

When the glacier collapsed, the villages downstream had no chance

28 August 2026 - Björn Söderberg, Build up Nepal



On the morning of 26 August, part of a glacier and a mountainside high in the Himalayas collapsed. An enormous mass of ice, rock and earth crashed into the river system, triggering a flood wave of unimaginable force. For the communities closest to where the disaster began, it happened incredibly fast. Further downstream, warnings were issued and people were urged to leave areas close to the river.

Water, rock and mud swept through the valleys. Entire villages and communities were washed away or buried in mud. Roads and bridges disappeared. 469 people have died and at least 977 people are missing.

Rescue efforts are continuing at full intensity. The army, police, aid organisations and local communities themselves are searching for survivors and missing family members. Many areas are still difficult to reach. Our own staff and partners in the field are reporting hundreds of people missing in only the areas where they are working.

For us at Build up Nepal, it feels like the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake all over again. Several of the affected areas in Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Dhading are places where we worked on reconstruction after the earthquake.

This is not an isolated disaster. It is a pattern.

The same river system was hit last summer by a smaller glacial flood that devastated communities and swept away the bridge at Rasuwagadhi. The year before that, catastrophic floods hit the Kathmandu Valley and other parts of Nepal, destroying thousands of homes. And the year before that.

The Himalayan glaciers are melting. Mountains and ice are becoming increasingly unstable, and glacial lakes are growing high in the mountains. The risk of landslides and sudden floods is increasing, sometimes leaving people downstream only minutes to react.

For the people who live here, climate change is not something that will happen in the future.

It is destroying livelihoods and making it harder for farmers to plan their next harvest. Families are forced to start over, again and again. Some of the people who have contributed least to global emissions are paying a terrible price.

What happened this week is part of a new reality in the Himalayas. We need to start building for it.



Right now, it is about people who have lost everything

Search and rescue operations are still underway, led by the authorities, specialist organisations and local communities. Build up Nepal and Tuki Nepal are now preparing our response for the next phase. Thousands of people have lost their homes in the middle of the monsoon. Our response will focus on shelter, from temporary shelter and safer places to stay through to permanent housing and reconstruction.

Then the complex questions begins. Where can families safely return? How do we improve warning systems and preparedness, and how do we build homes and communities that can withstand this new reality?

Recovery will take years, not months. Build up Nepal was founded in response to the 2015 earthquake and has spent the past decade helping communities rebuild after disasters and build safer homes. We approach this disaster with the same long-term commitment.

Join us and help

Build up Nepal and our partner Tuki Nepal have launched an appeal for the affected families. Funds will support our shelter response, from temporary shelter through to safer permanent housing and reconstruction.

Our partner Tuki Nepal Sweden:

www.tukinepal.org



SWISH: 123 900 5042

BANKGIRO: 900-5042

For international contributions, larger grants or partnerships, please contact us directly. We will continue to share situation updates as the picture becomes clearer and our response takes shape.

Facts at a glance | Situation as of 28 August 2026

Based on the NDRRMA Situation Report.

- 469 people have died and at least 977 people are missing or remain out of contact.
- 13,295 personnel from the police, army and Armed Police Force have been mobilised.
- 3,253 people have been rescued and 15 helicopters are involved in rescue operations.
- 30 truckloads of food and other relief supplies have been dispatched to affected areas.

Follow the developments

<https://www.bbc.com/news/live/cr0qxd1y219kt>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2026/aug/27/nepal-flash-flood-live-updates-tibet-border-death-toll-missing-himalayas-floods-flooding-latest-news>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2026/08/26/world/live-news/nepal-flash-flooding-floods-intl>