

# Disaster Risk Communication: What do people in Nepal need to prepare better for disasters?

RESEARCH BRIEFING  
FEBRUARY 2023 | RESILIENCE

This briefing draws on research conducted to understand:

**Media use and access:** What different types of media people in Nepal use, and what platforms are most effective to reach different groups

**Risk perception and preparedness:** How at risk people in Nepal feel from different disasters and how they prepare

**Information needs:** What people in Nepal feel they need to prepare better for disasters

Two studies were conducted to inform this work: a quantitative Nepal Media Survey 2021<sup>1</sup> conducted by Sharecast Initiative supported by BBC Media Action, and a qualitative study<sup>2</sup> conducted by BBC Media Action in 2020 to co-design the National Disaster Risk Communication Strategy for USAID's *Tayar Nepal* – Improved Disaster Risk Management Project.

These findings have been used to inform the co-design of the National Disaster Risk Communication Strategy and provide valuable information to others communicating with people in Nepal on how to prepare for disasters.

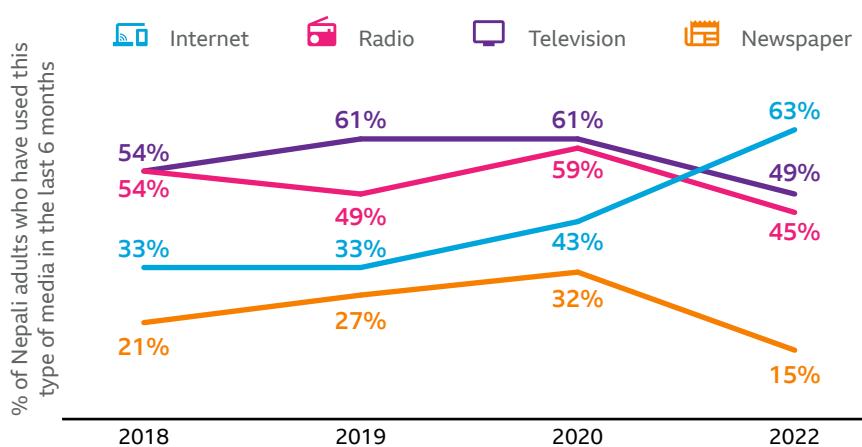
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- 1) A face-to-face survey was conducted with 5582 participants aged over 18 years. The study was representative of the 2021 population census for province, age, sex and ethnicity.
- 2) Qualitative study was conducted in selective 13 districts (Darchula, Kailali, Kalikot, Surkhet, Bardiya, Dang, Baglung, Makwanpur, Sindhupalchowk, Rautahat, Saptari, Khotang, Taplejung) across 7 provinces. Districts affected the most in terms of number of deaths, affected families and frequency of occurrences of disasters events were selected. Balance of administrative, geographic and ethnic diversity was also ensured in the selection process.



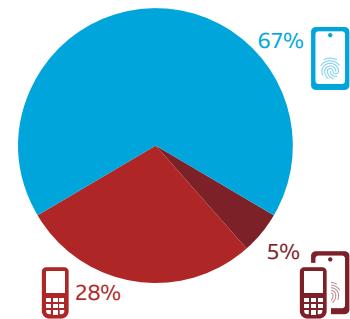
## Media usage in Nepal<sup>i</sup>

The Nepal Media Survey 2022, when compared to previous surveys, shows that the use of internet has almost doubled in Nepal since 2018. It has overtaken TV to become the leading media platform. Youtube and Facebook are the most popular social media platforms.



Since 2018, consumption of traditional media sources such as radio, television and newspaper (print) has declined.

90% of Nepalis now own a mobile phone



- ▶ 67% own a smart phone, 28% own a feature phone and 5% own both.

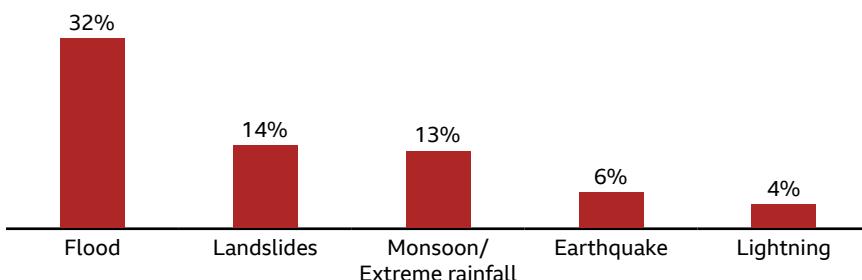
## Disaster risk perception

- ▶ Nepal is exposed to both natural and human induced hazards such as flooding, landslides and earthquakes. Studies have shown that more than 80% of the total population are at risk of these.<sup>ii</sup>
- ▶ To understand how at risk people perceive themselves to be, we asked them if their community was at risk of any hazards, and if so which ones.
- ▶ Overall the survey<sup>iii</sup> showed that **52%** of people thought they were at risk of any hazards.

