

Nepal Monthly Situation Update



Issue No. 60, covering the period 1 April -7 May 2010

Kathmandu, 13 May 2010

I. HIGHLIGHTS

- The Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee (CNDRC) endorsed recommendations emanating from the Disaster Preparedness and Pre-monsoon planning workshop
- Week-long strike disrupts humanitarian aid operations across the country: Food distribution temporarily suspended in food insecure districts in the Mid West Region
- Nineteen diarrhoeal deaths reported from Mid West and Far West Region districts
- On-going political deadlock continues and the three major parties have not reached agreement despite intensive negotiations

II. CONTEXT

Ongoing political deadlock has continued throughout April and the positions remain largely unchanged despite intensive negotiations between the three main parties – Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M), Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML) – to find a solution. Negotiations intensified prior to the UCPN-M's 1 May nationwide rally, but consensus was not reached. During a 6 April nationwide rally to push for the conclusion of the peace and constitution-drafting process, several UCPN-M leaders including Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" said this would only be possible with the Maoists leading Government. The NC and UML have still not been able to secure Maoist commitments to their preconditions for a unity government, which include the renunciation of violence, return of property, cessation of violent Young Communist League (YCL) activities and a speedy solution to the integration and rehabilitation issue.

The pressure within the UML party continued to mount, with leaders, including UML Chairman Jhalanath Khanal, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister (PM) Madhav Kumar Nepal to make way for a consensus government. The drive to form a national unity government gained momentum in the UML, with the conclusion of its parliamentary party meeting on 18 April "to forge consensus with political parties in order to conclude the peace and constitution drafting processes." Subsequently, on 25 April, the party's Standing Committee decided to work towards building national consensus but most of the members said that while they would be flexible about a change of government, there was no question of the Prime Minister stepping down before a concrete plan for the new government, constitution and peace process was prepared. The UML, however, remains divided on this issue. PM Nepal has also stated his readiness to resign if the UCPN-M meets the aforementioned conditions.

Meanwhile the NC maintained its support for the current government, saying that it had been formed through a democratic process, and adding that it was not ready for compromise on a new power sharing deal unless there was a concrete plan and action was taken on issues related to the integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist Army personnel before 28 May 2010.

Political agitations of the Madheshi parties were evident during the reporting period. The Madheshi People's Rights Forum - Nepal (MPRF-N) called for a two-day strike in the Terai, demanding the implementation of past agreements reached between the Government and the Unified Democratic Madheshi Front (UDMF). Similarly, the Sadhbhawana Party (SP), a member of the governing coalition, threatened to withdraw its support for the current government if the past agreements of the UDMF were not implemented. On 5 April, a small Madheshi Party, Nepal Sadbhawana Party-Anandidevi (NSP-A), with two seats in the CA, decided to withdraw its support for the current government claiming that it had failed to build national consensus. However the MPRF-D, led by Deputy Prime Minister Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar, maintained support for the current coalition on the basis that it was a majority government enjoying the support of 22 parties.

On 8 April, the International Relations and Human Rights Committee of the Parliament directed

the Prime Minister to review and revise the terms of reference of UNMIN, if required, and extend its term beyond 15 May until the peace process reached its logical conclusion.

There has been no notable progress on constitution-drafting over the reporting period. Leaders of the main political parties have publicly reiterated their commitment to finalize the constitution by end of May, but their statements have been received with increasing skepticism by the general public. Political parties appear to be looking for a way to extend the mandate of the Constituent Assembly, while still being able to present some important progress by the 28 May deadline.

On 15 April, UML Chairman Khanal stated for the first time publicly that it was not possible to promulgate the constitution by the 28 May deadline since the remaining time was too short and the tasks to be completed were too many. Additionally, the UML parliamentary party meeting, on 19 April, recommended that the CA's tenure be extended.

The Government re-started salary payments to Maoist Army (MaoA) personnel from 16 April, after reaching agreement with the UCPN-M at a meeting facilitated by UNMIN on 5 April. Arms Monitors (AMO) in the field and in Kathmandu observed the salary payment exercise in Maoist Cantonment Sites 2, 3, 4, 5 and in Kathmandu Valley. Few discrepancies in the number of Maoist army personnel were reported and the exercise was conducted smoothly.

According to media reports, the UCPN-M had been mobilizing its youth cadres in several districts upon the instructions of the central leadership. There were allegations that the cadres were being trained by discharged MaoA personnel to use *lathis* (sticks) and *khukuris* (knives).

