

Nepal's Emergency Preparedness and Response System

Good practices, lessons learnt and gaps



AIN's Endeavour in REACHING OUT TO THE UNREACHED

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List of Abbreviations

AIN	Association of International NGOs in Nepal
CCCMC	Camp coordination and camp management committee
CDO	Chief district officer
DANA	Damage and needs assessment
DDC	District development committee
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
DPNet	Disaster preparedness network
DDRC	District natural disaster relief committee
DMC	Disaster management committee
EPR	Emergency preparedness and response
EWS	Early warning system
FGD	Focused group discussion
GIS	Geographical information system
HFA	Hyogo framework of action
I/NGO	International/national non-government organisation
MIRA	Multi-stakeholders initial rapid assessment
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NRCS	Nepal Red Cross Society
NDRC	Natural disaster relief committee
NSDRM	National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management
PwD	People with disabilities
RNDRC	Regional natural disaster relief committee
NDRA	Natural Disaster Relief Act
SAR	Search and rescue
SOP	Standard operating procedures
SWC	Social Welfare Council
VDC	Village development committee
VNDRC	Village natural disaster relief committee

Foreword

The Association of International NGOs, AIN is delighted to release the study report on 'Nepal's Emergency Preparedness and Response System: Good practices, lessons learnt and gaps'.

One of the most densely populated countries (28 million people) in the world, Nepal ranks 144th in the Human Development Index (HDI 2009) out of 179 countries. Since it is located in a seismic zone, Nepal is prone to earthquakes; its geology puts it at risk of landslides and avalanches; and the potential effects of climate changes causing in recurring monsoon floods, and winter droughts and the incidence of fires. In fact, the number and impact of natural disasters is steadily increasing and more and more people are affected by them. The Ministry of Home Affairs of Nepal estimates that over the last ten years landslides and floods killed an average of 230 people every year. The Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) reported that a total of 27,256 people were killed between 1971 and 2007 due to natural disasters. The year 2008 was a particularly devastating year: thousands, including over 65,000 displaced by the flooding of the Koshi River in August 2008, were displaced or lost their livelihoods and homes due to flooding. In 2009, an epidemic killed more than 355 people in Jajarkot and Rukum districts. District disaster relief committees (DDRCs), UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs, including Nepal Red Cross Society and other civil society organisations, have responded to these disasters.

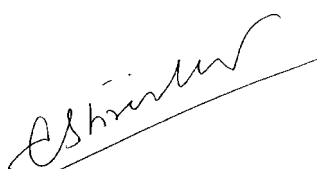
AIN is particularly grateful to Dr. Dhurba Gautam, independent researcher and consultant, for his wonderful work and excellent research in portraying a wide array and dimensions of emergency and response system practiced in Nepal. We would like to acknowledge the staff and members of DDRCs, UN agencies, the Nepal Red Cross Society, several humanitarian organisations, INGOs, and NGOs for their professional support during both field consultations and consultation meetings with district-level stakeholders in the study districts. The main objective of this study was to identify the good practices in disaster preparedness and response in Nepal as well as the major lessons and gaps. It focused in particular on the 2008 flooding in Koshi, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts and the 2009 epidemic in Jajarkot and Rukum districts. The key NGO partners of districts who were directly involved in response were also consulted. The capacity of the concerned authorities was also assessed for emergency preparedness and response.

The study will serve as the basis for developing a capacity-building framework for local actors in the future. It will also provide specific knowledge about those capacity areas that need to be developed and will be the basis for training designed to ensure that there will be good-quality, timely response and preparedness mechanisms in disaster-prone districts in Nepal in the future.

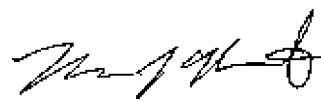
AIN would like to acknowledge the members of community disaster management committees and other stakeholders such as school teachers, social workers, youths, children, women, older people, and people with disabilities who aided our consultant by responding to the queries. Their contribution to this study were varied, but among the most valuable were sharing their experiences, thoughts and opinions about emergency preparedness and response systems and coming up with innovative ideas. In addition, we would like to acknowledge AIN Task Group on Disaster Management (TGDM) and its members for their valuable support. AIN TGDM since its inception in 2002 has been doing commendable work in terms of fostering a common knowledge thereby creating an environment for coordination and collaboration among members' activities and establishing synergy in the DRR and Emergency Response in the country. TGDM has always remained committed towards expanding its resources on behalf of all disadvantaged people in Nepal, especially those vulnerable to Natural Disaster and has continued its effort in engaging with the Government, donors, various sectors of the civil society, NGOs and excluded people on these issues.

We are also thankful to the many intellectuals who provided their time and energy from the initial stages of terms-of-reference preparation to the final stages of providing useful feedback and suggestions about the report. Some of these people include Anjalee Shakya Thakali and Dhruba Devkota of Save the Children, Reshma Shrestha of AIN, P.V. Krishnan and Shyam Sundar Jnavaly of ActionAid Nepal, Phanindra Adhikary of IRD, Pitambar Aryal of NRCS, Ram Luitel and his colleagues at UNOCHA, Bishnu Kharel of OXFAM, Isaac Anup Rana of World Vision International Nepal, Dr. BN Uprety of NCDM, Dr. Meen Chhetri of DPNet, Gopal Dahal of Lutheran World Federation, Om Mulmi of UNDP, Nabin Pradhan of Plan Nepal, the Red Cross Movement, DPNet and UN agencies.

Last but not least, our thanks goes to the AIN Steering Committee for providing valuable comments on the first draft and to Save the Children for initiating this study, major financial contribution and bringing all major stakeholders together onto one platform to support a common cause.



Chij Kumar Shrestha
Chairperson
AIN



Brian J Hunter
Country Director
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Executive Summary

1. The context and objectives

Though landslides, floods and epidemics occur annually right across Nepal, this study focuses on just nine of the nation's 75 districts: six in the Far- and Mid-West and three in the Eastern development regions. It further narrowed its focus to the 2008 flood of the Koshi River, the 2009 flash floods in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts, the 2009 landslides in Doti and Achham districts, and the 2009 epidemic in Jajarkot and Rukum districts. The main objective of the study was to assess the effectiveness of Nepal's emergency preparedness and response (EPR) system. Its specific objectives were to explore the good practices of the lessons learnt from, and the gaps of EPR.

2. Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative information was collected. Secondary sources were reviewed, information generated at "lessons learnt" workshops was evaluated, and in-depth consultations with central- and local-levels stakeholders were conducted. Visits to disaster-affected areas enabled the researcher to experience for himself the hardships of affected communities. In addition, by conducting focus group discussions as well as interviewing with key informants, particularly school teachers and social workers, elicited information and concerns about EPR. To get responses that could be expressed in quantitative terms, semi-structured interviews were also carried out. A modified version of the "most significant change" technique was used in order to explore the perceptions of respondents and to assess the effectiveness of EPR.

3. Emergency preparedness mechanisms

District disaster preparedness workshops are held to make disaster actors aware of the need to be more responsive, but since the mechanisms for monitoring and follow-up are weak, not all plans actually work. Workshops are held and trainings are conducted after needs are assessed. District natural disaster relief committees (DDRCs) do hold stakeholder meetings to make preparedness plans, but because there are no disaster management cells within them, their responses have been *ad hoc*. For example, work in search and rescue (SAR) would be more effective if adequate equipment and periodic refreshers were provided to the team and if follow-up were regular. While the MoHA has a disaster management unit under the leadership of the joint secretary, it is overwhelmed as disaster management is just one of his three major responsibilities (the other two are drugs control, planning and security). There is a need for additional staff who can provide support to the joint secretary. Relief has been

speeded up by the provision of relief funds. The Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee (CDRC) gets NRs.100 million and each district disaster relief committee gets NRs. 100 thousand. There is also a Prime Minister Relief Fund of an unlimited amount. Unfortunately, these funds are neither quick to be channelised nor very transparent. Funds for responses are not allocated to village development committees (VDCs) and because of security threats VDC secretaries do not stay in VDCs to adequately supervise what is going on because of security threats. To systematise responses, there are strong, functioning networks at the central and district levels. Social audits are used to promote accountability and transparency, but no authority gauges how well they serve in EPR work. The distribution of 15 days of relief materials is well coordinated but the package itself is not sensitive to climate, culture, age or context. Disaster actors have formulated a uniform format for conducting damage and needs assessment (DANA), but despite the efforts of the DDRC to ensure that data collection results in a single body of data agreed upon by all, sufficient cross-verification is lacking and sometimes because data is not very reliable, controversies erupt.

4. Emergency response mechanisms

The media is reliance on second-hand information and ignorance of the ground reality have at times, created confusion and delayed response. The DDRCs' "one-door" system further extends the delay, as does the tardiness of DANA and the poor flow of information between disaster actors and affected families, most of whom are not well informed about the types of relief and compensation they are entitled to. DDRC may need help developing a better communication strategy and action plan. The establishment of relief camp coordination and camp management committees (CCCMC) made it easy to distribute relief materials with minimal conflict, but there was no clear strategy to ascertain who should be in camps and for how long. Relief was distributed according to average rather than actual family size and was not always suited to the particular disaster. Sometimes relief efforts were duplicated because of the limited effectiveness of the coordination mechanism between disaster actors and government agencies or because of the absence of such a mechanism altogether. Records of the number of people who live in disaster-prone areas and of potential losses of life and property need to be kept in order to ensure that there is agreement on the number that need help.

5. Policy framework

The natural disaster relief committees (NDRCs) formed at the central, regional and district levels have clear roles and responsibilities, but those at the regional level are not fully functional and policy provisions for village-level NDRCs are lacking. Though the role of DDRCs is widely acknowledged by disaster actors, their bureaucratic structure means that its members are more responsible to their supervising line ministry or department than to the affected communities. In addition, the need to secure the approval of DDRCs for all relief discourages early action. Cluster-wise contingency plans facilitate response in theory, but don't work well on the ground because the capacity to execute plans is low and accountability, weak. The Local Self-Governance Act of 1999 gives locals the authority and responsibility to design and

implement disaster-related activities but they are not assured resources from the centre. The CDRC has formulated some standards for the provision of immediate relief in cash and/or in kind, but other than in the case of deaths, the enforcement of these standards is arbitrary.

6. Process and procedures

All disaster actors have agreed to use the NRCS's format for the initial rapid assessment, which is conducted between 24 and 72 hours, and to later employ multi-sectoral initial rapid assessment (MIRA) tools in the case of a large disaster response or cluster activation. However, the current design focuses only on water-induced hazards and it is difficult to distinguish between a 'small' and a 'large' disaster. Once information about a disaster is received and a DDRC meeting held, security personnel are dispatched to conduct a quick assessment and to initiate SAR operations. Their appraisal then shapes the nature of the "one-window" response adopted. The absence of both standing orders from the government and standard operating procedures hinder response, as does the absence of a standard DANA and the resultant idiosyncrasies. Another problem is that the existing mechanisms do not address the real needs of most vulnerable, silent, marginalised people, who, as a result, often do not get compensated for their losses.

7. Existing emergency response capacity

Though disaster actors have organised a variety of trainings to increase the efficiency of responders, these initiatives have been neither adequate nor timely. The resultant delays in action create many problems as the number of disaster-affected people increases in geometric progression. Because there is no accountable agency or specific policy for undertaking either search and rescue (SAR) or DANA, both are done on an *ad hoc* basis. The NRCS plays a crucial role in emergency response because it has local chapters across the country, but it does not have the capacity to handle such matters as education, water and sanitation, health and nutrition, and protection. Psycho-social counselling to reduce fear and trauma is not sufficient. Funds, food stocks and human resources were available for relief efforts, but the supply of non-food items was inadequate as they are not stocked. Administrative hassles like having to seek three competitive quotations for food items cause delays.

8. Application of the cluster approach and contingency plans

The cluster approach activated for the first time in Nepal after the Koshi flood was instrumental in providing immediate, integrated services, holding leaders accountable and forcing them to act predictably and reliably, strengthening networks, coordinating and consolidating humanitarian relief, and avoiding duplication. Each cluster has a contingency plan and has assumed responsibility for implementing it, but these plans have not been updated and do not specify clear-cut terms of reference. The cluster approach was not effective in handling small-scale responses in part because district-level contingency and disaster management plans had not yet been approved by district development committees (DDCs) and municipalities and no budget was allocated to the cluster level.

9. Coordination mechanisms

After a disaster, the CDRC organises meetings with government line ministries and bilateral organisations to arrange for resource mobilisation and management and plans of action and to share situation updates, and DDRCs execute the EPR work. The MoHA was able to depute its under and joint secretaries quickly to the scene of the Koshi flood and to make prompt, lifesaving decisions. Though the arrangement was spontaneous, it was nonetheless very effective. In part because of the efforts of the AIN task group, disaster actors have now adopted a culture of producing and distributing situation reports. This is a change from the past, when individual organisations kept records for their own benefit only. The culture of making joint appeals for resource mobilisation and response also exists despite the self-interest that also motivates organisational responses. Public-private initiatives were strong, but the role of DDCs and municipalities, in general, is still weak.

10. The way forward

In terms of policy, local governments should be made responsible for the formulation and execution of contingency plans and the management and distribution of relief materials and DDRCs should delegate some of the responsibility for EPR. CDRC meetings should include specialised technicians who can provide the expertise government officials may lack. In terms of coordination, DDRCs need support so that their role is limited to monitoring, providing technical backstopping and sorting out administrative hassles. The NRCS should focus on resource generation and the operationalisation of response, and district-level service and development agencies should be more accountable for effective resource mobilisation. Networks, platforms and forums should be developed to ensure that there is a single common voice and a unified response. In terms of disaster finance and resource mobilisation, though the NSDRM envisions that there are national, district and municipal authorities to oversee disaster risk management in Nepal, it is the Social Welfare Council which must assume the role of mobilising international and national non-government organisation (I/NGOs) at the central level to carry out EPR work and include budgetary provisions to do so. DRR programmes should include funds for emergency response work and the CDRC should lead the preparation of a national vulnerability and contingency plan and create room for developing VDC-level contingency plans.

