



OCHA Nepal Situation Overview

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Highlights:

- Winter crop failure renders additional 2 million people food insecure
- Majority of the Koshi displaced return to their original lands as recovery activities continue
- Winter session of Legislature-Parliament resumes after several adjournments
- Unified Communist Party of Nepal- Maoists takes majority seats in by-elections

CONTEXT

Political Developments

The winter session of the Legislature-Parliament commenced on 29 March with the government planning to present a minimum of 16 new bills and three recently promulgated ordinances. However, the session was immediately postponed until 7 April due to disagreements between the major parties and the absence of the PM, on official visit to Finland and Norway. The session was further adjourned on 7 April following reported disapproval by the main political parties in the coalition and the opposition party Nepali Congress of the way the United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) was conducting government affairs, including failure to honour past agreements and arrest of suspected criminals allied to UCPN-M. On 12 April, following the signing of 9 point pact between UCPN-M and CPN-UML, CPN-UML stated that they would withdraw their boycott of legislature-Parliament, after they had stalled parliamentary proceeding for over two weeks with the support of the main opposition party NC. The Terai Madhesh Democratic Party (TMDP) also agreed to suspend the disruption after UCPN-M leadership promised to discuss TMDP issues in a cabinet meeting on 15 April. However, on 13 April, a meeting between UCPN-M and NC leadership over the issue ended inconclusively, leading to the further postponement of parliamentary session of 14 April. On 15 April the parliamentary sessions resumed after UCPN-M persuaded both CPN-UML and NC to support the house proceedings, promising that the government would address their demands.

On 10 April, largely peaceful by-elections were held in 6 constituencies located in Rolpa, Dhanusa, Morang, Kaski and Kanchanpur districts. According to the results of the elections released by the Election Commission, UCPN-M won three seats, with Madheshi Peoples Rights Forum (MPRF), CPN-UML and NC winning a seat each.

During this period, the Technical Committee for the 'Army Integration Special Committee' (AISC) was formed and commenced its work. The committee is responsible for re-verifying the combatants that were previously verified by United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), assess their choices, determine the modalities of integration and draft a time line to accomplish the task. The Prime Minister (PM) and Defence Minister publicly stated that integration of PLA into the Nepal Army could be finished in three months.

As reported in the past Situation Overviews, controversy between the UCPN-M members in the Government and the Nepal Army (NA) continued, originally triggered by NA recruitment and non-extension of service tenures of eight brigadier generals. On 7 April, the Nepal Army (NA) called back its athletes from the 5th National Games in protest to a last minute decision of the National Sports Council to include PLA combatants in to the games. The Sports Council Member Secretary stated that they did so after the council received instructions from the PM, who is also the patron of

the Council. On 11 April the media reported the Defence Minister as stating that the government would constructively handle the rift between NA and the Defence Ministry.

During this period, the Constitutional Committee (CC) of the Constituent Assembly (CA) received proposals from political parties on the type of government, the federal structure, the electoral system, fundamental rights and other issues that they would like to be covered in the new Constitution. The ruling UCPN-M proposed a structure of an executive president chosen through direct election, bi-cameral legislature at central level, unicameral legislature in the provinces and mixed electoral system. On the contrary, NC and CPN-UML proposed a structure lead by a Prime Minister with executive powers. However, NC and CPN-UML were divided on electoral systems. While CPN-UML wants the Prime Minister to be elected through direct election, the NC prefers PM's election through legislature. Similarly, while MPRF proposed an executive president through direct election, TMDP prefers an executive Prime Minister elected through parliament and a constitutional President. The 40 CA outreach teams also completed country-wide consultations and filling of questionnaires in all the districts on the issues that citizens wish to have incorporated in the new Constitution and continued presenting their reports to the CA Secretariat.

On 14 April the high-level mechanism of the five ruling parties agreed to form the State Restructuring Commission (SRC), Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission on the Investigation of the Disappeared (CID).