National media reported that the Nepal Army (NA) began recruitment to fill 271 technical vacancies, having received instructions to proceed from the Government. The UCPN-M denounced this move as a violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), but the Chief of the NA's Legal Department said it was in accordance with the law and the constitution.

Protests

Over the first seven days of May, the indefinite strike called by the UCPN-M brought humanitarian operations in all parts of the country to a halt. The UN and its partners were deeply concerned about the impact on food assistance, emergency seed distribution, and access to emergency medical services. (See OCHA Nepal: Situation Report United Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist (UCPN-M) General Strike, 7 May 2010)

In a press statement the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) highlighted "The freedom of movement of humanitarian actors must be protected... It is the responsibility of all concerned to ensure that these principles are understood and respected right down the chain of command". The World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners provide assistance to over 2.5 million people but for four days had to virtually suspend all operations. In addition the EU Food Facility Project partners, who support a large scale emergency operation to improve agricultural yields in food insecure districts were faced with delays and stoppages to seed distribution, during a critical time for planting. FAO was not able to distribute 500 metric tons of improved paddy seed intended for over 54,000 food insecure farmers in 10 districts

The statement also highlighted the difficulties compounded by lack of transport, absent health care workers, closure of schools, disruption of scheduled exams and shortages of essential drugs and medicines. Likewise, outreach services such as mobile reproductive health camps, immunization campaigns and outbreak response in diarrhoea-affected districts have all been hampered by the week long strike. The HC called on all parties to protect humanitarian access and to assist in re-launching critical Operations with the minimum delay.

UCPN-M carried out protest rallies and organized a mass gathering in all District headquarters across the country on 6 April on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of People's movement and against the incumbent government. Addressing the mass gathering, the Maoist leaders stressed the need to form a national unity government under Maoist leadership stating that the country would have the new constitution and conclusion of peace process only if a Maoist-led national government is formed.

The Federation of Other Backward Communities' (FOBC) indefinite Terai Bandh called on 20 April demanding the implementation of the 24 March five-point agreement with the government is yet to be officially called off. Although sparse vehicular movement was observed in the Siraha section of the East-West Highway and less vehicle movement in the Mid and Far West Regions, markets and shops, educational institutions and industries were not affected by the strike.

Sunsari district Village Development Committee (VDC) secretaries started protests by wearing black arm bands at District Development Committee (DDC) office at Inaruwa since 16 April demanding better safety and security conditions. They announced the strike after the government did not provide security following the KJWP extortion request of NPR 300,000 (\$4,152) from each VDC with death threats if they failed to donate. According to INSEC online report of 26 April, a group of All Tarai Liberation Front (ATLF) abducted the VDC secretary of Karaiya VDC of Bara district on 24 April from the Motisar on Kalaiya-Birgunj road.

Farmers' Rights Protection Central Struggle Committee comprising maize victim farmers called a strike in Bara, Parsa, Rautahat and Sarlahi districts on 22 April putting forth 22 points demands including compensation of maize crop failure. Public vehicular movement remained halted and market places remained closed in the districts. Meanwhile, six farmers were injured in a clash with the Police.

Birgunj Customs Office Agents' Union halted work since 22 April accusing unnecessary trouble from the Armed Police Force (APF) team deployed to patrol the border area. The union halted work following the patrol team seizing a loaded truck. 82 agents launched the agitation and Custom officials and transport entrepreneurs also expressed solidarity with the agitation.

MPRF called for two days *Terai bandh* (strike) on 8 - 9 April protesting against the government failure to implement past agreements made with *Madhesh* based parties two years ago and for the promulgation of new constitution on time. Markets were closed and there was no public vehicular movement reported in the Terai districts of the Eastern Region and Central Terai. One cadre was injured and 16 arrested in Mahottari district while the protestors enforced the *bandh*. Similarly, the Party took out torch rallies on 7 April and *Lathi Julus* (Rally with sticks) on 27 March in District Headquarters of *Terai* districts of the Eastern Region and Central Terai. The cadres of MPRF picketed the District Administration Offices (DAOs) of all *Terai* districts on 6 April.

Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-Jwala and Goit group) and Madhesi Virus Killers (MVK) called for indefinite Saptari district *bandh* since 28 April protesting the arrest of their cadre. The *bandh* was called off on 30 April after the local administration released their cadres following investigation.

