

2025

RAPID RESPONSE COMMITTEE ADVOCACY WORKSHOP REPORT



Jhapa District

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जनस्वास्थ्य प्रशासक
कार्यालय प्रमुख



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स्वास्थ्य
निर्देशनालय



Mr. Gyan Bahadur Basnet
Director, Health Directorate Koshi
Province

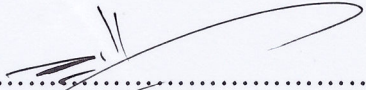
It is with immense pleasure that I present this comprehensive report on Municipal level Rapid Response Committee & Rapid Response Team Advocacy Workshop held in Jhapa District, Koshi Province, in 2025. This workshop marks a crucial and proactive step in our ongoing commitment to strengthening the district's preparedness and response capabilities against public health emergencies.

Jhapa, facing specific and recurrent public health risks, particularly those related to hydro-meteorological hazards like floods, alongside the continuous threat of infectious disease outbreaks and environmental concerns, necessitates a highly robust, adaptive, and systematic approach, built on multi-sectoral coordination and strong local ownership. Recognizing this necessity, the RRT Advocacy workshop was designed in line with the National Guidelines for Rapid Response Team to update the Municipal Level Rapid Response Committee/Team, clarify roles and responsibilities, and reinforce coordination mechanisms among local governments and health institutions.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Health, Koshi Province, WHO Nepal, Pandemic Fund, Health Office Jhapa, and municipalities of Jhapa for their valuable contributions to the success of this workshop. The workshop successfully focused on reinforcing the Local Level RRT mechanisms, identifying systematic gaps, mapping resources and capacities, and fostering the collaborative spirit essential for a timely and coordinated response. This concerted effort ensures that our preparedness strategies are evidence-based, community-focused, and tailored to the unique vulnerabilities of our local communities.

The discussions and recommendations emerging from this workshop reaffirm the importance of collective action, intersectoral collaboration, and continuous capacity-building in achieving resilient health systems. This report encapsulates those insights and serves as a strategic resource to guide future planning, coordination, and operational preparedness of health emergencies at the district and municipal levels to protect the well-being of all citizens.

I look forward to the diligent implementation of the recommendations put forth in this report, confident that this document will serve as an invaluable resource and a clear roadmap for advancing the readiness and resilience of Jhapa District against all future health emergencies.

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Mr. Gyan Bahadur Basnet
Director निर्देशक
Health Directorate, Koshi Province

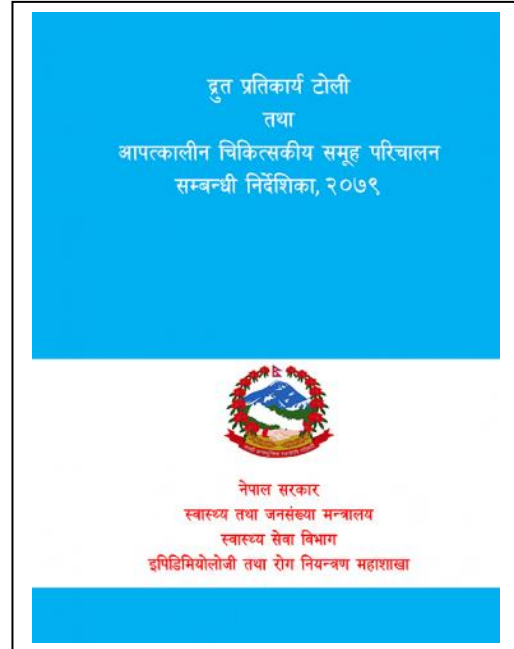
Rapid Response Committee Advocacy workshop

Jhapa District

Background: In Nepal, the Rapid Response Team (RRT) and the Rapid Response Committee (RRC) play crucial roles in managing and mitigating the impacts of emergencies and disasters. The RRT, composed of health workers and technical experts, provides immediate response and investigation during crises like natural disasters or public health emergencies, including medical aid, shelter, and food distribution. It operates at the central, provincial, district and local level, coordinating with various stakeholders and conducting rapid assessments. The RRC, a higher-level body, oversees strategic and operational aspects of emergency responses at the central, provincial or municipality level. It ensures coordination among response units, manages resources, and makes critical decisions to address the crisis effectively. Together, these entities enhance Nepal's capacity to respond

swiftly and effectively to emergencies. The guidelines for the Rapid Response Team (RRT) and Rapid Response Committee (RRC) in Nepal were endorsed in **2022 AD**. These guidelines were developed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency responses by providing a structured approach to managing and coordinating efforts during crises and disasters.

