

## **Situation Update: Koshi River Cofferd Dam Overflow**

**Status Summary:** **Low risk** of Koshi River embankment breach (re-flooding) at Pachim Kusaha breach point, which will further be mitigated by rapid repair of 2008 flood damaged spurs, as committed by the high level mission on 27 May.

### **Situation Update:**

On 26 May, late evening, the Koshi River water levels were high due to incessant rainfall in the region from 22-24 May, causing overflow of the Koshi coffer dam in Pachim Kusaha VDC, Sunsari District. The overflow raised community fears of re-flooding. There was no impact of the overflow outside of the Koshi River embankments, as the coffer dams were constructed to divert the water away from the embankment breach points for repair work. There was no displacement. The water levels throughout the Eastern Terai Districts remain high following the recent heavy rainfall. The weather conditions have improved.

### **Response :**

The Sunsari DDRC reported the situation to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry for Water Resources immediately following of the incident of coffer dam overflow. The DDRC requested immediate technical support from India, with particular concern that overflow would have affected the structure of the coffer dams, as they are constructed from sand (as opposed to more concrete materials) and completion of repair to the 5 spurs at the Pachim Kusaha embankment breach site. The DDRC is highly concerned about the overflow, with the onset of the monsoon season, which may increase pressure on the Koshi River embankments, increasing risks of floods.

On 27 May, a high level mission, including the Ministry of Home Affairs Secretary, Water Resources Secretary, Physical Planning and Construction Secretary and Indian Embassy officials visited the coffer dam and Pachim Kusaha breach site. The high level mission committed to expediting the repair to the spur and embankments to mitigate risks of flooding. The Indian Embassy stated that the repair and reconstruction of the spurs and embankment at Pachim Kusaha will be completed by the end of May, as scheduled. The coffer dam overflow will not have any effect the spur repair.

Also on 27 May, following the GCM, the LDO and UN OCHA assessed the Highway and diversion road to assess access, as well as visiting the coffer dam site and embankment repair site. The visit observed slow movement across the damaged East-West Hwy in Shrepur VDC, Sunsari District, and diversion road. The coffer dam remains under water due to the high water levels at Pachim Kusaha, Sunsari District. Technical assessments of the area by the Gol contracted engineers indicated low risk of the overflow breaching the embankment. However, further rainfall and higher water levels will increase the risk of embankment breach. Two of the five 2008 flood-affected spurs at Pachim Kusaha - Koshi River embankment point require completion before further rainfall.

**Media:** The media reports were effective tools for raising awareness of the risks and mobilising the necessary central level response to expedite the repair of the Koshi river embankment and mitigate risks of flooding.

**Access:** The East-West Highway point affected by the floods last year and diversion road were damaged by rainfall this week with the water washing the sand road away. Trucks and buses continue to get stuck in the mush of sand that is now the road crossing. The break point of the East-West Highway and diversion road should not be passed during bad weather conditions. The 'pond' that remains of the river

flow has also risen due to the recent 4 days of rainfall, indicating that it may also render the point impassable after the pond levels rise further. This will cut off the East-West Highway again for the duration of the monsoon period. The responsibility of road repair lays with the Department of Roads. On 27 May, the Department of Roads announced plans to build a Bailey bridge on the diversion road. The Chatara Ferry alternate route is closed due to high water levels and strong currents (Assessed by UN DSS on 27 May).

Thank you and kind regards,

Kendra

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