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Information bulletin

Nepal & India: Landslides and Floods

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Date of disaster: 2 August 2014	Point of contact: 1. Dharma Pandey, DM Manager, NRCS 2. Leif Jonsson, DM Coordinator AP Zone
Host National Societies: Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS)	

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Nepal and Indian Red Cross National Societies, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), have yet to determine if external assistance is required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

The situation

Nepal

Heavy rain caused massive landslides from the hillside in Jure, Mankhaa Village Development Committee of Sindhupalchowk district in Nepal. The incident happened at 02:00 am on 2 August 2014 when most of the people were sleeping in their homes. The landslide created more than 100 meter high artificial dam across Saptakoshi River, one of the main tributaries of Koshi River. The flow of water is completely blocked due to the dam that has created artificial ponds, accumulating a large volume of water upstream. The blockages of river course formed an artificial lake; spread over 2.5 kms by length and 130 metres by depth. The landslide area is located 70 km North East of Kathmandu Valley. Araniko Highway, a major highway that links Kathmandu to China boarder passes through the incident area. The areas along the highway are very important from the point of view of tourism and trade between the two countries; therefore most of the area were inhabited with markets, hotels and private homes in several places. Two hydropower plants are fully operating nearby the area.

The landslide occurred in the night time and has caused huge loss of life and properties in Jure area where many houses and markets were located.



According to preliminary report, 10 people are confirmed dead and the security forces have recovered several dead bodies from the rubble. So far, more than 100 people are still missing and the number of casualties is likely to increase. The landslide has affected large areas and completely swept away many infrastructures, including more than 200 houses, markets, part of the highway, livestock and transport vehicles that were parked on the highway. Report from the affected areas shows 21 people, including one Belgian citizen, are injured in the incident. The road access to the affected area is completely disrupted and security forces has blocked the roads around 20 km ahead of the incident area. Likewise, the communication network is very limited and two hydropower plants shut down and the supply of electricity in the area and in Kathmandu valley is reduced. The access for assessment team in the affected area is very difficult and restricted due to the high risk of floods so NRCS assessment is still exploring possibilities to gain access. Some of the affected people evacuated from the areas on 2 August are either taking shelter with their neighbors or in schools; while other affected people are seeking shelter in open spaces and are further affected by the rain and harsh living condition.



With large volume of water collecting above the artificial dam, the risk of flash floods is high if the dam structure is to give way. This is likely to cause huge impact in 11 districts (Sindhupalchowk, Kavre, Khotang, Dolakha, Bhojpur, Udayapur, Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Dhankuta, Saptari and Sunsari) along riverside downstream of the landslide area. Damages to the infrastructures, lives and properties may not be limited to the 11 district, but also as far as Bihar state of India. The Nepal government has declared a high risk area along the riverside downstream of the Koshi river.

India

The northern districts of Bihar state bordering Nepal is likely to experience flooding due to large release of water from the dam in Nepal. Supaul district among other districts is likely to be hit worst by the floods, followed by three other districts (Saharsa, Madhepura and Khagaria). The water level in Koshi river is high and meteorological services have forecasted high probability of additional rainfall in the coming 2-3 days.

The highest level alert has been sounded on 2 August and Supaul town has been made the headquarters (HQs) to tackle the imminent crisis. Relief and rescue operations are being planned if the Koshi river water breaches or crosses the embankment, which will cause serious flooding in the nearby districts.

The people in these districts are requested to evacuate the area between the river and its embankments and take refuge in relief camps established by the District Magistrates. Central Government (New Delhi) has also been alerted about the impending disaster. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams have mobilized three teams (each comprising 45 members) to Supaul, three teams to Madhepura and two teams to Saharsa. Other teams from Kolkata are being mobilized and are on the way to Bihar state.



Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Nepal Red Cross Society

NRCS took place in the emergency meeting of Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee called by the Nepal government. The National Emergency Operation Centre and Local Emergency Disaster Management Authority (LEMA) were activated. More than 700 personnel from all three security forces (Nepalese Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police) were deployed for immediate search and rescue. The security forces located at district level in all 11 district were mobilized since 2 August, alerting people to be evacuated and assisting them to move to safer locations. The Nepalese Army and their technical personnel have detonated two blasts to clear the debris from the river and open the course of river. The water has started to flow slowly out from the artificial dam. However the majority of debris are yet to be cleared and pose as high risk of flash floods in the area. The government also has mobilized private and government owned helicopters to transport six affected people, including one Belgian citizen injured by the landslide, and to the medical facilities in Kathmandu.

Trained NRCS volunteers from Sindhupalanchok district chapter, and Barhabise, Khadichaur, Jalkeni sub-chapters were deployed to gather information as well as provide support to the affected people in the area; however the assessment team and responders are having several challenges to gain access in the landslide area due to high risk of flash floods and continuous rain.

NRCS central warehouse located at Kathmandu has sent non-food relief items (NFRIs) for 100 families and 15 dead body bags to the affected area. NFRI packages will be distributed based on the findings of the rapid assessment report. A team from national headquarters (NHQ) has been deployed on 3 August to facilitate district

chapters and volunteers to carry out assessment, relief management, provide first aid and WASH. National Disaster Response Team (NDRT), Community Action for Disaster Response in Emergency (CADRE- Community S/R), District Disaster Response Team (DDRT), and first aid team are kept in high alert position in NHQ, Bhaktapur and Kabhrepalanchok. NRCS NHQ emergency operational center (EOC) has been activated and all relief efforts are being coordinated. NRCS Sindhupalanchok district chapter has been represented in the DDRC meeting in Sindhupalanchok.

NRCS NHQ is expecting the preliminary report of rapid assessment and the key basic needs of the displaced families will be addressed by 5 August 2014 which will define the intervention and resources needed for NRCS future actions. Meantime, NRCS will utilize their own available resources and if the situation remains stable – shelter activities for displaced families will likely be considered in the operation. Furthermore, the IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) is being considered by NRCS. If the situation deteriorates, an Emergency Appeal will be launched.

Indian Red Cross Society

IRCS is closely monitoring the development and has started to mobilize volunteers to assist in the evacuation of population at risk in the four concerned districts. As a preparatory measure, IRCS has carried out an update of human resources available at district level and also reviewed its local preparedness stock of NFRIs. The information on its capacity has been shared with the Indian government in coordination with the IFRC South Asia Regional Office. Additional information will be available in the next bulletin.

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All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.