



OCHA Nepal Situation Overview

Issue No. 30, covering the period 25 June- 11 July 2008

Kathmandu, 12 July 2008

Highlights:

- Severe Food insecurity continues in the Mid-West and Far-West hilly and mountain areas
- Diarrhoea outbreaks triggered by monsoon coupled with poor sanitation in MWR/FWR
- Political stalemate continues with postponement of parliamentary session of the CA
- Protests and concerns over ethnic and indigenous groups declaring autonomous provinces
- Security situation deteriorates in the Terai with incidents caused by armed groups
- Threats by armed groups against aid programmes increase, with IED explosions at CARE and IOM offices

CONTEXT

Political situation

The ruling Seven Party Alliance (SPA) reached a new agreement on 25 June over contentious political issues that were delaying the Constituent Assembly (CA) from drafting a new constitution and forming a new government. The parties agreed to a 21-Point bill, which among other crucial issues included the Fifth Amendment of the interim constitution to elect president, vice-president and Prime Minister through a simple majority.

On 26 June, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala announced his resignation, calling for the formation of a new government under the leadership of Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M). PM Koirala will continue to act as caretaker PM until he officially tenders his resignation to the new president.

The political stalemate continued after the parliamentary session of the CA was postponed for the twelfth consecutive day since 26 June, following protests by parliamentarians of the Madhesi parties against the SPA's failure to include their demands in the Fifth constitutional Amendment. The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), Terai-Madhesh Democratic Party (TMDP), Federal Republic Front (FRF) and Rajendra Mahatoled Nepal Sadbhawan Party (NSP) staged regular demonstrations inside the Assembly stalling the legislative proceedings. The contention was that demands for an autonomous Madhesh Province in the Terai and proportionate representation of Madhesi in the Nepal Army were agreed by the SPA with the umbrella of Madhesi parties (United Madhesi Democratic Front - UDMF) during an agreement in February 2008.

To end the political deadlock, a constitutional supplementary bill was drafted on 4 July after nearly a week of protracted negotiations to address the demands of the Madhesi parties, but SPA could not table the bill during the CA's scheduled session on 5 July following the rejection by the Madhesi parties.

The CA resumed its parliamentary session on 8 July after agreeing to introduce a newly drafted second supplementary bill, which was tabled on 9 July. The parliamentarians representing the Madhesi parties rejected the bill and boycotted the legislative session.

On 13 July, the CA passed the Fifth Amendment with the new supplementary bill despite lack of consensus from Madhesi parties. It allows the election of president and vice-president and formation of new government through simple majority of

the CA. The constitutional supplementary amendment stated that there would not be a single province but multiple autonomous states, such as the Terai-Madhesh for the Madhesi and other indigenous and ethnic groups. The names, numbers and structures, including details of centre and provinces, resources and allocation of resources would be determined by the CA. Entry into the Nepal Army will be based upon the principle of equality and inclusion.

Protests against the 'one Mahesh one province' were staged by various non-Madhesi indigenous groups and led by Tharu Kalkarini Sabha (TKS) and Chure Bhawar Ekata Party (CBEP). On 28 June, CBEP warned that residents of the Chure Bhawar region would take up arms if the SPA agreed to the Madhesi demands. The Tharu Welfare Assembly organised a series of protest programmes in the capital and Terai condemning SPA's action to introduce the new supplementary bill. Around 16 organisations, including Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIN), CPN (Marxist Leninist) and Chure Bhawar Ekata Party announced their support to the Tharu agitation against the Madhesi province.

On 8 July, Tharu groups, including TWC, Tharu Student Society, Tharu Youth Front and Tharuhat Autonomous State Council, formed a new Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee to intensify protests. The TWC organized a Terai Bandh on 10 July against the demand for a 'One Madhesh one province'. The Bandh was strictly observed in the Districts of Kailali and Kanchanpur where the Tharu formed the ethnic majority, with no vehicular movement and the markets were mainly closed. On 4 July, Federal Republican National Front (FRNF), CBEP and Nepal Loktantrik Samajwadi Dal jointly organised a general strike in the Terai region obstructing public transport and private vehicles on the East-West Highway. The strike mostly affected the eastern districts of Rautahat, Sarlahi, Saptari, Siraha, Mohattari, Dhanusha and Morang, and also Bara and Parsa in the Central Region.

