

Report on Dialogue on Current Floods and Landslides: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward

22 July 2013
Kathmandu



Organized by:
Disaster Preparedness Network-Nepal (DPNet-Nepal)

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1. Introduction

On July 22, 2013 Disaster Preparedness Network-Nepal (DpNet-Nepal) organized a dialogue programme on Current Floods and Landslides: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward. The program was held at the Meeting Hall of Nepal Red Cross Society, Kalimati, Kathmandu from 14.00hrs to 17.00hrs. In total 46 participants representing governmental offices, Universities, International non government organizations (INGOs) national non government organizations (NGOs) United Nations (UN) Agencies, Red Cross Movement, Donor Agencies and Media attended the program. The university students, researchers and DRR professionals were also attended the program. The list of participating organizations is given in the annex 1.

The South West Monsoon in 2013 entered in Nepal in early June and the heavy rainfall triggered the massive floods and landslides in the 13 districts of the Western and Far Western regions of the country. Similarly, some districts of central regions (Rautahat, Bara and Sarlahi) and Eastern regions (Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Saptari) were also heavily affected by flood disaster having huge devastation in May, June and July 2013. The flood and landslides that resulted have left dozens of people dead and injured and destroyed property worth millions of rupees. Based on the report revealed by Nepal Red Cross Society, 59 people lost their lives, 17 missing and 29 are injured and more than 7350 families were affected from 25 May to 18 July 2013.

However the government and other concerned stakeholders have been making significant efforts continuously in response and preparedness to reduce the negative impacts of flood and landslides. The efforts and preparedness activities are not sufficient to reduce the loss of lives and property. There should be effective and efficient preparedness planning, response and relief operations during disasters.

2. Objective

The dialogue aimed to bring all DRR stakeholders in a single forum and make aware for improved response mechanism and better preparedness to reduce the adverse impact of possible flood and landslides. The program also aimed to i) review on response mechanism for current flood and landslides occurred across the country and map the response capacity of the humanitarian organizations to cope with possible flood and landslides, ii) know the effectiveness of Early Warning System in recent Flood and landslide and iii) collect feedbacks, comments and make ways forward on how to improve response and preparedness activities in the days ahead.

3. Dialogue Format

The program was conducted upon the chairmanship of Dr. Meen B. Poudyal Chhetri, Chairperson, DpNet-Nepal. Mr. Ram Chandra Neupane, General Secretary of DpNet-Nepal delivered welcoming remarks and highlighted the objective of the program. Mr. Neupane said that the main objective of the program was to share lessons learned from the current flood and landslides and make ways forward on how we can improve our response and preparedness activities to reduce the negative impact of potential disasters.

A quick self-introduction of the participants was followed by the technical session. The technical session included three presentations, namely, Effectiveness of Early Warning System in Current Flood and Landslides, Response and Lessons learned from recent flood and landslides and Humanitarian

Concerns and Response: Nepal Flood and Landslides 2013. The presenters included Mr. Rajendra Sharma, Chief of Flood Forecasting Section, Department of Hydrology Metrology, Mr. Dharma Raj Pandey, Deputy Director of Disaster Management Department, Nepal Red Cross Society and Mr. Kedar Babu Dhungana, Humanitarian Manager, Save the Children. The presentation session was followed by discussion session. Participants from various organizations commented on different issues and put their views and suggestions. The program was facilitated by Mr. Bhesh Parajuli from DPNet-Nepal.

4. Presentation Session

Mr. Rajendra Sharma, Chief, Flood Forecasting Section and Senior Divisional Hydrologist from DHM



presented the paper on effectiveness of early warning systems in recent flood and landslides in Nepal. Mr. Sharma informed that DHM has a mandate from Government of Nepal to monitor all the Hydrological and Metrological activities in Nepal. DHM has a priority on "Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning". DHM has a Flood Forecasting Project and the project has been implementing various activities in coordination with non government organizations at local level. The principle activities of the project are to establish, operate and manage flood forecasting stations

and upgrade them with real time telemetry system, assess hazards, due to floods in major river basins and develop river flow forecasting models for major rivers of Nepal.