Safety and security

Incidents of bomb explosions, especially targeting public places, increased during this period. On 3 April, three children were injured when an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded at Ganesh Chowk in Birgunj Municipality, Parsa District. On 4 April, an IED explosion injured a butcher at Gudri Chowk in Biratnagar, Morang District. The Nepal Defence Army (NDA) claimed responsibility for the explosion. On 6 April, an IED was found in TMDP party office situated in Janakpur, Dhanusa District. The Madheshi Silent Killers claimed responsibility for the incident. On 7 April, an IED explosion at the Pashupati Plastic Industry in Birgunj, Parsa District injured a factory employee. On 10 April, during the CA By-Elections, YCL reportedly set off an IED near the Mithileshwar Mahawahi VDC polling booth. On 8 April an unidentified group planted an IED that exploded at a medical store at Pahalkanpur VDC, Kailali District.

Extended Strikes (*bandhs*) due to various reasons continued to disrupt humanitarian and development activities as well as affect the daily lives of people in most districts of Nepal. From 29 March, the Koshi flood Victims Struggle Committee (KVSC) demonstrated in Sunsari District, demanding the implementation of recommendations of government appointed High Level task force, which includes full compensation for the flood-affected land and crops,

resettlement to alternative land for those unable to return, livelihood support and continued provision of assistance in camps. On 9 April, KVSC declared an indefinite strike to press for their demands. On 11 February, a clash between protestors and security forces resulted in 6 protestors suffering minor injuries. Thereafter, KVSC continued to block the main East West highway and vandalised 25 cars, seriously disrupting access, the important embankment reconstruction work and other activities. On 12 April, further clashes between the police and KVSC led to injury of over 30 people.

Protesting the Nepal Oil Corporation's (NOC) policy to ban the usage of tankers of over 20 years old, the Tanker's Association of Nepal enforced an indefinite nationwide strike from 29 March to 4 April. During the strike period, no petroleum products were transported, which led to shortage of petroleum products in most parts of the country. On 4 April, the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies (MoCS) and Federation of Petroleum Supply Entrepreneurs (FPSEN) agreed to form a Joint Panel with representatives from NOC, FPSN and Nepal Petroleum Dealers Association (NPDA) to address the issue, ending the strike.

Frequent clashes between youth and other groups allied to political parties continued, sometimes with tragic consequences. On 2 April, a CPN-UML allied Youth Force (YF) cadre was reportedly stabbed to death by three UCPN-M allied Young Communist League (YCL) cadres in Biratnagar, Morang District. The District leadership of YCL denied the alleged YCL involvement. The situation remained tense and protests continued for most of that week. UN vehicles were denied access and had to resort to alternative routes. Similarly, on 2 April, 3 people were injured during a clash between YCL and YF in Athbiskot, Rukum District. The incident took place during a CPN-UML rally to protest against an incident on 26 March in Butwal of Rupandehi District, where a CPN-UML supporter was reportedly killed by a YCL cadre. On 8 April, four individuals were seriously injured in a clash that ensued between the cadres of UCPN-M and CPN-M Matrika Yadav faction at Sarochiya in Morang District. On 13 April, several people were injured in a clash between YCL and YF in Bhujela of Kanchanpur District.

Reach of the State

The trend of destroying Village Development Committee (VDC) offices through explosive devices and fire, damaging civil and other documents that started in January, mainly in the Mid and Far Western regions continued. On 9 April, an unidentified group planted a bomb which exploded at the Pahalmanpur Village Development Committee (VDC) Office of Kailali District. Many VDC Secretaries are currently operating from District headquarters.

Attacks on government officials by political and other groups continued, disrupting delivery of services. On 2 April, the Secretary of Amardaha VDC in Morang District was physically assaulted by cadres of MPRF. On 6 April 2009, an unidentified group attacked the temporary Police Post at Baddichur, Kunathari VDC in Surkhet District. Two policemen were critically injured.

Closure of government offices by different groups continued. On 1 April, Demanding participation in the District level meetings, the small political parties in Kailali District namely MPRF, Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP), Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), National Janashakti Party (NJP) and National Samajbadi Party (NSP) padlocked the offices of Dhangadi Municipality and District Development Committee (DDC). On 2 April, demanding arrest of those involved in the murder of a cadre of CPN-UML affiliated Youth Force (YF); CPN-UML members padlocked the Area Administrative Office in Butwal, Rupandehi District. On 8 April, cadres of Tharuhat

Autonomous State Council (TASC) padlocked the ward offices of Tikapur municipality and declared that this would continue for an indefinite period until their cadres who were arrested on 2 April were released.

