



# Koshi River Floods in Sunsari and Saptari OCHA Situation Report No.8

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**This situation report is based on information received from UN Agencies and humanitarian partners, government sources, and OCHA and UNDAC team members based in Sunsari and Saptari Districts.**

## I. Situation in Sunsari and Saptari Districts, Eastern Nepal

- 1) **Flooding/Infrastructure damage and repairs:** An estimated 80% of the Koshi River continues to flow through the gap in the embankment where the river breached its limits on 18 August. Four VDCs remain fully or partially submerged. The East-West highway is damaged for 14km, including 1km completely washed away, and about 4km submerged in flood water, and thus remains impassable, effectively cutting off Eastern Nepal from the rest of the country. Although the water level has gone receded, the flood remains unmanageable unless the river can be redirected into its original course. The monsoon season is expected to last at least another month, and historically the worst floods have occurred in October.
- 2) An alternative road connection being constructed north of the barrage will allow the river to be crossed. The government has asked the army, in cooperation with the Department of Roads, to construct an alternative route from Kanchanpur in Saptari to Chatara in Sunsari. A number of small dirt roads will need widening and gravelling, and a ferry connection will be established at Chatara. The alternative route is scheduled to be opened within 2 months. The government also plans to establish a motorboat service from Bhandabari to Laukahi in Sunsari district free of cost for the general public.
- 3) The Government of Bihar (India) will handle the repair and reconstruction of the embankment. Indian engineers have been focusing on preventing a further collapse of the dams. After this stabilization phase, work will begin to dig a channel in the old river bed, to redirect the river back into its original course.
- 4) **Displacement:** Current assumptions remain that up to 70,000 people were displaced by the floods. In Saptari, a household survey conducted on 31 August by Oxfam, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA puts the total number of displaced at 4,022 families (27,812 persons).
- 5) Some returns have been reported over the past week, with certain camp populations decreasing by 30-40%. In VDCs south of the highway as many as 13,000 Indians may have left Nepal to return to their land or seek assistance in India. Returns are impossible to verify however as assessments in areas of return have not taken place.
- 6) It is difficult to access the total displaced as there is a large influx from Birpur, Lalpur and Fatehpur in Bihar, whose actual number is unknown. The new registration to be done by NRCS and camp management volunteers is likely to give a more accurate figure. According to the figures given by the Saptari Chief District Officer on 8 September, about 10,000 of the affected population living in temporary shelters and schools in Saptari are Indians and a further 5000-6000 displaced Indians live with host families.



Photo: OCHA

## II. Humanitarian Response

- 7) **Ongoing and completed assessments:** Recent assessments on the Saptari side include: (a) A Joint IRA by Oxfam, Caritas and partners; (b) a Rapid assessment by NRCS; (c) a joint household survey by Oxfam, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and their partners. The assessment covers details on disaggregated population by age and sex, place of origin, PLW and special needs, and livestock.
- 8) **Southern part of Sunsari:** An Interagency Assessment to Ramnagar Bhutaha and Narshinghaa Tappu VDCs (south of the highway) documented that host families and communities are finding it difficult to continue to provide support to those displaced. In Narshing, the community decided to evict IDPs from the local school (an unregistered camp). There is also pressure in registered camps to vacate schools.
- 9) The assessment confirmed concerns that high numbers of IDPs continue to receive little assistance. Indications are that 30-40% of families are hosting up to 10 people each, and resources are running out fast (food stocks, savings, fodder, etc). A number of displaced have already been effectively pushed out by host families without resources to support them, and are resorting to door-to-door begging.
- 10) **Planned cross-sectoral inter-agency assessment:** At the request of the Humanitarian Coordinator, a cross-sectoral IA assessment is planned for the coming week in both Saptari and Sunsari districts. The assessment will focus at both household and community levels, and aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of needs and outstanding gaps across the various caseloads of vulnerable and affected people (IDPs in registered camps, IDPs with host families, IDPs without shelter and non-registered, and communities who have stayed in – or returned to - their place of origin, also flood-affected).
- 11) WFP will send assessment training teams to both districts on 12 September, and the assessment will be implemented from 13-18 September. The involvement of local