11. Major lessons learned

Visits to disaster-affected areas by political leaders and high government officials during peak response periods hinders SAR, relief distribution and timely meetings of DDRCs unless they systematise their visits and action plans. Training must be extended beyond NRCS staff and security personnel; local youths, school teachers and students, local political cadres and CBO members should also be included in capacity-building initiatives. Capacity-building initiatives should also focus on how to consolidate the achievements made thus far, how to introduce and mainstream a database into local governing systems and how to mobilise community volunteers effectively to respond to disasters. Selecting inappropriate relief

materials creates rumours about the misuse of funds. Misinformation and false news reports often delay responses. Giving too much relief makes people feel that they are entitled to unconditional relief and creates a dependency syndrome. Budget for transporting relief materials must be allocated. Because there was no monitoring or follow-up, information, education and communication (IEC) and relief materials were widely misused; knowledge-building measures and demonstrations of proper usage must accompany their distribution. The high turnover rates of government staff, particularly chief district officers (CDOs), means that DDRCs do not function for several days at a time at regular intervals.

12. Recommendations

For immediate action

- a) The number of human resources in the disaster management unit of the MoHA should be increased. Each should have a clear job description to facilitate work performance evaluations and to make sure EPR is a priority task.
- b) DDRCs should assign a single media focal person to report on current and future disaster response activities to avoid confusion. They should also develop a communication strategy and an action plan.
- c) The cluster approach should be continued and strengthened by allocating clear roles and responsibilities and sharing good practices. To increase visibility and understanding, orientations should be conducted.
- d) Hazard, risk and vulnerability maps should be prepared for disaster-prone VDCs and, based on this assessment, action plans drafted and budgetary provision made by government service delivery organisations.
- e) RNDRCs should identify and stock potential warehouses with relief materials. DDRCs should draft a code of conduct to assure donors that such stocked materials are not being misused.
- f) As per the provisions of the NSDRM, a district disaster management unit should be established within each DDRC and the role of the VDC secretary should be redefined so that he/she is first responder. Each VDC should also have three task forces, one each for early warning, first aid, and SAR.
- g) Disaster actors should advocate for a policy which adopts different response systems carefully tailored to the real needs of different vulnerable groups and which provides for the equitable allocation of resources to DDRCs based on their risk and disaster profiles.

In the long term

- a) Locals should be trained in SAR techniques and provided the equipment they need. They should also be trained in food storage and handling techniques, maintaining health and hygiene during floods, and the managing and distributing of relief materials.
- b) District disaster management plans should focus as much on disaster risk reduction (DRR) as emergency response. EPR roles and responsibilities should be defined in VDC and DDC planning guidelines and incorporated into disaster management plans.

- c) Disaster-affected communities should adopt preventive measures like community- and school-led total sanitation and appropriate behavioural changes, including the declaration of open defecation free area and the provision of support for toilet construction.
- d) Each DDRC should have a geographical information system (GIS) coordinated through a GIS secretariat headed by a disaster programme officer to establish and update a databank in standardised format. Standard operating procedures must be adopted and the disaster-affected identification card system should be systematised and its use monitored.
- e) More disaster management committees (DMCs) should be formed and their capacities built using drills and simulation exercises involving local leaders and community-based organisation (CBO) members to manage and effective response. In addition, a mechanism should be developed to ensure the sustainability of existing DMCs and enable them to function even after particular projects have been completed. Emphasis should be given to ensure that their achievements can be mainstreamed with local development planning and that their roles are defined and acknowledged in the process.
- f) A process for selecting competent and professional companies to supply the needed non-food items should be adopted in advance.
- g) Nepal's response system should be extended beyond floods and landslides to include fires, thunderstorms, glacial lake outburst floods, cold waves, and other disasters. Workshops should continue to be held before the monsoon, but also at other crucial times for other hazards, like, the beginning of winter and autumn.
- h) Considering the need of internal resource mobilisation for effective disaster response, a policy to use the *chungi kar* (a local tax) collected by municipalities and part of the *sanshad bikas kosh* (parliamentary fund) should also carried out.
- i) Efforts should be continued to prepare district disaster preparedness plans (DDPP) in the remaining 12 districts. DDPPs should include response guidelines. An autonomous and professionally competent, multi-disciplinary national focal institution for disaster management should be established to manage disaster properly.
- j) The budget for DDRCs should be increased from NRs. 100,000 to at least NRs. two million and a mechanism to use VDC, DDC and municipality resources to respond to disaster should be developed. As a part of resource management, the government should work in partnership with UN agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in implementing its long-term DRR strategy.
- k) The government should establish mechanisms for systematising emergency operation centres so that they can provide sufficient material support. At the least, specific roles and responsibilities should be defined and concrete plans written.
- l) The cluster approach should be enforced to ensure that responses draw on the expertise of the members of each of the eight clusters and thereby save time and resources. Clusters should be activated according to the nature of the response required using a well-coordinated effort.
- m) Early warning systems (EWS) and climate forecasting systems should be developed at district or regional level to make community-level EWS functional. More resources and efforts should be devoted to EWS and climate forecasting.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	1
Foreword	2
Executive Summary	4
1. Background	13
1.1 The context	13
1.2 Study context	15
1.3 Objectives	17
1.4 Methodology	17
1.5 Limitations	19
1.6 Organisation of the report	19
1.7 Emergency preparedness and response status in Nepal: A policy review	20
2. Major findings	23
2.1 Current emergency preparedness and response mechanism	23
2.1.1 Emergency preparedness	23
2.1.2 Emergency response mechanism	29
2.2 Policy framework	34
2.3 Process and procedures	37
2.4 Existing emergency response capacity	41
2.5 Application of the cluster approach and contingency plans	46
2.6 Coordination mechanisms	48
3. The way forward	51
3.1 Policy	51
3.2 Coordination	51
3.3 Disaster finance and resource mobilisation	52
4. Major lessons learnt	53
5. Recommendation	55
5.1 Recommendations for immediate action	55
5.2 Recommendations in the long term	57

List of Maps, Figures, Boxes and Tables

Map 1: Study districts of East and West	15
Box 1: EPR-related acts, policies and plans	20
Box 2: Acts and strategies that support disaster management	22
Box 3: Government standards of relief	35
Table 1.1: Human casualties and damage caused by disasters from 1971 to 2008	14
Table 1.2: Human casualties and populations affected by disasters by study district	16
Table 1.3: Number of respondents by district	18
Table 2.1a: Practice of emergency preparedness within the community	28
Table 2.1b: Satisfaction with response mechanism in recent years	33
Table 2.2a: Are you familiar with policy standards?	37
Table 2.3a: Is the existing DANA approach systematic?	38
Table 2.3b: Are relief materials timely and adequate?	39
Table 2.3c: Is the relief package appropriate in terms of quality?	40
Table 2.4a: Are people skilled in SAR and first aid and are sufficient materials available?	42
Table 2.4b: Is there adequate psycho-social counselling to reduce trauma and suffering?	44
Table 2.5a: Are contingency plans and the cluster approach are effective for EPR?	46
Table 2.6a: Are existing coordination mechanisms and networks beneficial for EPR?	48
Table 2.6b: Is the DDRC's role in coordination effective?	49



Nepal's Emergency Preparedness and Response System

Good practices, lessons learnt and gaps

1. Background

1.1 The context

Nepal's physiological, geological, ecological, meteorological and demographic characteristics make it vulnerable to disasters. In fact, in a survey of 200 countries, Nepal was ranked 11th and 30th most vulnerable in terms of earthquakes and floods respectively. The region as a whole is equally susceptible: of the world's 40 worst disasters, 67% occurred in Asia and 50% of those were in the SAARC region (World Bank, 2005¹).

Disasters² in Nepal include floods, landslides, droughts, earthquakes, storms, avalanches, hailstorms, fires, and epidemics. About 80% of the total land area of 147,181 sq km comprises mountains and hills, landforms prone to floods and



¹ World Bank, *Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, Progress Report 1*, World Bank, www.worldbank.org

² According to the Natural Disaster Relief Act of 1982, disasters include earthquakes, floods, landslides, fires, droughts, epidemics, and storms as well as industrial accidents and accidents caused by explosions or poisoning.

landslides. The Tarai plains³, in contrast, suffer mostly from regular and flash floods, fires, cold waves, droughts and epidemics. The major factors responsible for the high incidence of disasters are the high degree of environmental degradation, the fragility of the land mass, gradients of the mountain slopes, rapid population growth, and slow economic development.

Evidence suggests that floods and landslides are often interrelated: some landslides are triggered by riverbank erosion, and flash floods usually occur when the temporary dam created by a landslide suddenly breaches and river water is released suddenly, inundating areas downstream. Other causes of flash floods in rivers originating in hilly regions include continuous heavy rainfall, avalanches, snowstorms and cloudbursts.

Table 1.1: Human casualties and damage caused by disasters from 1971 to 2008 in the study districts

S.N.	District	Human casualties (No.)		Affected Population	House damage (No.)	
		Dead	Injured		Complete	Partial
	Western districts					
1	Jajarkot	490	259	14,247	604	342
2	Rukum	366	149	13,705	761	496
3	Kailali	1056	893	66,996	2265	447
4	Kanchanpur	281	4968	30,853	848	566
5	Achham	627	97	213,793	299	43
6	Doti	784	2250	32,548	151	184
	Eastern districts					
1	Sunsari	531	2911	258,577	14,923	9195
2	Saptari	831	545	431,075	25,542	2803
3	Udayapur	329	744	75,845	4367	3854
	Grand total	5295	12,816	1,137,639	49,760	17930

Source: NRCS situation reports 2008 and 2009

In Nepal, emergency preparedness and response (EPR) needs to be engaged in annually to lessen the impacts of disaster. However, because of limitations in its legislation, policies and legal provisions, the tumultuous political situation, and the government's inability to comply with the existing legal provisions, the EPR system in Nepal is often problematic and challenging.

³ A low (100-300masl) and flat land stretching along the southern part of the country next to the Indian—border

1.2 Study context

Though landslides, floods and epidemics occur annually right across Nepal (see Table 1.1), this study focuses on just nine of Nepal's 75 districts⁴: a total of six in the Far- and Mid-West and three in the Eastern development regions (see Map 1). It further narrowed its focus to the 2008 Koshi River flood, the 2009 flash floods in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts, the 2009 landslides in Doti and Achham districts, and the 2009 epidemic in Jajarkot and Rukum districts.

The Koshi flood was the biggest of its kind⁵ in Nepal. On 18 August, Nepal's biggest river, the Koshi, breached its banks, causing serious flooding in four village development committees (VDCs)—Sripur, Haripur, Paschim Kusawa and Laukahi and partially inundating several other areas in Sunsari District, and in the eastern part of Saptari District.



⁴ Jajarkot and Rukum districts in the Mid-west Development Region; Kailali, Kanchanpur, Doti and Achham Districts in Far-West Development Region; and Udaypur, Saptari and Sunsari Districts in the Eastern Development Region.

⁵ It was a flash flood caused by the breach of its embankment.

The flood affected 42,807 Nepalese⁶ of 7,572 households, destroyed dozens of drinking water and electricity supply systems, damaged approximately 5,000 hectares of standing crops, covered arable land in a thick layer of sand and silt deposits, and killed thousands of livestock. The flood also damaged several kilometres of embankment as well as the East-West Highway. As a result, it severely disrupted communications and transport and divided the displaced families into two parts—those in Sunsari District and those in Saptari District.

In 2009, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts were severely affected by flash floods⁷. Flooding in the Mohana, Pathariya and Kada rivers in Kailali and in the Dodha and Mahakali rivers in Kanchanpur were also devastating. The floods not only damaged houses and standing crops but also eroded physical infrastructures, including roads, bridges, culverts, and schools, and social infrastructures like kinship, social bonds, and people's networks⁸. The unusual late monsoon rains took both local communities and disaster actors by surprise.

The diarrhoea epidemic⁹ which struck the Mid-and-Far-West development regions in June 2009 took four months to get under control. Jajarkot and Rukum were hit worst: there, the death toll was 225 and 58 respectively. The long drought and poor sanitation were held largely responsible for the outbreak, and geographical remoteness and poor preparedness resulted in an ineffective response.

Table 1.2: Human casualties and populations affected by disasters by study district

S.N.	District	Types of hazard	Deaths (No.)	Affected people
Western districts				
1	Jajarkot	Epidemic	225	25616
2	Rukum	Epidemic	58	12815
3	Kailali	Flood	4	325
4	Kanchanpur	Flood	4	288
5	Achham	Landslide	33	12054
6	Doti	Landslide	14	2170
Eastern districts				
1	Sunsari	Flood	17	42807
2	Saptari	Flood	1	
3	Udayapur	Flood	2	NA

Source: UNOCHA SITREP (2009); NRCS SITREP (2008)

⁶ An estimated 11,000 Indian nationals in 2,328 households were also affected. (Government's assessment report of 2008)

⁷ There were three floods, the one with the most impact being the third, which was in full spate from 4-6 October. It is the impact of this third flood which is highlighted in this report.

⁸ Gautam, Dhruva. (2006). *Damage and Need Assessment: A Sociological Study*. Lutheran World Federation, Kathmandu.