There are serious political concerns in the Eastern Region over the emerging trend of ethnic and indigenous groups declaring autonomous provinces. The Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) has claimed the region's three districts (Morang, Jhapa and Sunsari) as 'Limbuwan State' while the CPN-Maoists and Dhimal caste have declared the region as 'Kochila' and 'Dhimal autonomous state'. An alliance of nine indigenous groups—comprising of Rajbansi, Gangain, Meche, Dhimal, Sathal and Urao among others—known as Eastern Terai Indigenous Janjati Organisation (TIJO) named the region as 'Morang Autonomous State'. The trend of declaring group associated States threatens the social structure of Nepal, which has prompted calls from sociologists for the State Restructure Commission to address this matter cautiously.

After nearly three months since the CA elections, the cabinet nominated the remaining 26 CA members making the 601-member Assembly complete. Out of the 26 members, 15 are from indigenous nationalities and six from marginal ethnic groups. During the reporting period, major parties had started their internal discussions for preparation to form a new government.

The Government of Nepal reportedly handed a formal letter to the UN Secretary General to extend term of UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) for another six months. UNMIN officially closed its regional offices in the Mid-West and Far-West Regions on 10 July.

The indefinite strike called by the Nepal Petroleum Dealers Association (NPDA) was withdrawn on 30 June after nearly a week of protests following intervention by Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and. The dealers have planned another protest immediately after a new government is formed. The strike caused an acute shortage of petroleum products following the closure of 2,500 dealers despite the recent 25 per cent price increase.

Safety and security

The security situation is deteriorating in the Terai, in particular in the Eastern and Central Regions, where armed groups are increasingly active in the absence of government structures. In Madhuwapur VDC of Siraha District, an engineer from Kathmandu was abducted by an unknown group on 27 June. Another civilian was abducted on 30 June in Basbitti VDC of the same District, no group has claimed responsibility.

On 2 July, an armed group opened fire at Dhulabari of Mechinagar Municipality in Jhapa District and killed a businessman and injured several others. On 4 July, members of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) led by Rajan Mukti shot one of two businessmen abducted from Jaleswor-Bardibas in Mahottari. An unidentified group attacked a human rights activist on 6 July at Batahakhola of Dhodhana VDC in Siraha. A YCL cadre was killed by an unidentified gang following his abduction in the District's Mirchaya VDC. In Sunsari, local farmers vandalized a YCL office at Inaruwa protesting against the capture of fertilizer by CPN-Maoists. They also staged a demonstration on the main highway and local markets were closed at Inaruwa.

In another incident, Jwala Singh led JTMM (JTMM-JS) cadres shot dead a civil society member and the former Mayor of Gulariya municipality of Bardiya where he was working as District Coordinator of the Civil Society Network on 29 June. Following the killing, the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI)-Bardiya chapter called for Bandh in Gulariya Bazaar

Government offices and employees, including those working with police forces, are becoming political targets for political and civilian groups. Cadres of Kirant Jawadi Workers Party (KJWP), whose armed activities increased in the eastern hilly districts of Bhojpur and Khotang, looted the police posts and set fire to a VDC office. In Khotang, the VDC secretaries appealed for security from the local administration following threats from activists of KJWP. The activists threatened VDC Secretary's to donate NPR 200,000 and resign within the month.

VDC Secretaries of the Chisapani, Bopung, Devasthan, Diplung, and Dambrakhu Siwalaya VDCs' were among those displaced from their working stations. Due to regular threats, the VDC Secretaries are not releasing the VDC budget from the District Development Committees (DDC). Once the VDC Secretary

releases the budget, they face problems from armed groups demanding donations and from local parties pushing preference for projects in VDCs.

Protesting the attack on District Development Committee (DDC) Saptari, the staff of local bodies stopped work for an indefinite period. The staff said they would not return to work until the government assures them security and punishes the guilty. Civil servants shut down all local bodies in the district. The field presence of government staff working with local bodies was drastically reduced due to insecurity. For instance, 30 VDC Secretaries in Jajarkot District are operating from District Headquarters (DHQ). Local people, particularly in Daha, Kortang, Maikot, Thalarai and Suwanuli VDCs, are compelled to travel at least three days to access the VDC Office services.