Mr. Sharma informed that flood forecasting section of DHM has installed telemetry system for real time data acquisition on 75 stations in major river basins of Nepal. The web based data acquisition and dissemination systems have also been developed. Some models such as MIKE11 and GeoSFM models are customized for long term flood forecasting. Community based system has been promoted for warning dissemination and response. Flood forecasting section of DHM is also doing Research on rainfall-runoff modeling and preparing flood hazard maps. A full copy of his presentation can be found at DPNet Website: <http://www.dpnet.org.np/index.php?pageName=presentation>

The second presentation was made by Mr. Dharma Raj Pandey, Deputy Director, Disaster Management Department, NRCS on Response and Lessons learnt from recent floods and landslides. The presentation provided the details about NRCS response system, Flood/landslide situation and impacts, Challenges/constraints and Key lessons learnt. Mr. Pandey informed that NRCS headquarters receive early notification of flood by districts chapters within 6 hours. NRCS distributes ready to eat food and non food items to the affected people and families. It conducts Rapid Assessment within 72 hours. It also carries out need assessment within 4-10 days and detail need and damage assessment within 60 days.



Mr. Pandey provided the details about NRCS preparedness for response. NRCS has developed its own policy documents and guidelines for effective preparedness, response and risk reduction including huge material resources and trained human resources/volunteers. The recent flood and landslides has killed many people in different parts of the country. The affected districts from flood and landslides since may 25 to 18 June are Darchula, Kanchanpur, Bardia, Kailali, Kalikot, Dailekh,

Bajahng, Humla, Dadeldhura, Baitadi, Achham, Doti, Mustang, Taplejung, Sindhuli, Kathmandu . Similarly, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Udayapur, Routahat, Dang, Nawalparasi, Rolpa, Pyuthan, Kailali are the districts affected since July 9 to July 9 2013. NRCS has carried out search/rescue and evacuation together with Security Forces, first aid service, rapid assessment, distribution ready to eat (RTE) and food, distribution of NFRIs set, detailed assessment and coordination with DDRC, MoHA and Clusters.

He highlighted some challenges and constraints faced during response and lessons learnt from the recent flood and landslides. The challenges and lessons learned from the recent flood and landslides are listed in his presentations in detail. A full copy of his presentation can be found at DpNet-Nepal Website: <http://www.dpnet.org.np/index.php?pageName=presentation>

The final presentation was made by Mr. Kedar Babu Dhunagana, Humanitarian Manager, Save the Children Nepal.



Mr. Dhunagana highlighted some good aspects of immediate response from the Government and humanitarian agencies in recent flood and landslides in Nepal. The good aspects include that Government promptness (Activation of NEOC, deployment of MOHA/NEOC Officials to Darchula within 24 hours...), Increased Relief Fund size; doubled which is realized. The security forces performed very proactive roles. There is less number of casualty compared to past flash flood cases. Increased relief package size from the Government is realized. CBDRR initiatives worked a lot in saving lives and relief collected from civil society, corporate/business sector. Media attention is increased in disaster.

He also mentioned some gaps on immediate response. He stated that the lack of equal attention to all affected districts (e.g. cases from Kalikot & Dailekh) was realized. Lack of need based life saving relief materials: addressing humanitarian needs of diverse beneficiary groups: children, elderly, sick, pregnant, PWD..... , Assessment a continual challenge, Lack of clarity on early recovery and rehabilitation and Livelihood aspect receiving less attention, poverty increasing & GDP decreasing. Logistics a big challenge in remote hill districts, unavailability of land for temporary shelter & schools: a case from Darchula, small engagement of in-country international community (due to disaster size, number of displaced and duration, DDRCs under resourced in terms of technical, human, materials and financial).

He emphasized on further opportunities on immediate response. He said that this is a right time to start Disaster to Development initiatives: especially learning from Darchula and Kanchanpur. Flood and landslides mitigation/river embankment intervention needed at large scale across the country. Mainstreaming DRR into regular development process is needed. Safer city planning and initiatives should be started. Capacity building of security forces for search and rescue: a strong logistics back up needed.

Besides, he highlighted on the following issues as well:

- Disaster categorization mechanism as a regular practice from Govt. to be in place
- DDRCs and Cluster capacity development and resourcing at Govt. level
- Clarity on Early Recovery intervention: policy/strategy (?)
- Improved Preparedness well resourced (Govt. Support to NRCS?)
- Establishment and activation of EWS across the country

A full copy of his presentation can be found at DpNet-Nepal Website:

<http://www.dpnet.org.np/index.php?pageName=presentation>

5. Discussion Session

The presentation session was followed by discussion session. Participants from various organizations commented on different issues and put their views and suggestions.