Context: Jhapa is a district located in the southeastern part of Nepal, within Koshi province, and shares its borders with India to the south and east. This district is part of the Terai region, characterized by flat plains and fertile soil, making it one of Nepal's most agriculturally productive areas. Jhapa is particularly renowned for its rice production, and it also grows other crops like maize, jute, and tea, with tea gardens being one of its prominent features. The district is home to a diverse population, including ethnic groups like Brahmin, Chhetri, Rai, Limbu, Rajbanshi, and Santhal, reflecting its rich cultural mosaic. Nepali is the official language, but other local languages like Rajbanshi, Santhali, and Maithili are widely spoken.



Jhapa experiences a subtropical and tropical climate, with hot summers and significant monsoon rainfall. The district is known for its vibrant cultural traditions, where festivals such as Dashain, Tihar, Chhath, and Holi are celebrated with enthusiasm. Traditional dances like Maruni and Jat-Jatin are part of the local heritage. Hinduism is the dominant religion, but there are also communities practicing Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity.

Earthquakes pose another risk in Jhapa, as the district lies within a seismically active zone. Though not as prone as other regions of Nepal, cities like Birtamod, Damak, and Bhadrapur, with concentrated populations and infrastructure, could face significant damage in the event of an earthquake. Fire hazards are also a concern, especially during the dry season, when traditional thatched-roof houses in the southern belt and forest areas like Charali are at risk of fire outbreaks. Droughts, while less frequent, affect regions like Budhabare, Dhulabari, and Gauradaha, particularly during dry spells when irrigation is inadequate, impacting agriculture.

Additionally, Jhapa faces health hazards during and after floods, as stagnant water and poor sanitation lead to outbreaks of water-borne diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, and dengue fever, particularly in rural areas. The combination of these factors makes Jhapa a district vulnerable to a variety of natural and man-made disasters.

Objective of the workshop:

- **To Form and or update the Municipal-Level Rapid Response Committee/Team:** If the committee/team has not been formed according to the guidelines, it should be reorganized.
- **To Discuss the Roles, Duties, and TOR:** Discuss the roles, duties, and powers of the municipal rapid response committee and team.
- **To encourage the Formation of a Health sector preparedness and response plan:** Motivate the municipality to develop an emergency action plan for the health sector.

The Ministry of Health, Koshi Province, organized the workshop with financial assistance from Pandemic Fund and technical support from WHO. The WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) team, including the Field Medical Officer, Information Management Associate and Emergency Surveillance Associate stationed at the Provincial Health Emergency Operation Center (PHEOC), Koshi Province, coordinated with the Health Office Jhapa and the Health Section chief of Municipalities of Jhapa District to arrange and fix the workshop in the mentioned date. Similarly, the team facilitated to achieve all the objectives and to conduct the program successfully.

Provincial Presentation:

The program began with introductions, allowing participants to familiarize themselves with each other before proceeding to the main presentation. The presentation covered the details of the teams involved in Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) and Rapid Response Teams (RRT), explaining their respective roles and responsibilities in managing health emergencies.



Pic: Resource person from MOH, delivering her presentation on RRT Guidelines, PHEOC presentation

Mrs. Upama Koirala, a resource person from the Ministry of Health (MOH), presented the session, emphasizing the crucial role of the RRC in managing health crises effectively. He provided a comprehensive overview of how the RRC is instrumental in coordinating rapid responses, ensuring timely interventions, mobilizing required resources, and facilitating communication with key stakeholders during health emergencies. Her presentation underscored the importance of a well-organized and prepared system to respond quickly to health crises, reduce health risks, and safeguard the well-being of affected communities. It further highlighted the necessity of clear coordination and defined roles within the teams to ensure an efficient and effective disaster response and management. She shared the information on the Risk matrix which was created to identify the top 26 hazards in Koshi province using Strategic Toolkit for assessing Risk (STAR) in the workshop which was held in Biratnagar. She shared that the koshi province is at very high risk of Flood and landslide. Similarly, Fire, air pollution, heat wave, antimicrobial resistance microorganism, RTA, Dengue falls under high-risk category.