### Risk perception of different disasters

Risk perception is higher amongst those who have been recently, and are regularly affected:

- ▶ 1 in 2 people who feel at risk are those affected by flooding every year
- ▶ 1 in 4 people who feel at risk are affected by landslides every year.



Q. If yes, please mention which disasters you and your community are at risk of? Base: 2881 (Those who said they are at risk of disaster)

- ▶ A qualitative study conducted by BBC Media Action Nepal in 2020 found that risk perception is higher for hazards such as floods and landslides which cause mass loss of lives and property, whereas hazards such as lightning, drought and cold waves, which are scattered in occurrence and do not cause mass loss of life at one timepoint are considered less of a risk.

## Determinants of risk perception

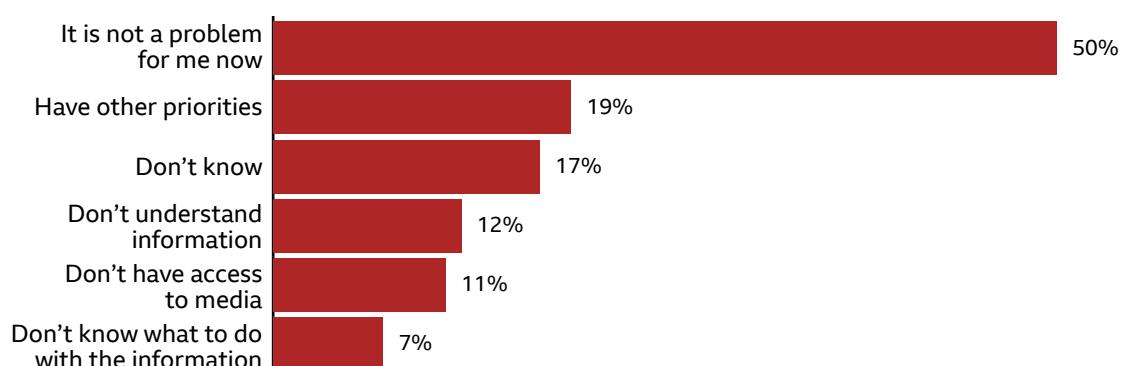
- › The qualitative study found people are willing to live in areas at risk from natural hazards when they feel a strong affinity to their place of living either because their day-to-day livelihood relies on being in that place, or due to strong cultural, social or ancestral bond with that location.
- › People who are exposed to risks in their day-to-day activities – especially low-income groups – were less likely to be worried about the risks, and were more ready to take risks. For example, this included people who live or do agricultural activity in steep fragile slopes, people with no land who reside on riverbanks or those living near rivers for generations.

## Seeking information for disaster preparedness

Two thirds (69%) said they seek information for disaster preparedness whereas 31% don't.

Amongst those who do not seek disaster preparedness information, the majority (50%) believe it is not a problem for them, or they have other priorities (19%). For the rest, access and understanding is an issue: 11% do not have access to media, 12% don't understand the information and 7% don't know what to do with the received information.

**Reasons for not seeking disaster preparedness information**



*Q: Why don't you seek information for disaster preparedness? Base: 1758 (Those who don't seek information)*

## Radio remains a key source of information on disaster preparedness

Although internet and social media are now more widely used than traditional media in Nepal, when it comes to information about how to prepare for disasters, radio and television is preferred in many provinces.

**Top 2 media sources for disaster preparedness**

Provinces	n	Media	Percentage
Koshi	n=527	📻	20%
Madhesh	n=864	📻	24%
Bagmati	n=771	📺	33%
Gandaki	n=391	📺	33%
Lumbini	n=663	📺	20%
Karnali	n=188	📻	43%
Sudurpaschim	n=420	📻	44%
Total	n=5582	📻	23%
		📺	18%
		📺	22%
		📺	29%
		📺	23%
		📻	18%
		📺	19%
		📺	22%
		📺	24%