⁹ Later it was proved to be cholera.



In 2009, landslides devastated the Far-West particularly Doti and Achham districts. According to the Meteorological Forecasting Division of Surkhet, a low pressure system from the West caused unusually heavy rainfall: in just 24 hours, 221 mm of rain fell in Dipayal, 210 mm in Dadeldhura. Twenty six people died (six in Doti and 20 in Achham) and 731 households were affected (see Table 1.2 for the human casualties and populations affected by disasters in the study district). Cropland was lost, roads submerged, and people's lives and livelihood disturbed.

1.3 Objectives

The main objective of the study was to identify the effectiveness of Nepal's emergency preparedness and response system. Its specific objectives were to explore the good practices of, lessons learnt from, and gaps of EPR.

1.4 Methodology

The methodology adopted focused on collecting both qualitative and quantitative information from a variety of disaster-affected people, government agencies, and international and national non-government organisations (I/NGOs).

First, the secondary sources available were reviewed. These included situation reports published and circulated by the government, UN agencies, the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and other I/NGOs. In addition, published and unpublished study reports and documents were examined to help establish the status of EPR and to identify the key issues and concerns of disaster-affected communities. The information generated at "lessons learnt" workshops led by different I/NGOs, district natural disaster relief committees (DDRCs), UN agencies, the NRCS in various districts was also reviewed critically.

The second step was holding in-depth consultations with central - and - local level stakeholders who had been involved in the Koshi flood EPR in order to assess issues like the extent of preparedness, the response mechanism, the significance of policy provisions, and the level of coordination. Several meetings with senior

members of the government at the national, regional and local levels were held to get an overall picture of the government's mechanisms and planned interventions for EPR. Interviews and interactive meetings were conducted with DDRCs, UN agencies, the NRCS, and I/NGOs to identify good practices, major learning and the level of coordination. In addition, specific information was sought from cluster leads by interviewing individuals.

The third step was to conduct more than two weeks¹⁰ of field work in the seven districts in order to capture the real perceptions, issues and concerns of the disaster-affected communities. Participatory tools and techniques were employed to generate specific information. Formats and checklists were carefully prepared beforehand for administration in the field. Transect walks, participant observation, key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted on site. Disaster-affected areas were visited and consulted with disaster-affected communities in order to visualize the situation and their hardships and to listen to their stories about how they managed to protect their lives and livelihoods during disasters. Key informants such as school teachers and social workers were encouraged to share their issues and concerns about the overall preparedness and response system. FGDs were held with disaster-affected communities in order to elicit information about the effectiveness of the overall response system and the underlying preparedness mechanism. Care was taken that these FGDs were balanced in terms of both gender and ethnic group. When the field work was carried out in the Koshi region, none of the displaced people were still living in refugee camps, but refugees in Kanchanpur were consulted about their issues. A meeting with some of the members of the Koshi Victim Struggle Committee was fruitful in terms of providing information about the preparedness of disaster actors, response system, key bottlenecks in terms of coordination, and good practices.

Table 1.3: Number of respondents by district

Districts	Disaster-affected people (no.)					Total
	Youth	Children	Elderly	Single women	PwD*	
Western districts						
Jajarkot	52	17	16	5	2	92
Rukum	20	6	6	4	1	37
Kailali	65	20	23	14	5	127
Kanchanpur	83	25	16	6	4	134
Sub-total	220	68	61	29	12	390
Eastern districts						
Udaypur	32	14	15	7	3	71
Saptari	60	18	12	12		104
Sunsari	142	23	26	19	5	215
Sub-total	234	55	53	38	8	390
Total	454	123	114	67	20	780

*PwD-People with disability

¹⁰ The Western districts were visited from 23 to 31 December, 2009, while those in the East were visited from January 7 to 14, 2010.



In addition to the above strategies, semi-structured interviews were carried out to get a variety of responses that could be expressed in quantitative terms. While selecting respondents, gender and other social distinctions were considered¹¹ (see Table 1.3). In appraising the effectiveness of the EPR system, a modified version of the “most significant change”¹² technique was used in order to explore the perceptions of respondents and to assess the effectiveness of EPR.

In the final step, the information gathered from various sources was analysed and interpreted and a report produced.

1.5 Limitations

Despite the many efforts Save the Children made to notify disaster-affected people, government agencies, and I/NGOs in advance so that consultations would run smoothly, this study was forced to make several compromises with respect to its pre-defined methodologies. First, it was not possible to meet and interact with all DDRC members and disaster actors as they were busy. In Kailali district, the Prime Minister’s visit forced the field plans and consultation meetings to be re-scheduled. Second, because of the limited time frame and geographical remoteness of Jajarkot and Rukum districts, very few VDCs were visited. Third, for Doti and Achham districts, the study relied only on secondary information and on information derived from the “lessons learnt” workshop conducted by the Regional Natural Disaster Relief Committee (RNDRC) with technical support from the UNOCHA. Fourth, in Koshi, interaction with displaced families was limited as they had returned home from the refugee camps.

1.6 Organisation of the report

The report is organised in five sections. Section one describes the study background and overall scenario of EPR status in Nepal from a legal perspective. Section two contains the major findings on current EPR mechanisms, the status of policy

¹¹ Out of the total 780 respondents, 392 were male and 388 female.

¹² MSC is a participatory monitoring and evaluation instrument that involves gathering knowledge about changes that participants have witnessed and the modifications of perceptions that have occurred.

frameworks, processes and procedures, the existing emergency response capacity, and the applications of contingency plans, the cluster approach and coordination mechanisms. Major lessons learnt are summarised in the third section, and section four summarises the key ways forward in terms of policy, coordination and disaster finance/resource mobilisation. The report concludes with recommendations in the fifth section.

1.7 Emergency preparedness and response status in Nepal: A policy review

The National Disaster Relief Act (NDRA) was promulgated in 1982 to steer relief and response work in a systematic way. Prior to its passage, relief and rescue works were carried out as social work. Because of the absence of national disaster relief regulations, the NDRA is not fully effective and relief and response work is based on *ad hoc* government decisions. Though the NDRA provides for four sub-committees—relief and treatment; supply, shelter and rehabilitation; regional natural disaster; and local natural disaster—not all committees function adequately. Furthermore, the NDRA does not describe the duties and responsibilities of any disaster actor other than the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). As a result, it is often difficult to mobilise for disaster actors in emergency response.

Box 1: EPR-related acts, policies and plans

- ◆ Natural Disaster Relief Act, 1982 (Revised 1989, 1992)
- ◆ National Plan of Action on Disaster Management, 1996
- ◆ Establishment of DPNet, 1997
- ◆ Local Self-Governance Act, 1999
- ◆ Tenth Plan of government of Nepal, 2002-2007
- ◆ Model agreement between the MoHA and the United Nations Office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs to expedite customs procedures during emergencies, 31 May, 2006
- ◆ Three-Year Interim Plan, 2008-2010
- ◆ Revised Disaster Management Act and Policies, 2007
- ◆ National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management, 2009

The response system was systematised only after the earthquake of 1988, which led to the first amendment of the NDRA in 1989. After flooding in 1991 and 1992, the NDRA was again amended in 1992 to foster still more effective preparedness and mobilisation. In 1996, the National Plan of Action on Disaster Management was formulated to broaden the scope of disaster and further internalise disaster preparedness, response, reconstruction and rehabilitation and mitigation as essential components of disaster management. It also allocated the roles and responsibilities of key disaster actors and prioritised activities to increase the resilience of communities and to lessen disaster risks.



Following the learning of the 1993 flood and guided by the Wakayama Conference, the Disaster Preparedness Network (DPNet) was established in 1997 as a loose network charged with building the capacity of disaster actors in disaster preparedness. In 1999, the Local Self-governance Act was enacted to promote decentralised disaster risk management (DRM), but it lacks supporting regulations and budgetary allocations. The 10th five-year Plan (2002-2007) of the government and the Three-Year Interim Plan (2008-2010) also highlight the need for promoting the security of life and property from all forms of disasters. A new Disaster Management Act and Policies was initiated in 2007 to address key issues and concerns through vigorous consultation with the disaster management committees and NGOs working in disasters and handed over to the MoHA and the National Planning Commission (NPC). In 2005, the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) and the 2nd World Conference on Disaster Risk made the need to formulate a national strategy for disaster risk management (NSDRM) clear. The government, UN agencies and disaster actors began to develop an NSDRM in 2008; it came into effect in October 2009.

Under the provisions of the new NSDRM, disaster risk reduction (DRR) focal desks were established in 12 key ministries, including the Ministry of Local Development. These desk which released new directives to implement local development activities and drafted planning guidelines for DDCs and VDCs so they came incorporate DRR as a key priority. The National Platform on DRR, a body adopting the spirit of the HFA, was formed in Nepal in 2009 under the chairpersonship of the Secretary of the MoHA. Its members represented government and UN agencies, the police, the army, the NRCS, I/NGOs, the media and the corporate sector. The NPC has also developed DRR mainstreaming guidelines to incorporate in development plans.

Following the 2006 flooding in Western Nepal, revision of the disaster management act began. However, revisions are still in process and have not yet been approved by the government. The cluster approach started in 2007 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee comprising UN agencies, I/NGOs, Red Cross movements and

the government was officially used and institutionalised after the 2008 Koshi flood. In addition, more roles and responsibilities were allocated to the Department of Water Induced Disaster Prevention, the Water and Energy Secretariats Commission, the Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management for emergency preparedness to water induced disasters.

Box 2: Acts and strategies that support disaster management

- ◆ Land and Water Base Protection, 1982
- ◆ Soil and Watershed Conservation Act, 1982
- ◆ Water Resources Act, 1992
- ◆ Agricultural Perspective Plan, 1992
- ◆ Local Self-Governance Act, 1995
- ◆ Shelter Policy, 1996
- ◆ Building Act, 1997
- ◆ Water Resources Strategy Nepal, 2002
- ◆ National Water Plan, 2005
- ◆ Water-Induced DM Policy, 2006

The government also ratified the Tampere Convention, which relates to the provision of telecommunication resources for disaster mitigation and relief operations, as well as the Framework Convention on Civil Defence Assistance. A task force on comprehensive law reform is under the review of the MoHA in order to develop disaster relief directives and standards. The National Policy on Disaster Management and district preparedness and action plans¹³ were formulated in collaboration with international agencies but there is still no standard format. The government has also passed other acts which are closely related to DRR (see Box 2).



¹³ Action plans were prepared for five districts (Chitwan, Makwanpur, Sindhuli, Syangja and Tanahu) out of a total of 22 highly vulnerable districts and a total disaster risks management pilot exercise was conducted in Chitwan District.

2. Major Findings

2.1 Current emergency preparedness and response mechanism

2.1.1 Emergency preparedness mechanisms

Mechanisms for emergency preparedness are several. Each is described below, along with its limitations.

- a. **Pre monsoon and district disaster preparedness workshops:** These workshops are held annually at the district, region and central level to make disaster actors aware of the need to be more responsive to the needs of disaster affected people by creating plans and programmes in advance. In addition, workshops serve to make the DDRC more accountable for executing those plans. These workshops used to be limited to the centre level, but with a push from disaster actors, were scaled up in disaster-prone districts in 2009. Though the mechanisms for monitoring and following up on these plans and for gauging their effectiveness is not yet at the desirable level it is gradually improving. The reasons for the ineffectiveness, of these workshops include inadequate resources, low commitment to their implementation, and a culture in which disaster activities are accorded little priority. If the outcomes of workshops are not addressed seriously, investing in such planning is not meaningful.
- b. **Stakeholder meetings for planning:** DDRCs hold stakeholder meetings which disaster actors and disaster management committees (DMCs) attend in order to make preparedness plan. Search and rescue (SAR) is the responsibility of the government, but there is no disaster management cell within the DDRC to monitor and follow up on progress. As a result, the government's response is sometimes *ad hoc* because there is little review or reflection by stakeholders during a disaster.
- c. **Training needs assessments:** The greater the capacity of human resources and the greater their sufficiency, the more timely and adequate the response will be. As a result, capacity-building in the form of trainings and orientations are essential. To make these efforts as effective as possible, the government first assesses current needs and then takes steps to address them. Trainings are conducted in a variety of topics, including SAR, first aid, community-based disaster preparedness, and participatory vulnerability analysis. Following training, early warning systems (EWS) committees were formed to translate the acquired skills and knowledge into practice. Work in SAR is not effective either the western or eastern districts surveyed except in some DIPECHO-

supported communities. The reason for the relative lack of success in SAR work is the lack of adequate equipment, periodic refreshers and follow-up. In some instances, trained community members and security personnel feel helpless because they do not have adequate SAR equipment's. Sometimes the transfer of trained security personnel creates knowledge gaps in SAR. In fact, because newly-posted security personnel are ignorant about nature of hazards, they are often at risk. Hom Bahadur Khadka, Assistant CDO, Saptari explained the problem as follows:



Hom Bahadur Khadka

SAR work in the field is still carried out by untrained personnel, including NRCS volunteers, soldiers and police officers, though some individuals at the central level are trained. Thirteen soldiers died in a fire in Ramechhap District because they did not have enough information about this sort of hazard. During the Koshi, Kailali and Kanchanpur floods, local people had to come to the rescue of the security personnel who were sent to respond to the disaster. Rescuers lack SAR equipment and do not have basic skills, like the ability to swim. Responders lack basic skills and SAR materials are not in the ready position. The government needs to dispatch trained security personnel to hazard-prone areas in order to rescue disaster affected people immediately.