Operational Space

Violations of Basic Operating Guidelines (BOG) were reported in the Far-Western Region and Central and Eastern Terai districts during April. Many of these 13 incidents (Extortion/Donation Demand-11 and Program Interference- 2) were related to UCPN-M donation demands for the party's 1 May protest programme and general strike. UCPN-M reportedly sent out letters to the staff of government and local organisations in Bajhang district demanding one month salary for the celebration of the people's movement on 6 April 2010. On 5 April, UCPN-M held a meeting in the District Development Committee (DDC) demanding one month salary as a donation from DDC staff members. Local businessmen were also asked to donate for the same cause. Similarly, UCPN-M also collected donations from businessmen and contractors in Dadeldhura district. UCPN-M reportedly sought donations from local organizations, businessmen and teachers working in Bajhang, Morang, Rautahat districts.

According to the local organizations, prior to the Tharuhat Autonomous State Council (TASC) District Conference held on 2 April in Tulsipur, Dang, TASC organized a donation collection in the district. As of 1 April in Panchthar district, Bibas Bidrohi faction of KJWP demanded NPR 300,000 (US\$4152.24) donation from each VDC with a death threat if they fail to provide the amount in the name of ethnic rights and national liberation war. KJWP sent letters to all 41 VDC secretaries of the district requesting donations.

On 26 April, Underground Joint Ethnic Regional Liberation Front (Samyukta Jatiya Kshetriya Mukti Morcha) reportedly torched the VDC office of Malaya dada VDC of Udayapur district. Meanwhile, all VDC secretaries of Ilam district have jointly resigned from their posts through submitting their resignation to Local Development Officer (LDO) stating that they could not continue working with increased extortion and security threats from the various underground political groups. A statement issued by VDC Secretary Welfare Protection Centre states that the situation culminated as the concerned authorities continued to ignore the appeals made by the VDC secretaries for the safe working environment.

Safety and Security

Police discovered a Maoist army Platoon Commander from Main Cantonment in Sinduli in possession of a hand grenade while travelling on public transportation on 27 April. UNMIN condemned this incident as a reckless risk to life and called the UCPN-M to cooperate fully in an investigation and take appropriate disciplinary actions.

A number of arrests were made of members of armed groups during April. Police arrested the Chief of the Terai Cobra, an armed group active in the Terai, on 20 April in Sarlahi district. Police arrested two cadres of the Kirant Janabadi Workers Party (KJWP) from Shanishchare VDC of Jhapa district on 5 April. Both are in custody and the case under the Public Security Act and Extortion has been filed. Police arrested four cadres of Pallo Kirant Limbuwan National Forum (PKLNF) from the border of Banjho VDC of Ilam and Damak Municipality-1 of Jhapa while they were collecting money from vehicles on the same day. Similarly, police arrested five cadres of Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) from Charkoshejhad¹ along the Dharan-Itahari section of the road for extorting NPR 2,000 (US\$ 27.68) donations from trucks on 11 April.

A civilian of Betahani VDC in Banke was shot dead by cadres of 'Tarai Janatantrik Party Madhesh', an underground armed group of the Terai, on 26 April. The victim was allegedly murdered for not supporting the group.

A Sub-engineer of the District Development Committee (DDC) in Humla was abducted by Young Communist League (YCL) cadres at Thehe VDC on 27 April, but released later that day. A statement issued by YCL village committee in-charge stated that the victim was not abducted but taken into control for some time.

Following reported intimidation and extortion from various groups, police provided security to businessmen in their residences in Nepalgunj. Despite the implementation of the Special Security Strategy, the security situation remains the same in the district. Communal tensions increased temporarily in Nepalgunj in early April due to a clash triggered by the elopement of a Hindu girl with a Muslim boy, but the situation quickly normalized.

Protests over the irregular power supply in the Eastern Region heightened in April, in particular as it affected water supplies. Six persons were injured in a clash with police while the local entrepreneurs and businessmen were trying to padlock the Rajbiraj branch of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Office in Saptari district on 22 April. In response to Police intervention, protesters pelted stones at the police office, vandalised the NEA office and imposed a strike in Saptari district for until the regular electricity supply is resumed.

According to a local NGO, two people were reportedly seriously injured in an Improvised Explosive Devise explosion on 6 April while renovating their house in Haku VDC, Jumla. It is suspected the bomb was hidden there during the conflict. The Nepal Army defused a further two socket bombs from the same house, and conducted a mine and bomb awareness programme in the community.

