

CIVIC MATTERS

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WHEN THE RIVER ROSE

Bhotekoshi Floods, Human Loss & Nepal's Growing Climate Risk



Kayapalat

An Effort for change

WHEN THE RIVER ROSE



It was an ordinary morning for many people living along the Bhotekoshi River. People were starting their day, children were preparing for school, businesses were opening, and travellers were moving along the roads.

Then, suddenly, the river rose.

A powerful flood swept through the Bhotekoshi corridor in Rasuwa, carrying water, mud, rocks and debris. Homes, roads, bridges, vehicles and other infrastructure were damaged or washed away. For many families, there was almost no time to understand what was happening before they had to run for safety.

What happened next showed how quickly a disaster in the mountains can travel. The flood moved downstream through the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli river systems, affecting communities in several districts. Bodies and debris were later found far downstream, showing the scale and force of the flood.

Behind every number reported after the disaster is a human story - a family that lost its home, a farmer who lost a livelihood, a business that disappeared, or a family still waiting for news of someone missing.

A Disaster Beyond One Place and Early Warning Can Save Lives

The Bhotekoshi flood was not simply a local incident. Its impact travelled with the river.



Initial assessments suggest that an ice-and-rock landslide near the Nepal-China border may have triggered the sudden surge. The debris entered the river system and created a powerful flood that moved rapidly downstream. The exact causes and sequence of events are still being studied.

What made the situation especially difficult was the lack of heavy rainfall immediately before the flood. This meant communities could not rely on the usual signs of a monsoon flood. The sudden nature of the event exposed how vulnerable communities can be when disasters occur with little warning.

Yet, one thing became clear: early warning can save lives.

After information about the flood began reaching authorities, warnings were sent to communities living downstream. The Flood Forecasting Division sent more than 679,000 SMS alerts through Nepal Telecom and Ncell, asking people to remain alert and move towards safer places.

For some communities, these warnings gave people valuable time to escape.

A warning cannot stop a flood. But a timely warning can give a family the few minutes it needs to move to safety.

At the same time, the disaster showed gaps in Nepal's monitoring system. Some water-level stations stopped transmitting data after being damaged by the flood. This is a serious concern because during sudden disasters, reliable information is needed most when communication systems are under the greatest pressure.

The lesson is simple: Nepal needs warning systems that can work quickly, reach everyone and continue functioning even when disaster strikes.

But saving lives is only the first step. For those who survived, another difficult journey has begun—the journey of rebuilding.

A HIMALAYAN WARNING FOR NEPAL WE CANNOT IGNORE

For affected families, the disaster does not end when the water goes down.

People need safe shelter, food, clean water, healthcare and support. Children need to return to school. Farmers and small businesses need help to rebuild their livelihoods. Families who have lost their homes need long-term solutions, not only temporary relief.

The emotional impact must also be recognised. Losing a home, being separated from family members or experiencing a sudden disaster can leave lasting fear and stress. Recovery should therefore include mental health and community support.

But the Bhotekoshi disaster also raises a much bigger question: Are we prepared for the risks emerging in Nepal's mountains ?

Nepal is a country of mountains, rivers, glaciers and steep slopes. Communities living downstream depend on these natural systems, but they can also become highly vulnerable when they change suddenly.

A joint study by ICIMOD and UNDP has identified 47 potentially dangerous glacial lakes across Nepal, India and China, including 21 in Nepal. These findings do not mean that every lake will cause a disaster. They do, however, remind us that Nepal needs to understand its changing mountain environment and prepare for possible risks.

The Bhotekoshi flood should therefore not be seen only as a tragedy of one river or one district. It should be seen as a warning for the whole country.

Nepal cannot prevent every flood, landslide or climate-related disaster. But it can prepare better. That means investing in stronger early warning systems, improving water and weather monitoring, strengthening local disaster response, preparing communities for evacuation, and making sure development projects and settlements are planned with disaster risks in mind.

It also means thinking beyond emergency response.

When a disaster happens, rescue teams are the first line of support. But after the rescue comes the harder work: rebuilding homes, restoring livelihoods, reopening schools, repairing infrastructure and helping communities recover.

This work needs coordination between federal, provincial and local governments, security agencies, communities, humanitarian organisations and development partners.

Most importantly, local communities must be part of the process. They are not only victims of disasters. They are often the first people to notice changes, the first to warn their neighbours and the first to help others reach safety.

The Bhotekoshi flood has taken lives, destroyed homes and disrupted communities. But it has also given Nepal an important opportunity to learn.

The question now is not only "What happened?"

The bigger question is "What will we do before it happens again?"

KAYAPALAT AUGUST



KAYAPALAT TEAM

BHALAKUSARI: LISTENING TO DIVERSE YOUTH VOICES

On 26–27 August 2026, Kayapalat organized Bhalakusari with diverse youth from Kathmandu, including LGBTIQ+ youth, youth with disabilities (PwD), and other marginalized groups, to discuss democratic participation, governance, and civic engagement.

The discussions highlighted that while youth are recognized as important stakeholders, their meaningful participation in decision-making remains limited at local, provincial, and federal levels. Participants noted that non-political youth are often overlooked, with governments engaging youth mainly for mobilization rather than involving them in planning, policymaking, implementation, and monitoring.