📻 Radio

📺 Television

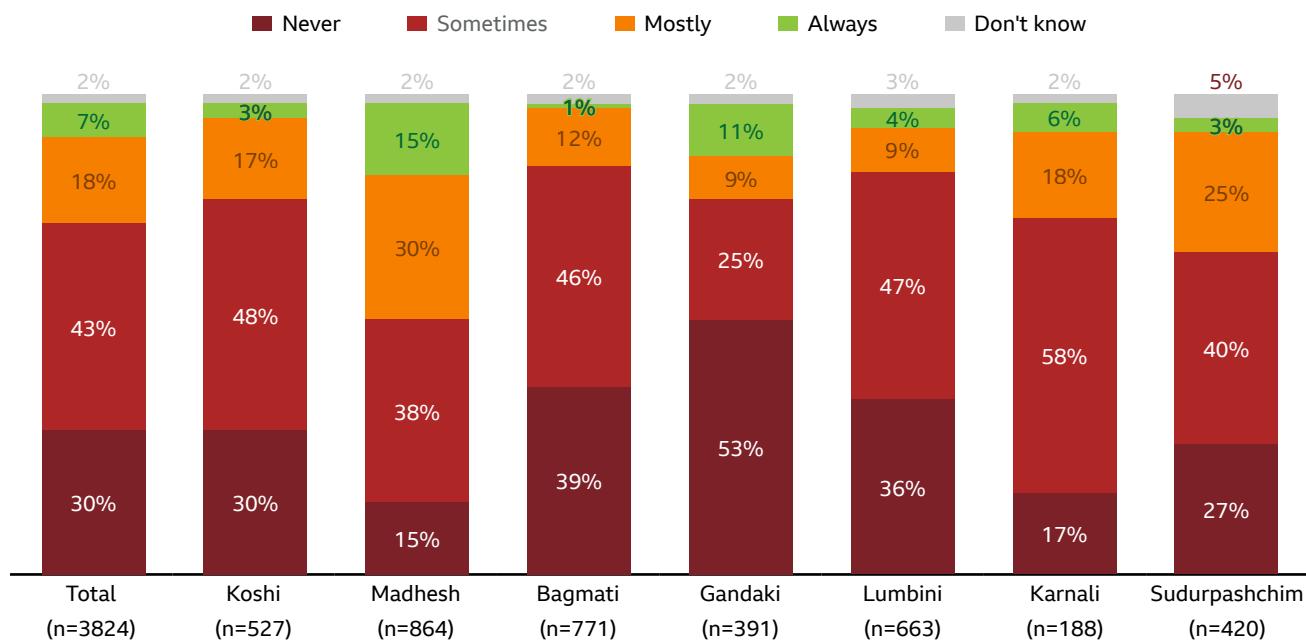
📺 Social Media



## Usefulness of disaster preparedness information

- 69% of people are seeking disaster preparedness information. When rating the usefulness of disaster preparedness information, the majority (73%) feel it has only been useful sometimes or not at all. This is particularly true of people living in Bagmati and Lumbini.

### Usefulness of disaster preparedness information across provinces and at national level

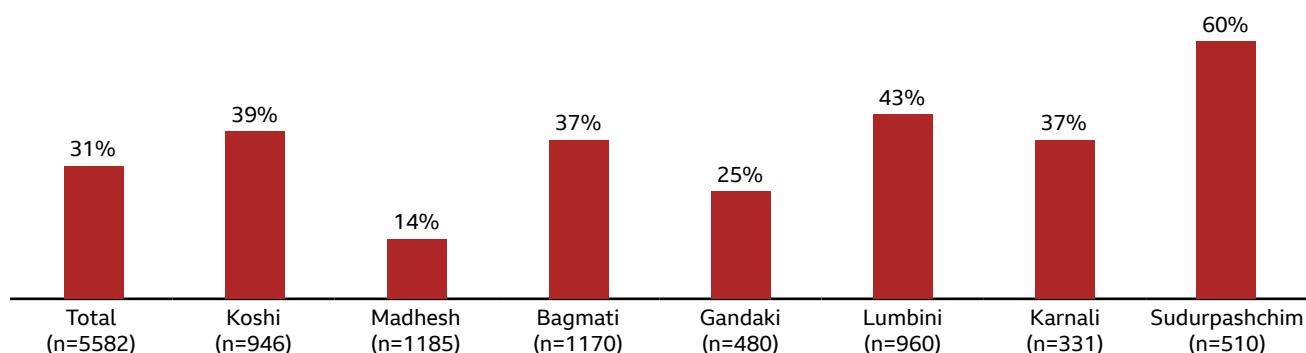


Q. Do you think the information you have received has helped you to prepare for disasters you face or reduce damage/risk ?

## Actions taken to prepare for the monsoon

- One-third (31%) of people are taking some action to prepare for the monsoon.
- Taking action varies greatly by province: 60% of people in Sudurpaschim are taking action compared with only 14% from Madhesh Pradesh.
- Data suggests those who are more worried about disasters happening are more likely to take action: 87% of those taking action are those who seek disaster preparedness information, and nearly 50% are those who have been recently affected by a disaster.

