagar, Morang District. The students issued a four-point demand, including security for Madheshi students in Dharan; relocating the college to another Terai district and immediate action against the perpetrators that had attacked 12 Madheshi students. The students also demanded that upcoming exams be conducted in Inaruwa, Sunsari District. On 11 February, the Pallo Kirant Limbuwan Rastriya Manch announced an indefinite bandh in Jhapa district, demanding the implementation of an agreement the group reportedly made with the government on 22 August 2008

Despite continued protests and assurances by the government, attacks on the media continued during this period. On 11 February, a group reportedly led by students of Glorious College attacked two media houses in Butwal of Rupandehi District. The group also burnt over 1,000 copies of a local daily newspaper (Mechikali), alleging that the daily carried false news about a student of the same college. On the same day, another group also forced their way into the office of the local Tinau FM radio and reportedly took control of the radio station for over an hour. In the wake of these incidents, the local chapter of the Federation of Nepal Journalists (FNJ) condemned the attacks and accused the local administration of indifference in containing attacks against the media. On 12 February, claiming that the daily had published false news about them, individuals allied to the Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) burnt a local daily newspaper Aujar, at Pathari in Morang District. After completing a four-day visit to Nepal, the International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission issued a statement on 8 February in which it concluded that press freedom in Nepal continues to face serious threats, forcing media houses to practice self censorship.

Clashes between youth groups affiliated to different political parties continued to be reported. On 10 February, three (3) cadres of Young Communist League (YCL), the youth wing of the ruling UCPN-M were reportedly injured in Khotang District after being attacked by a group, which the YCL officials claimed to have been CPN-UML's youth wing (Youth Force). The group also vandalised the YCL office. On 9 February, YCL cadres were reported to have beaten CPN-UML affiliated All Nepal National Federation of Students' Union (ANNFSU) of Diktel Campus, Khotang District. On 12 February, a leader of the main opposition party NC was severely injured after being attacked by YCL cadres in Nuwakot District.

On 6 February, an armed group attacked a police station in Syaublicang village, which is about 17 kilometres from the headquarters of Pyuthan District, Mid Western region. During the attack, the group killed one police officer and took all weapons. The police station was staffed by 10 police officers who said they lacked the equipment to resist the attack. Senior security and Home Ministry officials traveled to Pyuthan on 9 February to investigate the incident. An organization calling itself the Mongolian Freedom Front (Mongolian Mukhti Morcha) claimed responsibility for the incident

### Reach of the State

Delivery of government services, especially in areas outside the capital continued facing challenges. On 10 February, Nepalese entrepreneurs who deal in Chinese goods shut down Nepal-China border at Tatopani, Sindapulewok District, citing government's apathy towards taking action against those involved in stealing and smuggling of the Chinese goods.

Earlier, the entrepreneurs had on many occasions' shut down the border area, claiming that the Custom Office staff were cooperating with the entrepreneurs who were involved in the theft and smuggling of goods. Between 5–12 February, teachers that had reportedly been working on temporary contracts padlocked the District Education Office and Regional Education Offices in Doti District, demanding that they be given permanent job status and benefits. Similarly on 5 February, accusing police of failing to arrest some suspects after a clash in the area, local youths vandalized area police office at Siudiwar in Bhoteodhar Village of Lamjung District.

On 10 February, Three Village Development Committee (VDC) offices in Kailali District of the Far-Western region were burnt by a group of unidentified persons. During the arson, documents and other office equipments were totally destroyed. Similarly, on 12 February, after 8 VDC offices were padlocked by TASC in Dang District, The Affected VDC Secretaries made a 9 point resolution to the government, appealing for among other things security for VDC Secretaries, ending of threats, impunity and killings of VDC Secretaries, Declaration as martyrs of all VDC Secretaries who have been killed in the past, government support to families of former VDC Secretaries and a directive from the Local Development Office (LDO) allowing the affected VDC Secretaries to work outside the offices padlocked by TASC. In a similar development, On 5 February, the VDC Secretaries of the southern VDCs in Jhapa District, Eastern Region received letters from JTMM- Jwala Sigh with threats of serious consequences if they failed to give financial contribution to the armed group.