On 2 April, demanding 24 hour power supply and timely provision of electricity bills, the 'Struggle Committee against Load Shedding' started an indefinite closure of the Nepal Electricity Corporation (NEC) Production and Transmission office in Lahan, Siraha District. On 7 April, to pressurise the government to fulfil their undisclosed party demands, the NSP, padlocked the Mahottari District Development Committee (DDC) offices.

Extortion drives, especially in Eastern region and parts of the Central Terai continued. According to local media, the Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) continued to impose compulsory donations on all business owners in most districts of Eastern Nepal. Similarly, on 7 April, TASC padlocked 10 VDC offices and a post office including Masuriya, Pahalmanpur, Darakh, Ramshikharjhala, Khailad, Bauniya, Baliya, Chuha, Udasipur, Fulbari and Chuha Post Office in Kailali District for an indefinite period in protest to the arrest of TASC cadres by government security officials on accusations of extortion. The TASC Kailali also announced a civil disobedience campaign. On 8 April, following threats from TASC, government offices based in Tikapur area of the district were shut down. According to credible reports, TASC is currently extorting money in the name of 'taxation' from all contractors dealing in stones, land, gravel, and other natural resources in Kailali District.

Operational Space

Road travel restrictions due to strikes in different parts of the country affected the operations of UN agencies and their partners in different ways. Between 29 March and 15 April, the KVSC strike continued, obstructing Koshi flood displaced relief operations. Whereas the strike organisers granted selective access to UN vehicles, the unpredictable security situation and obstruction of the road by commercial vehicles cut off the humanitarian and recovery workers from certain displaced people's camps. Several clusters stated that on-going activities were delayed or suspended in these areas as there was limited transportation access for materials or staff movement. The strike also caused the postponement of assessments and monitoring missions.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Koshi River breach Floods, Eastern Region:

According to preliminary findings of the inter-agency survey to areas of return prepared by IOM, approximately 89% of the flood affected displaced people from the red zones (areas that were seriously affected by floods and considered unsuitable for immediate return) have voluntarily returned to their areas of origin. However, there are no basic services in these areas, further worsened by high winds, increasing heat and storms. Meanwhile, Koshi flood affected continued to return and by 7 April, a total of 1677 households had received the government return package of 50,000 Nepali Rupees while 4652 households had applied for the return package. Registration for return package continued in the most affected villages. Approximately 7,572 households were affected by the Koshi floods. From 2 April, WFP together with local partners started implementing food for work programmes for some of the returning IDPs. However, more than 1500 households are still in camps, mainly in Sunsari District.

Food security

According to the World Food Programme Emergency Food security Alert issued on 5 April, the 2009 winter drought will

push an additional two million people towards hunger. The alert estimates winter crop (wheat) losses at between 30 to 70 %, with high impact in Mountain and Hill districts. Rising prices and crop failure have also resulted in a significant increase in household food insecurity. According to the WFP alert, 30 % of rural households throughout the country are selling assets to cover food shortages. Given the severity of the situation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Government of Nepal), WFP and FAO are planning to undertake a joint rapid crop and food security assessment from 18 April, the results of which are expected to be released in May. The IASC also met on 8 April and agreed to support WFP plans to launch an appeal to raise additional funds for the drought affected



Women in Bajura affected by food insecurity: Credit-OCHA Agriculture/Livestock

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) and the District Agriculture Development Offices (DADOs) is currently supporting flood affected farmers in the Far Western Region of Nepal through the provision of 165 MT of rice seeds for the forthcoming planting season. In the districts of Kanchanpur and Kailali, each of the selected 5 500 flood affected farm households (or approximately 30 800 individuals) in 20 different VDCs, are targeted for provision with 30 Kg of paddy seeds. The seed support provided will allow both the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in the flood affected VDCs and the local availability of food crops.

