
Rasuwa Flood Emergency: ASIA's assessment and continuing commitment since 2015

Statement to ASIA's partners and donors

A catastrophic flash flood has devastated Rasuwa district and the Trishuli river corridor, hitting communities across several municipalities and downstream districts. The ASIA team is now in Uttargaya – where ASIA has worked since the 2015 earthquake – conducting a rapid assessment, and we are preparing to assess Gosaikunda and Aamachhodingmo as soon as access allows.

SITUATION UPDATE

On the morning of 26 August, a sudden transboundary flood entered Nepal from the Tibetan side through the Lhende-Bhote Koshi-Trishuli river system, sweeping through settlements and critical infrastructure in Rasuwa and downstream districts. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, drawing on satellite imagery analysis, attributes the event to a glacier-related flood in the Lhende river triggered by a snow and rock landslide that blocked the channel upstream; the precise chain of events is still under investigation. As of 05:00 on 27 August, Nepal Police reported 162 deaths and 41 people receiving treatment, while hundreds remained missing or out of contact. Destroyed roads and bridges, unstable communications and isolated communities continue to impede rescue and assessment efforts. The Government has declared the affected areas disaster crisis zones and announced free treatment for the injured.

CONFIRMED SEVERE IMPACT ACROSS RASUWA

The damage runs the length of the district and continues downstream. The settlements of Timure and Syabrubesi in Gosaikunda were among the first hit, road access towards the northern border has been severed, and communities downstream along the Trishuli in Nuwakot and Dhading have also been affected. The Government has named Uttargaya among the most affected local governments, and it is the area we know most about so far: the old and new municipal office buildings were washed away, multiple connecting bridges were lost, the Khalte settlement was completely swept away and pre-positioned emergency supplies were destroyed. Independent reporting indicates that the market areas of Betrawati and Sole were also swept away. The Nepal Electricity Authority reports damage to infrastructure linked to eleven hydropower projects with a combined capacity of 405 MW, and telecommunications towers in Rasuwa and Nuwakot have been damaged, further limiting contact with affected communities. We still have no verified household figures for any of the affected municipalities. Immediate priorities include emergency shelter, safe water and WASH, food and essential items, health and protection support, and restoring access to cut-off communities.

ELEVEN YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO RASUWA

ASIA began working in Rasuwa in 2015, immediately after the earthquake, with Uttargaya, Naukunda and Kalika at the centre of our programme presence in the district. We have also worked in Gosaikunda, where our 2015 shelter response covered the settlement at Syabrubesi, and we have carried out assessments elsewhere in the district and built working relationships with the local authorities concerned. That work is documented. Our 2015 response in Rasuwa reached 11,806 people and included close to 26,000 corrugated galvanised iron sheets for monsoon-resistant temporary shelters in Yarsa, Saramthali and the Tibetan settlement at Syabrubesi, 337 gas cylinders and cooking sets, 19 toilet and washing facilities, carpentry training with 168 toolkits, and 400 cash-for-work contributions. We built 58 temporary learning centres across 18 damaged schools, serving 2,345 children, and went on to rebuild four permanent earthquake-resistant schools with 28 classrooms between them. With the University of Milan-Bicocca we mapped landslides and ground fractures in Saramthali, Yarsa and Bhorle, so that reconstruction decisions could rest on slope-stability evidence. Much of that work lies in what is today Naukunda, and Dandagaun, where we worked then, is now Uttargaya-2 - the same municipality where our team is working this week. In the years that followed we continued in WASH, education and livelihoods. It is hard to watch what these communities rebuilt after 2015 – homes, services, livelihoods – destroyed a second time.

The disaster shows once more that climate change and cascading Himalayan hazards are now part of the operating context in Nepal, for humanitarian and development work alike. Attributing any single event takes scientific assessment, but the case for investing in preparedness and cross-border early warning does not wait on that.

For ASIA, an emergency is not a short intervention. Relief saves lives in the first weeks, but the years that follow decide whether communities recover or are left more vulnerable than before. We stayed on that basis after 2015, and we make the same commitment now: our engagement will not end when the emergency phase closes. We ask our partners to plan with us over that timeframe.

ASIA'S RESPONSE

All ASIA staff are safe and accounted for. The team is collecting and verifying data on affected people, displacement, damage, access and priority needs. Eleven years in Rasuwa have meant working across the district, not in a single municipality. Uttargaya, where our programmes are based, is also where access opened first, so that is where the team began. Gosaikunda and Aamachhodingmo are among the worst affected. We delivered shelter assistance in Syabrubesi, in Gosaikunda, after the 2015 earthquake, we have carried out assessments in that part of the district since, and we deal with the same local authorities and district structures, so we can move there as soon as conditions allow. Rapid assessments in both are already planned. We are working in coordination with the district authorities and the local governments concerned, and alongside the other agencies responding. We aim to consolidate the findings and share an evidence-based proposal with partners by Monday 31 August.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

The assessment will determine what we do. On the basis of what we know today, and of what the authorities and other responders already cover, we expect to concentrate on water and sanitation and on shelter, the areas where our presence in the district lets us act fastest, together with the relief items families need in the first days. Where water systems are damaged, we would rehabilitate supply points, provide water treatment and hygiene items, and support sanitation in displacement sites. In shelter we would work in two stages. First, immediate cover: tents for displaced families, together with food and cooking sets for households that have lost their stocks and their kitchens. Then transitional shelters, built with corrugated galvanised iron sheeting and local materials and constructed together with the families themselves, designed to hold through the winter and to serve until permanent housing support reaches these communities. The second stage is where the weight of our response sits: transitional shelter is what carries households through the winter and into reconstruction. We will work through our own team and local partners rather than a parallel structure, and in every affected municipality we can reach. Recovery support – water systems, schools, livelihoods – would follow in a second phase, once immediate needs are covered.

We ask donors and partners to stand ready to activate rapid and flexible support so that we can move as soon as needs are verified. Scope and budget will come with the proposal.

The destruction reported along this corridor is of a different order from what ASIA has responded to in Rasuwa in recent years: whole settlements, the bridges that connected them and the public buildings that served them are gone, and families who rebuilt after 2015 have lost everything a second time. International attention on events like this fades within weeks. The recovery takes years. Restoring water systems, shelter, schools and livelihoods in Rasuwa will take that long, and the communities affected should not be left to carry it alone.

ASIA stands with the people of Rasuwa – not only in this emergency, but through the long recovery ahead.



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Kathmandu, 27 August 2026