- authorities in the cross-sectoral assessment, and their validation and support for the process is critical.
- 12) Plans are underway for additional support to restore and rebuild the lives of those most severely impacted by the floods. This week WFP and OCHA will lead an inter-agency assessment on the impact of the flood within the affected communities. Outcomes of this assessment will further define the immediate to long-term support and recovery needs of the flood-affected population.
  - 13) **Actors on the ground:** The Government continues to take the lead in flood response. At central level, the Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee oversees the process. The CNDRRC is supported by a Regional Disaster Relief Committee as well as District DRCs in both Sunsari and Saptari. At the regional level, a “Saptakoshi Disaster Management Coordination Cell” monitors the process and directs the DDRCs accordingly.
  - 14) According to the Government’s 9-month relief programme recently introduced, the MoHA and the Chief District Officer have overall responsibility for coordination, at the central and local level respectively, for effective mobilization of the relief operation.
  - 15) The government has also endorsed the formation of a three-member ministerial committee (Ministers of Home Affairs, Minister of Defense and Minister for Physical Planning and Works) to oversee relief and rehabilitation. A relief fund of 2.5 billion Nepali rupees (around 36 million USD) has been established, with 500 million rupees (7 million USD) released immediately from a 6 billion rupee assistance fund pledged by the European Union.
  - 16) The government is supported in its response by the humanitarian community organized through the cluster system, which has now been formalized (the HC sent a letter to the ERC on Sept 9<sup>th</sup>). Clusters established include health (WHO), nutrition (UNICEF), WASH (UNICEF), food (WFP), education (UNICEF/SCF), protection (OHCHR), camp coordination and camp management (IOM), and emergency shelter (IFRC).
  - 17) **Emergency Shelter and NFIs:** In Saptari, the displaced are living in a total of 23 shelter locations including 9 schools, 2 public buildings and 12 temporary settlements. The number of displaced living with host families remains unknown. According to the Saptari CDO, the relocation of IDPs from the ‘spur’ areas (Sunsari areas accessible only from Saptari) to a new location is no longer a priority and will be considered only once there is a need.
  - 18) As requested by the CDO, Oxfam has started construction of additional shelters on the eastern side of the Koshi barrage. So far 2,027 shelter kits have been distributed to construct shelters there. Rotary International has provided a further 196 shelter boxes to the CDO for distribution. Priority will be given to Dalit and extremely poor people.
  - 19) All camps on the Saptari side have been selected by the CDO, who wishes to move IDPs off the embankment and spurs to facilitate transport and repair. Concerns have been raised regarding water logging at some sites but IDPs do not want to leave, as they wish to remain close to their homes.
  - 20) NRCS has started distribution of NFIs on the spur side accessible from Saptari. The SC Alliance has NFIs in stock and will decide where to distribute them. Caritas has provided 3,600 camping mats and an additional 4,400 are on the way. 3,000 battery lamps are ready in stock and 1,000 more are in the pipeline. Distribution is expected to start on 9 September, after registration is completed. Caritas further plans to provide smokeless stoves and supplement fuel for families for 2 months. The need for cooking utensils in schools in Saptari has yet to be filled.
  - 21) **Alternative shelter sites:** 4 of the current temporary shelters have been identified as longer term sites (3 near Kalamandir, one along embankment). The Sunsari government is also working with three possible resettlement sites at present, led by the District Water Office and the Department of Urban Planning. There is a lack of consensus on how many people these sites can accommodate.
    - a. The **Jumkha Prison (“Chinese Camp”)**: Leveling work has begun, however work on drainage and latrines remains to be completed. The authorities plan to provide shelter to 4,500 people there, although other actors recommend that the site is suitable for only 2,000. The existing water supply is insufficient, so 30 tube wells will be constructed. Within 3 days the camp will be ready for shelter construction.
    - b. The **field/customs office in Laukahi**: This field, located along the Indian border, was identified as a possible site in recent days. The field measures roughly 100m by 150m, and leveling and filling work began on 6 September. Officials hope to resettle as many as 6-8,000 although other actors believe that the site is too small for such a large number.
    - c. The **steel factory (Simariya)**: The government is moving forward with a plan to take control of this property.
  - 22) The authorities are planning for a rapid movement of IDPs into these new sites, and it is imperative that resettlements occur with the necessary planning and preparation.
  - 23) The shelter and CCCM clusters will identify counterparts at the district level for coordinating and supporting the Government on these issues. In particular, technical support needs to be provided to the government on site planning to ensure that best practice and accepted minimum standards are observed. Moreover, the inputs of UN, I/NGO, Red Cross movement, and Government line agencies for services and infrastructure at all of the possible new sites need to be coordinated.
  - 24) **Registration:** In Sunsari, Government registration has reached 50% of people and government-identified camps. The process continues this week. A portion of the population registered in some camps in fact reside in other locations. The Government has also opened a registration desk at the Sunsari CDO residence for those not registered in camps. Indians are being registered in some camps.
  - 25) It is unclear how many people may be excluded from this registration process. Displaced people in VDCs south of the East-West highway are less likely to be registered (Bhutaha and Narsing). People without access to camps may also not be registered. There is some concern about double registration and the government will compare registration lists against the vote roll to eliminate double registered Nepalis. For Indians without identification, it is difficult to prevent double registration given the mobility of the population.
  - 26) NRCS is issuing ration cards and distributing NFIs and food only to those living in camps.