- d. **Management of resources:** In order to make it possible to respond, the central natural disaster relief committee (CDRC) has a relief fund of NRs 100 million and each DDRC has a fund of NRs. 100 thousand. One advantage of these funds is the amount provisioned is not frozen at the end of the fiscal year even if it is not spent. However, the funds are not very transparent: how much each fund contains and how much is spent on disaster response is not carefully accounted for. In addition, funds are allocated to the CDRC based on past trends in the number of human casualties and the magnitude of physical damage and are not necessarily adequate. Another weakness in the funding system is that there is no provision whatsoever at the VDC level for disaster response: despite the fact that their annual budget is more than two million rupees, they do not even allocate the 20 thousand needed to procure SAR materials.

Another difficulty is that when VDC secretaries are ready to allocate funds, they are unable to do so because of delays in the provisioning of budgets. Because of the long process of budget channelisation to districts, VDCs do not receive money at the beginning of the fiscal year¹⁴. Bhikku Chaudhary, a resident of Mohanpur (Thapapur VDC) of Kailali offered his opinion on the situation:

¹⁴ Nepal's fiscal year began on 15 July and early August is the monsoon season which is most vulnerable to floods, landslides and epidemics.



Bhikku Chaudhary

To me, the most important factor is the dedication and seriousness of the district government (i.e. DDC). Though the majority of VDCs in Kailali District experience flooding annually, VDC secretaries are reluctant to allocate resources for flood response from their funds. Because they have to resort to hunting down funding after a flood has occurred, their disaster responses are not as effective as they could be. If we do not use VDC funds to set up emergency response mechanisms to protect our lives and livelihoods, there is really no reason to allocate an annual budget at all. This is because without an emergency fund, our main focus ends up being dealing with the impacts of floods rather than promoting general community development work.

Further complicating matters is the fact that in Nepal's post-conflict environment, with threats from so-called political gangs rife, VDC secretaries stay in district headquarters and cannot adequately supervise what is going on in the VDCs.

The government has also established a very large Prime Minister Relief Fund to ensure that its response to any natural or human-made disaster is timely. This fund supplements that of the CDRC, and it is used for disaster relief and response. In particular, it is intended that the need of disaster-affected people for food and non-food relief items in the initial stage of a disaster is met. However, the fund is sometimes spent on treating political leaders and supporting the families of martyrs.

Following a disaster, the CDRC usually organises a meeting involving central-level stakeholders to familiarise them with the situation and to make them aware of the needs of the affected population. It controls the central disaster relief fund but its use of these funds is not transparent and it is not able to channel adequate funds promptly. In this regard, Pushpa Raj Sharma of NRCS of Kailali had this to say:



Pushpa Raj Sharma

Arrangements for resource mobilisation are still ad hoc. In Kailali District last year, the DDRC promised to arrange for up to NRs. 300,000 to be reimbursed to NGOs which provided relief materials. The actual repayment of the money, however, was substantially delayed because of the long administrative channel and organisational hassles. As a result of this experience, not a single institution is ready to provide temporary support to the DDRC again. I think the DDRC should have its own fund ready to be mobilised immediately.

For effective resource mobilisation, once a NRCS district chapter or other disaster actors are identified and roles are assigned to each of them, there needs to be a clear resource mobilisation plan. However, experience has demonstrated that not all organisations fulfil the commitments they make during the planning phase. Their lack of action adversely affects the overall response system.

- e. **Good networks:** To make responses systematic, strong networks have been established at the centre. They include the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), UN agencies, the Association of INGOs in Nepal (AIN), DiMAN and DPNet. There are also loose networks like NNDAC at the district level. All help facilitate disaster response. In communities where there are DMCs, and disaster task forces, responses were carried out without dispute. Though social audits are gradually being introduced in order to promote accountability and transparency, there is no proper authority to monitor or gauge the quality of their performance in EPR work.
- f. **Sectoral approach:** Through the tireless efforts of disaster actors, relief is provided for 15 days initially, and the distribution of relief materials is properly enforced. However, the relief package is designed only with floods in the Tarai communities in mind and it is not suitable for other hazards of other ecological zones. There is no ready-made standard relief package if the disaster occurs elsewhere despite the fact that the uniformity and consistency of relief distribution should be a central issue. The current blanket approach to the provision of non-food relief items, which does not consider climate, season, cultural or social context, or age, should be reviewed critically.
- g. **Damage and needs assessment:**
Because they realise the importance of reliable data for effective response, disaster actors have come up with some formats and structures for rapid assessment, multi-stakeholders initial rapid assessment (MIRA) and the damage and needs assessment (DANA), which enable them to count human casualties and assess the extent of physical damage as well as to pinpoint those actions needed to mitigate the impacts of a disaster. While it is encouraging that the DDRC assumed a leadership role in DANA, despite its good intentions, it does not have a pool of multi-disciplinary human resources to carry it out effectively. The lack of a clear system of classifying disaster-affected people and damage also rendered DANA less effective than it could be. There is a need to mainstream assessment tools and processes to make sure that DANA exercises are carried out without dispute.

Despite the efforts of the DDRC to ensure that data collection results in a single body of data agreed upon by all, the mechanism to verify and cross-verify the data gathered by various sources, including the NRCS, the Nepal Police, VDCs, and political parties is still inadequate. Rajendra Rawal, Chairperson of Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist, Kanchanpur said this about the conflict that generally ensues:



Rajendra Rawal

There is always a debate about the number of disaster affected people while carrying out a DANA. People who are on the lists of the Nepal Police or VDCs are not on the list of NRCS list and vice versa. In some cases, relatives and friends of the data collectors appear on the lists. This was the reason that genuine flood-affected people in Dekhatbhuli, Kanchanpur, refused all support. They didn't allow anyone to enter their camps and warned outsiders not to bring any relief materials to distribute. Because of the conflict that occurred last year while collecting data and distributing relief materials, some VDCs even refused to allow the team of DANA to conduct its assessment. Their refusal stemmed in part from the fact that they were waiting for big things like land instead of food and non-food items.

The method by which data should be collected is not clearly defined before the monsoon, and individuals and organisations involved in data collection (response teams) are not properly oriented to the task to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. In fact, there is little understanding of the importance of accurate data collection among the collectors. As a result, data was sometimes faked and controversies over the distribution of relief materials arose. Trust in the data is very low as its nature is influenced by political and other vested interests. There are innumerable complaints about how inaccurate data has left many affected people to languish. Though NRCS does apply its own set of criteria in carrying out its assessments, these criteria may not always suit the needs of other agencies and authorities. Therefore DANA needs to be done in a neutral, independent and transparent manner in order to minimise the number and severity of problems likely to arise in the future. It is crucial that DDRC members be adequately trained in the methodology, information collection techniques, analysis and reporting required to achieve the standards of the DANA.

- h. **Vulnerability mapping of flood-prone VDCs:** In Kailali, some disaster actors prepared hazard and vulnerability maps of select flood-prone VDCs using past trends in the number of human casualties and the extent of physical damage. These maps helped to identify the most vulnerable zones and people so that information could be used to develop appropriate strategies. In Rukum and Jajarkot, affected VDCs were categorised as highly, moderately, and partially

affected. In the Koshi response, categorisation into red, yellow and green zones during the relief and rescue phase helped responders provide immediate relief and design appropriate compensation packages based on the losses incurred. However, there is no proper plan for relocating vulnerable and at-risk settlements to safer places because of little political commitment and inadequate resources. Because of the absence of an alternative shelter, the extent of encroachment on forest areas is high.

- i. **A disaster management section within the Ministry of Home Affairs:** The government has established a disaster management section within the MoHA under the leadership of the joint secretary. Under his/her command, there are two under-secretaries and two section officers. The joint secretary has three different responsibilities: disaster management, drugs control, planning and security. Because his/her duties are so extensive, it is difficult for him/her to be as active in EPR and advocacy work as he/she needs to be. The emergency operation centre soon to be established within MoHA may provide the joint secretary with the support she/he needs by ensuring that there are trained human resources in the disaster management unit.

Table 2.1a: Is emergency preparedness practiced within the community ?

Disaster response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	288	73.84	311	79.74
No	67	17.17	59	15.12
Total	355	91.01	370	94.86
No response	35	8.99	20	5.12
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interview, 2009/10

- j. **District disaster management plans:** District disaster management plans are formed at the district level to foster preparedness and emergency response work. Using these plans as a foundation, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and Earthquake Safety days are celebrated to make the masses aware of the reason for preparedness and response mechanisms. The plans help mobilise DMCs and community-level networks. However, there is too much duplication of planning involved in particular DDRCs and DDCs make similar disaster plans under different names.

Overall, the practice of implementing emergency preparedness measures within communities both in the East and in the West is increasing (see Table 2.1a), though Eastern districts are slightly more prepared because the area witnessed the intervention of a large number of disaster actors during the Koshi flood.

2.1.2 Emergency response mechanisms

The study revealed that the following mechanisms are in place for dealing with emergencies. However, the effect of each is undermined by the various shortcomings outlined below.

- a. **Media-led response system:** The media can play an important role in responding to emergencies. In particular, it helps people realise and claim their rights and influences decision making at national level. However, during a disaster, when things are done in a rush, the media often relies on second-hand information and does not adequately assess the ground reality. When this happens, it creates confusion among disaster affected people and increases the dependency syndrome.

A media-led response system is in place. Because of the mobilisation of the media during the 2008 Koshi flood, the response was overwhelming. Since there was less media coverage of the flood-affected communities in Kailali and Kanchanpur in the same year, these communities were relatively neglected. The disasters in Dhanusha and Mahottari were also overlooked. In general, the Nepali media places little value on emergency responses to local disasters partly because of a lack of awareness about disaster issues. For instance, Koshi became a big issue not because of the Nepali media but because of international media, which focused on the far more devastating impact the flood had in India. If mention of disaster response is made at all, they are soon forgotten. Despite the important role in EPR, the media has failed to influence disaster management policy either when major calamities are in full swing or afterwards.

In some instances, disaster actors are reluctant to respond immediately even if skills and resources are available because they want their work to be as visible as possible. The delays are partly because of the DDRC's "one-door system". Currently, no one in the DDRC is responsible for looking after the media to make sure information is properly channelised. Because the messages that the CDRC and DDRC issue to act immediately is lost, lower level disaster actors adopt a "wait-and-see" strategy and delay several days before they mobilise resources.

- b. **Local-level response capacity:** Disaster actors have ensured that local-level response has been effective, particularly in Dhanusha and Mahottari districts in 2008. Local actors, including the members of DMCs have received capacity-building training and can now manage disaster funds more facilely. However, the sense that various I/NGOs each has its own “territory” has meant that other actors are not free to act in others territories and has hampered response. For the most part, VDC-level DMCs have not been established and those that do exist are not able to steer disaster-related activities, including emergency response, well. Ganesh Singh, a local resident near to Mohana Camp of Kanchanpur expresses the inadequacy of the “equal-relief-for-all-families” principle:



Ganesh Singh

In Mohanpur Camp of Kailali, a police officer of the area police office assured us that we would get compensation from the government and asked us to provide food and non-food items to meet the immediate need. We did so. After some time, however, he was suddenly transferred, leaving us in the lurch. Although we clearly laid out our expectations to, we were unable to settle on an adequate amount to compensate us for our expenditures the DDRC. Since the DDRC was reluctant to support us, we will have to settle for receiving equal amounts for each family.

In a few cases, when the names of villages were similar, the relief to which one village was entitled was taken away by another village. For instance, in Kailali District, Bhiteriya was flooded, but the adjacent village of Banjhariya used its political clout to get the relief earmarked for Bhiteriya.

- c. **Humanitarian hubs:** Responses in the Eastern and in the Mid- and Far-West development regions were quick because of the existence of hubs of humanitarian organisations. Response systems are guided more by the disaster actors in particular locations than by the decisions of government who carry out DANA. However, it is precisely because development actors confine their programmes to limited areas that other areas are neglected. Till now, disaster actors have not been able to adequately delineate the difference between development work and humanitarian work.
- d. **Information and communication:** A system of communication and public information is extremely important during any emergency. Displaced people who are waiting for assistance from disaster actors need to have proper information if they are first to stay alive and later to be able to make decisions about how to restore their livelihoods. At present, however, information does not flow between disaster actors and affected families. The degree of coordination between central ministers and local offices is not adequate.

Affected families are not aware of what the plans and programmes of disaster actors are or of what sorts of relief they will be provided and for how long. The DDRC may need help developing a communication strategy and action plan during disasters.

Because they recognise the value of disseminating information to the public, a few disaster actors have started to display information, including plans, mandates and budgets, at public meetings, on notice boards and by FM broadcasts. However, such efforts are the exception, not the rule. In general, public information is not disseminated in a timely and clear manner at the local level and the majority of people are not well informed about the types of relief and compensation they are entitled to.

Because the distribution of relief has no pre-determined guidelines about what is available and for how long, the affected develop a "relief mindset" and believe they are entitled to unconditional relief. As a result, they wait before taking independent steps to restore their livelihoods. It seems that people fear that if they demonstrate any sign of recovery that disaster actors will withdraw the relief and compensation packages they have promised. Anxiety levels are high because people do not know when the government will finally provide them compensation. This lack of information also undermines trust in disaster actors. Usha Thapa, a local resident near Mohana camp of Kanchanpur captures these feelings of insecurity and frustration:



Usha Thapa

Because of the dearth of information, people spent more than Rs.1200 on transportation, food and accommodation to get relief materials like plastic buckets and jugs worth just Rs.3000. Because the affected have no idea what or how much they will receive, or when or how long they will receive it, there is always confusion. It seems to them that the disaster actors are cheating them.