Furthermore, she presented on the Overview of PHEOC Koshi Province, Major activities of PHEOC, Role of PHEOC in pre-disaster, during disaster and post disaster situation. She presented on the hub and satellite hospital network of Koshi Province and shared the 11-point declaration issued by MOHP during hub and satellite hospital network strengthening program. She shared the glimpse of WHO supported activities in province such as preparedness activities, RRT training for health care workers, ambulance service equipment handover to Koshi Hospital, Distribution of EMDT bag pack to the hospitals, Update of hospital disaster preparedness plan through HSI + application with support from WHO. She also briefed about the availability of National RRT guideline 2079 which can be publicly available at the official website of EDCCD.

Birtamod Municipality

Venue: Birtamod Municipality Hall, Jhapa, District

Date: 16 February 2025

Participants: Deputy mayor, CAO, Ward chairpersons, Doctor, Nurses, Sr AHW, Sr ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

District Presentation

Mr. Ramesh Barakoti, Health office chief of Jhapa district, delivered an insightful presentation that emphasized the crucial role of Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. He elaborated on the specific roles and responsibilities of the RRC, highlighting its importance in ensuring effective coordination and swift response during health crises. His presentation covered how the RRC facilitates communication, resource mobilization, and timely intervention, all of which are essential for minimizing health risks and managing health emergencies efficiently.



Pic: HO Chief, Mr Ramesh Barakoti delivering his message on RRC, RRT and Experience sharing of outbreak management by Jhapa District

In addition, he also emphasized on the importance of RRT team formation at Palika and ward level. Nepal being prone to disasters, it is crucial to activate and strengthen the existing RRT team members. He also shared insight on the risks of earthquake and mixed calamities, Nepal being ranked in the 11th and 16th position respectively. In terms of flood and landslide, it lies in the 30th position. In countries like Nepal, where there is weak in preparedness activities, many people lose their lives not because of the pandemic or accidents themselves, but because of delay in rescue and treatment services. He also shared the example of outbreak such as dengue outbreak, food poisoning outbreak, flood in various parts of Jhapa district, outbreak of water borne disease and so on.

He shared experience of Food poisoning outbreak in Arjundhara Municipality, Jhapa district. He shared information regarding media monitoring, rumor verification and deployment of district level RRT team in the field for further investigation. The patient was admitted in the local level health facility and municipal hospital, mobilization of health care workers for treatment of affected patients. "An emergency meeting with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and doctors was immediately held, during which it was decided to triage the patients and dispatch them according

to the need." An environment was immediately prepared to coordinate with the Medical Superintendent and the in-charge of the Emergency Department of Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur for the dispatch of patients." He also shared data on the date and time of onset of symptoms, gender wise classification of cases, type of symptoms, age group classification, type of food taken at the event where outbreak was reported, laboratory finding in coordination with lab official of Provincial hospital Bhadrapur.

He shared the good practices of outbreak management and way forwards as follows:

- "Immediate coordination with communication and other agencies is necessary.
- Rapid response committee and rapid response teams need to be mobilized.
- Pre-preparation for disaster control is required.
- Along with pandemic control, attention should also be given to study and research.
- Plans should be made to prevent such incidents from happening again.
- There should be continuity of coordination after the pandemic."

Rapid response teams have already been formed in all local levels of Jhapa district. However, it seems they still need to be made more active.

Main Bottlenecks

- At the local level, the limited budget for health-related response. The budget is allocated for disaster management and response. The sub mayor suggested the ward official to allocate the budget funding in optimum amount in the health-related response.
- Inline of logistic management and stock piling of medicine in place is crucial.
- Update of the health facilities focal person including government and private health institutions to be taken into consideration by the health section of municipal level.

Lessons Learnt

- Ongoing collaboration with health organizations helps maintain a continuous supply of resources, training, and information, which gradually strengthens the municipality's disaster management capabilities.
- The sub mayor also emphasized the need for preparedness and readiness, highlighting the importance of proactive strategies, and suggested that the municipality, ward chairperson to allocate some funds for health-related response.
- The sub mayor urged to continue the RRT and RRC meeting monthly to activate and strengthen the capacity to respond before disaster as a part of preparedness.