Youth also raised concerns around digital threats, climate impacts, limited employment and opportunities, and shrinking civic spaces. PwD and diverse youth shared that their concerns are often acknowledged but rarely translated into meaningful action.

LGBTIQ+ youth highlighted persistent identity crises, stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, and lack of attention to intersectionality. They also identified limited civic participation, lack of unified voices, unemployment, and digital threats as major challenges, while sharing stories of resilience and community action.

Overall, Bhalakusari reinforced the need for governance where diverse youth are not merely consulted, but meaningfully heard, valued, represented, and involved in decisions affecting their lives.

The sessions also created a safe and inclusive space for youth to share lived experiences, connect their concerns with wider governance gaps, and explore collective ways to strengthen civic participation. Their reflections highlighted the need for more responsive institutions, meaningful representation, and youth-led solutions in democratic processes.

CIVIC ISSUES OF AUGUST

1 WHY NEPAL NEEDS CLIMATE COMPENSATION

Nepal contributes very little to global greenhouse gas emissions, yet it faces disproportionate impacts from climate change, including floods, landslides, melting glaciers, and other climate-related disasters. The growing losses underline the importance of climate justice and international support for loss and damage. A recent analysis highlights that Nepal needs stronger, reliable, and locally generated climate data to clearly document its losses and strengthen its case for international climate finance and compensation. Better evidence can help Nepal demand greater accountability from those most responsible for the climate crisis.

Read at : [Kathmandu Post](#)

2 WHO WATCHES POLICY DECISIONS ?

The debate over what constitutes a “policy decision” continues to raise important questions about transparency and accountability in Nepal. Concerns have emerged over whether decisions labelled as policy matters can escape meaningful scrutiny by anti-corruption authorities. Such legal ambiguity can create gaps in oversight and weaken public accountability. For a democratic system to function effectively, government decisions—particularly those involving public resources and public interest—must remain subject to appropriate checks, transparency, and institutional scrutiny. The issue highlights the continuing need to strengthen Nepal’s accountability mechanisms.

Read More : [Kathmandu Post](#)

3 CAN FEDERALISM DELIVER FOR CITIZENS?

More than a decade into Nepal’s federal journey, questions remain about whether federalism has delivered its promised improvements in representation, autonomy, and public service. A recent discussion on Madhesh highlighted a growing crisis of public trust, with political achievements not always translating into better governance. Federalism was expected to bring decision-making closer to citizens, but institutional weaknesses, political disputes, and limited accountability continue to create frustration. The experience of Madhesh raises a wider civic question: Has federalism truly strengthened citizens’ participation and access to government, or are important promises still waiting to be fulfilled ?

Read More : [Onlinekhabar](#)

EDUCATION REFORM : WHO DECIDES AND WHO PAYS ?

Nepal’s proposed School Education Bill has opened an important debate over who should control education and who should finance it. Local governments have raised concerns about federal encroachment, while teachers, private schools, and education stakeholders have called for clearer responsibilities and stronger implementation.

The debate also touches on free and compulsory education, teachers’ working conditions, and the constitutional role of local governments. Education is not only a service but a fundamental public responsibility. The ongoing discussions therefore provide an opportunity to build a system that is more equitable, accountable, participatory, and responsive to students and communities.

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CIVIC ISSUES OF AUGUST

Financial governance became an important civic issue in August as young people, civil society representatives, and experts gathered to discuss fiscal federalism, budget transparency, and citizen oversight in Bagmati Province. The discussions highlighted the importance of enabling citizens to understand how public resources are generated, allocated, and spent. Transparent budgeting is essential for preventing misuse of public resources and strengthening trust between institutions and citizens. Meaningful citizen oversight can also help ensure that public budgets respond to community priorities rather than remaining limited to government offices and formal processes.

Read at : [OnlineKhabar](#)

Nepal's federal structure continues to face challenges in clearly distributing authority between federal and provincial governments. A recent report highlighted a security governance gap, particularly the continued influence of Chief District Officers who remain accountable to the federal Ministry of Home Affairs rather than provincial governments. Although provincial governments have constitutional responsibilities for peace and security, their practical authority remains limited in several areas. This raises important questions about the functioning of federalism, institutional coordination, and accountability. Effective federalism requires not only constitutional powers on paper but also clear authority, cooperation, and responsibility in practice.

Read at : [Kathmandu Post](#)

Nepal's dependence on foreign employment continues to shape the lives and futures of thousands of young people. In August, foreign employment agencies halted labour-migration processes after demanding changes to government policies and administrative arrangements. The disruption highlighted how strongly Nepal's economy and household livelihoods depend on overseas employment and remittances. At the same time, it raises deeper questions about employment opportunities inside Nepal, safe migration, labour governance, and young people's economic futures. For many youth, migration remains less a choice than a necessity—highlighting the urgent need for decent employment and opportunities within the country.

Read at : [Kathmandu Post](#)

Civic Matters is a monthly digest that examines the ever-changing landscape of civic rights and grassroots movements. It captures the true spirit of modern civic engagement by analyzing policy debates, showcasing local initiatives, and highlighting global trends.

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