

Fostering Knowledge on Disaster

DPNet Nepal eBulletin

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Summary

This quarterly report highlights DPNet Nepal's initiatives from July to August 2025, focusing on disaster risk reduction, policy advocacy, and community resilience.

On 5 July, DPNet conducted a fact-finding visit to Chobhar Gorge to assess flood risks. Led by Prof. Dr. Bishal Nath Upreti and Chairman Dr. Raju Thapa, the team found that the September 2024 flood (1,130 m³/s) was within the gorge's capacity (~2,800 m³/s), and that widening or blasting the gorge could worsen flooding, destabilize rocks, and damage cultural heritage sites. Recommendations included halting physical alterations, exploring upstream embankments, preventing river encroachment, and monitoring debris during monsoons. Findings were presented to NDRRMA on 7 July, emphasizing the need for a multi-disciplinary study before intervention.

Also on 7 July, the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) convened to revitalize thematic committees and approve the FY 2082/83 work plan, including establishing Provincial Platforms for DRR, hosting the Fourth National DRR Conference, and leading key observances.

On 31 July, a national dialogue on post-disaster challenges of landless populations engaged parliamentarians, officials, and civil society. Discussions focused on aligning land legislation with DRR, safeguarding hazard-prone areas, and promoting risk-sensitive land-use planning. DPNet pledged to submit recommendations to inform Land Act amendments.

On 1 August, the second DRR dialogue with the Home Minister addressed policy and institutional reforms, emphasizing strengthening NDRRMA, improving disaster financing and data systems, updating guidelines, and enhancing early warning and response capacity.

Finally, on 19 August, Nepal marked World Humanitarian Day, promoting locally led response, volunteer training, and Good Samaritan protections. DPNet Chair Dr. Raju Thapa called for legal safeguards for bystanders and responders, supported by the Home Minister, highlighting Nepal's focus on empowering communities and strengthening municipal preparedness.

DPNet Carries Out Observation Visit to Chobhar Gorge



Chobhar is now at the center of discussion following a rumor that the government is going to blast out bed and side rocks of the gorge to widen and deepen the Bagmati River ‘to solve the flood problem in Kathmandu valley’. The Chobhar Gorge is the outlet of the Bagmati watershed including Kathmandu valley, and surrounding mountains. In the recent years, Bagmati River and its tributaries get flooded during monsoon and affect adjacent settlements and urban infrastructures like roads and bridges. One of such devastating flood occurred on 28 September, 2024.

Considering the flood risk, DRRM Executive committee meeting, held on 18 May 2025 decided, ‘During the continued rain, flood cannot pass through the Chobhar Gorge and surrounding areas are flooded, and considering the risk and not to let such situation repeat in coming days, Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) to reduce the disaster risk coordinating with Nepalese Army as and when required’, and instructed the MoUD.

After that there have been different opinions, including criticism and anger from the public against the decision and government move. Also, there have been rumors that the Chobhar Gorge is being blasted out and widened by removing historic rocks.

The Chobhar is a historically, culturally and geologically significant site. There are temples and other religious sites and the site is linked to spiritual sentiments of the local and Nepali people.

Chobhar's importance extends beyond its hydrological role. Ancient texts like the Gopalarajavamsavali describe the Kathmandu Valley as a prehistoric lake, drained through the Chobhar gorge by Manjushree, a pivotal figure in Buddhist mythology. Licchavi-era inscriptions (400–750 CE) highlight the valley's historical prominence, while geological studies reveal Chobhar's fractured metamorphic rock and cave systems, formed over millions of years. These factors emphasize the need for careful stewardship of this culturally and geologically unique site.

The local residents already voiced strong concerns over the government's proposal to blast and widen the gorge as a rapid, engineering-centric response to the deadly September 2024 floods.

To gather first-hand information on flood risk at Chobhar Gorge and explore mitigation options that would preserve the gorge's natural integrity, DPNet dispatched an expert fact-finding team on 5 July 2025. The delegation was led by adviser and former chairperson Prof. Dr Bishal Nath Upreti and included current chairperson Dr Raju Thapa; former chairpersons Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa and Dr Meen Bahadur Poudel Chhetri; former DUDBC director-general Er Umesh Bahadur Malla; retired government secretary Mr Kedar Neupane; journalist Mr Ram Krishna Bhandari; technical advisers Ms Krishna Karki and Mr Rohit Yadav; DPNet vice general secretary Mr Harsman Maharjan; and Ward 6 councillor Mr Nandalal Maharjan, an elected representative from the Chobhar area, who guided the group through key sites during the visit.