- Mr. Ram Prasad Luetel, Disaster Response Specialist, UN OCHA shared some lessons learned that response in this year was best among recent years. Government was very proactive in disaster response this year. The humanitarian agencies actively supported the government of Nepal while working in the disaster affected areas. The response was better than expected but still there are a lot of things to be improved. There is a problem on clear identification of families truly affected by disaster while providing relief material. The chronic problem should not be mixed with humanitarian response.
- Mr. Gehendra Gurung, Head of Program, DRR and CCA, Practical Action said that Rapti and Karnali flooded higher this year than ever in last 30-35 years. But there was no human loss due the installation of early warning system. There could have been huge loss of lives as the flood reached to the habitation at 11-12 at night. He also expressed that there might be the impact of climate change in early heavy rainfall than expected.
- Mr. Laxman Basyal, Department of Education, EIE focal point put the issue that what is warning chain and how does it works? How to make it quick responsive? He suggested that making linkage of warning sign to schools can help to make aware the school children. The effective coordination between different organizations and intra departments and government authorities is realized. Due to lack of Early Warning System and efficient communication there was great loss in Seti flood which could have been minimized if there was proper communication system and EWS. He also mentioned that Darchula was not on the prone district list but there was a huge devastation. So the Government and the humanitarian agencies need to identify other disaster prone districts and should treat equally in terms of DRR.
- Asim Shrestha, Emergency Officer, UNICEF said that in some districts DDRC members were not aware about DPRP, so it could be the reason for lacking on implementation of DPRP and quick assessment. He suggested for more orientation and sensitization to DDRC members by District Lead Support Agency (DLSA) with the support from other agencies on a regular basis and coordinates especially on information management part and share with humanitarian actors. This is required due to frequent transfers of government officials. He also mentioned that there was no availability of food items required for children, lactating mothers and pregnant women, special attention should be given to that group during emergency.
- Mr. Sunil Sun Shakya from NDRC suggested that Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan have been developed in most of the districts and we need to review whether the clusters at districts were activated or not. More sensitization programs are needed at local level. He also suggested that rather than on response we should be focused on prevention and mitigation of disaster on coming days.
- Mr. Sunil Gurung from Oxfam put his view that there is confusion on the role of different organization due to their role restricted to higher disasters. The confusion is on the role on different size of disasters. District Disaster Relief Committees are highly under resourced and that should be supported. In some districts local government authorities were much aware so coordinated well with all stakeholders to reduce the impact.
- Mr. Bishnu Timilsina, General Secretary, Disaster Management Network Nepal shared some bitter experience on compensation distribution due to lack of good governance during collection and distribution. He suggested that all scale disaster should be equally treated. The humanitarian agencies should reach to the remote areas of the country as well. There are so many cases of disaster which are not covered by any media and any agencies.

- Mr. Surendra Dev Bhatta from Central Department of Environment Science, TU, put his query about the EWS of landslides.
- Dr. Govinda Basnet, Freelancer suggested that the river encroachment could be the most important factor that caused disaster and increased vulnerability to flood.
- Mr. Bhuvanishwori Parajuli from NSET suggested that it would be better if the representative from Department of Urban Development and Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development were participated in the program while both ministries have a vital role in mainstreaming DRR into development.
- Prof. Dr. Hari Krishna shrestha,from,Nepal engineering college said that most of the houses destroyed on Darchula were made by encroachment of river. So it should be considered in the future. He also put his query about National Strategy on EWS. The mainstreaming of disaster into development programs is going on and need to be expanded.
- Mr. Deepak Adhikari, DSP from Armed Police Force informed that APF has been making its efforts on rescue and response. There is the problem of transportation and lack of resource for those activities.
- Mr. Deepak Paudel, Executive Member, DPNNet-Nepal highlighted that we should not link every extreme event with climate change without proper research and findings. Similar erratic/extreme rainfall had occurred in various times in the past as well. He also mentioned that extreme rain event does not mean flood risk. He also informed that DPNNet-Nepal will try to link the disaster risk with development in the days to come and advocate on the issues.
- Mr. Ram Chandra Neupane, General Secretary of DPNNet-Nepal shared some examples from last year seti floods and loss on Kharapani. He emphasized that the government should consider and take lead role to reduce the loss of disaster. There was the detail study on Darchula which remained to be implemented. Government should develop riverside settlement policy which can help for the river protection and reduce risk in lives and livelihoods.