¹ Charkoshe Jhadi is Nepal's well known jungles, which was one of the popular destinations for hunting by early rulers who ruled Nepal. Charkoshe, meaning 8km, and jhadi meaning bush/jungle, Charkoshe Jhadi meaning 8km jungle, between Tarahara, and Dharan, in Sunsari District

Humanitarian and Cluster/Sector Updates

Accidental fire in Terai districts

With the increasing temperature and strong winds, fire incidents have been reported across the country. According to the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) 23 districts were affected by fire and wind as of 25 April. Fourteen deaths, two missing and 48 injured have been reported from six districts. 569 houses were completely damaged and 262 houses partially damaged. The affected families lost food stocks, clothes, personal documents and other belongings and some lost their homes. District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) and NRCS district chapters distributed ready-to-eat food and Non Food Items to the affected families. The estimated loss of properties is NPR67,441,700 (\$933,449). The affected districts were Siraha, Udayapur, Sankhuwasabha Rautahat Saptari, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Rasuwa, Surkhet, Kapilbastu and Rolpa. Locals and security personnel (Police and Army) have brought the fire under control and rescued the fire victims in several districts.



*Photo 1 : Non food Item support in Kapilvastu;
Photo: Save the Children*

There were also increased reports of forest fires. According to the District Forest Officer (DFO) - Dang, from 29 March to 7 April, 3,700 hectares from 24 different community forest of five VDCs were lost due to fires.

Save the Children (SC) under the grant assistance of USAID/OFDA provided non food items to 107 affected families in Kapilbastu and Siraha districts immediately after the incident. SC has provided fortified food to elderly, pregnant women and lactating mothers including children of fewer than five years affected by fire in Narainapur of Banke district and provided education support to all 113 fire affected students in Pyuthan district.

Education

Education Cluster plans to revise the Education Cluster Contingency Plan (CP) from a broader stakeholder's participation. Save the Children will consult with cluster leads and will organize a meeting to review the education contingency plan after the training of Frontline Responder's Training on Education in Emergency. The training and review meeting dates will be shared soon.

According to media reports, despite government campaigns to increase enrolment rate in schools in the Eastern Region, children in a Musahar² village of Siraha district continue to be deprived of education. Although the village in Siraha-9 is next to the District Education Office, about 123 school aged children of 60 families have never been enrolled in school. In Musahar villages- Lalpur-1 and Aurahi-8, 100 and 150 children are deprived of education respectively. The Musahar community are mainly landless and take daily-wage labor for subsistence living and are unable to send their children to school. According to a survey conducted by Dalit Janakalyan Yuba Club, Lahan, only four percent of 75,000 Musahars in the district are literate. Only five persons from the Musahar community are college graduates and 95 per cent of Musahar are landless in the district.

² Musahar are those people mainly below Poverty Line

Food Security

In March, World Food Programme (WFP) cash/food for assets (C/FFA) provided 3,293 metric tonnes (MT) of rice and pulses and US \$424,407 to 77,808 vulnerable households, who in turn worked on 235 small-scale infrastructure construction and rehabilitation projects. In conjunction with C/FFA programmes WFP has, since April 2009, provided 7 million sachets containing 1 gram Micronutrient Powder (MNP) to 75,000 children ages 6 to 59 months across 17 districts in Nepal. Half of Nepal's children under 5 years are stunted or chronically undernourished. For the same population, acute malnutrition rates are at 13 percent. Hidden in this national average are extreme variations and in many communities, acute malnutrition rates exceed 15 percent: the emergency threshold. Current estimates identify 3.5 million food insecure people living in Nepal.



*Photo 2 : WFP FFA activities Basudevi VDC, Doti
Photo: James Giambrone*

The food security situation in Nepal continues to be of serious concern. The Government of Nepal will revise cereal shortfall estimates following the winter crop harvest in 2-3 months. According to government figures, the current cereal shortfall is around 400,000 MT. National food security is further exacerbated by more than 18 months of sustained high food prices. Overall year-on-year food price inflation remains above 18 percent.

The winter crop outlook for wheat and barley is reportedly above normal across the country. The area planted has increased compared to last year. Favourable rainfall to date is expected to have a positive impact on the overall production. The situation remains a concern in Humla, Mugu, and Rolpa, however, where the winter crop situation is moderate, and will depend on the amount and distribution of rainfall in the upcoming month.

The reduction in the summer crop output due to the last winter drought, however, has had a significant impact on the national food balance as the paddy, maize and millet crops account for approximately 80% of the annual production. The country is anticipated to face a substantial food deficit even if the 2009/2010 winter crop production is above normal.