On 1 July, a group of NC activists assaulted the VDC Secretary of Laxmipur Prama VDC of Siraha. The VDC Secretary Welfare Promotion Forum (VDCSWPF) has locked up the offices of DDC, demanding immediate action against the NC activists. Employees of Siraha VDC and DDC submitted a joint resignation to Ministry for Local Development (MOLD) demanding their security.

Concerned over the state of lawlessness and growing insecurity in Morang, the Maoist-affiliated The Nepal Federation of Trade Unions (ANFTU) demanded District Administration Office in Biratnagar for the effective security arrangement to prevent growing number of abduction in the region. In Siraha, members of the ruling party Nepali Congress (NC) organized called a general strike on 7 July protesting against lack of action by the district administration towards controlling the increasing criminal activities.

From 5-8 July, flights from/to Nepalgunj were cancelled due to the protests by the Karnali Rights Coordination Committee (KRCC) and passengers to the Karnali demanding additional flights to the Karnali Zone, protesting airfare hikes and demanding discounts of 55 per cent for students and 50 per cent for children below 12 years old, among others. Irate passengers padlocked the main entrance gate of the Ranjha Airport and the counter of the airlines at the airport. Similar protests were organized in Surkhet and Humla airports three weeks ago by the KRCC, which formed two weeks before the CA election. Following a meeting of the Ministry of the Civil Aviation and CA members from the Karnali, the airport was re-operational from 8 July.

Operational space and humanitarian access

Regular threats by armed groups have increased concerns among local aid workers who are unable to visit villages to monitor field activities. Local and international NGOs are taking more precautions while working and monitoring at the VDC level. Locally hired employees face less risk than those from outside the District.

In Dhanusa and Parsa Districts of the Eastern and Central Regions, a new faction of JTMM led by Rajan Mukti threatened international aid agencies in the Terai to close its activities within 10 days and issued warning to Pahade (of hill origin) employees to leave the area within five days. They have also warned any organization of not implementing any programme in the Terai areas without approval of the District Development Committee. Rajan Mukti started his own faction of JTMM after separating from JTMM-JS. Police said that they have no confirmation of the authenticity of the threat. JTMM-JS has reportedly intensified donation collections from NGOs in Bardiya district. On 10 July, cadres of JTMM led by Rajan Mukti exploded bombs on the walls of Care International Nepal Office in Janakpur but no one was hurt.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Protection

UNICEF organised a training of trainers for members of the child protection cluster and Government of Nepal's Central Child Welfare Board and District Welfare Board on 'Child Protection in Emergencies' to ensure child protection stakeholders had a common understanding on child protection issues during emergency situations and to ensure a collaborative preparedness plan. Children are not mentioned in the draft bill for Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

UNICEF recently organised a meeting of experts on children's rights and transitional justice to discuss crucial issues like truth-seeking, reparations, memorials, prosecutions, and security sector reform. On 4 July, a meeting was held among key government ministries, convened by the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction and Ministry of Women and Social Welfare with UNICEF to focus on their coordination for the development of a national plan of action for reintegration of children affected by the conflict.

Refugees/IDPs

The Armed Police Force (APF) has increased security near the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Jhapa after it was attacked with a series of bomb explosions on 30 June. The Government of Nepal mobilized 120 security personnel and five vehicles to boost security for IOM at the Bhutanese refugee camps.

A Thematic Report on IDPs published by OCHA in June 2008 says that solutions for IDPs must move on from the current focus on return and reintegration include local integration and resettlement to an alternative location, as foreseen in the *IDP Policies*. Inadequate implementation of the *IDP Policies* has had negative consequences, leaving IDPs without solutions and protection issues unresolved. Displacement due to unrest in the Terai originally affected mainly Pahades, but with time affected all communities, as armed groups target anyone with money. It would appear that actual displacement is limited and takes place very quietly and discretely, but many would like to leave and some have plans ready.