In Mid Western Region, an extra 2 MT of finger millet seeds are being procured so as to be distributed in Jajarkot district. In addition to this, over 22 MT of maize seeds have been provided to farmers in Jajarkot, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Rukum and Salyan districts so as to increase food availability within 3 months from planting. A Training of Trainers (ToT) on vegetable production is currently ongoing in these districts. In the Eastern Region the distribution of cattle feed were delayed due to bandhs and demonstrations while rehabilitation / recovery of the crop sector has started with the return of many IDPs to their areas of origin in Sunsari District. 1200 Urea blocks were also distributed.

Health

During this period, as part of the 2009 preparedness strategy, World Health Organization (WHO), jointly with Epidemiology and Diseases Control Division (EDCD), pre-positioned an inter-agency emergency health kit, and 2 diarrhoeal disease kits at the regional medical store in Biratnagar in Morang district and Nepalgunj in Banke

district. The Inter-agency Emergency Health Kits cover the health needs of 10,000 people for three months and a diarrhoeal kit can cover between 400-500 diarrhoeal cases

Koshi Floods: District Health Office (DHO)/District Public Health Office (DPHO) in Sunsari and Saptari districts continued providing continuous health services in the districts through its 10 mobile clinics and temporary hospitals. Because of the changing weather, the number of cases of Skin diseases, conjunctivitis, ARI, and Pneumonia notably increased in areas where IDPs are located.

On 11 April, Rural Reconstruction Network (RRN), a local NGO, started re-building the Sub-Health Post in Siripur VDC that was completely destroyed by the Koshi flood.

Camp Coordination/ Camp Management

IOM completed the re-verification of camps. A total of 1,240 households (HH) comprising of 3991 individuals were verified as residing in the remaining 12 camps with 4 families in Mahendra Highway Camp C. Out of the total households, 79 are from Shreepur, 17% HHs from Paschim Kusaha and 4% HHs from Haripur VDC. 76% of the surveyed HHs stated that they intend to return to their places of origin as soon as possible. 99% of the surveyed households have not received the Government Return Package. 92% of residual population are from the red areas and 53% are landless.

On 10 April, the government started construction of women's prison inside the Jhumka Prison camp. The ongoing construction has affected 84 households, which will require relocation to another camp.

Emergency Shelter/NFI

IFRC has agreed to lead the cluster for Emergency Shelter issues. However, UN-Habitat is currently leading the Shelter Cluster for recovery issues, in particular Koshi flood response. UN-Habitat estimates that additional shelter materials are required to fill the gap of providing all residual and returning families with shelter package. The original projection was to have 7,000 shelter kits for returning families, but this is now deemed insufficient after NRCS distributed 6500 kits. Cluster members stress additional needs for transitional shelter materials. During this period, Plan Nepal distributed 4269 Blankets and 4269 mattress in all camps and return areas.

UN-Habitat secured funding from WFP to support the vocational technical training for 250 IDPs. Trainees would be selected from returning IDP households, who have accepted the government return package. Selected IDPs would qualify for food for training throughout the period of the training, with 2 modules for initially 150 and then 100 IDPs over a period of 5 months. Trainees will receive 10-12 weeks of training, under the management of food Skills.

During this period, UN Habitat submitted a concept note and funding request to UNDP under The Koshi Early Recovery Programme (KERP) with funding from Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) for US\$ 602,250. The funds, if granted, will support housing for 300 economically vulnerable IDP households, transitional shelter for 1500 camp based households and vocational training for 150 returning IDP households.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Due to influx of people returning to their villages, including in the red zone, the Water and Sewerage Service Development Officer (WSSDO) started providing tube wells in return areas, in order to meet emergency water needs, until the ADB funded reconstruction project begins. This is being coordinated through the WASH cluster. WSSDO in

both Sunsari and Saptari districts also continued with decommissioning of WASH facilities in vacated camps.

