

Planning at District and Community Levels

District disaster preparedness plans are prepared annually by each district disaster relief committee (DDRC) at the district level and not at the community level, even though there may be several communities in each district. The communities concerned are, however, consulted through interaction programmes during preparation of the plans. Alternatively, the communities may approach their DDRC to seek its help in disaster mitigation measures.

District preparedness plans

District disaster relief committees (DDRCs) have been established in all 75 districts as drawn out in the Natural Disaster Relief Act (NDRA), 1982. In addition, there are five regional disaster relief committees representing the five national development regions.

MoHA provides annual budgets to the DDRCs to implement the district action plans for each district. According to the disaster management section of MoHA, an annual budget of Rs 25 million was provided for the fiscal year 2005/2006 for disaster-related work and according to the annual disaster preparedness plans prepared by the DDRC in each district. The budget is dispensed to each district on the basis of requests for requisite funds that had either been spent or on the basis of the amount planned for expenditure by each DDRC.

For now, it is understood that only annual disaster preparedness plans are in place and implemented accordingly. For a long time, it was thought that broad-based district disaster preparedness plans had to be prepared if disasters were to be managed properly. The government has declared 23 districts to be the most vulnerable. They are Chitwan, Sarlahi, Makwanpur, Rautahat, Dhanusha, Tanahun, Jhapa, Ramechhap, Siraha, Khotang, Saptari, Taplejung, Dhading, Mahottari, Gorkha, Sindhuli, Nawalparasi, Udayapur, Myagdi, Arghakhanchi, Sankhuwasabha, Syangja, and Parsa (Figure 8).

Out of the 23 districts, the government has chosen five districts for which district disaster preparedness plans should be drawn up, namely, Chitwan, Makwanpur,