18 out of 24 VDCs in Mugu district are facing food shortages affecting families of 13 VDCs. Marginalized groups are most affected. The food deficit in the district is 7,000 MT for this year. The main cause is a 40-50% production loss during the summer crop harvest (due to last winter's drought), which had a negative impact on people's food stocks. According to the media and local contracts, WFP is distributing 2,600 MT of rice, and the Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) has allocated 600 MT of subsidized rice, however this will not cover the deficit.

According to media, NFC has not found the funds to transport rice to mountain districts. Airlines charge transportation fare of as much as NPR 9,700 per quintal for Humla, NPR 7,960 per quintal in Mugu, NPR 7,034 per quintal in Dolpa. It takes as much as NPR 18,602 per quintal to airlift food to Humla by helicopter. Transporters charge NPR 1,850 per quintal to transport food via road to Jumla and NPR 970 per quintal to Kalikot.

In April, Mercy Corps and the NRCS completed the final round of Cash for Work (CFW) schemes under the WFP-supported Food Crisis Cash Transfer Project (June 2009 – June 2010). This round of CFW has benefitted 7,395 households in three districts (Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Dhangadhi) affected by food price volatility, crop loss, and chronic food insecurity, and included cash transfers of NPR 51,765,000 (\$718,958). This has supported 123 schemes (irrigation, fish ponds, roads/trails, community buildings), to which Government of Nepal offices contributed an additional NPR 2,551,000 (\$35,431).

Agriculture and Livestock

District Level Inception Workshop of European Union Food Facility (EUFF) projects were accomplished in all ten districts across the country with support from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Participants included government line agencies and other stakeholders. The objective was to share and create awareness regarding the concepts, strategies and activities of the EUFF projects. Additionally, VDC level workshops were organized in all 211 VDCs for creating awareness to local stakeholders and maintain transparency whilst implementing the project. Under the EUFF, 13 MT of vegetable seeds, 36 Kg of True Potato Seed, 266 MT of maize seed have been delivered to ten districts, of which distribution to beneficiaries completed in eight districts; and is ongoing in Kalikot and Dolpa districts. Similarly, 174 MT paddy seeds have also been delivered to four districts. Transportation of remaining paddy seeds and 980 MT fertilizers is underway, which was delayed due to indefinite strike called by UCPN-M.

As reported in the March Situation Updates, farmers from five eastern Terai districts lobbied the government to provide compensation for poor maize crop yields. On 22 April, 1,339 maize farmers reportedly lodged an application at the District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) in Jhapa district demanding compensation for the loss incurred by non-yielding maize. They also warned of protests if the government failed to provide compensation. Despite the government's decision to provide NPR 200 million (US\$2.76 million), farmers continued their protest in Bara district. Maize victim farmers have been demanding compensation for the loss, bank loans to the farmers at low interest rates, production of quality seeds in Nepal, irrigation facility and credit cards to the farmers. In a 7 April press release from Kalaiya, Bara, the struggle committee said that they will continue their agitation until the government announces full compensation stating that the government had just fulfilled one out of the 18 demands. According to the farmers, the failed maize represents a loss of NPR 3000 million (\$41.52 million) in Terai.

In Udayapur district, farmers have identified the main agricultural problems of rural areas as low quality seeds, fragmentation of land and low irrigation facility. These problems are particularly acute in the northern hilly VDCs of the district according to the Vulnerability Assessment Mapping conducted by WFP. To counter these problems WFP have been working on opening up irrigation channels and FAO has a programme to assist 16,059 households with quality seeds and fertilizer (32kg per household) plus 2,500 landless households have been given livestock – pigs, goats etc. Training included Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and training for government technical staffs. Three local leaders will be trained to implement 24 FFS especially in the poorest four VDCs.

Health

UNICEF Biratnagar raised concerns about water shortages in Biratnagar Sub Metropolitan area caused by ongoing load-shedding which supplied only 3 hours electricity per day in the beginning of April and now only 12-14 hours. The population are increasingly relying on dirty wells, which could be a source for water borne epidemics. UNICEF is also concerned about children playing in the receding ponds in the dry season, which are becoming increasingly unhygienic and shared with domestic animals. The need for strong Health cluster Preparedness Plans was highlighted, in particular pre-stocking of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) to combat the severe effects of diarrhoea on children under 5.