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- 27) In Saptari, a new registration process based on new forms developed jointly by NRCS and UNICEF began on 8 September after completion of training for NRCS volunteers. The initial focus is only on registration of people living in temporary settlements. This will be expanded later to include IDPs in schools.
- 28) UNICEF has already printed 5,000 beneficiary registration cards for NRCS. The CDO's office received the Sunsari voter list which alongside citizenship certificate, marriage certificate and other forms of identification will be used.
- 29) A government representative as well as NRCS, Caritas, and Oxfam will work together in a taskforce to liaise with camp management committees being formed at the settlements. The time frame for the registration process was tentatively set at five days as the registration has to be completed before the next round of food distribution.
- 30) **Camp management:** Camp management committees are being established in some areas. In Saptari, 9 government officers, each with 2 assistants, have been assigned to support camp management.
- 31) The government has formed a settlement monitoring team comprising of 7 members, with the LDO as coordinator. Other members include police officers, an INGO, a NGO, a UN representative, and a DAO representative.
- 32) **Food:** The generous support provided immediately following the displacement by host families, local communities and civic groups is beginning to wane. In the food sector, a number of groups supporting wet feeding programmes have already left Sunsari. This has created a food gap until the planned WFP food distribution (set to reach all camps within 5 days). The gap is being filled with funds from the DDRC through the DADO.
- 33) WFP food distributions are ongoing in both districts, with up to 60 days of food provided to 70,000 displaced people. In Saptari, WFP has provided 15-day food rations to 26,000 people. Food for an additional 1,300 recently-arrived families is being distributed this week. Cooked fortified food will be provided to 12,000 children under 5 and vulnerable adults in Saptari through a partnership with Concern. In Sunsari, WFP has provided 4,300 people with a 15-day food ration in temporary camps.
- 34) WFP, DEPROSC and Concern are also providing wet feeding for children in schools.
- 35) There are still some settlements which are yet to be covered, including camp D where about 500 people need food. An additional food supply for 1,200 households was due to arrive in Saptari on 8 September, but was held up by a bandh (strike) in Mirchaiya.
- 36) Overall, the distribution has been satisfactory, with few logistical problems, such as double distribution to the same family and exclusion of some eligible families. Some families did not have cooking utensils and firewood. These issues will be addressed once the displaced families are officially registered and ready for next distribution.
- 37) **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH):** In Saptari, Oxfam is collaborating with UNICEF to do public health promotion in the camps. Concern and UNICEF are supporting with latrines and tubewells.
- 38) In Saptari and Sunsari VDCs accessible from Saptari, hand pumps have been installed in spur/embankment areas to meet immediate water needs. Additional trenches and latrines are also in progress. Volunteers and hygiene promoters have been mobilized for awareness raising campaigns. Tube well slabs are being increased in size to facilitate clothes washing.
- 39) Dead livestock near the river beds and garbage overflows in schools are of concern in Saptari.
- 40) **Health:** At least 22 people are reported to have died in settlements (9 in the western side and 13 in the eastern side of Koshi Barrage). 15 new deaths have been reported since 1 September in Saptari.
- 41) Diarrhoeal cases have been increasing exponentially, and there is concern among agencies regarding the lack of surveillance sufficient preventive and awareness measures. Concern has started hygiene awareness activities on a door-to-door basis.
- 42) Measles and rubella cases have also been increasing. Five cases of measles (all Indians) have been detected and lab tests are being conducted for verification. Sunsari DPHO is conducting measles, polio, and Vitamin A campaigns in all camps in Sunsari. UNFPA, UNICEF and the government are conducting a joint mission including to follow up on a suspected case of polio.
- 43) Two cholera cases have been 97% confirmed. The patients, both Indian, have been admitted to DPHO clinic on eastern side. MSF is activating its cholera preparedness plan, establishing a cholera treatment unit and emergency clinic on the 4<sup>th</sup> spur, with similar set-up near Bardaha (with agreement by DPHO).
- 44) On 8 September, 18 government doctors arrived in Saptari from Kathmandu to support the medical teams on the ground.
- 45) A site for a 24-hour health centre has been selected in Saptari near the Kankalini Mandir, while another centre continues at the customs office at Koshi barrage. Generally, in Saptari, concerns have been raised due to the lack of access to health facilities (with 20 shelters and only 5 health camps, there is an urgent need for mobile health clinics).
- 46) **Nutrition:** Some partners have been doing mid-upper-arm-circumference (MUAC) testing and the results are awaited, but initial reports suggest a small number of cases of severe acute malnutrition. The MoHA had suggested the possible establishment of a therapeutic feeding centre in Saptari, but partners feel the number of SAM cases so far may not warrant this.
- 47) Nutrition concerns have been raised particularly for infants and lactating mothers, and supplementary feeding programmes are being expanded in Saptari (Sunsari is reportedly fully covered). Currently Concern covers 6 sites in Saptari. WVI and SCF are also providing supplementary food packages for children. WFP/UNICEF supplementary feeding in Saptari is focusing on wet-feeding due to a lack of fuel and cooking utensils. WFP has indicated they have enough stock of UNILITO to cover all sites. CHD is offering training of health staff and nutrition facilitators on Infant Feeding during Emergency.