- e. **Camp coordination and camp management committees:** In the East, the establishment of relief camps coordination and camp management committees (CCMCs) made it easy to distribute relief materials with minimal conflict. In the West, however, the lack of functional CCMCs impeded the systematic distribution of relief. After the Koshi flood, relief camps were established very quickly in Saptari and Sunsari districts and their respective CCMCs played significant roles, especially in distributing relief materials and providing information about whom to target and what they needed. Shelters began to be constructed¹⁵ six days after the flood and construction efforts were managed effectively.

¹⁵ Shelters were designed following consultations with beneficiaries and local authorities.

These camps did have their shortcomings, too. Some partially or non-affected people resided in the camps irregularly, timing their presence just so they would be able to receive relief when it was distributed. Another problem was that there was no clear strategy about how long disaster-affected people would be kept in the camp or even, in fact, who was eligible to be there. Disaster refugees were unclear about when they have to leave—after the water subsided, after a specified period of time or when the situation returned to normal.

Another weakness is that relief is distributed based on average family size rather than on actual numbers of family members¹⁶. Unfortunately, the government's estimate—5.6 members per family—may be adequate for urban nuclear families but fails to recognise the extended family system of rural villages. In some Tharu communities in western Tarai, single household has up to 17 members. The largest documented has 28. Clearly, such families did not receive adequate provisions.

- f. **Quick response:** Disaster actors have adopted a quick response system: within 36 hours, they mobilise a rapid assessment team and draw up a report on the response needed. However, the relief materials are not always suited to the hazard in question and the geographical remoteness of affected areas makes it difficult to transport materials there quickly. Ganesh Rokaya, Teacher, Jajarkot, described his experience:



Ganesh Rokaya

In my experience, relief materials were inappropriate and often available. Besides, recipients often did not know how to use them properly. Though the effectiveness of Euro-guards is not in question on technical grounds, they are so heavy that they were difficult to transport remote areas of Jajarkot. Many affected people like Aqua-tab because it does not have an unpleasant taste and is easy to prepare, but it is a relatively expensive form of water treatment and it was not easily available because demand surpassed supply. People are turned off by Piyush because its shelf-life is short and because of its unappealing odour. However, since Piyush is, in fact, the best option for remote areas, we need to organise appropriate awareness campaigns to promote its use.

- g. **Delays:** In the majority of cases, disaster-affected people did not get immediate, efficient and effective rescue and relief services. Delays often had very serious and unpleasant results. In fact, some affected people were unable to secure even the most basic of needs, including shelter and food.

¹⁶ Relief distribution was based on the principle of equality rather than on that of equity.

Sometimes, relief works were duplicated, because dialogue and mutual understanding among disaster actors was absent. In Koshi, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts, delays in the distribution of relief caused relief and recovery phases to overlap and unnecessarily complicated matters. Observations suggest that the numbers of deaths and patients caused by the epidemic in Jajarkot could have been reduced the unnecessary suffering in Jajarkot is evidence of the poor state of humanitarian response system in the country.

One of the reasons for delays is that DANA does not occur promptly. For example, in Kanchanpur, where the DDRC gave the responsibility of conducting a DANA to a team headed by the district agriculture development officer, it took about 20 days to collect data and more than a month to produce a report. To make matters worse the report highlighted data about land and crops and did not address humanitarian issues explicitly. Remedying the deficiency further extended the delay, as Mahantari Chaudhary, a resident of Mohana Camp of Kanchanpur explained:



Mahantari Chaudhary

The flood occurred on 5 October but relief was distributed to the residents of Mohana Camp of Kanchanpur only at the end of October and in the beginning of November, a month later. If materials are distributed late then they are not always useful. For example, post-flood support includes vegetable, wheat and rice seeds to help farmers restart their livelihoods. However, although wheat seeds were distributed as a part of the recovery/ rehabilitation phase, it was too late in the season to plant them. Those who were able to had already planted wheat seeds they got on their own. The seeds in the relief package provided were either eaten or sold. Since seeds for plantation are treated with pesticides, people's health was put at risk.

Table 2.1b: Are you satisfied with the disaster response mechanism between 2005 and 2009

Disaster response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	302	77.43	293	75.13
No	76	19.49	84	21.54
Total	378	96.92	377	96.67
No response	12	3.08	13	3.33
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interview, 2009/10

It is very important to keep records of the number of people who live in disaster prone areas and of potential losses of life and property. Since no such data exists, it was very difficult for agencies to agree on the number affected by the disasters studied. As a result, precious time is lost during the rescue and relief phase simply verifying who the affected are instead of actively providing assistance. In some places, the number of affected reported actually exceeded the total population. In other places, authorities responded to the request for data by forwarding a list of voters. Because conducting a DANA does not always involve on-the-ground data collection (i.e. entering villagers and engaging with people) data tends not to be trustworthy.

Interestingly, people are slightly more satisfied with response mechanisms in Western (77.43%) than Eastern districts (75.13%) despite the fact that emergency preparedness practices were more effectively carried out in the East (see Table 2.1b). As discussed earlier, the reason for the discrepancy may be partly because people tend to wish to get more relief and response materials rather than engage in early recovery work themselves and partly because of differences in the socio-cultural structures of the communities.

2.2 Policy framework

Below the policies of the government with respect to disaster relief, preparedness and management are briefly laid out.

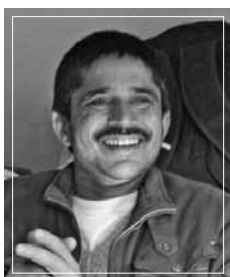
a. Central-, regional-, and district-level disaster relief committees:

As called for in the NDRA, the government has formed and strengthened NDRCs at the central, regional and district levels. It has also clearly divided and spelled out their roles and responsibilities. RNDRCs, however, are not fully functional at the operational level. This shortcoming prevented a proactive response from the DDRC which should have responded to the 2008 Koshi flood and the 2009 Kailali and Kanchanpur floods¹⁷. In addition, the policy provisions for village disaster relief committees (VDRCs), few such local organisations have been established and those that exist are not functional. Disaster actors did not recognise the roles of VDRCs. There are some gaps among the various levels of NDRCs.

b. Good reputation of DDRCs: The role of DDRCs is widely acknowledged by disaster actors. As a result, support for managing emergency response work is good. The organisational structure of DDRCs, however, is confusing. In some cases, because the status of DDRC members is equivalent to or higher than the status of the DDRC chairperson, members resist mobilisation. DDRC members are sometimes more accountable to their seniors in the concerned line ministry or line department because the DDRC does not evaluate their performance.

¹⁷ Flooding of the Mohana River, which divides Kailali and Kanchanpur districts, caused a lot of destruction in both districts in 2008 and 2009. The flooding of the Koshi River, which divides Saptari and Sunsari districts, also caused much damage to property and took many lives. RNDRCs should have functioned in both cases because the disasters affected more than one district.

- c. **Supremacy of DDRCs:** No body, whether an I/NGO, civil society or the private sector, can provide relief to affected families without approval from the concerned DDRC. The intent of this provision is to streamline emergency response work in a collaborative manner and prevent duplication, but its actual impact is often to discourage disaster actors who are keen to act immediately. The role of disaster actors has not been properly envisioned. It characterises them as "dollar businesses". While in general, politicians do not look favourably upon I/NGOS, Bhesh Raj Pokhrel, UPCA, Sunsari did recognise their role in emergency response:



Bhesh Raj Pokhrel

In places the government is unable to reach, I/NGOs perform well during emergencies. The tendency of DDRCs to assume complete authority without allocating resources is harmful. They should change their attitude toward I/NGOs and civil society. There is a need to prepare a good modality fostering and strengthening public-private-partnerships in order to make sure emergency response work is sustainable. Sooner or later, the government has to recognise the role of non-government disaster actors.

- d. **Contingency plans:** Cluster-wise contingency plans do promote response work in theory, but their effective implementation was limited to a few districts. Only some districts were able to use them to advantage. District-level government lead agencies did not seem to have the skills they needed to lead clusters and when clusters are weak, the associated DDRC is weakened and its response is ineffectual. In some cases, members are not clear about how to execute the plan and there is little accountability. In terms of the response to

Box 3: Government standards of relief

- ◆ Rs. 25,000 shall be provided to the family of every person who dies.
- ◆ Injured persons shall be treated and provided Rs. 1000 as a transportation allowance to return home
- ◆ Seriously injured people will be airlifted and taken to a well-equipped hospital.
- ◆ Rs. 10,000 is provided to anyone whose home is destroyed by a natural disaster.
- ◆ If there is a threat of a disaster or if a house is not safe to live in, then up to Rs. 5000 shall be provided to arrange for temporary accommodations.
- ◆ Seven kilos of rice or Rs. 125 shall be provided to every homeless person. He shall also receive Rs. 500 for clothing and kitchenware.
- ◆ Those who have lost all their land and crops and have nothing to eat shall get Rs. 1000 in immediate relief assistance
- ◆ Those affected by natural disaster will get a concession on the price of some timber to construct a new home.

the epidemic in Jajarkot, for example, there was confusion among the World Health Organisation, the Ministry of Health and Population, the District Public Health Office, and the Water and Sanitation cluster about who should have responded first and what each body should have done because coordination roles had not been clearly defined. In addition, the tasks that cluster groups should assume are not clearly delegated from the centre. Plans are clear about what should be done but do not mention specific actions for concerned agencies to take if the plan is not executed as laid out.

- e. **Local Self-Governance Act of 1999:** This act gives local government authorities the authority and responsibility to design and implement disaster-related activities at the local level. However, there is no systematic and assured mechanism of resource allocation to the local authorities from the centre. There is a gap in policy when it comes to both resource allocation and management.
- f. **Provisioning for standards:** The CDRC has formulated some standards (see Box 3) for the provision of immediate relief in cash and/or in kind. Other than in the case of deaths, however, the enforcement of these standards is arbitrary and sometimes DDRCs ignore the prescriptions. Some requirements are impractical. For example, to claim Rs. 25,000 for a death requires families to produce a body; however, especially in the case of a flood or landslide bodies are often not recovered. It is also difficult for the affected to make claims within 30 days after a disaster occurs. Hardship and ignorance result in many disaster-affected families applying too late to get assistance. Some standards, like the one about timber, are too loosely formulated; because phrases like “some timber” and “concession” do not specify either the exact amount of wood or the exact discount to be given, they cause much confusion. They are interpreted to mean “as is convenient” and thus inadvertently led to encroachment on forests. Another flaw in the standards is that they do not specify any concrete evacuation or resettlement plan. A third problem is that some responders have no idea what the NDRA provides for.

People are not very familiar with provisions of the NDRA in either the Western or the Eastern districts (see Table 2.2a) though people in the East are slightly more knowledgeable. In the West, nearly two-thirds of respondents are ignorant about the NDRA's provisions. This large gap may be due to the inadequate dissemination of information and the lack of awareness campaigns. It demonstrates that there is a need to spell out key provisions in policy and to ensure that they are properly enforced.

Table 2.2a: Are you familiar with the NDRA's standards?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	119	30.51	151	38.72
No	248	63.59	220	56.41
Total	367	94.10	371	95.13
No response	23	5.90	19	4.87
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

2.3 Process and procedures

Whenever a disaster strikes, the following procedures are adhered to.

- a. **Common formats are developed:** All disaster actors and duty bearers have agreed to use the initial rapid assessment (IRA) format developed by the NRCS for the first three days and use to use the MIRA in the case of any large disaster that needs to be addressed by multiple stakeholders. However, since there is no clear delineation between a 'small' and a 'large' disaster, confusion at the operational level is rife. Another problem is that a MIRA focuses mostly on water-induced disasters, and that separate formats specifically for other hazards, including epidemics and landslides, have yet to be developed. It is promising that consultations are going on to make MIRA more usable for a variety of hazards.
- b. **DDRCs take a lead role in the initial assessment and response:** Once information about a disaster is received from the affected communities, security personnel are dispatched to conduct a quick assessment of the extent of the disaster before any further government response. They also carry out SAR operations.

The concerned DDRC generally calls a meeting of its members to appraise the situation and develop an action plan. The response adopted is generally a "one-window" system. Weaknesses include the absence of both standing orders from the government and standard operating procedures (SoP). DANA reports also do not follow the standard format and different assessment identifies different numbers of affected families. The non-participatory approach to data collection adopted in the name of speed often hampers the success of the response. It was said that data collectors would sit in one corner of a village, catch a few passersby and ask them about the damage to the village without visiting individual houses. The resultant data was a poor guide for an effective response on the part of disaster actors and also invited conflicts. Even when the information was accurate, it was often not properly analysed for future

use. In fact, there seemed to be little understanding about the value of information. Data was collected without a sense of what it would be used for and who its audience was.

As discussed earlier, the DANA system governs the overall response system. However, the majority of respondents in both regions opined that the DANA is not systematic. Respondents in the West are slightly more satisfied with DANA than those in the East although preparedness is higher in the East (see Table 2.1a). This seeming contradiction suggests that emergency preparedness alone does not make for good DANA.

Table 2.3a: Is the existing DANA approach systematic?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	157	40.26	132	33.84
No	222	56.92	246	63.08
Total	379	97.18	378	96.92
No response	11	2.82	12	3.08
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

Sometimes the response system is influenced by individual interest or by politics. Because a number of different political parties are represented within a DDRC, sometimes the decisions of DDRCs seems to be driven mostly by vested interests, not the welfare of the affected people. National-level politics, however, seems to have little influence over the response and recovery system. Poor accountability also hampers the response system, as Himalaya Thapa of NNSWA of Kanchanpur opined:



Himalaya Thapa

The culture of seeing everybody with the same lenses—often violated the rights of the genuinely affected. For example, the secretary of one VDC in Kanchanpur sent a list of everyone who lives in the village although in actuality only 50 were affected. When he was asked why, he answered that he could not afford to fight with the local people because he would have to work there for long time. The desire to make everybody happy violates the fundamental rights of disaster-affected people.

