

NEPAL FLOOD 2017



MEDIA MONITORING
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Cover Photo: Flooded town of Gaur, Rautahat district. By Sanjeev Singh

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The [Cloud Burst](#) which occurred last week resulted in heavy flooding and landslides in 22 districts of Nepal, affecting thousands of people. The southern plains of Terai are said to be the worst affected area of this disaster. [According to the government](#), the death toll has reached 66, 35 are said to be missing and 35 have been injured as of the evening of 13 August.

Many highways have been blocked and floods swept away sections of the East West highway. Eleven districts, namely Panchthar, Sindhuli, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Sarlahi, Bara, Dang, Banke, Makawanpur and Palpa, have been badly affected. Thousands of people have vacated their homes in the affected areas, fearing the flood and have moved to safer places. More than 8000 security personnel from Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and Nepal Army have already been mobilised in the rescue operation across the country.

The attention of the national and international media has been turned to this disaster. This media monitoring has gathered the news published in national and international news portals. This coverage has concentrated on the current scenario of the areas affected by flood. The collected information's have been divided into themes.

Increasing challenges

More than half a dozen districts across the Koshi River have been [without electricity](#) since Saturday morning after floodwaters damaged transmission lines, substations and other infrastructure. Currently, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Illam, Bhojpur, Dhankuta, Panchthar and other districts have no electricity. The distribution system of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has been completely damaged in the eastern region which has [affected the power supply](#).

Around [600 tourists](#), stranded due to flooding in Sauraha in Chitwan, have been waiting to be rescued. The swollen Rapti and Budhirapti Rivers flooded more than 100 hotels in the area. The rescue efforts were run with the help of tamed elephants. The trapped tourists included 200 Nepalese, 200 Indian and another 200 from various countries. After the river Rapti entered the children's home, at least [365 children were rescued](#) by a helicopter from the building.

The vehicular movement along the [East-West Highway](#) has been halted after the bridge over Gandheli River collapsed in Banke district. Hundreds of vehicles and passengers have been stranded. The flooding also caused a [wide-scale breakdown of communication infrastructure](#) in the eastern Terai since Saturday evening. Although telecom service providers have

claimed that majority of the glitches in their system have been fixed, people living in more than half a dozen districts across the Koshi River are still experiencing poor network.

Nearly 11,000 families, who were displaced by the flooded rivers, have been left in a lurch for want of relief in Morang district. Hundreds of victims are facing a hard time due to hunger as the government agency has not begun relief distribution yet, as stated by [The Himalayan Times](#).

Government's effort

On August 12, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba instructed all four security agencies (Nepal Police, Nepali Army, Armed Police Force and National Investigation Department) to [immediately rescue people affected by floods](#) in various districts. He also instructed ministers and bureaucrats to identify vulnerable areas and adopt precautionary measures. He informed that the government was ready to provide all necessary help in relief and rescue operations. The PM further encouraged participants to take the help of civil society in relief and rescue operations. According to the Home Ministry, More than 80 per cent of flood-affected areas were inundated and government agencies were not been able to fly helicopters to the flood-affected areas due to bad weather.

On August 13, Minister for Home Affairs Janardan Sharma formed a [central command post](#) for intensifying rescue operations. The meeting decided to urge the Indian side to open more doors of Laxmanpur barrage and Koshi barrage so as to minimise damage on the Nepali side. On August 14, India informed Nepal that they have given [directives to open the gates](#). The District Natural Disaster Rescue Committee has distributed dry foods to victims in the flood-hit areas. Efforts were also on to pack food items to be distributed to those affected by flooding and landslides, while helipads at Nepal Army's barracks have been kept ready for relief distribution. Minister Sharma visited western Nepal for an [onsite inspection of flood-hit areas](#) and held interactions with flood victims of Fattepur, Raptisunari Rural Municipality in Banke district. He directed the concerned bodies to adopt additional rescue measures. He also conducted an aerial inspection of villages near Rapti and Babai Rivers. He also observed the inundated Gulariya Municipality in Bardiya.

The Home Ministry released [Rs 19.7 million](#) to provide financial assistance to the disaster victims which will be provided to the disaster survivors through the concerned district natural disaster and rescue committees. A Cabinet meeting held on 13 August decided that the government would

provide [Rs 2 lakh](#) to each family who lost their loved ones in floods and landslides.

The Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport Management has intensified clearance and repair of obstructed roads across the country so as to resume transport to help ease rescue operation and relief distribution. The Ministry of Health has been asked to manage health workers with medicines in flood and landslide affected areas. The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has been asked to operate private helicopters with priority in helping rescue operation.