- 48) The MoH, UNICEF, and WHO issued a joint press release urging all partners in the region to avoid unsolicited donations of breast milk substitute, due to health and hygiene concerns, and urging partners to focus on feeding lactating mothers instead.
- 49) WVI is providing nutritional support to 4,514 under five children in 31 camps in Sunsari. Severely malnourished children will be referred to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre in Biratnagar. WVI is identifying lactating mothers to provide training on breast feeding. So far 38 nourishing mothers and 32 pregnant women identified in different camps by WVI.
- 50) **Education:** DToT (District Training of Trainers) dates that had been finalized for 24-26 September had to be deferred in Saptari until a later date.
- 51) Dates for opening schools in Saptari have yet to be agreed with the DEO.
- 52) **Protection/child protection:** Health-related protection concerns identified so far include that privacy is not maintained while examining women for treatment in health centres, that no specialized health services are available for children, and that no female health service providers are available for women.
- 53) The tracing of families of separated children is still reported to be an issue, especially for children from India or those in Saptari whose relatives are in Sunsari.
- 54) Security for women in shelter camps needs to be enhanced, with a need for police to increase monitoring and to encourage female police to patrol. There are unverified reports of between 5 and 11 rape cases in Saptari over the past few days.
- 55) In order to enhance protection Oxfam is distributing battery lights to each family in Saptari. Camp committees recently established are being encouraged to ensure equal participation of women.
- 56) **Security:** On 4 September, the Government declared 10 VDCs in Sunsari and 1 VDC in Saptari as disaster areas according to the 1982 Natural Calamity Act (PashimKusaha, Shreepurjabdi, Haripur, Laukahi, Basantapur, Bhokraha, Duski, Madhuban, Narsingha, RamnagarBhutaha and Inaruwa Municipality in Sunsari, as well as in Bhardaha in Saptari). Following the declaration of emergency, the Saptari CDO stated that the government will deal firmly, using force if necessary, to

deal with those calling *bandh* (strikes) or obstructing the movement of relief supplies.

### III. Appeals and Additional Funding Needs (Short Term Relief Requirements)

- 57) An appeal letter was circulated by the Humanitarian Coordinator on August 29<sup>th</sup>, outlining a request by 7 humanitarian organizations for a total of \$10 million to support response operations. ECHO has responded by pledging \$1 million to WFP for food distribution to the affected population.
- 58) The Humanitarian Coordinator is planning a CERF request for resources to support emergency life-saving activities. A request has been submitted to the Emergency Relief Coordinator.
- 59) The humanitarian community, under the guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator, has decided to produce a revised appeal, based on additional needs identified since the appeal letter was circulated, as well as the changing situation in the affected region. The revised appeal will include a broad strategic plan for the flood response, and is expected to be finalized next week.

### V. Coordination

- 60) An UNDAC team was deployed to Nepal on 5 September for a period of 2 weeks to support the ongoing response operation, including through coordinating inter-agency assessments, strengthening coordination structures in the field, and supporting information management.
- 61) In Sunsari, coordination meetings are held in Inaruwa three times per week, while cluster coordination meetings are held regularly under the leadership of government line ministries (schedules posted on Nepal Information Platform). In Saptari, the UNDAC team has established an On-Site Operations Coordination Centre, and coordination meetings are held daily.
- 62) All available assessments, reports, photos and tools can be accessed at the FLOODS section on the Nepal Information Platform <http://www.un.org.np/floods/index.php>

**For more detailed and updated information please visit the Nepal Information Platform (<http://www.un.org.np>) or contact:**

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