Because there is no systematic procedure, the genuinely affected are often not provided with the materials they need. Krishna Bahadur K.C., a teacher in Joshipur, Kailali, explains the problem:



Krishna Bahadur K.C.

In Joshipur VDC, 140, out of 160 families were affected but relief was allocated to only 14 families and actually provided to only 12 families despite the fact that all 140 had suffered essentially the same extent of physical damage. This inequity created so much conflict that oil was divided equally even to the last spoonful in order to keep everyone happy. The culture of distributing materials equally denies the genuinely affected their rights. It is not a good sign that non-affected families have begun to claim relief.

- c. **Orientation on the best use of relief materials:** Though this issue is very important, especially when new materials are involved, disaster actors paid little attention to it. In Jajarkot, some demonstrations were held for a few people but these were more events than processes and were therefore not very effective in helping them to use the materials properly. Hari Basnet, *Mantri*, of the NRCS District Chapter in Jajarkot described his experience:



Hari Basnet

We distributed a large quantity of relief materials like Euro-guards, bags, hand-washing kits, soap, oral rehydration solution, Piyush, nail cutters and Aqua tab but did not pay much attention to demonstrating their proper use. As a result, materials were wrongly used and the results were discouraging. People did not know how to use water-purifying agents; for example, they did not understand that 2-3 drops of Piyush is sufficient to purify five litres of water. In fact, they didn't even have the right size buckets to measure five litres. In consequence, they use too much Piyush and found the resultant odour so distasteful they discontinued its use. In some places we found that Aqua tab was used as a cetamal tablet. Soap distributed for people to wash their hands after using the toilet was either saved for the future or used to wash clothes. We realised that proper demonstrations are required.

Table 2.3b: Are relief materials timely and adequate?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	112	28.72	137	35.13
No	261	66.92	239	61.28
Total	373	95.64	376	96.41
No response	17	4.36	14	3.59
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

Not only do special target groups not get appropriate relief materials, they also do not receive them in a timely fashion or in adequate supply (see Table 2.3b). Only 28.72% people in the West and 35.13% in the East were satisfied with the timeliness and adequacy of relief materials. Their response reflects the delay in the arrival of materials and the fact that they are too little in relation to the extent of damage caused. In several cases, it was noted that the first response was made only 72 hours after the disaster.

- d. **Reaching the un-reached:** All disaster actors have agreed that they will adopt an affirmative approach to reach those groups most vulnerable to and most at-risk during disasters. Among these groups are PwDs, lactating and pregnant women, children, older people and single women. However, during the actual distribution of relief materials, despite their good intentions, disaster actors are unable to provide adequate help. It is reported that these most vulnerable groups are deprived of nutritious food and other basic services. Because responders are not well informed about the SPHERE standard and the different needs of different vulnerable people during disasters, the most vulnerable do not get adequate or appropriate materials even if relief materials are in abundant supply. Existing mechanisms do not address the real need of the most vulnerable, silent, and marginalised groups. As a result, they rarely get compensated for their losses. This is because response takes a “blanket approach” rather than addressing individual needs.

The issue of protection was not a priority in the West, but in Koshi, protection was a central concern. For example, in Inaruwa, the district headquarters of Sunsari District, separate health camps were organised for lactating and pregnant mothers so that they could be provided with special care and support. Inaruwa, however, is an exceptional case: in general, the need for protection issues to be incorporated in contingency plans for disaster preparedness is not an idea that disaster actors have fully internalised.

Table 2.3c: Is the relief package appropriate in terms of quality?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	188	48.20	203	52.05
No	195	50.00	173	44.36
Total	383	98.20	376	96.41
No response	7	1.80	14	3.59
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

In terms of the appropriateness of relief packages measured in terms of quality, people in the East were slightly more satisfied than those in the West, but in both regions, only about half were satisfied (see Table 2.3c). Such limited satisfaction suggests that the materials were too unfamiliar to be useful and are of poor quality.

2.4 Existing emergency response capacity

The capacity of disaster actors is discussed below.

- a. **Skilled human resources:** Though disaster actors have organised a variety of trainings and orientations to increase efficiency of responders, these initiatives have been neither adequate nor timely. All the districts surveyed reported that skill in SAR techniques was limited and that there were not enough rescue materials. Security personnel often refused to get involved in SAR because they lacked the necessary ropes, life jackets, boats, and other equipment. The need for motorboats is acute during floods, but few DDRCs have one. Some of those that do exist do not function because they have not been properly maintained.

Since there is no well-defined and institutionalised emergency response system and no skilled human resources are few, the capacity to respond is low. At present, there is no accountable agency or specific policy for undertaking either SAR or DANA and both are done on an *ad hoc* basis. In fact, most disaster actors lack adequate knowledge about how to conduct DANA and SAR teams are mobilised without any understanding of the risk. Other deficiencies are that there are no stand-by teams for SAR or DANA and no manual or guidelines for procedural operations for SAR teams. SAR initiatives that have been organised thus far are too small-scale to handle large disasters like the 2008 Koshi flood.

Existing human resources such as female community health volunteers were promptly and effectively mobilised to respond to the Jajarkot and Rukum epidemics, but they were too few. There are very few trained health personnel available at the district level to respond to emergencies. In some places, there were no security personnel either. Gagan Bahadur Khadka 'Jeevan' in Jajarkot addressed this issue:



Gagan Bahadur Khadka

There were not enough trained human resources in the district to respond to the epidemic. We mobilised all Young Community League cadres in the district to facilitate the response, but the situation was so bad that even people who had not even seen a syringe in their lives had to give injections to patients so that epidemic-affected families would feel that things were under control. Though we took risks, we were successful in managing the epidemic. We learned that we should have some trained health volunteers in reserve so that we can mobilise them when they are needed. People do not trust the health facilities in sub-health posts or government health technicians. The likelihood of having materials instantly available for a timely response was close to zero.

Table 2.4a: Are people skilled in SAR and first aid and are sufficient materials available?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	219	56.15	172	44.10
No	165	42.30	202	51.80
Total	384	98.45	374	95.90
No response	6	1.55	16	4.10
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

More people in the West (56.15%) reported that they felt that they had sufficient skill and materials for SAR and first aid than did people in the East (44.10%) (see Table 2.4a). The difference may be attributable to the fact that the Koshi flood was sudden and unexpected whereas Western districts had experienced floods, landslides and epidemics almost yearly and were therefore more conscious of the danger and had adopted more preventive measures.

- b. Capacity of the NRCS:** All respondents and major stakeholders recognised that the NRCS plays a crucial role in emergency response work both because of its wide geographical presence in the form of local chapters, its wide volunteers base, and its strong capacity to distribute both food and non-food relief items. The NRCS heads an emergency shelter cluster and is quite capable of coordinating other agencies in their efforts. Its nation-wide network comprises volunteers trained in first aid, light SAR and assessment and response. However, the NRCS does not have the capacity to provide the full-range of education, water and sanitation, health and nutrition and protection services required during an emergency. The one-window system, in which a basket fund is created and all the relief materials are supplied through the NRCS, relies overly heavily on the assumption that local NRCS chapters are capable of doing everything.

While every organisation does want to achieve visibility by being seen as an actor, for one organisation alone to assume a disproportionate amount of the overall burden of providing relief is not sensible. In Kailali, for example, the NRCS was given three major responsibilities—assessment, management of food items, and management of non-food items—and found itself overwhelmed. They did not have enough human resources to perform effectively. Keshav Dutta Pant, the chairperson of NRCS Kanchanpur recognises both the skill of the NRCS as well as the fact that it has room to improve the quality of its services:



Keshav Datta Panta

Though our efforts were not sufficient for handling the entire emergency response during the last monsoon season, we are nonetheless proud that we mobilised a team of 150 volunteers from 13 sub-chapters, all of which were on the alert in case immediate mobilisation was needed. We also managed to assess disaster-prone areas ahead of time. We contacted key persons immediately after disaster occurred and were able to stock the 13 NRCS centres with enough supplies for 130 families. This level of preparedness is found rarely in other institutions. We have never claimed that we are perfect, but we can deliver a good response because our social and physical infrastructures are strong and our volunteers are trained in EPR.

Response capacity determines how quickly relief materials can be distributed to disaster-affected people. The more time is lost, the more problems are created because the number of disaster-affected people increases in geometric progression. Chhedan Sharma, Vice-chairperson, NRCS Sunsari had this to say about the speed of response:



Chhedan Sharma

Since relief was distributed using a one-window system, it was the responsibility of the NRCS alone to distribute good-quality relief materials to affected people promptly. Actually handing out the materials was not difficult in relief camps because it was affected people who came to stay there, but in the villages there were many challenges. Since relief came very late, after the affected had got on with their lives, it was very hard to distinguish between the genuinely affected and those who just wanted a handout. The problem lies in the fact that nobody refuses things given out freely.

- c. **Psycho-social counselling:** Psycho-social counselling is as essential as relief. It serves to reduce fear and trauma by providing timely support to needy people and addressing their needs properly. In addition, such counselling, which also addresses medical and security issues, is needed to protect vulnerable groups. The psycho-social care and the dietary needs of displaced lactating mothers, pregnant women and their children was carefully managed in the East after the Koshi flood, but there was no evidence of counselling in the West. In Koshi, women volunteers were provisioned and watch groups were formed and trained to take preventive measures in case of gender-based human rights violations and violence against women and children. The creation of child-friendly safe spaces in Koshi flood-affected areas, for example, improved the well-being of children by allowing them to play, sing and learn new things from class room based structural activities. Once their children were engaged, parents could relax and concentrate on daily chores. The tendency of agencies to distribute tangible relief created a vacuum in the provision of intangible like counselling.

In addition, mechanisms to provide social security measures like insurance and incentives for relief workers were inadequate. In addition, some of those measures were utterly inappropriate: the distribution of old and used clothes to Muslim communities, for example, made no sense as they were simply dumped by the community.

Because there was no psycho-social counselling in Gurkhakot VDC of Jajarkot, adult males went to India after the epidemic, leaving behind only women, children and older people. These groups became double victims in a sense: not only did they experience physical ill health but they also suffered mental stress when they were left alone. In both Jajarkot and Rukum districts, because people did not understand the transmission path of cholera, they engaged in unproductive and even harmful behaviours, including refusing to allow the transport of medicine to epidemic-prone VDCs, refusing to take patients to health centres for further treatment, and to participate in funerals. Family members did not communicate among themselves about what they knew of the epidemic either.

Table 2.4b: Is there adequate psycho-social counseling to reduce trauma and suffering?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	115	29.49	132	33.85
No	252	64.61	239	61.28
Total	367	94.10	371	95.13
No response	23	5.90	19	4.87
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

Neither in the East nor in the West do people have sufficient information about the role of psycho-socio counselling in reducing trauma and suffering (see Table 2.4b) and only about a third in each region think that sufficient counselling was provided. The data suggests that responses concentrate on tangibles to the neglect of intangibles. About 5% of the population in both places does not even know what counselling entails. This ignorance is a reflection of the lack of awareness-building and advocacy work.

- d. **Institutional set-up:** In Jajarkot and Rukum, the establishment of WASH committees at the district, VDC and ward levels enhanced synchronisation and communication at all levels. Because of this structure, when the epidemic struck it was possible to mobilise volunteers to visit all houses and encourage the affected to go to health camps, to carry serious patients to health camps, and

to help distribute relief materials. The categorisation of affected VDCs into 'most affected, affected, and not affected groups promoted the prompt allocation of human resources and materials.

- e. **Advance provisioning of stock, funds and trained human resources:** If relief materials are in place and suppliers have been identified beforehand, response is quick. Through the efforts of the NRCS, this was the case in the Koshi flood of 2008. Funds were available, warehouses were stocked and human resources were available. However, these resources were in short supply both in the East and in the West. The supply of non-food items was particularly inadequate as they are not stocked in warehouses and if large amounts are sought, local markets cannot fill the demand. Administrative hassles like having to seek three competitive quotations for food items further delay the process. To address the flaws of this system, stockpiling in regional and central offices is required.

The number of health and sub-health posts in Jajarkot and Rukum is adequate, but their infrastructure and facilities are very poor and people have no faith in the quality of services available. They would rather be served at a private clinic. In addition, few government posts had medicine to treat cholera in stock.

Resource constraints reduced response capacity. In general, food items are readily available only during the emergency period (the first 30 days) and the budgets of disaster actors make no provision for food items during the post-emergency period (from 31 to 90 days). There is funding for the latter period only if donors provide assistance.

- f. **Poor management of available resources:** Helicopters were widely mobilised and immediate rescues were possible in Kanchanpur and Jajarkot districts. However, in Kailali, because the areas suitable for helipad were totally inundated, it was not possible to deliver relief materials to areas near flood-affected communities. In Jajarkot, poor coordination and advance information resulted meant that materials were dropped far from health camps.

There were many stories about the misuse of helicopters. People opined that helicopters were used to ease the travel of leaders and ministers rather than to transport materials. At the height of the crisis in Kailali, for example, one helicopter made a trip carrying 20 leaders and 10 kg of rice. In Jajarkot, a chartered helicopter carried six VIPs with only one box of 24 bottles of saline. In Kailali and Kanchanpur, where relief could be transported by bus and truck, helicopters were hired to demonstrate that the government was indeed a formidable presence. There are many more similar examples.