On 21 April, Helping Hands Nepal NGO conducted a Health Camp in Wana VDC of Sankhuwasabha district. 778 patients received free health check up and treatment from the camp. Residents of 12 VDCs including Jaljala, Wana, Syabun received health services.

UNICEF Udayapur confirmed the success of their joint programming with local Health agencies in decreasing the percentage of undernourished children from 44% several years ago to 8.4% now. This has been achieved through improved monitoring – age for weight and attendance at supplementary feeding centres. Use of community mobilisers and growth charts down to the village level has captured cases earlier for treatment. Government outreach services have also been improved. Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) now receive more materials and

the cost of monthly meetings is provided by UNICEF.

As of 1 April, District Health Office (DHO), Udayapur, has halted immunisation following the direction of Ministry for Health not to use the new pentavalent vaccines until further instruction. The new vaccines were brought to the district for immunising children against cough, tetanus, homophiles and viral influenza. Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus (DPT) vaccines were used earlier for those purposes. Due to the halt in vaccination, children in the district have not been vaccinated for one week. However, other vaccines being used in the district have not been halted.

A workshop for epidemic preparedness, outbreak management and capacity building of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) at the district and community level, organized by Epidemiology and Disease Control Department (EDCD) and facilitated by WHO and the Regional Health Director Office (RHDO) in Jajarkot from 1-3 April. Participants included health assistants from all health facilities, and other departments concerned with disease outbreaks in the district. Staff members were oriented to get prepared, pre-position ORS and other medicines before monsoon season and make arrangements for the transportation of people in case of medical emergencies. The Regional Health Coordination Team (RHCT) has begun initiatives for the regional and district health sector periodic and strategic plan, with logistical and technical support from various organizations (SC, GTZ, Plan Nepal, UNICEF, CARE, UMN, WHO, ADRA, Merlin and NFHP). Three-day meetings have already been held in Bardiya, Surkhet and Banke and the other 12 districts are planned to be completed in next month. According to GTZ, the MWR health sector resource mapping has been finalized.

The RHDO is coordinating with the Medical College in Kohalpur to conduct mobile health clinics for uterus prolapse cases within seven districts of the mid western region. RHDO has expected to do 700 to 800 operations through the mobile clinics. Similarly, the DHO and ADRA are jointly organizing a health camp in Achham for 32 health workers on awareness, management and screening of uterine prolapse cases.

The mid-western RHDO, the DHO and GTZ conducted a joint mission in Jumla to assess the health situation in the district. Their findings have noted the absence of many health workers from their respective duty stations. As the adolescent and sexual education training was ongoing, the poor sanitation and hygiene found as the main cause of the epidemic outbreak, and absenteeism of health workers have huge implications for delivery of the services.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The WASH Cluster plans to carry out diarrhoea preventive campaign this year and will coordinate to align short term intervention with regular and long term interventions. The institutional mapping and consensus building initiatives around the alignment are being carried out. A small task force comprising of three directors from DWSS, DHS, Education along with UNICEF and SNV has been formed and are working together to develop a consensus on working modality for WASH promotion in Mid and Far Western Regions.

The WASH Cluster meeting on 2 April agreed to revise both Flood/landslide and earthquake contingency plans. It will also coordinate with health cluster to develop a contingency plan for diarrhoea epidemic scenario. A small task force was formed consisting of representatives from Ministry of Physical Planning and Works (MoPPW), Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS), Oxfam, IRD and UNICEF. The task force has been assigned to review the contingency plans, finalise the 3W matrix ('Who, What and Where') for mapping out agency-wise WASH preparedness intervention planned for 2010 and review of existing hygiene kit package (most essential/optional items).

The DWSS of Jajarkot and Rukum received NPR 60 million (\$830,000) from the Government of Nepal to install 5,000 latrines (3,000 in Jajarkot and 2,000 in Rukum) and conduct district-wise hygiene promotion campaigns (distribution of chlorine and soap for two months). The Water Supply and Sanitation Sub Divisional Offices are working with DDRCs/DDCs and political parties to identify the most diarrhoea affected VDCs. Meanwhile, procurement of supplies for latrine construction and hygiene promotion is ongoing along with training of Mistri (skilled labour) in the districts. The WASH cluster compiled the list of stock available with different agencies for the 2010

response. UNICEF in consultation with NHICC/DHS and WASH cluster is working together to develop a common print and electronic materials for diarrhoea prevention campaign. NHICC has also shown interest and commitment to support in airing of radio spots/jingle through Nepal Radio and FM stations. DWSS and Oxfam will explore and carry out microbiological samples test (e-coli, total coli forms) of drinking water projects in Baitadi where high incidence/death of diarrhoea reported recently in April. The Epidemiology and Disease Control Department (EDCD) reported that there were 369 cases and 19 deaths due to the recent diarrhoea diseases in the Mid and Far Western Regions, including 27 reported cases in Tanahu in the Western Region.