Recommendations

The sub-mayor requested all the participants to work about outbreak prone areas at the ward level. The rumor verification and monitoring of health-related news should be screened. Enlist all the pharmacy shops and information on the medical doctors and keep an information repository up to date for timely response to future disasters or any other outbreaks. As Birtamod municipality is prone to animal attack, food poisoning cases, dengue outbreaks. RRT team should be focused on the treatment services and management of affected cases. He also urged the health section chief of Birtamod municipality to update the list of FCHV workers working at the different ward level.



Pic: Participants of RRT/RRC advocacy program at Birtamod municipality, Jhapa

Overall comments and conclusion

The Deputy Mayor of Birtamod Municipality expressed gratitude to the provincial government, health office Jhapa and WHO for raising awareness about health emergency preparedness and response. He acknowledged that proper attention has often been lacking for preparedness and preventive measures, and she stated that this program will serve as an important lesson for prioritizing preparedness activities in the future.



Pic: Deputy Mayor of Birtamod Municipality delivering his closing remarks

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
15	13	28

Gauriganj Rural Municipality

Venue: Gauriganj Rural Municipality Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 16th Feb 2025

Participants: Vice Chairperson, Act CAO, Ward chairpersons, Doctor, Nurses, Sr AHW, Sr ANM, PHI, Lab personal IT officials, and FCHVs

District Presentation

Biswanath Shrestha, a resource person from the Health Office Jhapa, delivered an insightful presentation on the significance of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and Rapid Response Committees (RRC). He elaborated on the formation process of these teams and committees, emphasizing their critical roles and responsibilities in public health emergencies.



Pic: Resource person from HO Jhapa delivering his presentation

During his discussion, he shared his firsthand experience dealing with a food poisoning outbreak in Arjundhara Municipality, highlighting key challenges encountered and the lessons learned in managing such health crises. He provided valuable recommendations for effectively addressing outbreaks like COVID-19, underscoring the importance of preparedness, swift response, and coordinated efforts among stakeholders. Additionally, he shed light on the broader spectrum of public health concerns, discussing both communicable and non-communicable diseases in the global context. His presentation served as a crucial learning opportunity, reinforcing the need for robust health surveillance, early detection mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the response to public health threats.

Main Bottlenecks

Limited budget at the local level poses a significant challenge as there are numerous tasks to be performed with constrained resources. Additionally, preparedness activities often receive less priority, which weakens the ability to respond effectively to emergencies. This lack of focus on preparedness can lead to delayed responses, inadequate resource

allocation, and increased vulnerability during health crises. Strengthening financial support and prioritizing preparedness efforts are crucial to enhancing resilience and ensuring a more effective response to public health emergencies.

Lessons Learnt

Regular collaboration with health organizations helps secure a continuous supply of resources, training, and information, gradually enhancing the municipality's capacity for disaster management.

The Vice Chairperson emphasized the significance of preparedness and proactive planning, highlighting the necessity of regularly evaluating and improving disaster response strategies to effectively handle unexpected emergencies.

Recommendations

- Provision of logistical support from the provincial and central government.
- Future training and capacity-building programs for RRT members.
- Budget allocation and advocacy meetings at both district and local levels.

Overall comments and conclusion

The Acting CAO of Gauriganj Rural Municipality expressed gratitude to the provincial government and WHO for raising awareness about health emergency preparedness and response. He acknowledged that preparedness activities and preventive measures are often overlooked and emphasized that this program serves as a valuable lesson, encouraging a greater focus on preparedness efforts in the future.



Pic: Closing remarks by Act CAO of Gauriganj Rural Municipality

Male	Female	Total
18	8	26

Jhapa Rural Municipality

Venue: Jhapa Rural Municipality Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 17th February 2025

Participants: Chairperson, CAO, Ward chairpersons, Medical Officer, AHW, ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

Province Presentation

Mrs Upama Koirala, a resource person from the Ministry of Health (MOH), PHEOC, delivered a detailed presentation highlighting the essential role of Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in handling health emergencies. She explained the key responsibilities of the RRC, emphasizing its role in ensuring efficient coordination and a swift response during health crises. His presentation outlined how the RRC facilitates communication, mobilizes resources, and enables timely interventions, all of which are crucial for reducing health risks and managing emergencies effectively.



