

IRDR Webinar

Transboundary Disaster Risk Reduction: Implications of the China-Nepal Flash Flood of 26 August 2026

Time & Date:

UTC7:00-8:30, 3 September, 2026

Meeting Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/94216917516?pwd=PmJankd6wD39N8Xfb68th8MEi9z1j7.1>

1. Introduction

This Concept Note presents the framework for an urgent webinar on Transboundary Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): Implications of the China-Nepal Flash Flood (Glacier Collapse Flash Debris Flow) of 26 August 2026. It details the rationale, core objectives, thematic content, and proposed structure of the webinar, serving as a foundational document for prospective participants and stakeholders. The webinar is co-organized by IRDR and UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

2. Rationale

On 26 August 2026, a catastrophic flash flood devastated the Bhotekoshi/Trishuli River corridor, inflicting severe loss of life and widespread infrastructural damage across Nepal. The event was triggered by a massive ice-rock avalanche—initiated by the collapse of a glacier section on the northwestern slopes of Nepal's Langtang Himal, within a tributary valley of the Lhende River (which demarcates the China-Nepal border in that region). The resulting debris cascade temporarily dammed the river; upon breaching, it unleashed a torrent of water and sediment that swept through downstream communities, hydropower installations, and critical transport links.

This disaster has laid bare critical systemic challenges transboundary DRR governance, particularly within the fragile Himalayan context. Existing early warning architectures remain predominantly national in scope, constrained by inadequate mechanisms for real-time data and information sharing on hazards that originate in—and impact—both countries along shared border catchments. Moreover, the cascading and multi-hazard nature of high-mountain events—frequently compounded by secondary perils—overwhelms single-hazard governance models and exposes deficiencies in trans-sectoral coordination. Addressing these vulnerabilities necessitates a paradigm shift toward integrated, all-of-society research

and policy frameworks for DRR.

In response, this workshop is convened to examine the complex hazard dynamics of the 26 August event, advocate for comprehensive and forward-looking approaches, and galvanize robust international collaboration. A key priority will be mobilizing sustained investment in science, technology, and innovation to underpin effective transboundary DRR strategies.

Core thematic priorities include:

- **Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS)** – integrating seismic, cryospheric, and hydrological monitoring across the entire source-to-downstream continuum.
- **Critical Infrastructure Risk Assessments** – covering hydropower projects, cross-border transport corridors, and frontier facilities.
- **Capacity Building for DRR Research and Community Resilience** – with a specific focus on high-risk, transboundary catchments.

3. Objectives

The workshop is designed to achieve the following strategic outcomes:

- Analyze the 26 August 2026 event as a definitive case study of cascading transboundary hazards in the Himalayan region.
- Identify systemic challenges in current early warning protocols, risk assessment frameworks, and cross-border coordination mechanisms.
- Articulate a compelling, evidence-based case for enhanced international investment in science and technology for transboundary DRR.
- Foster enhanced multi-stakeholder collaboration among UN agencies, academic and research institutions, government bodies, and frontline practitioners.
- Develop a set of actionable policy and operational recommendations to strengthen transboundary resilience and risk-informed development.

4. Target Participants

This webinar will convene senior representatives from UN agencies, the research community, public sector institutions, civil society organizations (NGOs), and media outlets from both China and Nepal. All invitees share a vested interest in transboundary DRR, risk-informed investment, sustainable development, and effective disaster risk communication.

5. Workshop Format and Structure

This is a 90-minute online event, structured to maximize expert engagement and actionable outcomes. The agenda is as follows:

Moderator: Fang Lian, IRDR Science Officer

Item 1: Opening Remarks (2min each)

- Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief of UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, *setting the tone and raising the needs for regional and international collaboration*
- Saini Yang, IRDR Executive Director, *IRDR efforts for disaster response and transboundary DRR*

Item 2: Scientific Briefings – On-Site Response and Research Support (5 min each)

- Suraj Gautam, IRDR ICoE on Interdisciplinary Research on Himalayan Risk and Resilience (ICoE-IHRR), *providing scientific context and rapid-response insights.*
- Hao Wang, Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment, Chinese Academy of Sciences, *presenting ground-level observations and geophysical assessments.*

Item 3: Panel Discussion – Perspectives on Collaboration, Response, and Resilience (5 min each)

- Amod Dixit, IRDR ICoE-NSET (Nepal), *detailing emergency response operations, post-event lessons from the Nepal side, earthquake and multi-hazard risk assessment, and science-policy integration.*
- Suraj Gautam and Basanta Raj Adhikari, IRDR ICoE-IHRR, *addressing GLOF dynamics, cascading hazard modeling, citizen science applications, and operational early warning frameworks for Himalayan risks.*
- Emily Chan, IRDR ICoE for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response (IRDR ICoE-CCOUC), *Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (HEDRM) approaches; transboundary public health capacity building.*
- Rajib Shaw, IRDR Fellow; Yu Lei, Scientific Committee Member, *offering strategic science support for DRM authorities, alongside a visionary perspective on MHEWS and risk-informed development.*
- Speaker tbc, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), *climate resilience, sustainable development, and mountain issues in the Hindu Kush Himalaya.*

Item 4: Open Floor – Q&A Session

- An interactive dialogue between the panel and the virtual audience.

Item 5: Wrap-Up and Next Steps

- Concluding remarks and articulation of follow-up actions, delivered by the IRDR Executive Director.

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