On 10 February, Cadres of FLSC begun to collect 'tax' in Simsuwa village, Dhankuta District. On 27 January, FLSC had made public its intention and 'tax policy' that is to be applied for business organizations, NGOs, INGOs, media organizations and all other agricultural and business firms in

nine districts in Eastern Nepal. On 14 January, Cadres of Kirant Janabadi Worker's Party (KWJP) reportedly threatened to kill a civilian in Bhojpur District for failing to provide them with 500,000 Nepal Rupees within a week as previously demanded. A five-point understanding had been reached between the government and KWJP in January 2009 under which the KWJP agreed among other things to suspend its activities against civilians while pursuing negotiations with the government.

### Operational Space

On 10 February, claiming that the ambulances were operating during a TKS called bandh Cadres of Tharu Kalyankarini Sabha (TKS) vandalized two ambulances at Kadmaha in Saptari District. On 10 February, Cadres of FLSC declared that they had started to collect taxes in Simsuwa area, Dhankuta District, along the East-West Highway from all individuals, including International and National Non-Government Organisations (I/NGOs).

On 13 February, a socket bomb exploded in the office premises of OHCHR in Nepalgunj, Banke District. There were no damage or casualty. As police started investigations, a leaflet of a group calling itself '*Bhishan Himali Bagh*' was found at the explosion site. On 14 February, Human Rights activists, Civil Society representatives and media persons deplored the explosion inside the OHCHR office and demanded thorough investigations.

## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

### Koshi River breach Floods, Eastern Region:

During this period, the temporary diversion between the break in the East-West Highway was completed, allowing vehicles to cross from Sunsari to Saptari for the first time since the flood occurred in August 2008. Construction to repair the highway permanently is underway.

On 8-10 February, the Humanitarian Coordinator, OCHA Head of Office and UNDP Country Director led an inter-agency mission in Eastern Nepal to assess the progress being made by the government and other actors involved in the Koshi floods response. The mission also monitored the humanitarian and early recovery efforts of different actors and held consultations with all the key partners and gave input to actors on how best to give a clear strategic direction to the ongoing response to the floods and deal with emerging recovery issues.



HC and team consult with IDPs in Sunsari (Photo credit – FAO)

The success of the government led flood-affected population verification exercise and the mass public information campaign resulted in over 1,800 households applying for the voluntary return package in the initial days. The government also began issuing assistance of 4,500 Nepal Rupees to each displaced Indian national household for voluntary return to India.

Upon successful implementation of the return packages, it is estimated that a residual caseload of 20,000 displaced Nepalese will be unable to return and would require continued humanitarian intervention in the camps for a period of 6-12 months. The challenge is ensuring continued humanitarian support to this caseload, as many actors are currently in the process of phasing out relief programmes.

### Food security

The World Food Programme (WFP), in its latest food security bulletin released on 4 February, estimates that over 26,000 people are highly food insecure in three Mid-Western hill districts of Dolpa, Jumla and Mugu, where cases of acute child malnutrition have also been reported. This situation is anticipated to further worsen in some moderate to highly food insecure areas until March 2009. The bulletin further adds that about 40,000 flood affected people are still highly food insecure in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts of Western Nepal, and need urgent support for the rehabilitation of their livelihoods.

On 6 February, WFP announced that due to exhausted financial resources it will only distribute half rations to the 60,000 Koshi flood-affected populations in February. The District government however appealed to WFP to continue support, as the return packages is in the initial stages and insufficient to provide essential support to the return areas in addition to the caseload remaining in the camps that will need continued humanitarian support.

**Sunsari:** The 7<sup>th</sup> round of food distribution (15-day ration) was completed on, 12 February. The round targeted 3,976 households and 24,652 individuals.

**Saptari:** The 8<sup>th</sup> round of 15-day food distribution commenced on 9 February.

CARE Nepal also distributed Horlicks in Camps K and L for 120 children, pregnant and lactating women, with a total target of 2,500 beneficiaries.