Dr. Meen B. Poudyal Chhetri, Chairperson of DPNNet-Nepal thanked all the participants and paper presenters. He extended his gratitude to the paper presenters for the informative and useful presentations and to all the participants for their constructive feedback and suggestions.

Dr. Chhetri concluded the program highlighting the factors which have been increasing the vulnerability to disasters in Nepal. Poverty, lack of awareness, reluctant government and lack of concrete disaster act and law are some major issues to increase the vulnerability of lives and livelihoods. The government should come proactively not only in disaster response but in phases of disaster as well. If we all make our best efforts in collaborative way it will help to reduce the impact of disaster to lives and livelihoods..



6. Lessons Learned

- The government approached more proactively in response this year but still there are many areas to be improved
- Preparedness and community based initiatives at districts and local level supported to respond quickly and minimize the losses from flood and landslides
- The gaps were realized in coordination between cluster co-leads and clusters leads while distributing relief items to the affected people.
- Government security bodies played very proactive role in response but their capacity need to be strengthened.
- The EWS installed in various flood prone rivers and communities saved lives and livelihoods, so it needs to be extended in many more flood prone rivers and communities

- Difficulties faced in logistic transportation to the hill districts so the coordination mechanism with private/corporate sectors need to be established
- We should learn from the case of Darchula where the land for temporary shelters and schools was not available
- There was less number of casualty compared to past flash flood cases but we need to focus on how to minimize the losses on livelihoods and infrastructures
- All affected districts were not looked equally during disaster. More attention was paid in Kailali but equally affected district Dailekh was not focused on.
- There was no availability of different food items required for child and pregnant women, special attention should be given to that group during emergency.
- A collaborative action amongst humanitarian agencies at district level and practice of resource sharing ensures coverage of larger numbers of beneficiaries.

7. Ways Forward

- Flood forecasting-long term and seasonal and Early Warning System needs to be developed and installed in all flood prone rivers and communities.
- River encroachment should be controlled from the government and more awareness activities are needed to the vulnerable communities.
- The EWS of landslides needs to be installed and vulnerable communities should be educated about EWS.
- Government should have clear policy and law to control the river encroachment.
- The chronic problem needs to be treated separately and should not mix up in emergency humanitarian response.
- Disaster should be considered as development issue and needs to be mainstreamed into regular development plans and programs.
- Need clarity on Early Recovery Intervention: policy and Strategy
- Effective coordination and information sharing mechanism should be in place for the immediate response.
- It would be better to have a pre monsoon workshop before starting monsoon season to make aware and keep alert all concerned stakeholders.

8. Conclusion

The dialogue program was overall successful that provided situation updates and shared lessons learned from the recent flood and landslides amongst DRR and other concerned stakeholders. The program also intended to map the response capacity of the humanitarian agencies working in Nepal but very limited agencies provided information regarding this. The program was significant to identify some gaps and make ways forward to reduce the adverse impact of flood and landslides in the future. The government moved more proactively in response than in the previous years, though the gaps were realized in coordination between cluster co- leads and leads. The river encroachment is one of the major problems that increased the loss of lives, livelihoods and property. Government should have specific policy and regulation to control the river encroachment. The chronic problem should not be mixed up in humanitarian emergency response. Government and all DRR stakeholders have to mainstream disaster into regular development plans and programs. DRR programs should focus more on prevention and mitigation rather than in response and preparedness. Government line ministries and departments needs to be strengthened for effective and efficient response and preparedness.

Annex 1:**List of Participated organizations**

S.N	Organizations
1	Adventist Development and Relief Agency Nepal
2	Armed Police Force
3	British Red Cross
4	Caritas Nepal
5	Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Forum Nepal
6	Department of Hydrology and Metrology
7	Disaster Management Network Nepal
8	DPNet-Nepal
9	ECARDS Dolakha
10	HECT Consultancy
11	HelpAge International
12	Himal Media
13	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent
14	Kirtipur Volunteer Society
15	Natural Disaster Management Forum
16	Nepal Engineering College
17	Nepal Police
18	Nepal Red Cross Society
19	National Society for Earthquake Technology
20	Organizations
21	Oxfam
22	Practical Action
23	Save the Children
24	The small Earth
25	Tribhuvan University Central Department of Environment Science
26	United Nations Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
27	United Nations Children Funds
28	United Mission Nepal
29	University of Groningen
30	United States Embassy in Nepal
31	World Vision International