



### Topics

#### Natural Disasters and Disaster Reduction

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## More than 35,000 people displaced in Nepal by flooding

There are at least 35,000 people who have been displaced from their homes because of flooding. “The flood-victims will need at least two months of relief support,” said Biswa Prakash Pandit, senior official and joint secretary of the MOHA (Ministry of Home Affairs). Shelters are being built to provide refuge to the affected families.

“With the increasing threats on human life, our staff are on high alert to help the affected families,” said Sanjeev Kafle, director of the disaster unit of the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), one of the most active national humanitarian agencies involved in rescuing and providing relief to flood victims.

According to the NRCS, over 10,000 people in Sunsari District were evacuated with the help of the Nepalese army and police over the last three days. Many sought refuge in schools, colleges and public buildings in the district’s Inaruwa Municipality. Apart from the NRCS, relief response and assessment is being conducted by over 20 international and national agencies. The Nepalese government has also been providing aid through the Prime Minister’s Natural Disaster Relief Fund, according to government officials.

“Contingency plans and relief supply stocks are in place and there is a need to improve field level coordination among key stakeholders to help the affected families,” said Niranjana Tamrakar, OCHA Nepal’s national natural disaster response and preparedness adviser. People who are passing through this situation will stay in refugees more than 4 weeks. Health teams have sufficient stocks of medicines to control any possible disease epidemic.



Hundreds of people are looking for some refugee for their families.

## Lack of preparedness and crescent quakes

An earthquake surprised the habitants of Dhaka, Bangladesh on 25 August, measuring 3.0 on the Richter scale. People in there fear another quake which maybe will be stronger than this and they think preparedness is not their consolation. The tremor's epicentre was around 40km from Bangladesh's second city, Chittagong, but resulted in no casualties. It comes less than a month after a 5.6 degree quake rocked the capital, Dhaka, and other parts of the impoverished nation on 26 July. On 20 March two mild tremors were felt in Dhaka and three other northeastern districts. On 7 November 2007, a 6.0 degree quake shook the southeastern region. Its centre was at Roninpara, about 70km from Chittagong, cracking open a fault in the hills of Chittagong and Khagrachhari districts. Due to its geographic location Bangladesh is considered high risk for earthquakes, according to experts.

A roundtable on 31 March 2008 organized by the Network for Information Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster (NIRAPAD), a national non-governmental organization (NGO) - in association with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and CARE Bangladesh - concluded that the loss of lives and property could be reduced significantly if the government took proper preparedness and mitigation measures.

“Unplanned urbanization, overpopulation, poorly constructed structures, lack of coordination between institutions concerned, inadequacy of recovery tools and lack of awareness among the people place the country at high risk,” said Maksud Kamal, an expert on earthquake and tsunami preparedness at the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) within the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management.

Experts cite a clear lack of direction in the government's earthquake preparedness efforts. A study by the Bangladesh Earthquake Society warned that a major earthquake could destroy 28 percent of buildings and structures in Dhaka alone.

"A relatively long period of 'rest' from any major seismic activity, and high attention paid to other disasters such as cyclones and floods, have led to a neglect of disaster preparedness for earthquakes - the most destructive of all natural disasters," said a statement by the society on 4 August. Sirajul Islam, chief urban planner of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), said the national building construction code of 1993 was updated in 2006, but no ministry or department had been assigned to implement it. Abul Kalam of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology alleged building codes were often not adhered to: "Most of the buildings in major cities are built without following the building codes," he said. He also said the Public Works Department (PWD) had stopped working on earthquake preparedness, and called on the government to turn the PWD into an institution with the authority to demolish and reconstruct buildings.



This left the last earthquake. People fear this situation to get worse.

## Heavy rains are flooding several areas of Ethiopia

Flash floods following torrential rains in Ethiopia's Gambella regional state have spread to four districts and displaced thousands more people.

"The number of displaced people has reached 20,000," Akway Ojulu, the team leader of Gambella's Disaster Prevention and Food Security Department, said. He also said "We have already distributed blended food to 2,000 people in Itang and 4,000 in Lare. Most of the displaced people sheltered in schools,"

Gambella has been repeatedly hit by flooding from the rivers that drain into the region from the western highlands of Ethiopia. In 2007, flooding left 135,000 people displaced.

Recent rains have also affected other regions. According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), flooding has also been reported in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray regions. At least 3,700 people in the East Shewa zone of Oromiya have reportedly been displaced by floods.



People are leaving the area watching the results of the past flood.



**Comments:** It is incredible how bad the actual situation of the world is. Every place is changing in a bad way; heavy rains have brought more problems than other things. People are moving from their livelihoods because rivers are expanding themselves. Maybe in a near future we will lose some coasts or other areas because they will be flooded.

Preparedness is essential for keeping people safe. Bangladesh citizens will feel better and capable. So they could make a good and organized act facing a natural disaster.

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