### Agriculture/Livestock

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) continued to support flood affected farmers and their households' food security through improved animal health services and the provision of livestock related inputs. In both Sunsari and Saptari districts, 20,000 livestock were supported by the programme with 395 MT of compound feed currently being distributed to beneficiaries in order to sustain their livestock. Over 5,000 floods affected households are being supported with the provision of 500 MT of rice straw and 40 MT of urea molasses' blocks. In addition to the aforementioned, FAO in collaboration with the District Livestock Service Office (DLSO) applied over 25,000 vaccinations and deworming (anthelmintics) treatments.

In Mid Western Region, FAO is currently executing two projects in six districts (Jumla, Jajarkot, Rukum, Salyan, Rolpa and Pyuthan) aimed at the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector of vulnerable farmers affected by years of conflict and soaring food prices. A total of 17,430 households (approximately 97,608 beneficiaries) are being supported with the provision of vegetables' seeds and technical backstopping. Out of these, 13,000 households (approx. 72,800 beneficiaries) will also be supported with maize, wheat and paddy seeds while another 2,000 households (approx. 11,200 beneficiaries) will receive small ruminants in order to sustain their livelihood, nutritional and food security status. Similarly, in the Far Western region, FAO is currently supporting 28,762 vulnerable farm households (approximately 161,067 beneficiaries) affected by drought and soaring food prices with two different projects



implemented in five districts (Bajura, Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang and Darchula) where 28,762 vegetable seeds composite packages and 24,888 bags of 5 Kg wheat seed bags were distributed to beneficiaries. The distribution of wheat seeds aim at the increase of the duration of the households' food self sufficiency while the provision of vegetables' seeds and technical backstopping seek the improvement of the beneficiaries' nutritional status and income generation

### Avian Influenza

Following the declaration of an outbreak of Avian Influenza (AI) in Karkabitta, Jhapa District, Eastern Nepal on 16 January and subsequent efforts to control the spread of the virus lead by the government with the support of WHO, FAO and UNICEF, on 10 February, the Director of Livestock Services at the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) said that the country's first-ever AI outbreak had been fully controlled and that the fatal virus strain had not spread to other parts of the country. Following the outbreak in Nepal in January, 23,947 chickens, 4,931 eggs, 329 pigeons, 401 ducks and 12 parrots were culled while 345 stocks of feed and 1,009 egg crates were destroyed in an operation that involved more than 200 security personnel. The government will continue surveillance during the next 90 days and if no further outbreak is detected, the country will be declared AI free.

On 13 February, FAO's Crisis Management Centre- Animal Health (CMC-AH), which operates to enhance FAO's ability to help member nations prevent and cope with disease outbreaks gave preliminary findings of their Nepal rapid assessment mission. The CMC-AH mission commended government efforts to control the IA outbreak. The mission recommended among other things strengthening of cross border programmes, review of the compensation policy, upgrade of the laboratory sector, development of partnership with the private sector for effective industry protection and allocation of more resources and training on surveillance activities.

According to the President of Poultry Farming Entrepreneurs Association, there is a total investment of 17 billion Nepal Rupees in poultry and related industries in Nepal. After the AI outbreak, production in the sector plummeted by 70 percent.

### Camp Coordination and Management (CCCM)

By the end of March, IOM plans to phase out as Camp Coordination Camp Management focal point. No organisation has been identified to continue the work for the extended residual population of 20,000 that cannot return.. IOM continued preparing the camp consolidation strategy and assessing camps on both Sunsari and Saptari side.

**Sunsari:** Data entry for the verification process continued and was completed on 15 February. UNDP continued supporting the database, which has been handed over to the Government. IOM also plans to handover DTM responsibilities to the Government before the end of March.

**Saptari:** Following distribution of return package and beginning of the return process including a number of Indian nationals, Oxfam started work on camp consolidation of Camps A – D.