Pic: PHEOC resource focal person from province giving presentation on RRC, RRT and PHEOC

Similarly, she also shared valuable insights on the role of the Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) in disaster preparedness and response. He described how the PHEOC functions as a central unit for coordinating emergency responses, collecting and analyzing health data, and ensuring the successful implementation of preparedness strategies. She stressed the importance of proactive planning, inter-agency collaboration, and the use of surveillance systems to strengthen disaster response efforts. Both experts emphasized the need for a well-structured and coordinated system to effectively manage health emergencies and ensure a timely response to disasters.

After the provincial presentation, representative from Palika level, BIPAD focal person shared the flood affected prone areas of Jhapa rural municipality. The major rivers which can cause floods are Kankai river, Biring river and Mai River. Most common disasters in Jhapa rural municipality are Forest fire, Covid-19 outbreaks, Food poisoning outbreak. Disaster management committee has been formed at the local level units for management and response for disaster affected site. He also shared about the information flow channel for sharing the disaster related news. The latest update of flash flood in Jhapa rural municipality 01, Milan basti had occurred and most of population of that disaster affected area in ward no 1 were displaced. Health worker team were also mobilized for the response operation. Local level stakeholders is responsible authority for the response.

In addition to this, health section chief of Jhapa rural municipality thanked WHO and health office Jhapa team who had contributed a lot of support in the MR outbreak at Jhapa rural municipality ward no 6. The health care worker team from palika level was also mobilized for the outbreak investigation. Helvetas Nepal and WHO has been actively supporting in the outbreak response.

This year due to flash flood, Basic health service center of Jhapa rural municipality 05, Panthapad was affected. He shared the cost estimation of about 10 lakh which is required for reconstruction. No damage to medicine stock. The provincial representative PHEOC focal person, WHE IMA, HO Chief of Jhapa visited the health facility for monitoring and supervision. They urged the health coordinator to prepare the estimated quotation for the cost required for repair of the walls with the brief report of the incident which will be shared with the secretary of ministry of health.



Pic: Health coordinator of Jhapa Rural municipality sharing his insights about the disaster updates, and good practices at health sector, way forward plans

The technical session began with the brief presentation about the district level overview for responding to outbreaks and disaster by the health office chief of Jhapa district. He shared about the importance of RRT and example of how RRT team were mobilized to respond to food poisoning outbreak in Arjunthara Municipality of Jhapa district. He provided details about media monitoring, rumor verification, and the deployment of district-level Rapid Response Teams (RRT) for further investigation. The patient was admitted to both local health facilities and the municipal hospital, with healthcare workers being mobilized to treat the affected individuals. "An emergency meeting was promptly convened with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and medical professionals, during which it was decided to triage and allocate patients based on urgency." Coordination was swiftly established with the Medical Superintendent and the Emergency Department head at Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur for patient transfers." Additionally, he shared data on the onset of symptoms by date and time, gender-wise case classification, symptoms experienced, age group distribution, food consumed at the event where the outbreak occurred, and lab findings in collaboration with officials from the Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur.

Main Bottlenecks

- Implementing effective disease prevention and control measures has been challenging due to insufficient budgeting and a lack of proper financial allocation.
- As food poisoning outbreak is observed in various areas of Jhapa district, food quality check needs to be done in lab.
- Water quality testing should be done to ensure safe and hygiene drinking water. As the food poisoning outbreak was also reported at some areas. The people had developed symptoms like diarrhea and loose motion.

Lessons Learned

- The mayor emphasized the need for swift and well-coordinated responses, highlighting their crucial role in minimizing the impact of crises. A prompt and organized approach enables the municipality to manage disasters and outbreaks more effectively. Additionally, having clear and structured guidelines is essential to ensure that all stakeholders, including health workers, the RRC, and the RRT, understand their roles and responsibilities. Standardized procedures help maintain a unified response, reducing confusion and enhancing efficiency during emergencies.
- Monthly meeting for RRT and RRC should be done.
- Ward level chairperson shared his insight about the free health service camp conducted at the ward level for screening of Non communicable disease which is a good practice.

