

# Monthly Update – September 2011

## UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator's Office Nepal



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

### CONTEXT

#### Political Update

The Legislature-Parliament's majority vote to elect Baburam Bhattarai (UCPN-M) as Prime Minister in August, secured through the signing of the Four Point Agreement with the United Democratic Madheshi Front (UDMF) and bringing the UDMF into a majority government, was welcomed with great expectations that the peace process should enjoy significant gains in the months to come. The Prime Minister initiated the transfer of Maoist army weapon container keys to the Special Committee for the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist army combatants and also directed the government to begin reclaiming and returning land seized during the conflict. Despite these actions and continued political negotiations throughout the month of September, the parties have not made any tangible gains on the peace process.

The Prime Minister has called on the non-Maoist parties to reach agreement on the number of Maoist army personnel to be integrated into the security services and those to receive rehabilitation packages. In response, the Nepali Congress and UML have called for agreement on all issues relating to integration and rehabilitation. Disputes within the Nepali Congress (over the management of affiliated organisations) and within the UCPN-M (over the course of the peace process, particularly the hand-over of weapon container keys and the Four Point Agreement), were heightened, complicating efforts to maintain dialogue and reach consensus. UCPN-M intra-party disputes, with Vice Chairman Baidya and his supporters protesting publicly against the government, have especially forestalled the ability of the party to move forward with coherence. Although the prospects remain very unlikely, any UCPN-M intra-party rift would have negative consequences for the peace process and could raise questions on unity of command over the Maoist army.

#### Operational Space

During the month of September, operational space continued to be affected by monsoon induced landslides at localized sections of road across the country. The earthquake of 18 September caused various landslides and road blockages particularly in the Eastern Region. Limited information has come from Yamfudin, Lelep, Olangchungola and other neighbouring VDCs that are located in north east part of Taplejung District and have been cut-off from road access due to the collapse of the bridge over the Tamor River and several landslides (see *humanitarian section for more information on the earthquake situation, response and gaps*).

#### Bandhs

There were fewer *bandh* and other disruptions this month as compared to last. Most occurred towards the beginning of the month, potentially due to the number of major festivals, onset of *Dashain* and the lack of political triggers (such as a looming constitution deadline). There were few reported restrictions on the movement of UN, I/NGOs or other development partners, though many imposed self-restrictions during the occurrence of a number of *bandhs* in some regions. A UN staff member in the Eastern Region received a death threat by an armed group, but was withdrawn after mediation from UN Security and the Nepal Police.

Few major political disruptive actions took place. The newly established Tharuhat Tarai Party Nepal (TTPN), led by Laxman Tharu, organized a successful two day *Tarai bandh* on 1-2 September that halted vehicle movement and closed markets in Kailali, Kanchanpur, Banke, Bardiya and Dang districts. The UCPN-M Baidya group organized a mostly successful nation-wide one hour *chhakajam* on 2 September, protesting against their party's decision to hand-over Maoist army weapon container keys. In Chitwan, ongoing clashes and retaliatory attacks have occurred between the political youth wings of UML (Youth Association Nepal) and Nepali Congress (Nepal Tarun Dal) regarding accusations and investigation over a murder in August. The two political youth wings carried out strikes and obstructed roads on various days in during the month.

A number of limited disruptions were carried out in protest over localized issues. The All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU), the student wing of UML, organized a general strike on 6-7 September demanding action against the murder of a student of Madhyapaschim College in Nepalgunj during August. The *bandh* closed markets, industries and education institutions and halted vehicle movement in Banke, Bardiya, Dang and Surkhet districts from 6-7 September, and extended into Kailali and Kanchanpur districts

on 7 September. Although UN vehicles were allowed to move freely during the *bandhs*, other INGOs were not allowed. Some *bandh* agitators were reported to have taken control of three public vehicles hired by GIZ in Nepalgunj for a day and others vandalized the vehicle of the Banke District Education Office. Other major disruptive protests included: *bandhs* from on 1, 2 and 17 September in the Narayani zone of Chitwan District by the Narayani Transportation Entrepreneurs' Association demanding action over the murder of a staff member in August; a *bandh* across Kanchanpur District on 14 September by Child Development Centres teachers demanding salary equity, who also padlocked the District Education Office; and a public transportation strike at Attariya, Kailali District, from 20-21 September after a dispute about re-locating ticket counters led to clashes between transportation committees.