Residents of Biratnagar have been facing a water crisis for the last week as the city due to electric power cuts (load shedding) daily. According to Nepal Drinking Water Corporation (NDWC), Biratnagar, it has not been able to supply adequate water due to lack of electricity. The demand of drinking water in Biratnagar is 15 million litres per day but NDWC has been able to supply only 6 million litres.

At the beginning of the month, Save the Children (SC) began providing two-day WASH trainings to Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs), Junior Red Cross Circle (JRCC), Community Based Disaster Preparedness members and teachers in seven and three districts in MWR and FWR respectively. After the training, the volunteers will be mobilized in different wards of the districts. The four month long project began on 10 February is expected to reach 730 people are expected to benefit from the training. The project is part of USAID-funded disaster preparedness and response project started in October 2009. In addition, SC has an ongoing program to install 18 raised hand pumps in Banke, Bardiya and Dang and one in Kanchanpur, and to renovate 38 water supply systems in Jumla, Mugu, Kalikot, Rukum, Dadheldhura and Kailali districts.

Nutrition

Emergency Health and Nutrition Working (EHNWG) organized a workshop to review the Health and Nutrition Contingency Planning on 22 April. Health and Nutrition Working Group Members including UN and INGOs participated in the workshop. The process for finalizing the draft EHN contingency plan is ongoing. Second round National Vitamin A supplementation and De-worm campaign targeting under 5 years children completed on 19-20 April. Approximately 3.6 million targeted children benefitted from the campaign.

Protection

Over 3,500 rescued Kamalari³ in Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Surkhet await government funds for their rehabilitation. In July 2009, the Department of Education and Friend of Needy Children (FNC) signed an MoU by which the latter agreed to rescue and rehabilitate the Kamalari, and the government agreed to provide NPR 120 million (\$ 1,666,667). To date, they have not received the funds to cover the hostel expenses, scholarships, vocational training, and to maintain the 100 girls in their transit home in Dang. A 13 year-old Kamalari from Shaktinagar Freed Kamaya Camp in Tikapur, Kailali, was reportedly seriously beaten by the landlord she worked for since December 2010. She reportedly returned home on 5 March when she could no longer work due to physical abuse. The landlord was allegedly arrested after the girl's mother filed a complaint with the Tikapur APO on 7 April, but was then released after he agreed to bear all expenses for her treatment at Nepalgunj Medical College.

Shelter

The Shelter Cluster meeting on 15 April discussed the outcomes of pre-monsoon preparedness workshops and implications for the shelter cluster, removal of cluster projects from 2010 CAP, and the revision of Shelter Cluster contingency plan that was prepared in 2009. As number of gaps have been identified in the current contingency plan, specifically the need to identify suitable 'green space' within Kathmandu for temporary shelter in the event of a major earthquake and also need to include the Non Food Item (NFI) standards as an annex to the IASC Contingency Plan. NRCS agreed to prepare a timeline for inclusion in the updated contingency plan and UN HABITAT will

³ Female child workers

work with OCHA on the inclusion of the NFI standards. Meeting participants also noted that the Shelter Contingency Plan needed to properly trickle down to district level and form part of district level contingency plan. IFRC plans to conduct shelter training in Nepal, facilitated by the Federation Asia Pacific Shelter Coordinator, targeted to NRCS and district authorities. .

The UNDP funded landless house resettlement project for the 2008 Koshi flood affected people is ongoing. In March, the DDRC endorsed the names of 209 landless families from Haripur and Sheerpur VDCs from Sunsari district. The expected completion date of project was revised to end of June. Construction work has commenced, with 20 units expected for completion by the end of the first week in April. A further 84 units are expected to be completed by mid-May. An initial group of 86 Dalit families from Haripur were selected for the first phase of settlement. In total, 104 families from Haripur VDC are expected to be resettled by May. The remaining 105 families from Shreepur will be resettled in the next phase (May-June). At a DDRC meeting in March, WSSDO agreed to provide WASH support for the first 86 families for resettlement. This includes individual latrine and shared clean water points. Funding for WASH is from the ADB Koshi recovery grant.