- g. **Existing infrastructures:** Because the disaster-affected communities are not linked to the nation's road network, it is difficult to get relief materials to them. In addition, the state of roads was not well assessed and no alternative routes were considered, so the delivery of materials was *ad hoc*. As a result, the misuse of relief materials was widespread. Because there is no geographical information system (GIS) within DDRCs, coming up with alternative routes is very difficult.

2.5 Application of the cluster approach and contingency plans

The use of the cluster approach and contingency plans is evaluated below.

- a. **Understanding of the cluster approach and the use of contingency plans:** The concept of the cluster approach¹⁸ was introduced to provide immediate services to disaster-affected communities in an integrated fashion. Each cluster group met regularly, at least once a month, to assess work, share experiences, and plan new activities. General coordination meetings were also held weekly. The regularity of these meetings accelerated disaster response and fostered team spirit and good rapport among members. The approach also made leaders accountable, forcing them to act in predictable and reliable ways. Most informants expressed their appreciation of this approach of coordination and information-sharing among disaster actors and its ability to hold all accountable. Each cluster developed a contingency plan. Earlier the execution of disaster

Table 2.5a: Are contingency plans and the cluster approach effective for EPR?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	197	50.51	213	54.62
No	162	41.54	155	39.74
Total	359	92.05	368	94.36
No response	31	7.95	22	5.64
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

preparedness plans was the sole responsibility of DDRC but now clusters have assumed individual responsibility and it is easier to mobilise resources. However, the approach is not without its flaws. Clusters have not been revisited as the

¹⁸ To manage and coordinate responses, eight cluster groups— food, nutrition, water and sanitation, health, education, protection and child protection, logistics, communication and coordination are created. Each group is led jointly by both the head of the respective government agency in the district and a counterpart organisation among Nepal's international support partners.

local and national context has evolved or updated and there are no clear-cut terms of reference for 'roles and responsibilities'. In addition, the lead agencies of some clusters are not pro-active: they do not promote coordination and do not seek technical support from concerned stakeholders. There is little evidence that the cluster approach actually ensured that funding support to disaster actors was better provided for. As no evaluation of the cluster approach was carried out after Koshi, it is difficult to ascertain its effectiveness.

As the cluster approach was not fully operationalised in either Jajarkot or Rukum, technical working groups (sub-committees) formed under the DDRCs took the place of clusters. In general, the concept of cluster is not yet widely known and some agencies misunderstand it, seeing it as a 'geographic' rather than 'thematic' division of roles.

In both the West and East, slightly more than half of all respondents think that contingency plans and the cluster approach are effective for EPR (see Table 2.5a). In general, this level of approval suggests that people are familiar with the ideas and benefit from them.

- b. Responsiveness of stakeholders:** Responsibilities were divided among stakeholders using institutional mapping exercises. The cluster approach helped to strengthen networks, coordinate and consolidate humanitarian relief, and avoid duplication. However, this division was based on confusion, rather than on systematic decision-making. As discussed earlier, the NRCS in Kailali was given three major tasks—more than it could effectively handle—partly because of its good image but also because other agencies were not pro-active in assuming new roles. It was reported that most agencies participated neither in the initial cluster approach coordination meeting, which was held to allocate responsibilities, nor in subsequent ones. The low turnout may be attributable to the fact that attendance was voluntary. Another reason is that district-level government lead agencies such as district water supply and sanitation office and district livestock support offices did not assume a strong leadership role: they did not have a strong presence on the ground and did communicate messages about meetings effectively. In general, the cluster approach was not effective in handling small-scale responses when a study is carried out, it may however reveal that the cluster approach was effective in the Koshi response.

Because district-level contingency and disaster management plans had not yet been approved by DDCs, it was difficult to hold DDC members accountable for the execution and monitoring of and follow-up on those plans. As political parties,

head of municipalities or VDC chairperson and DDC chairpersons had only proxy representation in DDRCs, it was difficult to allocate budget for the execution of contingency plans. The Sunsari DDRC was actively involved in monitoring the activities implemented by various disaster actors, identifying gaps and ensuring that commitments were fulfilled. However, the constantly changing number of Nepali internally displaced persons and the number of Indian displaced persons in each camp made it difficult to figure out what the deficiencies were and to coordinate appropriate support. In addition, meetings were ineffective and communication between the field and cluster meetings was inadequate.

2.6 Coordination mechanisms

To maintain links between various disaster actors, the following mechanisms are in place.

- a. **Good coordination:** Coordination functions at the central level among the UNOCHA, MoHA, AIN and DPNET and at the district level among the DDRC, NRCS, and NGOs is good. The CDRC organises a meeting with government line ministries to arrange for resource mobilisation and further plans of action and with bilateral organisations to share situation updates and to manage and mobilise resources. All stakeholders recognise the DDRC's role in coordination, but noted that most decisions are made at the centre and handed down to DDRCs for execution in a top-down approach.

Table 2.6a: Are existing coordination mechanisms and networks beneficial for EPR?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	209	53.59	233	59.74
No	158	40.51	140	35.90
Total	367	94.10	373	95.64
No response	23	5.90	17	4.36
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

In the disasters studied, all cluster leaders, political parties, UN agencies, I/INGOs, and the NRCS collaborate to provide an immediate response. The Nepal Army and Police based in the region also offered support. During the response phase, the UNOCHA coordinated all humanitarian assistance using the cluster system.

Because coordination was good, the NRCS's format for initial rapid assessment (conducted within the first three days of a disaster) was widely accepted and used. Good coordination helped people realise that responding to a disaster is everyone's business, not just that of DDRCs and the NRCS. As a result, solutions were found quickly and implemented swiftly. In Jajarkot, good coordination among disaster actors prevented the duplication of resources and ensured that the response was timely.

When they were asked if the existing coordination mechanisms and networks were beneficial for EPR, 53.59% of respondents in Western districts and 59.74% of respondents in Eastern districts answered in the affirmative (see Table 2.6a). The fact that respondents perceived there is more coordination in the East might be attributable to the fact that emergency preparedness measures are more prevalent in Eastern than Western districts.

- b. Interim arrangement to respond to big disasters:** In response to the Koshi flood, the MoHA deputed its under-secretary and mobilised its joint secretary in order to make decisions and act quickly. Though the arrangement was made spontaneously, it was very effective in steering the response. However, because there were no standard operating procedures and no standing orders about how to respond, the relief announcements made by the technical committee were issued *ad hoc* and were later not followed. The result was confusion and frustration among disaster agencies and many broke rules and norms in order to gain popularity. Because of these political games, many non-affected families did not get any relief materials.

Table 2.6b: Is the DDRC's role in coordination effective?

Response	Western districts		Eastern districts	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	231	59.23	209	53.59
No	141	36.15	168	43.08
Total	372	95.38	377	96.67
No response	18	4.62	13	3.33
Total	390	100.00	390	100.00

Source: Semi Structured Interviews, 2009/2010

People in Western districts were slightly more likely than in the East, to feel that DDRCs were effective in overall coordination (see Table 2.6b). In both regions it was only about half who felt DDRCs were effective. The reason people in the East saw DDRCs as less effective may have to do with the fact that the CDRC was so visible there.

- c. **Culture of report updating and sharing:** Disaster actors realised the value of gathering information regularly and sharing it with others. They produced and distributed situation reports among the relevant agencies. This is a change from the past, when individual organisation kept records for their own benefit—to formulate proposals and the like—but did not share them with others. The AIN task group for disaster management has helped promote the sharing and coordination of information. The culture of making joint appeals for resource mobilisation and response does exist despite the self-interest that also motivates organisational responses. Two examples of such sharing are AIN's establishment of an information desk after the Koshi flood and its promotion of awareness about the code of conduct in emergency responses.
- d. **Public-private partnership:** The response mechanism successfully mobilised the Federation of Nepalese Commerce and Cottage Industries, the NRCS, political parties, and individuals to provide resources. In addition, the Marwadi Sewa Samittee helped in the Koshi flood response and a private hospital assisted in the Kailali flood response. In Jajarkot, Mr. Rajiv Shah, a Kathmandu-based businessman, assumed the cost of chartering a helicopter to distribute relief materials. His effort was appreciated by many. Despite such evidence of public-private initiatives, the role of DDCs and municipalities in general was weak.



3. The Way Forward

3.1 Policy

Certain policies should be introduced.

- a. **Make local governments more responsible:** Local governments should be made responsible for the formulation and execution of contingency plans the management of relief materials and the distribution of relief at the local level.
- b. **Make the corporate sector more responsible:** DDRCs should not assume sole responsibility for all tasks related to preparedness and emergency response work. A policy making the corporate sector more responsible, as befits corporate social responsibility, should be developed. So far only *ad hoc* support has been received. To cite a possible example, in the case of disasters in eastern Nawalparasi, the Gorkha Brewery Company and the Chaudhary Group should be mobilised because they have been in operation in that area for years.
- c. **Invite specialists to participate in CDRC meetings at the policy level:** Many specialised technicians work for such government bodies as the Department of Water Induced Disaster Preparedness, the Water and Energy Secretariat Commission, the fire brigade, the army, and the police. They could provide invaluable expertise to steer emergency response work but there is no provision for their involvement in CDRC meetings. Because only the heads of these organisations participate, at present, all directives are not fully technically guided.

3.2 Coordination

Coordination can be improved as laid out below.

- a. **Redefine the roles:** There need to be district platforms to serve as auxiliaries or helping hands to DDRCs. The role of DDRCs should be limited to monitoring and following up on response systems, providing technical backstopping and sorting out administrative hassles. The role of the district chapters of the NRCS should be more strongly focused on resource generation and the operationisation of response. District-level service and development agencies like the district agriculture development office, district soil conservation office, district livestock service office, the district irrigation office, should be more accountable for effective service delivery. Establishing a “volunteer bank” would help pressurise these service-delivery organisations to make decisions which support disaster-affected people.

- b. **Unify coordination forums:** There are many networks, platforms and forums at the centre and district levels which aim at coordinating efforts. These loose coalitions need to be brought together so that there can be a single common voice and so that the response is unified. The roles and responsibilities of each member of the unified networks should be defined clearly.

3.3 Disaster finance and resource mobilisation

Improvements in the mobilisation of funds and resources can be accomplished by taking the following steps.

- a. **Make disaster actors more responsible for mobilising resources:** Even though there are many disaster actors, few have provisions for financing their disaster responses in a planned fashion. The only reliable funders are some bilateral organisations and embassies. There is a need to redefine the role of the SWC so that it includes mobilising I/NGOs at the central level for emergency preparedness and response work and to ensure that it includes budgetary provisions to do so. I/NGOs working as a disaster actors should allocate some of their budget for emergency response work instead of trying to raise funds after a disaster occurs.

There is a need to make disaster and the budgeting it requires a priority in country strategic plans and in the “white papers” of every donor and I/NGO.

- b. **Build response work into the DRR programme:** Disaster actors implement many DRR related activities, but plan their budgets such that little of the money budgeted for DRR can be spent on response work. In the future, DRR programmes should include funds for emergency response work.
- c. **Prepare a national vulnerability and contingency plan:** In order to direct the attention of bilateral and multilateral donors to comprehensive response work, the CDRC should lead the preparation of a national vulnerability and contingency plan which gives clear directions about when, where and how to design meaningful emergency response work and creates room for developing contingency plans at the VDC level.



4. Major Lessons Learned

The lessons that can be derived from an analysis of the major findings are delineated below. Their application will help improve the quality of future emergency responses.

- a. **Visits by VIPs during peak response periods hamper efforts:** The visits political leaders and high-class government officials during peak response periods hinders SAR and relief distribution efforts because so much time is spent welcoming them in a lavish fashion. In the case of the disasters studies, sometimes DDRC meetings were cancelled or postponed as a result of such visits.
- b. **It is necessary to have local resource persons in SAR:** Although having trained NRCS staff and security personnel is necessary it does not suffice. Local youths, school teachers and students, local political cadres and members of community-based organisations like irrigation and forest user groups and women's groups also must be trained to serve as local resource persons so they can fill the gaps. The example of Chitwan, where the cadres of five political parties were trained demonstrates how useful having local resource persons is.
- c. **Inappropriate relief materials create harmful rumours:** Experiences in Kanchanpur, Jajarkot and Koshi demonstrated that selecting inappropriate relief materials creates rumours about the misuse of funds though some of these rumours could also have to do with the nature of international in-kind donations. Some examples that were cited include the provision of top-quality of soaps in Kanchanpur and Jajarkot and the distribution of sanitary pads in Koshi. Disaster-affected families suggested that instead of limited amounts of such "luxury items" larger quantities of needed materials be provided to address the need of more families.
- d. **Over-mobilising the media can interfere with response work:** Though the role of media cannot be underestimated, the response to media reports during the 2009 flood in western Nepal actually had a negative impact. Because one newspaper used the headline "Home Minister in Mid and Far West with 24 crores amount to response", some disaster actors adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude and did not act for themselves. In any case, the news was untrue and simply delayed the response.
- e. **Holding too many meetings is harmful:** In the name of holding meetings to reach a decision, time was wasted. There was too much focus on brainstorming the types of actions needed and not enough time spent on actually formulating concrete plans about what steps to take. The implementation of these actions decided upon the meetings needs to be the priority.