### Emergency Shelter/NFI

The distribution of IOM procured winter clothes was completed in the Sunsari and Saptari camps. On 15 February, NRCS started distributing sleeping mats and tool kits.

The weather conditions at camp level started changing as it became more windy and warmer. The tarpaulins that were

provided for emergency and winter conditions are now withering and may not provide adequate shelter in advance of the monsoon. To provide adequate shelter cover, UN Habitat are preparing a concept note to donors to fund the purchase and delivery of heavy duty tarpaulin sheets for distribution to IDPs who will remain in camps for the foreseeable future. During this period, UN Habitat submitted concept notes to several donors based in Kathmandu to support various recovery activities, including vocational training for up to 150 IDPs who will remain in camps.



Repair works on a section of E-W highway (Photo Credit – FAO)

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

**Sunsari:** UNICEF, in partnership with WSSDO continued to conduct hygiene promotion activities in Jhumka camp. IDPs received WASH materials along with a bucket. With the lowered water table and the increased load shedding, there is a lack of water for bathing in the camp and the actors were looking at possibility of installing a generator to meet the water needs.

**Saptari:** Forty hand pumps and 36 toilets, including in schools, and 20 bath rooms have been provided in Camps K and L. There is an urgent need of WASH facilities in camp G due to the high movement of IDPs from other camps to this camp. WSSDO committed to filling the WASH gaps in Camp G for the IDPs who have moved there from Camp A (410HH). The WASH Cluster has also observed that 60HH have moved from Camp A to E (Indian nationals) and 300HH have moved from Camp C to Haripur VDC.

Oxfam/KVS commenced decommissioning activities in Camp A-D after the distribution of the return package for Indian nationals.

### Protection

To enhance preparedness and revise the IASC contingency plans, OCHA continued with consultations with cluster leads to start revision of the 2008 draft contingency plans. As part of this exercise, on 10 and 11 February, OCHA supported child protection sub group workshop organised by UNICEF that was aimed at revising the child protection contingency plan based on lessons learnt from the recent floods response in Eastern and Western Nepal.

### Disaster Preparedness:

On 4 February, OCHA regional office for Mid/Far Western Region organised a lessons learnt workshop in Kailali District. The workshop, which was aimed at taking stock of recent floods response to improve preparedness and future response was attended by over sixty participants including representatives from government, UN and I/NGO covering key sectors (food, health/nutrition, Water and Sanitation, NFI/Shelter, Education, Protection, Search and Rescue).

## COORDINATION

Coordination meetings based on the cluster approach are being held in both Eastern region and at the central level in Kathmandu to coordinate response and work out ways of filling gaps and tackling emerging challenges. During the period under review, the IASC cluster leads continued with these strategic meetings.

On 3 February, the Nepal Humanitarian Transition Appeal for 2009 was presented to donors in Nepal. The Appeal seeks USD 115 million to provide lifesaving assistance as well as support specific measures on disaster preparedness and risk reduction, including the capacity building of national institutions.

On 15 February, the government led Central Disaster Relief Committee (CNDRC) meeting was convened. Among the key issues discussed in the meeting included a review of the Koshi floods response and the steps necessary for the approval of National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management. The meeting also formed an organising committee to oversee preparations for the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) exercise that is due to be hosted by the Nepal government between 22-24 April 2009.

## UPCOMING EVENTS/ MEETINGS

- IASC Operational cluster meeting, 20 February, 10.00 hrs OCHA office
- Full IASC meeting, 26 February, UN conference room
- Protection cluster meeting, 23 February, 14.00 hrs OCHA office

## RECENT MAPS RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

OCHA IMU produced a number of mapping products some of which are listed below and also available on NIP.

Nepal Koshi River Flood: CCCM Cluster Displacement Tracking for Sunsari, 5th Feb 2009  
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=626>

Nepal: Population Density (2006)  
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=625>

Nepal Koshi Flood Affected Areas: Damaged Land Classification in Sunsari District (Feb 18, 2008)  
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=624>

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*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, [omuqa@un.org](mailto:omuqa@un.org)*

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