### **Improvised explosive device (IED) incidences**

During September, a total of 15 IED incidences were reported across ten districts in the country, including ten explosions that injured two people. The overall number of IED events is down from the 21 that occurred in August and is below the average of 17 per month for the previous two years. There has also been an almost 25% percent reduction in IED incidences from July to September this year as compared to last (down to 52 from 69). However, this reduction is most likely due to the early onset of the Nepali festival periods of *Dashain* and *Tihar*, which are generally accompanied by a decline in IED incidences. All but one incident (in Bhojpur District) occurred in *Tarai* districts and mostly affected business/commercial actors and public spaces rather than political actors or state offices.

Notably, Sunsari District continues a recent upswing of IED incidences (11 in the last three months), Bardiya District has experienced a spike (having 5 incidences in the last two months compared to a two-year average of less than one IED a month) and Banke Districts sees a steady continuance of IED activity (averaging almost three incidences per month for the last six months). The occurrence of three IED incidences in the Far West *Tarai* in one month (including two explosions) is an unusually high frequency for the region, which generally has the lowest rates of IED incidences in the country. Overall, the IED trend for 2011 remains roughly level with that of the previous two years.

## **EMERGING ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Local reactions to central peace process dynamics**

Dynamics relating to the opposition against the Four Point Agreement and the directive for the return of seized property in Kathmandu have significant potential for instigating localized tensions and conflicts.

Although the Four Point Agreement between the UCPN-M and UDMF secured a new government, it has also resulted in significant opposition. Protests organised by the Nepali Congress, UML, UCPN-M Baidya group and the National People's Front against the Agreement were observed in several districts. In the eastern *Tarai*, further street protests are expected from local UCPN-M Baidya activists and district-level UML and NC leaders are also indicating that street protests may be inevitable in the coming weeks. Constituent parties of the UDMF have reportedly increased their activity in *Tarai* districts in order to organize their own counter protests. The current use of rhetoric (particularly that re-enforcing Pahadi-Madheshi fault lines) by political actors and the media and the threat of street protests by both sides may create tensions and openings for violence. The potential for central political and peace process dynamics to catalyze political and communal tensions in central and eastern *Tarai* should be closely observed over the coming month.

While the directive to return seized property was welcomed by many, it was strongly criticized by some UCPN-M party cadres. In districts where UCPN-M cadres still control a large number of seized private and public properties, such as Banke, Bardiya and Dang, the implementation of the directive may be challenged and potentially lead to conflict at the local level. In an interview with local media, the Banke district UCPN-M leader noted that the seized land will not be returned at any cost and cadres are prepared to engage in violent resistance if the government forces them to vacate the land without providing alternative opportunities. In a similar vein, the Bardiya District UCPN-M leader stated in the media that, "We would not accept the Prime Minister's announcement because the Maoist party does not control any land, it is the peasants who holds it. We are ready to support and protect the peasants if government forces them to return their land... the revolutionary land reform act can only resolve this issue, not the government". The return of property has also been complicated in many instances by the fact that seized land has been given to third parties outside of the control of the UCPN-M, such as local tillers.

In order to begin implementing the directive, a 'Land Return Committee' has reportedly been established. At the district level, the Chief District Officers of Banke, Dang, Bardiya, Salyan and Rukum reported they have been in consultation with all political parties and UCPN-M leaders, though they have not yet established any specific mechanisms for the return of property. Beyond the need to first resolve the fundamental UCPN-M

intra-party impasse on the issue, there remain strong likelihoods for the outbreak of local level conflict if attempts at property return go ahead without achieving consensus amongst local political, government and community actors for establishing and utilizing mechanisms to register, coordinate, monitor and manage disputes during such a process.

### **‘Far Western Awareness Forum’ launches advocacy campaign**

As noted in August, a number of new organisations advocating for issues of concern to the Far West Region were active. In September, another group called the ‘Far Western Awareness Forum’ organized an awareness campaign in five districts (Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Darchula) from 1-11 September and formed VDC level committees in some areas in Baitadi. The forum submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister on 25 September, including the demand for the Far Western Region to be one province and voicing opposition to the Four Point Agreement reached between the UCPN-M and UDMF, including the dropping of all court cases against and offering amnesty for those involved in the various movements and greater Madheshi representation and recruitment into the Nepal Army. There has been limited public reaction to activities of the Forum to date and public support for the organisation is difficult to gauge at this stage.