Of the 58 Haripur families, 29 are still in Bangi Bazaar and 17 in Chatara, the remainder have left and gone to different places in Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari. The A/CDO visited the alternative site proposed by the local VDC, but as neither the local people nor the political parties agree to the IDPs moving there. The A/CDO is now proposing that a Police Post be established in Haripur and the IDPs return there. The A/CDO said that return would be voluntary. A decision on whether or not a Police Post could be established is expected by mid-July. Amongst the IDPs, the men in general say they would return provided a Base Camp were established and remain in Haripur and that compensation for losses were paid, however, the majority of the women do not want to return because of continuing fear and the memories of what happened.

Some 58 displaced families of Haripur VDC were relocated to different areas of Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa Districts to live with their relatives. The Assistant Chief District Officer and the Local Development Officer visited the location two weeks ago to observe the alternative land for their settlement. IDPs raised concerns regarding their security to return in Haripur. They told the officials that they would return to Haripur VDC if GoN established a base camp and provided compensation to their

lost livestock and damages properties. (Waiting for Marion's inputs)

Despite CPN-M's commitment to the signed Peace Agreement to return the seized lands and property, the local cadres continue to control and redistribute land, as seen in Kailali District. According to the Human Rights and Peace Process Monitoring Network-Salyan, CPN-M cadres have not returned land, particularly in Shivarath and Devsthal VDCs of Salyan where CPN-Maoists seized property from 48 families during the armed conflict.

On 30 June, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and International Institute for Human Rights, Environment and Development (INHURED) organised an interaction program for all the organizations working for the IDPs to discuss about the current IDPs issues, have a common understanding and advocate to the government for the approval of the directives. Altogether 30 representatives from various international/national non governmental organizations and UN agencies participated in the interaction program.

Health

From 10-11 July, the Nepal Medical Association (NMA) ceased all medical services, except emergency services, in government and private hospitals as a part of the nationwide protest. Patients in the MWR/FWR were reportedly in a desperate situation.

The ongoing monsoon season coupled with poor sanitation in many parts of the Mid-West and Far-West Regions triggered diarrhoea outbreaks in several locations this fortnight in Kalikot, Jumla and Dailekh. There was also a Measles outbreak in Doti District this week with over fifty children infected.

Four people died and many others were affected by an undiagnosed ailment in Kolti VDC ward numbers 5, 6 and 7 of Bajura District. In response, the District Health Officer (DHO) of Bajura has sent a team of three health workers to the Kolti area to assess the health situation. On 9 July, three people died and dozens were affected by a diarrhoea outbreak in the Rautae Community in Dailekh District. The Rautaes are considered forest dwellers. The monsoon season and poor sanitation conditions have increased the concerns for Dengue outbreak in the Terai Districts of the MWR/FWR. Epidemiology and Diseases Control Division (EDCD) of the Ministry of Health and Population has directed Terai Districts DPHO, including Banke, to strengthen the surveillance mechanisms and increase awareness on Dengue as the Dengue is present in the bordering Indian State.

The media reported of shortage in medicine supplies in the hilly Districts of the Far-West Region (FWR) as a result of the Truck Association's strike last week that ceased transportation of medicines and other essential supplies. UN OCHA followed up on these reports with the District Health Offices (DHO) and NRCS. The feedback indicates that there is no immediate threat of medicine shortages in the FWR. According to the DHOs, medicine stocks are sufficient and available in Accham, Bajura, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Doti and Darchula. In Bajhang, stocks are available, however at high costs due to increased transportation costs.

In Sankhuwasabha, over 24 locals in ward-5 of Madirambeni VDC were bed-ridden due to an unknown disease that spread in the area for several days. Following the outbreak, a team of five doctors of WHO went to the area.

A new case of Polio P1 virus was detected in Nepal's bordering Indian State of Uttar Pradesh, which raised concerns in

western Terai over the impact on the polio eradication programme in Nepal. Reports suggest that 97 per cent of Nepalese children were immunized in Nepalgunj during April 2008.