Disaster Preparedness

Coordination with government and cluster partners increased during past months. During April there were a series of consultations around disaster preparedness with the active involvement of the government and humanitarian community. A National Level Disaster Preparedness and Pre-monsoon Planning (DP and PP) workshop held on 8-9 April in Kathmandu and organized jointly by Government, UN agencies, Red Cross Movements, and I/NGOs. The workshop reviewed the effectiveness of 2009 disaster preparedness and response activities and agreed upon a preparedness plan for 2010. The workshop came up with 22 recommendations as a way forward. These recommendations were further tabled and endorsed from the CNDRC meeting.

On 19 April, a joint meeting (government disaster focal desk and operational IASC members and IASC focal points from the government) was held in Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA).

Construction of the temporary embankment has started along the Rapti River in Holiya VDC of Banke District through the Janta Tathbandhan Program, with the Water Induced Disaster Prevention (WIDP) Office is taking the lead. Around NPR 7 million (\$97,223) have been allocated for the bamboo piling, which according to experts should last at least two years.

An interaction with CA members was organized jointly by Environment and Child Concern Organization (ECO)-Nepal, Disaster Preparedness Network (DP Net), the National Network of Disaster Affected Communities (N-NDAC) and the Disaster Management Journalist Association (DIMJA)-Nepal with the support of Oxfam on 2 April. The objective of the interaction was to ensure the rights of disaster affected people and vulnerable communities through enactment of a pro-people Disaster Management Act and Policy which were drafted in 2007.

III. COORDINATION

Regular regional level Contact Group Meetings (CGM) in Eastern Region Central Terai, Mid West Region and Far West Region are facilitated by OCHA on a monthly basis. At the national level, OCHA also facilitates the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) /IASC operational and Principals meeting on a fortnightly and a monthly basis respectively. (See schedules below and on www.un.org.np) OCHA with UN and HCT has met and advocated with UCPN-M regarding donation demands and access constraints prior to and during the week long general strike imposed by UCPN-M.

The Humanitarian Coordinator's press statement advocating for humanitarian access, particularly for food and seed distribution was widely circulated. OCHA issued an ad hoc Situation Report regarding impact of General Strike on 7 May.

IV. UPCOMING EVENTS/ MEETINGS

- 13 May 2010: Contact Group Meeting, 11:00am – 12:30 pm, UN Conference Room
- 13 May 2010: Shelter Cluster meeting, 10:30am – 12:30 pm, IFRC/NRCS building
- 14 May 2010 : Operational IASC/HCT Meeting, 10:30am – 12:00pm, OCHA Conference Room
- 17 May 2010: Food Security Cluster Meeting, 3:00pm – 4:30pm, WFP Meeting Hall
- 25 May 2010: Eastern Region Contact Group Meeting – OCHA Conference Room, Biratnagar
- 28 May, 2010 : Operational IASC/HCT Meeting, 10:30am – 12:00pm, OCHA Conference Room

For more details, please visit Meeting schedules at UN Nepal Information Platform (NIP).

<http://www.un.org.np/WebCalendar/month.php>

V. RECENT MAPS AVAILABLE:

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

Nepal: Security incidents related to the UCPN-M general strike, 7-9 May 2010

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=695>

Nepal: Security incidents related to the UCPN-M general strike, 1-6 May 2010

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=693>

Kathmandu Valley: Security incidents related to the UCPN-M general strike, 1-6 May 2010

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=694>

Nepal: Reports of Bandhs/Strikes – 1 – 31 March, 2010

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=692>

Nepal: Reports of Security Incidents – 1 – 31 March, 2010

<http://www.un.org.np/maps/metadata.php?id=691>

VI. RECENT REPORTS AVAILABLE:

Some of the recent reports available on NIP are listed below.

World Vision International Nepal (WVIN) Annual Review 2009

http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?mid=574

Role of Women in Community Based Disaster Risk Management in Rural Communities of Kailali District

http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?mid=569

Situation Analysis of Female Sex Workers in Chitwan

http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?mid=570

Study on Status of Unemployed Slum Youth and their Possible Linkages with Job Market in Greater Kathmandu

http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?mid=571

Situation Analysis of Women Street Vendor in Kathmandu

http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?mid=572

Final Evaluation of Concern Worldwide/MoHP Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition Pilot Program

http://www.un.org.np/reportlibrary/table_metadata.php?mid=573

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.

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