The group’s primary demand to establish the entire Far Western Region as one province brings it into direct opposition with demands made by Madheshi and Tharu identity groups that advocate for the Far Western *Tarai* be separated from hill and mountain districts in the future federal state restructuring process. For example, the TTPN has been newly established to demand a Tharuhat Autonomous State, which would separate Kailali and Kanchanpur districts from the other Far West districts in any eventual state restructuring process. Tensions over the terms of the federal state restructuring process are bound to be contentious and will likely intensify as the next constitution deadline nears towards the end of November. In this light, it is important to observe for any increases in regional and identity-based disruptions and indications that the political discourse between these opposing groups does not translate into localized inter-identity tensions.

### **Retaliatory violence between political youth wings continues in Chitwan**

In Chitwan District, markets and roads were closed for several days because of protests by and clashes between various political youth wings stemming from the investigation of the murder of Sanjaya Lama on 27 August. Responding to an attack against Kamal Pathak, a Central Secretariat member of Youth Association Nepal (the youth wing affiliated to CPN-UML), on 6 September, members of the Youth Association Nepal responded to the incident by obstructing transportation on the Chitwan section of the east-west highway. Local people believe the attack was connected with Pathak representing the family of Lama. Six days later, Nepal Tarun Dal (the youth wing of Nepali Congress) blocked vehicle movement and forced markets to shut in the district as a protest to the arrest of its district chairperson and area vice-chairperson under suspicion for the murderer of Lama. The Nepal Tarun Dal strike involved a clash with Youth Association Nepal cadres at Narayangadh. The organizers of strikes and protests on both sides claim unjust political interference in the handling of the Lama murder investigation. Although the recent increase in violence since Lama’s murder and its subsequent publicity suggest escalating competition between political youth wings, the political parties have stated that they will organise a rally together with civil society to demonstrate their commitment to end such violence.

### **Voter Registration**

The voter registration process in Banke continues to be obstructed by the UDMF in Banke District. Due to the notices given by UDMF leaders to stop the registration process until their demands are met, the DEO has not risked sending his staff to the VDCs and registration has been limited to only within the District Headquarters (DHQ). The DEO noted that formal and informal meetings held with Madheshi-based parties (who also are currently part of the government) have not achieved any positive results that would allow the resumption of full registration in the district and 40 out of the 46 VDCs in the district remain obstructed. There is concern that frustration may rise among non-Madheshi citizens who are being denied the opportunity to register as voters. Therefore tensions between Madheshi and non-Madheshi communities over the obstruction of voter registration cannot be ruled-out.

## **HUMANITARIAN UPDATE**

### **Sikkim-Nepal Earthquake, 18 September**

#### ***Situational Overview***

Striking in a mountainous area of India at around 6:25 pm Nepal time on 18 September, an earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter Scale caused widespread damage in parts of India, Nepal, China, and Bhutan. It affected 15 eastern districts of Nepal, as well as the capital region of Kathmandu Valley in the Central

Region. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) continues to coordinate the response to the earthquake. Latest figures released on 29 September by the NEOC<sup>1</sup>, indicate that: the number of fatalities remains at 6 persons, with 27 people severely injured and 133 with minor injuries; 3,678 families are reportedly displaced (the exact number of individuals displaced is yet to come); 4,402 houses/buildings are completely destroyed and 6,569 partially damaged; 117 Schools are completely destroyed, and 384 are partially damaged; 26 health facilities are completely destroyed and 39 are partially damaged; and 86 government buildings (such as VDC offices, community buildings, electricity stations) are reported to be destroyed, with a further 292 buildings partially damaged. There are still difficulties in accessing some remote areas and updates continue to be received at the NEOC from previously inaccessible areas.