Floods and Landslides

Heavy monsoon rains are causing minor natural events and raising concerns of displacement in the Far-West and Mid-West Regions, in particular Accham, Bardiya, Banke, Dadeldhura, Salyan, Jajarkot, Kailali, and Doti Districts. The community coping mechanisms and local authorities along with NRCS had the capacity to respond to these events. The relief community remain on standby to provide necessary assistance through the District emergency response plans as required. Dirt roads in the MWR/FWR are increasingly hazardous as the wet weather continues. The flooded roads emerged as major problems for traffic along the East-West Highway and secondary roads.

There were also reports of flood-related incidents in the eastern region. In Siraha district, floodwater from the Bataha River damaged the dam in Majhauriya VDC. About 101 poverty-stricken families from Chamar tole moved to safer place fearing their lives with their cattle, children other valuable items to the safer side of the dam. In Sarlahi, the water level has drastically increased in Lakhadei River and flood entered into Laxmipur Sukchaina and Belhi VDCs where 14 households were partially damaged.

Disaster preparedness activities at the Regional, District and community level are ongoing. The DDRRC, relief organizations and NRCS are working together to strengthen the disaster preparedness at the District level, with a focus on the isolated communities.

Food security

The food insecurity situation in the Mid-West and Far-West hilly and mountain areas continues to be severe. People of Namakwa, Ragda, and Bhagawati VDCs in Jajarkot district are facing food shortage due to failure of wheat crops which were badly damaged by hailstorms. The Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) has insufficient food stock to deliver the food deficit VDCs.

Around 1,500 people in Rammaikot VDC in Rukum face food shortages, due to crop failure and low productivity. In Bajura, people of the 11 VDCs in the north-eastern part of the District are reeling under food shortages as the food NFC at Kolti is running out of food stock. Dalit families in Sapta VDC are in desperate need of food support. A month ago, the World Food Program (WFP) distributed food in this area. However, the food provisions are almost finished. In June, hundreds of women gathered at the DDC and threatened to consume poison

en masse unless they were provided food immediately. The Political Parties settled demands by providing NPR 25,000 for relief to each VDC.

In Kalikot, people of north-west Patala area of the District are facing food shortages following crop damaged by hailstorms in April 2008. The NFC transported 1,500 quintals of food for the Patala area by helicopter. However, the food has not reached the area due to bad weather conditions.

In Accham, NFC supplied 400 quintals of rice to drought-affected areas of the District. The NFC Seti Zonal office has allotted 1,000 quintals of rice for the District. However, the allotted quantity of rice is insufficient to prevent food shortages in the District. At least 10,000 quintals of rice is required to address the food shortages. Local people are demanding the re-establishment of the removed NFC depots from Bijayak and Kamal Bazaar during the conflict to ease supply of food to the remote villages.

Education

Schools in the Districts are increasingly targeted by armed groups for extortion. On 1 July, an unidentified group shot dead the Principal of Don Bosco School situated at Sirsiya of Majhare VDC-7 of Morang District. In another incident, a Headmaster of Maina Kaderi Secondary School of Maina Kaderi VDC of Saptari was displaced following threats from the Madhesi Virus Killers Party (MVKP) on 5 July. The MVKP activists demanded he leave the VDC, because he did not appoint a relative of a MVKP activist to the post of a teacher at the school.

The District Education Office (DEO) in Bajhang was padlocked on 29 June by the Dalit Struggle Committee, demanding 20 per cent inclusion of Dalit for teacher posts. On 6 July, the DEO in Kanchanpur was padlocked

Avian Influenza

The Mid West Regional Livestock Services Directorate (RLSD) is enhancing the awareness activities on Avian Influenza (AI) throughout the MWR. The Rapid Response Team (RRT) for AI response was formed in all Districts in the MWR.

COORDINATION

OCHA along with partner NGOs assisted the Chief District Officer (CDO) and District Disaster relief committees (DDRRC) to conduct pre-monsoon workshop in 24 out of targeted 26 flood-prone districts.

UPCOMING EVENTS

IASC meeting, 17 July at 11am

Disclaimer: The information in this report is consolidated from media, UN, NGO, and other humanitarian partners, subject to availability of data. Although OCHA aims to confirm reports independently, occasional factual inaccuracies can occur. For inputs, questions or comments please contact:

Wendy Cue, Head of Office

OCHA Nepal

Tel. +977(1)559-2311

Ocha-nepal@un.org

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