### Percentage of people engaged in monsoon preparedness across provinces and at national level



Q. Do you take any actions to prepare for monsoon?

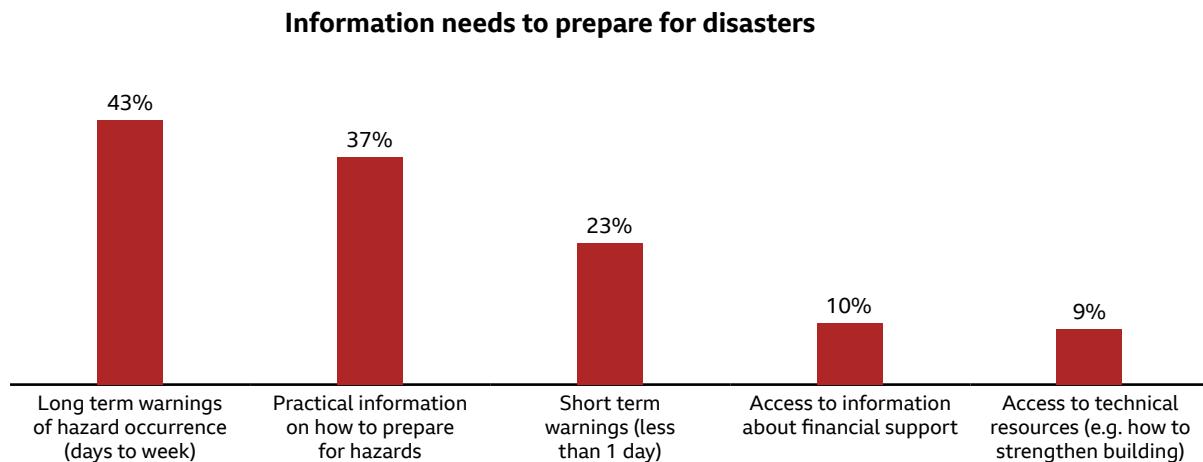
## What actions do people take?



Q. What actions do you take to prepare for monsoon? Base: 5582

## Information people in Nepal feel they need to be prepared

People feel being warned days or weeks in advance can best help them prepare for a disaster.



Q. What information would help you to prepare for disasters you face to reduce risk/damage? Base: 5582



## Requests for improvement in disaster risk communication

The research found people in Nepal feel they need more information to prepare for hazards:

- ▶ **Practical information people can use:** People have basic knowledge and information, but this is often not enough to turn into action. For example, in one study we found people living in drought prone areas such as Kalikot district, Karnali province have heard about plastic ponds, rainwater harvesting and drip irrigation to increase effectiveness of vegetable farming during winter droughts. However, they lacked concrete knowledge and detailed information to enable them to adopt these practices.
- ▶ **Information on how to prepare for variety of hazards:** People said they had little or no information to support preparedness, prevention, and mitigation for some hazards such as drought, forest fire, lightning, community fire, cold waves, snakebites.
- ▶ **Advertise helpline numbers:** Most people are not aware of existing helpline numbers 1149 and 1155 operated by the National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC).
- ▶ **Discussion and dialogue:** When information is shared, checks aren't in place to confirm if it's been received and understood by targeted groups. As a result, targeted members of the community are either not aware of the existing DRRM messages and information, or unable to fully understand them. Further, there are rarely mechanisms for people to discuss the information amongst the community and with authorities to facilitate decision-making and action.
- ▶ **Impact-based forecasts and practical early warning information:** People want more context about how they might be affected and how they should prepare. For example: Alert SMS messages only inform people about the rise in water level of the river and warn them to remain alert for next few hours/days. People seek more detailed information on how their area will be affected, and what level of preparedness is required for different communities according to their proximity to the river.
- ▶ **Diversity of languages:** Information dissemination does not consider communication needs of different audiences. Most information including early warning messages are delivered in 'Nepali' language only, despite 123 languages being spoken across the country.



Photo by Tom Van Cakenberghe/Getty Images

## Endnote

- i) Sharecast Initiative Nepal [SCIN]. (2022). Nepal Media Survey 2022, Lalitpur: Sharecast Initiative Nepal.
- ii) United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019). Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal: Status Report 2019. Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific [online]. Available from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/> [Accessed on September 3, 2020]
- iii) A face-to-face survey was conducted with 5582 participants aged over 18 years. The study was representative of the 2021 population census for province, age, sex and ethnicity.



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