### **Response to Date**

The Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee (CNDRC) meeting held on 25 September agreed to identify the need of shelter and food for the displaced people/families thoroughly and provide 7kg of rice per head, as well as provide kitchen utensils and tarpaulins if needed. Free medical services will be provided to all injured people by the government health services. NPR 100,000 will be provided to families of the deceased, which has been approved already. As an immediate relief NPR 5,000 was provided by the district team to displaced families whose houses were destroyed. It was further decided to provide NPR 5,000 from the central level as well. CNDRC has agreed to provide an additional NPR 15,000 to them depending on the situation. With this, there will be a total cash support of NPR 25,000 to families whose house was destroyed and NPR 125,000 to families that have had a member killed. Rehabilitation and reconstruction work will be conducted through the Ministry of Physical Planning and Work. The government has already distributed NPR 9,939,700 (equivalent to US\$132,529) to 3,158 families from its central level fund. The estimated losses and damage are reported as NPR 74,997,930 (US\$999,972).

The international humanitarian community has mobilized disaster assessment teams across the affected districts in the Eastern Region. The teams are primarily comprised of different clusters: education, WASH, and child protection. Similarly NRCS, with the support of the IFRC, has also deployed its assessment teams in the districts. At national level, all the clusters are coordinating with their respective government counterparts and are on standby position should there be a need.

### **Cluster Update**

#### **Protection Cluster**

The Protection Cluster responded to the earthquake, including rapid protection assessments of the situation. These highlighted shortcomings in the impact/needs assessments being conducted, as well as the delivery of assistance: There is a lack of information about the situation in some remote VDCs in Taplejung District due to difficulties in access and the delivery of assistance to remote VDCs is problematic. The Child Protection AoR led by UNICEF undertook rapid assessment missions to three eastern districts, where some children are found to be scared to return to school, fearing that the buildings might collapse. OHCHR teams in Taplejung, Panchthar, Illam and Okhaldhunga districts gathered information related to protection concerns and distributed the Protection Checklist to Women Development Officers and HRDs.

TPO-Nepal, co-chair of the psychosocial support working group under the Protection Cluster, developed a list of service providers in the districts that could be contacted to provide assistance. UNICEF developed public messages to be aired through FM radio that focus on child protection and psychosocial issues.

Other activities of the Protection cluster during the month include rapid assessment of the situation in Mahottari District following the flooding there as well the development of a number of tools. Protection checklists for other clusters were finalized and disseminated. The Child Protection AoR reviewed the training manual on child protection in emergencies and is developing a training package for the Child Protection section. This will be available as part of the Protection Cluster training packages. UNFPA, in coordination with the National Women's Commission, organized training on the Gender Based Violence Information Management System to a small group of GBV actors in Nepal.

#### **Food Security Cluster**

A Food Security Cluster meeting was held on 26 September to discuss the earthquake, including any gaps in responses. Key issues highlighted include government focal points for the range of food security issues (including food assistance, agriculture and recovery), and representation at the district level. These issues will be followed up with MoHA, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and other relevant Ministries.

#### **Health Cluster**

---

<sup>1</sup> These numbers may be revised as more information is collected from affected areas.

The WHO led Health Cluster is in close contact with Ministry and Health and Population (MOHP) regarding a health cluster needs assessment for the earthquake. All health institutions have been instructed by the government to provide free health services to people affected by the earthquake according to the instruction of the CNDRC. MOHP and Regional Health Directorate, eastern region have already deployed assessment teams and the reports are awaited. According to the latest reports from MoHA, 26 health facilities are completely destroyed and 38 are partially damaged.

#### **Education Cluster**

Due to the earthquake, schools are reported to be either completely destroyed or partially damaged in 13 districts: 128 schools in nine districts need urgent action as they are fully destroyed and 547 schools are partially damaged. A Regional Education Cluster Coordination meeting was held in Biratnagar and decided that it will organize a meeting for the final assessment report presentation and response plan development on 14 October in UNICEF ERZO, Biratnagar from 8:30-16:00hrs and action will be taken to open schools after Tihar vacation. UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan Nepal, LWF, UMN and Department of Education and UNFCO Biratnagar are engaged in the assessment work in different districts.