Vulnerable districts of Nepal

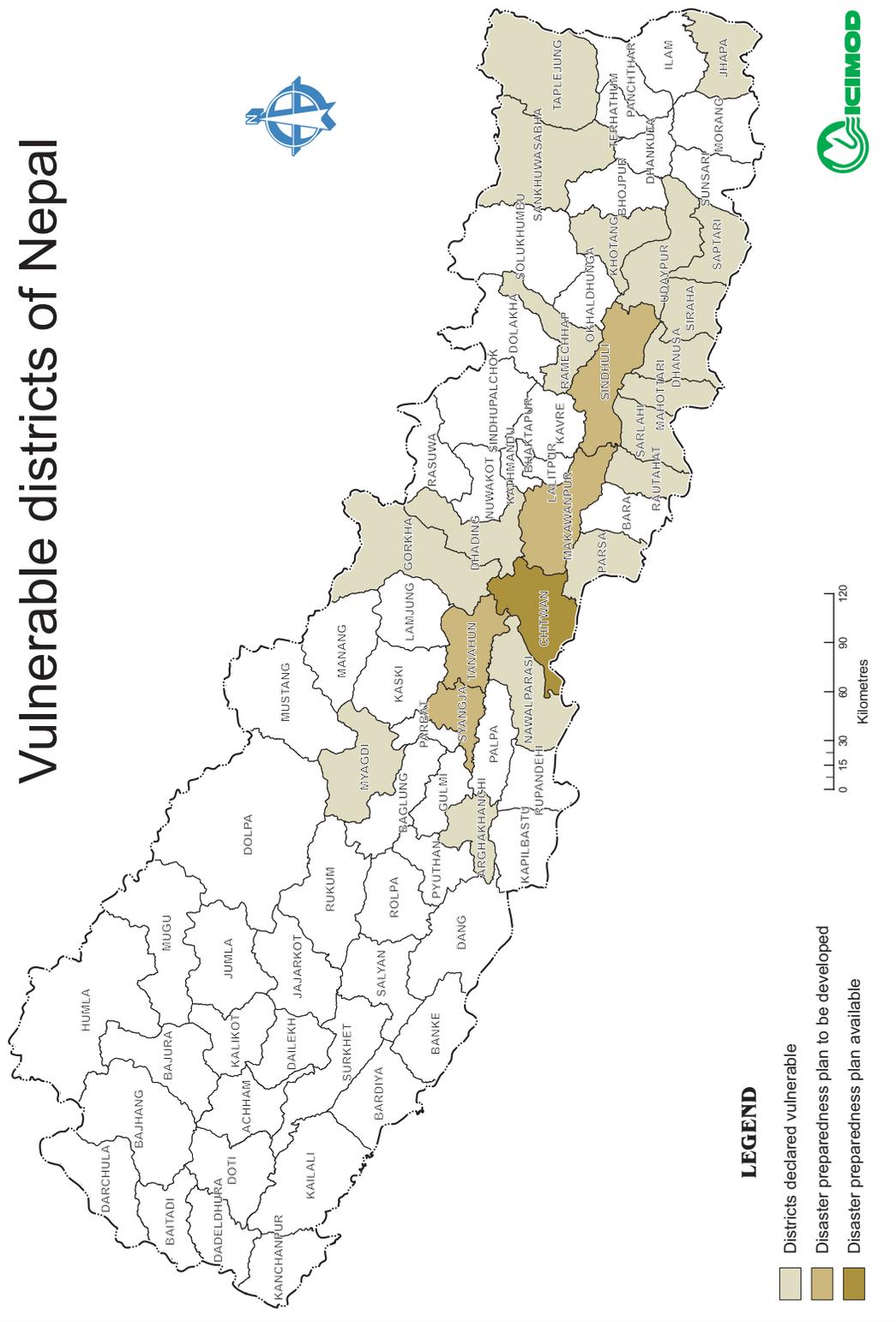


Figure 8: The Government of Nepal has identified 23 districts as being particularly vulnerable. Five of these districts have been chosen for development of district disaster preparedness plans. So far, only Chitwan has developed a district disaster management plan (Annex 9).



Sindhuli, Syangja, and Tanahun. Accordingly, district disaster management action plans for these pilot districts were prepared from 2001-2004. Of the five, 'Chitwan District Disaster Management Action Plan' was officially released recently under the title of 'Total Disaster Risk Management Pilot Exercise'. Other district plans are to follow.

These action plans were prepared with the support of the United Nations Office for Cooperation in Humanitarian Affairs (UN/OCHA) and the United Nations Development Programme, Nepal. The 'Disaster Management Action Plan of Chitwan District' is in Annex 10. It covers policy/legislation, organisational development, plan formulation, human resource development, preparedness, relief and rescue operation studies, and measures for floods, landslides, and earthquakes (before, during, and after disaster) delineating the responsibilities of executing and cooperating agencies. The plan broadly covers the needs of the Chitwan district in respect of natural disaster preparedness.

Disaster preparedness plans for the other districts will be similarly drawn based on knowledge gained from implementation in the five districts. But these district disaster management action plans, which have been so thoughtfully prepared, will only be effective if they are integrated into the periodic plans of the country.

Community-level flood management in Nepal

Jalsrot Vikas Sanstha, Nepal (JVS), a non-government organisation, carried out a study on community involvement in flood management from 2002-2005 as part of a regional project implemented under the supervision of the Global Water Partnership's (GWP) Associated Programme on Flood Management (APFM) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The broad objective of the project was to find ways and means of strengthening the self-help capabilities of communities for improved flood management by using the integrated water resources management (IWRM) framework. The overall goal was to contribute to the process of sustainable development and to improve the quality of life by reducing flood vulnerability with focus was on non-structural measures. The project's study area included Launiya and Tilathi VDCs in Saptari district and Brahmapuri and Banjaraha VDCs in Rautahat district.

The following are the outputs of the study:

- i) Preparation of a manual on community approaches to flood management
- ii) Testing the manual and implementing its measures in Banjaraha VDC of Rautahat District

Community-level preparedness for glacial lake outburst floods

Tsho Rolpa Glacial Lake is located 110 km north-east of Kathmandu in the Rolwaling Valley, Ward No 1 of Gauri Shanker Village Development Committee, Dolkha district of Janakpur zone at an altitude of 4,580 masl. It is the largest glacial lake in Nepal.

Studies carried out by the Water and Energy Commission Secretariat (WECS) and the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) on Tsho Rolpa had stressed the possibility of a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) because of the huge volume of water stored in the lake and water seepage through the moraine dam and the small outlet and freeboard of the dam. The lake would have breached had no immediate measures been taken to lower the water level. If the moraine dam had collapsed, some 30-35 million cubic metres of water would have been released and the resulting flood would have caused serious damage up to a distance of 100 km downstream, threatening human lives, villages, farmland, bridges, foot-trails, roads, and the 60MW Khimti hydropower plant and other infrastructure.

Sensing the imminent danger, the Government of Nepal, with the assistance of the World Bank, established an early warning system in 17 villages along the Rolwaling Khola and Bhote/Tama Koshi downstream from Tsho Rolpa to warn people of the possible GLOF from the Tsho Rolpa Lake. This was carried out under a community-level preparedness plan.

Fortunately, in 2000 A.D., the Tsho Rolpa GLOF Risk Reduction Project, carried out with the assistance of the Netherlands, managed to lower the water level to three metres below the danger level and the risk of bursting was prevented.

The GLOF warning system can be reactivated in case of GLOF danger at any point in future.

Community-level preparedness for earthquakes

The National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET-Nepal) launched a Community-based Disaster Risk Management Programme (CBDRMP) at the ward level in some wards of Kathmandu metropolis to provide technical assistance to communities to implement earthquake risk management initiatives through formation of ward-level disaster management committees. This programme already covers eight wards, and the ultimate aim is to bring all the 35 wards in the metropolis area within the fold of community level preparedness through organised ward level disaster management committees. Some wards have published pamphlets and notices to alert residents to the risk of earthquakes.