- f. **An over-indulgent response can make people dependent:** The Koshi response demonstrated that giving too much relief makes people feel that they are entitled to unconditional relief from disaster actors. People need to know exactly what they will get and how long they will get it for. While the provision of cash did seem imperative in some areas, it made some feel that if the government was pushed it would keep forking over money. Emergency, mid-term and long-term responses need to be clearly defined in order to reduce the dependency syndrome.
- g. **Provisions for the cost of transporting relief materials must be made:** Relief was delayed because there was no budget for transportation costs. Even when materials were procured and delivered to district headquarters, they took an unconscionable amount of time to reach the affected. Money for transportation must be allocated.
- h. **Providing accurate information saves lives:** In areas where adequate information was disseminated, the response work was effective and no harmful rumours circulated. Information can be provided using street dramas in local languages, intensive FM radio awareness campaigns, *lok dohari*¹⁹, quizzes, school health programmes, and demonstrations of sanitary practices. All of these methods were instrumental in increasing awareness, getting people to realise their roles in disaster management, and encouraging them to make behavioural and lifestyle changes. Street dramas helped abolish superstitious beliefs and a fatalistic outlook.
- i. **Selecting appropriate techniques for building knowledge is important:** Because there was no monitoring or follow-up, information education and communication and other relief materials were widely misused. Pamphlets and posters were used to cover school books and flexes were used to decorate floors, walls and roofs and to dry grains. Relief materials were stored in one corner in many houses and toilets were used as storerooms. People adopted inappropriate ways of purifying water. To avoid this misuse, materials need to be distributed simultaneously with the provision of knowledge-building measures and demonstrations of proper usage.
- j. **High turnover rates among government staff hamper response:** The high turnover rates of government staff, particularly chief district officers (CDOs), means that DDRCs do not function for several days at a time at regular intervals. Even when there is no CDO, the assistant CDO has no authority to run the DDRC to hold meetings or arrange for immediate response work. In Kanchanpur, the CDO changed six times in a single year.

¹⁹ A type of song sung as an exchange between two groups. The Jajarkot Lok Dohari Rastriya Pratisthan organised information-packed lok dohari in many places in order to make people aware about the roles of local people and about sanitation and hygienic behaviors in the management of the epidemic.

5. Recommendations

The following list of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of EPR is based on the overall findings of the study as well as on the discussions of the way forward and lessons learnt. Recommendations are divided into two parts: immediate actions and action in the long term.

5.1 Recommendations for immediate action

- a) **Increase the human resources in the disaster management unit of the MoHA:** After an assessment of the nature of Nepal's hazards and the risks they annually, adequate numbers of both technical and social science staff should be provisioned in the disaster management unit. Their exact job descriptions should be specified so that work performance evaluations are made easy. The job description of CDOs needs to be redefined to make emergency response one of his or her priority tasks. Each district administration office should assign one focal person to lead regular DDRC meetings. Similarly, every humanitarian agency, both government and non-government, should nominate a disaster focal person to steer its disaster activities.
- b) **Include a media focal person within each DDRC:** Each DDRC should assign one media focal person to report on the status of the response and upcoming plans of action to all disaster actors and disaster affected communities because independent reporting sometimes creates confusion, as it did in the West. His or her job will be to channel information so that the same message is communicated by all sources as well as to encourage advocacy before and during the monsoon. He or she should develop a list of all the disaster actors and relevant agencies with whom regular communication is essential. The DDRC should be provided with the help it needs to develop a communication strategy and action plan during disasters.
- c) **Strengthen cluster approach in disaster-prone districts:** Because it was so effective in the East, the cluster approach should be continued and strengthened by allocating clear roles and responsibilities, and sharing good practices and major learning from elsewhere. In addition, orientations to the cluster approach for disaster actors must be conducted so that they will be able to provide appropriate technical support, including support in developing IEC materials in local languages. Because livestock development plays such a vital role in helping people earn a livelihood, it should be kept in a separate cluster. Hopefully, the new National Disaster Management Authority will be able to take scale up this

approach. To do so, the cluster approach should be mainstreamed in the plans of both I/NGOs and VDCs, and specialist UN agencies should serve as independent monitors of the thematic issues each cluster addresses. These agencies should provide technical guidance and help fill in gaps in capacity and procedure.

- d) **Prepare hazard and risk assessments and appropriate plans:** Plans for action should be made after hazards and risks are carefully assessed and maps are prepared of disaster prone VDCs. The budget to execute these plans must also be forthcoming. The budget could be provisioned from the service delivery organisations of DDRC members. Maps should be regularly updated, drawing upon local knowledge, innovation and education so that a culture of safety and resilience is thoroughly inculcated.
- e) **Establish warehouses in strategic locations:** The RNDRC should identify potential warehouses in advance and stock them with relief materials in sufficient quantity to supply disaster-prone districts. The MOHA is initiating this step already. To avoid hassles, buffer stock, especially of goods for which the procurement system is long, should be allocated to district and regional-level stores. Warehouse should be made in safe places and have raised plinth levels and fire warning devices to ensure the safety of relief materials. Because some donors are reluctant to allocate materials in advance because they are concerned about accountability and transparency, the DDRC should make a strict code of conduct to alleviate their suspicions. DDRC should bear the cost of transportation from its internal fund to expedite the process.
- f) **Create a special disaster management unit within each DDRC:** To effectively coordinate with disaster actors, a disaster management unit should be established within each DDRC. To ensure that there is proper VDC-level coordination, the role of the VDC secretary should be redefined so that he or she has the managerial capacity to work as a first responder. Each VDC should also have three task forces, one each for early warning, first aid, and SAR.
- g) **Policy advocacy:** In order to make the EPR more effective, disaster actors should advocate the adoption of policies which favor disaster-affected people. Since the vulnerabilities and needs of women, children, PwDs, and older people differ, disaster actors should lobby for policies with different response systems to suit the real needs of the affected. They should also advocate for the allocation of resources to each DDRC based on the risk factors and disaster profiles of the districts, demanding equity, not equality.

5.2 Recommendations for the long term

- a) **Build local capacity in EPR:** Locals should be trained in SAR techniques and equipped with enough SAR materials, including life jackets, ropes, and boats, so they can take prompt action. SAR tools and equipment should be available at district headquarters and within each VDC if possible. The example of Turkey demonstrates that increasing the proximity of SAR materials helps a lot in making SAR immediate. Only if people feel that their own lives are not in jeopardy will they attempt to rescue others, so they need to be confident about rescue techniques. Local resource persons should also be trained in food storage and handling techniques, the maintenance of health and hygiene during floods, and the management and distribution of relief materials. Training in SAR, first aid and other specialised areas should be provided to security forces (the Nepal Army, the Nepal Police, and the Armed Police Force), Red Cross volunteers, and local people.
- b) **Prepare DRR-focused disaster management plans:** Disaster management plans focus largely on emergency response even though DRR is as important. In general action is reactive rather than pro-active and does not look to long-term disaster management. EPR-related roles and responsibilities should be defined in VDC and DDC planning guidelines and incorporated into disaster management plans.
- c) **Help disaster-affected communities change their behaviour:** Disaster-affected communities need to change the way they act, especially with regard to eating habits, sanitation and drinking water purification. There should be more emphasis on preventive measures like community- and school-led total sanitation and open defecation-free campaigns. The “one family, one toilet” principle should be enforced in epidemic-prone districts by mobilising district development committee and VDC funds.
- d) **Update data within DDRC:** In order to manage information well and thereby be able to respond as well, each DDRC should have a GIS. Each DDRC should make a GIS secretariat and authorise a disaster program officer to oversee the GIS. The secretariat should establish and update a data bank and share this information with other concerned actors. Data collection formats should be standardised and the modality of data collection agreed upon and taught before the disaster season strikes. The analysis and use of data for further planning should be consensual. A national system for disaster information management should be institutionalised. A SoP for effective disaster response must be developed and made part of disaster management. These procedures should be enforced using a system of awards and penalties.

- e) **Strengthen DMCs:** Where disaster-related projects are implemented by DMCs, response work is carried out in a timely fashion without any confusion or conflict. More DMCs should be formed and their capacity built using drills and simulation exercises. Other local groups, like youth clubs, community forestry and irrigation institutions and cooperatives, should also be target for capacity-building initiatives.
- f) **Make a card system:** Although many who were involved in the response to the 2008 Koshi flood told stories about the misuse of the card system—people sold their cards or bought extra ones—this system is invaluable. The way cards are distributed needs to be systematised and their use has to be monitored. A consensual system can be used to make sure that only the genuinely affected get cards.
- g) **Conduct a market study of non-food items in advance:** Since the management of non-food items created problems, some competent and professional companies able to supply the needed non-food items should be selected through a fixed process.
- h) **Include hazards other than floods and landslides:** Nepal's response system focuses mostly floods and landslides, but should also include fires, thunderstorms, glacial lake outburst floods, cold waves, and other disasters. Workshops should continue to be held before the monsoon system, but also before the spring and fall seasons as well.
- i) **Ensure resource optimisation:** There should be a policy to use the *chungi kar* (a local tax) collected by municipalities for disaster response and for DRR initiatives. Part of the *sanshad bikas kosh* (parliamentary fund) should also be allowed to be spent on emergency response work. Some DDRCs did allocate some budget for emergency response, but it should be mandatorily for all to do so. The role of international institutions in mobilising resources during disasters must be spelled out. Government agencies, including the SWC, should develop a policy so that all the community development projects of I/NGOs integrate disaster reduction strategies into their regular programmes.
- j) **Translate the key provisions of the NSDRM into action:** Efforts should be made to prepare district disaster preparedness plans which include response guidelines. As provisioned for in the national strategy for disaster risks management (NSDRM), national-level advocacy and campaigning to establish a national commission for DRM which will assume national authority for DRM should be carried out by disaster actors. These two steps will help translate the key provisions of the NSDRM into action and reduce the risk of disaster.

An autonomous and professionally competent, multi-disciplinary national focal institution for disaster management should be established to manage disaster properly.

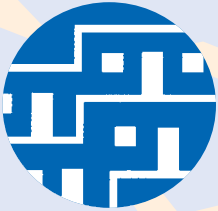
- k) **Ensure that resource are managed and mobilised:** The budget for DDRCs should be increased from NRs. 100,000 to at least NRs. two million (more than the annual funds for a VDC) and a mechanism to use VDC, DDC and municipality resources in response should be developed. As a part of resource management, the government should coordinate with UN agencies which can secure resources from the Global Fund for Disaster Relief. The government should also seek the partnership of multi-lateral agencies like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in implementing its long-term DRR strategy.
- l) **Establish an emergency operation centre:** The government should prepare mechanisms for systematising an emergency operation centre and developing a comprehensive plan of action for it. It should ensure the centre has sufficient material support and specific roles and responsibilities. The different agencies which work out of the centre, regional, districts level must have clearly defined roles as well.
- m) **Offer a response based on expertise:** The cluster approach should be enforced to ensure that responses draw on the expertise of the members of each of the eight clusters and thereby save time and resources. Clusters should be activated according to the nature of the response required, using a well-coordinated effort. Each DDRC should make a roster of experts who can carry out timely assessments and should review and update this not regularly.
- n) **Increase capacity of early warning and climate forecast systems:** Early warning and climate forecast systems do not exist at either the district or regional. A few communities in the southeast of Kailali District do have community-based EWS, but without effective climate forecasting systems, they do not suffice. More resources and efforts should be devoted to EWS and climate forecasting.







स्फियर परियोजना



मानवतावादी
घोषणापत्र
तथा प्रकोप
सहायतासम्बन्धी
न्यूनतम मापदण्डहरू

२००४ संस्करण

अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय रेडक्रस तथा रेड क्रिसेन्ट अभियान तथा गैरसरकारी संस्थाहरू (गैसस) का लागि आचारसंहिता

- ✧ मानवीय आवश्यकता सर्वप्रथम आउँछ ।
- ✧ सहयोग पाउनेहरूको जात, धर्म, वर्ण वा राष्ट्रियताको विषयलाई लिएर कुनै प्रकारको विभेद नगरी सहयोग प्रदान गरिन्छ । आवश्यकताको आधारमा मात्र सहयोग सम्बन्धी प्राथमिकता निर्धारण गरिन्छ ।
- ✧ सहयोगको प्रयोग कुनै खास राजनीतिक वा धार्मिक विश्वासलाई सम्वर्द्धन गर्नका लागि गरिने छैन ।
- ✧ हामी सरकारको वैदेशिक नीतिको साधनको रूपमा काम गर्ने प्रयास गर्ने छैनौं ।
- ✧ हामी सबै वर्ग, जातजाति र समाजको संस्कृति, परम्परा र संस्कारको सम्मान गर्नेछौं ।
- ✧ हामी स्थानीय क्षमताका आधारमा संकट-निवारण गर्ने कार्यक्रमको विकास गर्ने प्रयास गर्नेछौं ।
- ✧ राहत सहयोगको व्यवस्थापनको क्रममा कार्यक्रमबाट लाभ प्राप्त गर्ने समुदायलाई संलग्न गराउने उपायहरूको खोजी गर्नेछौं ।
- ✧ राहत सहयोगले प्रकोपबाट उत्पन्न हुने भावी खतरालाई कम गर्नुका साथै आधारभूत आवश्यकताहरू पूरा गर्ने प्रयास गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने मान्यतामा काम गर्नेछौं ।
- ✧ हामी आफूले सहयोग गर्न चाहेको तथा आफूले स्रोत स्वीकार गरेका दुवै निकायप्रति जिम्मेवार रहेको ठान्छौं ।
- ✧ आफ्ना क्रियाकलापबारे सूचनाको प्रसार-प्रचार वा विज्ञापन गर्दा हामीले प्रकोप-पीडित व्यक्तिलाई असहाय वस्तुका रूपमा लिने छैनौं । उनीहरूलाई समाजका अन्य मानिस सरह सम्मानित गर्दै उनीहरूको अधिकारको रक्षा गर्ने प्रयत्न गर्नेछौं ।

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