Mine Action

On 6 April, while marking the UN-declared 4th annual International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, UNICEF issued a press release that stated that landmines and other explosive devices have killed or injured 197 Nepalese since the end of the conflict in 2006. According to the statement, all of these explosions could have been prevented. Landmines and other remnants of war such as IEDs used during the decade-long conflict continue to take the lives and limbs of Nepalese, especially children. While the total number of casualties in Nepal decreased from 104 casualties in 2007 to 73 in 2008, children made up 63 % of those casualties. This gives Nepal one of the highest child casualty rates in the world. Women make up another 32 percent of the casualties and incidents have been reported in all the five regions of Nepal. According to the Mine Action Joint Working Group (MAJWG), which is composed of members from the Nepal Government, international donors, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and the Nepal Armed Forces, during the conflict, landmines were planted by the Nepal Army in 53 locations and more than 300 IED fields were laid by the Nepal Army, Police, and Armed Police Force. Unknown numbers of IEDs were also produced by the Maoist army and continue to pose a threat across the country, even in storage as the explosives breakdown over time and become unstable. Use of IEDs by various groups throughout Nepal is still ongoing.

Protection

Following calls by the government through the DAO, more than 131 of the people whose family members were killed during the conflict made applications to the government for compensation. According to the Ilam DAO, on 15 April, the DAO distributed 100,000 Nepali Rupees each to 75 families whose cases have been verified. Compensation to families who suffered losses due to displacement had been made earlier.

On 2 April, 58 families who were displaced as a result of threats and intimidation by armed Madheshi Tigers in September 2007 demanded compensation from the government. The displaced families continue to live under poor conditions in Bharaul VDC, Sunsari District. Several of these displaced maintain that they would be willing to return if adequate security was provided, while others are seeking resettlement.

Dalits in Khadakpur VDC in Saptari District continued facing discrimination, including being excluded from using the village wells and compelled to use water from contaminated pond. On 12 April, Madheshi Dalits staged a demonstration in Rajbiraj, Saptari District, to put forward 46-point demands related to racial, political, economic, legal, health and educational issues.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS:

OCHA continued supporting the government and other clusters in the preparation of Contingency plans based on the recent lessons learnt in the floods response. A multi-agency

team supported preparation of an Inter-Agency Simulation exercise, whose main goal is to test the status of emergency preparedness of the various humanitarian actors in the country and their capacity to manage a response to a disaster within the framework of the humanitarian reform. Preparations for the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Asia-Pacific regional earthquake exercise also continued.

COORDINATION

Coordination meetings based on the cluster approach are being held 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 a weekly basis.

On 8 April, the Nepal Humanitarian IASC Country team met and discussed issues on the planned earthquake simulation exercise. The IASC also identified current humanitarian priorities in the country, flood season preparedness plans and a review of the cluster approach. The meeting also agreed on the plans for Mid Year Review of the Humanitarian Transition Appeal.

UPCOMING EVENTS/ MEETINGS

- 16 - 17 April, 2009: IASC Simulation Exercise, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, UN Conference room
- 19 April, 2009: Custom Training, All day event, Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu
- 20 April, 2009: WASH Cluster meeting, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, OCHA conference room
- 21 - 24 April, 2009: INSARAG Earthquake Simulation Exercise, All day event, Hotel Soaltee Crown Plaza, Kathmandu
- 28 April, 2009: Emergency Health and Nutrition Working Group Meeting, 10:00am-11:30am, UNICEF Conference Room
- 1 May 2009: operational IASC meeting, OCHA Conference Room

RECENT MAPS RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

OCHA IMU produced a number of mapping products, some of which are listed below and also available on NIP (<http://www.un.org.np/>).

Nepal: Reports of Security Incidents- 1 to 31 March, 2009
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=636>

Nepal: Reports of Bandhs / Blockades - 1 to 31 March, 2009
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=635>

South Asia: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreaks in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (18 March 2009)
<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=634>

RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE:

Some of the recent reports available on NIP are listed below.
WFP: Market Watch # 12
<http://www.un.org.np/bulletins/WFP/2009/2009-04-02-Market-Watch-Issue-12-eng.pdf>

UNICEF: Knowledge, Attitude & Practice Survey -
Improvised Explosive Devices Landmines and other
Explosive Remnants of War (NEPALI version included)
[http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?m
id=521](http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?m
id=521)
UN: National Avian Influenza and Influenza Pandemic
Preparedness and Response Plan
[http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?m
id=520](http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?m
id=520)

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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