The group observed the sites across the Chobhar Galchhi, including its geological and hydrological aspects. Prof. Upreti has led several geological excursions to this site for students for last 3 decades. He explained participants, showing each sites and points, about Chobhar's challenging cave systems gorge's features

The visit yielded to sharing of the facts that the Chobhar Gorge has discharge capacity of about 2800 m³/s. The September 2024 flood peak was of about 1130 m³/s. Therefore, the Gorge is not the reason of flooding in Kathmandu valley on that event. The riverbank areas along Bishnumati, Bagmati Rivers were flooded. Many people think that the flooding was due to encroachment of the river and building settlements along the right way of the rivers.

Hydraulic models further show that enlarging the gorge would actually accelerate flow, deepen scour and raise upstream flood levels by several meters, while the real choke-points lie in low bridges and decades of flood-plain encroachment that trap runoff inside the valley. Blasting, meanwhile, would disturb highly fractured metamorphic rock, inviting slope failures or rockfall that could block the outlet entirely and send sediment-laden surges racing toward the Terai. Beyond engineering risks, the team stressed that Chobhar's location within the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage landscape means any alteration would erode sacred cultural sites and destroy unique fast-flow habitats that the river now supports. The deepening and widening of the Chobhar Gorge may lead to draining out of valley's underground acquirers as the valley is a bowel like watershed.

After the observation, the group discussed the issue along with the citation of facts and historical documents about the best options to preserve the natural landscape and solve the flood problem as seen by the ‘government eyes’.

The group discussion concluded as following:

- ‘Discharge blockage at Chobhar’ is not the cause of flooding in Kathmandu. Flooding in Kathmandu must be due to other factors but never due to Chobhar or downstream.
- Government should halt all physical alteration until an independent, multi-disciplinary assessment covering geomorphology, hydraulics, culture and ecology.
- Saving lives and the settlements from the flooding is important. Therefore, the government should look for alternatives to prevent further inundation and washing away of the settlements, without destroying the natural landscape, and heritage sites.
- Embankment in the upstream of Chobhar can be one of the options to protect some houses/settlements. However, reducing flood risk in Kathmandu valley rivers requires long-term strategies to restore rivers’ natural flow area.
- The government should at least prevent further encroachment of riverbeds and reclaim critical green buffers along the corridor of Bagmati River and its tributaries.
- Last year, the floodwaters of the Bagmati River carried various massive debris, including, collapse bridge, massive gas tank and other objects, downstream. Fortunately, these materials did not reach the Chobhar Gorge. If they had, there was a possibility of clogging the narrow outlet, potentially worsening flood conditions upstream. Therefore, during the monsoon season, special attention must be paid to prevent such debris from being washed away by the river and transported to the Chobhar Gorge. Proactive closely monitoring, and early clearance of potential blockages along the river should be prioritized to ensure the continued natural flow through the Chobhar outlet.

NPDRR Meets to Revitalize Thematic Committees and Finalize the New Fiscal-Year Programme



The National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) opened the new fiscal year with a high-level meeting on 7 July 2025 at the NDRRMA. Chaired by NDRRMA Chief Executive and NPDRR Chair Dinesh Bhatt, the gathering drew senior officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) Dr. Tok Raj Pandey, line ministries, security forces and provincial governments, as well as representatives of United Nations agencies, bilateral donors, international and national NGOs, the private sector, academia, the media and disaster-affected communities.

NPDRR Member-Secretary Dr Raju Thapa, who also chairs the Disaster Preparedness Network–Nepal (DPNet), delivered a detailed presentation on the evolution, structure and recent achievements of the platform. Tracing the concept back to the UN’s global and regional DRR platforms, he shared that Nepal formally constituted the NPDRR in 2013 to ensure international commitments are met at home. “Our strength lies in breadth,” he said, pointing to the platform’s nine thematic groups, government, semi-government bodies, UN and donors, INGOs, NGOs/CBOs, academia, the private sector, media and affected communities, which enable a “whole-of-society” approach. Dr Thapa also shared NPDRR’s coordination of Nepal’s common position paper for the 2025 Global Platform for DRR, its facilitation of nationwide celebrations of World Humanitarian Day and International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, and its role as secretariat for emergency knowledge-sharing during disaster events.

Following vigorous discussion, the meeting endorsed four headline decisions:

Re-energise all nine thematic groups. The secretariat will provide technical back-stopping to ensure each cluster meets regularly and feeds concrete actions into the national DRR agenda.