On the same day, Ministry of Health set up [Health Emergency Operation Centre](#) with a view to disseminating information regarding flood affected districts in the country. All the medical practitioners were urged to prioritise their work, rather than attending training, seminars, workshops and staying on leave in this hour of crisis. The rapid response teams had been kept on high alert and that teams of health experts had been deployed in various flood-affected areas to make sure that the victims get medical aid and epidemic diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, hepatitis, did not get rampant. MoH has also recruited 4 teams for inspection of situation in flood affected areas in Biratnagar, Janakpur, Rautahat and Nepalgunj. These groups will assess the local level institutions, co-ordinate for medicines and treatment and help the victims in flood affected areas accordingly. A [hotline number](#) has also been established. Along with that the ministry has provided a mobile number which can be contacted directly if health or any other related services is required.

The government also [directed state-owned companies](#) that supply essential commodities, such as food and petroleum products, to stay on their toes and ensure areas affected by floods and landslides do not experience shortage of those products. The instruction was issued by the Ministry of Supplies to Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC), Salt Trading Corporation (STC) and Nepal Food Corporation (NFC), among others, after incessant rainfall of the past few days triggered floods and landslides in the southern belt of the country. To ensure proper supply of food products, the Ministry of Agricultural Development also held a meeting with development partners to deliver essentials to people residing in flood and landslide affected areas. [National Human Right Commission](#) has appealed government to provide quick response to the victims.

[Nepal Red Cross Society](#) has also begun its participation in the search and rescue work in all the districts. The flow of water in [Narayani river has](#)

[been decreasing](#) as the doors of Gandaki barrage has been opened. The river had reached the level of danger in Sunday night.

Relief funds

[Various private organisations announced support](#) for the relief fund. Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) announced that it has collected Rs 10 million. Association of Pharmaceuticals Producers of Nepal donated medicines worth Rs five million. Nepal Young Entrepreneurs' Forum contributed Rs 1.5 million. Shanker Group donated Rs 500,000 and Clean Bagmati Campaign contributed Rs one million.

The [Nepal Telecom](#) decided to provide free SMS service from Sunday till Tuesday within its network across the country. Similarly, private telecom service provider Ncell announced it is expanding its '*sapati*' (loan) service, which it is providing to its customers. Ncell has also made its balance transfer service free. Buddha Air initiated a fund worth Rs 2.5 million to support the victims of Sunsari and Morang districts.

Non-Resident Nepal Association (NRNA) has established a fund to assist and provide relief to the flood and Landslide victims. NRNA President Shesh Ghale and Jamuna Ghale made [personal contribution](#) of Rs 10 million. The constitutional Assembly members of Nepali Congress announced that they would contribute a month of their [salary to help the flood](#) victims. Actor Dhurmus [distributed food and medicines](#) to 150 flood victims of Bhangaha rural municipality of Mahottari district.

The comedian duo, Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansha Acharya, [announced a donation](#) of Rs. 100,000. Deepak Raj Giri and Deepa Shree Niraula, also announced assistance of Rs. 100,000. Deepa Shree has also donated Rs. 51,000 to the disaster victims through the Morang Society, she is a member. Actress Priyanka Karki made a contribution of Rs. 51,000. Actress Pooja Sharma, committed to assist the disaster victims with Rs. 1 00,000.

Risk of epidemic

Health experts have warned of [possible outbreak of diseases](#) in the flood-affected districts, given their poor sanitation and hygiene conditions in the wake of the disaster. The medical professionals have issued [health alert targeting flood victims](#) across the country. After flooding, people are likely to suffer from water borne diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis E, typhoid and other gastrointestinal diseases. There is also high risk of malaria, dengue, chikungunya among other diseases. The victims

have to be cautious to prevent water borne and vector borne diseases. Doctors advised to wear full-sleeve clothes, use nets and apply mosquito repellents to stay safe from vector borne diseases.

Conclusion

Despite the heavy investment in disaster preparedness, the government was not able to provide the support immediately. Even though not many years have passed since the earthquake of April 2015, the governments weak preparedness has raised a question in its efficiency. According to [Madhukar Upadhyaya](#), Climate Change Expert, "our preparedness is below average. Damage to lives and infrastructures are usually high".

Contributors:

Rajesh Ghimire

Kritagya Regmi

Aanchal Parajuli

Sagar Pandit

Santosh Sharma