#### **WASH Cluster**

Based on information available through MoHA, DWSS and through the limited field trips, the WASH cluster meeting on 27 September concluded that no immediate humanitarian WASH response is needed at community level except distribution of some WASH supplies to meet the immediate needs of displaced families in few districts. WASH cluster members are willing to provide technical support for installation of WASH facilities in schools as required. It was also recommended to the education cluster to discuss and agree to develop similar modules of temporary WASH facilities appropriate to district specific needs and requirement. While calculating the number of WASH facilities, it is recommended to use standard SPHERE guidelines: 1 latrine for 30 girls and 1 latrine for 50 boys, with water at 10 litres per child.

#### **Logistic Cluster**

The Logistic cluster coordinator participated in a Nepalese Army and US Army simulation exercise from 18-21 September. The objective of the exercise was to understand the response capacity and the gaps in case of a mega disaster. Joint Secretary from Ministry of Home Affairs participated in a Safer World Workshop jointly organized by WFP and FAO in Rome from 16-17 September for pandemic preparedness and response. On behalf of IASC, the WFP led logistic cluster updated agency stockpile status and shared the updated list to all IASC cluster lead and cluster members on 25 September.

#### **Coordination**

In support of the government's earthquake relief efforts, partners (including UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement) are conducting assessments from their bases in Biratnagar in the Eastern Region, and inter-cluster coordination meetings have been held by the humanitarian community both at the national and regional levels. The government led District Disaster Relief Committees are leading the response efforts at the district level. Several clusters such as Education, Health, Nutrition and Protection held cluster meetings at the national level.

DDRC coordination meetings are being held in most affected districts to ensure an effective relief operation at the district level and stakeholders meetings and media briefings are being held regularly by MoHA.

#### **Needs and gaps**

Information received from the districts indicates that shelter, food and NFRI support is needed for the displaced and affected families. However, a detailed plan will only be developed once the collated results of the government's assessments is finalised by the NEOC. The final assessment reports are expected to come after the Dashain festival.

#### **Need for International Assistance**

There is no formal request from the government for external humanitarian support at the national or regional and district levels. However, the CNDRC meeting held on 25 September indicated that international support could be useful for reconstruction of damaged health and education infrastructure.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS**

For more details, please visit the UN Nepal Information Platform: <http://www.un.org.np/calendar/2011-10>.

- 4 November, Contact Group Meeting, UN Conference Room, Kathmandu (10:30-11:30)

## RECENT MAPS AVAILABLE

The RCHCO IMU produced a number of mapping products, some of which are listed below and also available on the UN Nepal Information Platform: <http://www.un.org.np/resources/maps>.

NEPAL: Earthquake Affected Districts (as of 18 - 22 September 2011)

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-earthquake-affected-districtsas-18-22-september-2011-800-hrs>

NEPAL: Epicentre of the Earthquake, 18 September 2011 (as of 18 September 2011)

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-epicentre-earthquake-18-september-2011-18-september-2011>

NEPAL: Flood and Landslide Affected Areas (1-31 August 2011)

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/nepal-flood-and-landslide-affected-areas01-31-aug-2011>

## RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE

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

Nepal: Earthquake Update, Situation update Issue #5

<http://www.un.org.np/headlines/nepal-earthquake-update-situation-update-issue-5>

RCHCO Field Bulletin: The status of land seizures in Kailali district, Issue #20

<http://www.un.org.np/headlines/rchco-field-bulletin-status-land-seizures-kailali-district-issue-20>

RCHCO Field Bulletin: Nepali Industries: Opportunity for prosperity or source of conflict, Issue #19

<http://www.un.org.np/headlines/rchco-field-bulletin-nepali-issue-19>

RCHCO Field Bulletin: Community access to natural resources: A case study on forest resource access and control in Morang District, Issue #18

<http://www.un.org.np/headlines/rchco-field-bulletin-18>

Independent External Review of United Nations Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN)

<http://www.un.org.np/reports/independent-external-review-united-nations-peace-fund-nepalunpfn>

UNESCO's new 3-year country programme

<http://www.un.org.np/reports/unesco-three-year-country-program>

United Nations Peace Building Strategy for Nepal 2011-2012

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

## CONTACT

### United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator's Office

GPO Box: 107, UN House, Pulchowk, Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: +977 1 5523200 Ext. 1518 | Fax: +977 1 5523991 | Email: [rchco.nepal@one.un.org](mailto:rchco.nepal@one.un.org)

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

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