Form National Committee. The chair was authorised to nominate five expert members, completing the NPDRR National Committee and broadening its technical base.

Expand the architecture to the provinces. By mid-2026 NPDRR will facilitate the establishment of Provincial Platforms for DRR (PPDRR) in all seven provinces, mirroring the national model and strengthening vertical linkages.

Approve the FY 2082/83 work plan. Key milestones include:

Hosting the Fourth National Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction;

Leading national-level observances of World Humanitarian Day (19 August) and International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (13 October);

Recruiting necessary staff for the NPDRR secretariat with partner support.

Chair Bhatt closed the meeting by expressing gratitude for the members' active participation and pledging that the secretariat would work on implementation of the decision. He emphasised that the day's decisions marked a shift from discussion to concrete action and noted that, by energising each thematic group, establishing provincial platforms and addressing staffing gaps, Nepal would strengthen its ability not only to respond to disasters but also to mitigate risks in advance.

DPNet Presents Chobhar Fact-Finding Observation to NDRRMA Team



A field mission by the Disaster Preparedness Network–Nepal (DPNet) has concluded that widening or blasting the Chobhar Gorge would do little to curb Kathmandu Valley floods and could, in fact, unleash new geological and cultural risks. The findings, presented on 7 July 2025 to the NDRRMA, come amid public chaos over rumours that the gorge’s fractured bedrock will be dynamited to speed Bagmati River outflow.

DPNet adviser Prof. Jib Raj Pokhrel cited four-century-old documents forbidding even the removal of wood from the sacred site, warning that tampering would offend spiritual sensibilities as well as scientific ones. Former DUDBC Director-General Umesh Bahadur Malla argued that houses inundated last year had been built in the river’s rightful path, and that safeguarding a handful of structures should not justify irrevocable damage to the gorge’s geology.

Drawing on more than thirty years of leading geological excursions to Chobhar, Prof Bishal Nath Upreti told the NDRRMA briefing that field measurements and hydraulic modelling show the gorge can safely pass roughly major flood, so the real bottlenecks lie upstream where decades of flood-plain encroachment and low bridges impede flow; he warned that enlarging the gorge would only accelerate water velocity, deepen channel scour, raise upstream flood levels and destabilise its highly fractured metamorphic rock, potentially triggering slope failures or even blocking the

outlet with rockfall, and he urged that any intervention wait for a rigorous multidisciplinary study instead of risking catastrophic engineering and cultural damage.

During the de-brief with NDRRMA, Dr Thapa summarised the team's main finding and highlighted independent, multidisciplinary study before any physical intervention is considered. He also shared the key idea like debris that could clog the outlet during heavy rains should be intercepted upstream. After hearing fact finding team briefing Mr. Bhatt thanked DPNet for bring valuable insights and shared with NDRRMA.

National dialogue held on post-disaster challenges facing landless people



Kathmandu, 31 July ,2025, A national dialogue on “Post-Disaster Issues and Challenges of the Landless” was organized with the participation of 65 individuals, including 32 Members of Parliament, senior officials, civil society leaders, and media representatives to discuss how Nepal’s land laws can better protect those living in hazard-prone areas. The event was chaired by Dr. Raju Thapa, Chairperson on DPNet, and facilitated by journalist Bijaya Poudel. It was organized with the support of DPNet, ASF Nepal, JCYCN, and DiMaNN. ASF Nepal delivered the opening remarks and DiMaNN Chairperson, Surya Bahadur Thapa highlighted the objectives of the program sharing his experience on relationship with landless and disaster. In order to set the context, Mr. Kedar Neupane, former Secretary of the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, highlighted the relationship between land tenure and disaster risk. He emphasized how insecure or poorly planned land use amplifies exposure to floods, landslides and other hazards, and argued for policy coherence between disaster-risk reduction, environmental conservation and land administration.

Building on the theme, Mr. Ganesh Bhatta, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, highlighted provisions related to disaster management contained in the draft Ninth Amendment to the Land (Related) Act, 2021 B.S. (1964 A.D.). He explained how the amendment seeks to clarify categories of land that must be safeguarded because of disaster risk and ecological value, and how the draft aligns with national DRR priorities.

In a discussion session, parliamentarians reported that 55 parliamentarians have already submitted amendment proposals to the draft, reflecting intense cross-party engagement on the issue. They noted that deliberations are ongoing in the House of Representatives and will proceed in the National Assembly as well. Several MPs promised to insulate the process from undue influence and ensure that land deemed necessary for protection, from the perspectives of natural-disaster risk, disaster management or environmental conservation, particularly safeguarding land along river, stream and canal banks and settlements in high-risk zones will not be distributed to landless people as per the provision consistent with Section 52(B) of the draft provisions.

Parliamentarians repeatedly stressed the need to mainstream risk-sensitive land use planning, from zoning and building controls to community relocation and the protection of forests and riparian buffers. Civil society representatives called for meaningful participation of affected communities, transparent criteria for identifying hazard-prone land, and clear inter-agency coordination so that land decisions support resilient recovery after disasters.

Offering a vote of thanks, Dr. Thapa committed that DPNet will continue convening dialogues with DRR stakeholders and will submit concrete, written recommendations to the parliamentarians for inclusion in the Land Act during the ongoing amendment process. He thanked the parliamentarians, government officials, experts and media for their contributions and formally closed the program.

Second DRR Dialogue with the Home Minister Held



On 1 August 2025 in Singhadurbar, Kathmandu, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) in coordination with DPNet organized the second dialogue to review policy and institutional reforms for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) in Nepal. Chaired by NDRRMA Chief Executive Er. Dinesh Prasad Bhatt and attended by Chief Guest Hon. Ramesh Lekhak, Minister of Home Affairs and Chair of the DRRM Executive Committee, the forum brought together senior officials across ministries, representatives of major political parties, UN agencies, academia, I/NGOs, private sector actors, DRR experts, and media, many from the National Platform for DRR (NPDRR). Joint Secretary Ms. Roshani Kumari Shrestha opened the session framing the objective of converting long-acknowledged gaps into practical institutional and policy fixes, while Joint Secretary Mr. Bandu Prasad Banstola highlighted that the series, run with development partners, seeks to translate dialogue outputs into concrete roles and actions.

Keynote speaker Mr. Bamshi Kumar Acharya mapped Nepal's expanding but fragmented DRRM framework, covering the DRRM Act (2074), Local Governance Operation Act (2074), DRRM Regulation (2076), DRR National Policy (2075), the National Plan of Action (2018–2030), and a suite of directives and procedures, highlighting the atypical sequence of enacting law before policy, partial translation of legal mandates into regulations, and uneven practice across tiers. He noted mandate gaps (notably recovery within NDRRMA's 25 functions), thin staffing (38 posts), and the need to detail operational roles under the National Disaster Response Framework. On financing,

he called for a dedicated DRR budget code, clearer fund pathways to provinces and local levels, and risk financing instruments for catastrophic loss, loss and damage, and climate funds, alongside amendments to the Act and regulations, implementable SOPs and standards, structure aligned to subject expertise, and stronger global engagement.

The floor emphasized four themes: institutional authority, continuity and capacity, financing, and data/technology linked to social protection. Experts, including Dr. Meen Bahadur Poudyal Chhetri and Prof. Dr. Jibraj Pokharel, urged empowering NDRRMA, with some advocating placement under the Prime Minister's Office, citing weak subnational presence and an underperforming NEOC. Speakers flagged frequent leadership transfers, missing SOPs, outdated assessment guidelines and terminology, and attrition of trained responders; NSET's Mr. Surya Narayan Shrestha proposed a DRR civil service cadre, an active Executive Committee, and operational EOCs at all tiers. FCGO's Mr. Yogesh Parajuli argued for a mixed cadre of civil servants and experts, a defined budget code, improved routing of funds to local governments, and remedies to "budget dumping." Former Executive Chief of NDRRMA Dr. Bhimsha Kumar Bhusal called for integrated and resilient data systems, GIS/remote sensing capacity, robust early warning, a dedicated response force, reduced staff churn, private sector engagement, and a proactive posture that includes Shock-Responsive Social Protection. Dr. Raju Thapa, Chairperson of DPNet and Member Secretary of NPDRR, shared that while Nepal has made progress in DRR policy formulation, past learnings and commitments are often overlooked. Referring to the Strategic Plan of Action (2018–2030), he emphasized its alignment with the Sendai Framework and noted its lack of implementation, particularly in meeting targets such as reducing disaster-related deaths, so such target of the policy documents need to be revised. He also pointed out that key guidelines like the Disaster Assessment Guideline and the DRR Vocabulary, both developed in 2072 B.S., are outdated and do not reflect the post-federalism structure or current global standards. To address these gaps, Dr. Thapa recommended forming a small technical expert panel to review existing DRR policies and suggest reforms to the ministerial level. Political leaders Mr. Khimlal Bhattarai (CPN-UML) and Mr. Kalyan Gurung (Nepali Congress) backed elevating NDRRMA's legal and financial standing, equipping local responders, insuring front-line workers, directing resources down to ward Disaster Management Committees, and enforcing environmentally responsible development practices.

Hon. Lekhak welcomed the series, tasked the Home Secretary and NDRRMA Executive Chief to prepare a prioritized list of legal and policy reforms aimed at simplification and effectiveness, and stressed strengthening early warning systems, including telecom-enabled alerts and direct call cascades to ensure last-mile reach. He encouraged integration of non-state actors and cited new MoUs with helicopter and drone operators to augment response capacity. Acknowledging emerging public safety crises, cybercrime, drugs, road accidents, and suicide, he expressed openness to structural recalibration of the DRR authority if it improves performance and highlighted life-insurance provisions for responders as a priority. He emphasized the need for a

long-term strategic approach, whether the Authority remains within or outside the Ministry, and urged stakeholders to provide thoughtful suggestions. The Home Minister further cautioned that any recommendation to place NDRRMA outside the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) must consider a 10–15-year perspective, warning that without such foresight, there could be a situation in 2–4 years where it may appear the Authority should have remained under MoHA.

Executive Chief Bhatt affirmed NDRRMA’s coordinating-and-leading role, noted progress on municipal warehouses, volunteer training, and in-house drone capability, invited written expert inputs for regulatory revisions, and flagged a proposed O&M reform expanding technical posts from 38 to 67 while streamlining rules that slow relief decisions. Upgrades to the 1155 helpline and the MIS are underway, with opportunities for transboundary early warning cooperation with China.

Nepal marks World Humanitarian Day with call for locally led response and Good Samaritan protections



Kathmandu, Aug 19, 2025, The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority organized a national program in Kathmandu to mark World Humanitarian Day. The event was supported by organizations including DPNet, NSET, NEAR Network, and brought together UN agencies, national and international NGOs, and professional networks. The program focused on promoting humanitarian support and strong local leadership within an international framework capable of supporting communities during crises.

Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak inaugurated the conference as Chief Guest and urged stronger regional cooperation, experience sharing, and practical solutions that put local authorities and first responders in the lead. His remarks highlighted Nepal's repeated exposure to floods, landslides, earthquakes, and fires, and the need to keep building capability at the ward and municipal level. The event took place under the banner "Strengthening Global Solidarity and Empowering Local Communities."

That message mirrored wider humanitarian communications this year. Global agencies marking World Humanitarian Day emphasized protection for aid workers and meaningful support to community responders. United Nations materials describe the day as a time to honor those who

step into crises, while many agencies warned that fatalities among aid workers remain alarmingly high in 2025.

The Kathmandu program also showcased the Asia Pacific localization movement that NEAR and partners convened this week. Participants advanced commitments captured in the Kathmandu Covenant, aiming to shift more power, resources, and decision making closer to frontline actors across the region.

In one of the day's most concrete policy appeals, DPNet Chairperson Dr. Raju Thapa called for a Good Samaritan law in Nepal. Such a law would protect bystanders, community responders, and humanitarian workers who render emergency aid at accident sites or during disasters, shielding them from legal harassment or prolonged police inquiry. Civil society advocates have argued that clear legal immunity and simplified hospital intake rules would remove a major barrier to life saving help in the first minutes after an incident. In response, the Home Minister welcomed the proposal, and NDRRMA's leadership said the Authority will introduce a reward policy to recognize and honor individuals who risk their lives to rescue others.

Speakers repeatedly underlined that most rescues in Nepal are carried out by local actors long before national assets arrive. That reality, they said, is why policy and budgets should keep prioritizing local preparedness, volunteer training, bilingual public messaging, and interoperable communications. It also aligns with this year's World Humanitarian Day theme, which centers the pairing of global solidarity with empowered communities.

World Humanitarian Day is commemorated every year on 19 August to honor aid workers and advocate for the protection of civilians affected by crises. The observance originated in memory of the 2003 Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad. In 2025, UN agencies and humanitarian networks again urged authorities and armed actors to respect international humanitarian law, and they called on donors to address widening funding gaps that leave local responders to shoulder growing risks with fewer resources. As Kathmandu closed its program, participants said they would carry forward issue discussed during the sessions, including legal reforms to enable safe bystander assistance and continued investment in municipal readiness.