Recommendations

During an open discussion forum, plans were discussed to develop a fire evacuation strategy for timely safety and rescue efforts. The mobilization of Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV) for screening non-communicable diseases was also highlighted, along with the identification and listing of nearby treatment centers. The participants expressed gratitude to the WHO for the development of the cervical cancer prevention vaccine. Additionally, the regular sensitization programs conducted by local governments play a crucial role in raising awareness and improving preparedness for responding to health-related events and outbreaks.

Overall comments and conclusion

The Chairperson of Jhapa Rural Municipality shared that they have been offering free institutional delivery and ambulance services at the municipal level. They initially formed a Rapid Response Committee, and now a team has been established. She expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Health, the Health Office Jhapa, and the WHO for organizing this sensitization program to inform healthcare workers and local stakeholders about disease trends and response measures.



Pic: Closing remarks by Mayor of Jhapa Rural Municipality

With the availability of a national guideline, the municipality is now well-positioned to mobilize the Rapid Response Committee (RRC) and Rapid Response Team (RRT) in the future. The Chairperson mentioned that while funds for RRC and RRT activities had not been allocated, budget prioritization for these teams would be ensured in the next fiscal year.

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
16	10	26

Damak Municipality

Venue: : Damak Municipality Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 17th Feb 2025

Participants: Mayor, Ward chairpersons, Doctor, Nurses, Sr AHW, Sr ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

District Presentation

Biswanath Shrestha, a resource person from the Health Office Jhapa, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the importance of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and Rapid Response Committees (RRC). He explained the process of forming these teams and committees while emphasizing their vital roles and responsibilities in managing public health emergencies.



Pic: Resource person from HO Jhapa delivering his presentation

During his session, he shared his firsthand experience in handling a food poisoning outbreak in Arjundhara Municipality, discussing the key challenges faced and the lessons learned in addressing such health crises. He also provided important recommendations for effectively managing outbreaks like COVID-19, highlighting the significance of preparedness, prompt response, and coordinated efforts among stakeholders. Furthermore, he addressed broader public health concerns by discussing both communicable and non-communicable diseases from a global perspective. His presentation served as a valuable learning opportunity, emphasizing the need for strong health surveillance, early detection systems, and capacity-building initiatives to enhance the overall response to public health threats.

Main Bottlenecks

- Prevention and control measures for disease have been a challenge
- No appropriate budgeting
- Coordination among different tiers of government

Lessons Learned

The mayor's emphasis on swift responses and effective coordination underscores the importance of timely and organized action in minimizing the impact of crises. A faster and more coordinated response enables the municipality to manage disasters or outbreaks more efficiently, reducing their consequences.

Clearly defined guidelines and structured protocols are essential to ensure that all stakeholders, including health workers, the RRC, and the RRT, fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Standardized procedures foster a unified response, preventing confusion and enhancing efficiency during emergencies.

Recommendations

- Support in logistic items from province and central government
- Regular sensitization by central and provincial government at local level for preparedness and response of health-related events/outbreaks

Overall comments and conclusion

The Mayor of Damak Municipality acknowledged that while similar committees and teams had been formed in the past for COVID-19 and other emergencies, the absence of clear guidelines and defined responsibilities had limited their effectiveness. However, with the introduction of the national guideline, the municipality now has a structured framework to efficiently mobilize the RRC and RRT in the future.

The mayor also noted that had this program been introduced before the budgeting process for the current fiscal year, funds could have been allocated for the RRC and RRT. Nonetheless, the municipality is committed to ensuring budget allocation for these teams in the next fiscal year.

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
21	7	28

Bahradashi Rural Municipality

Venue: Bahradashi Rural Municipality Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 18 February 2025

Participants: Vice mayor, CAO, Ward chairpersons, AHW, ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

Province/ District Presentation

Mrs Upama Koirala, a resource person from the Ministry of Health (MOH), delivered a presentation emphasizing the crucial role of Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. She outlined the key responsibilities of the RRC, highlighting its importance in ensuring effective coordination, timely interventions, and resource mobilization to minimize health risks and manage crises efficiently.



Pic: Hospital chief of Bahradashi Basic hospital giving his opening remarks and objective of this program

In addition to this she also provided an insightful overview of the pivotal role played by the Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) in disaster preparedness and response. He emphasized that the PHEOC serves as a crucial framework for coordinating and managing public health emergencies, ensuring that all necessary actions are implemented swiftly and efficiently. She discussed how the PHEOC facilitates the rapid mobilization of resources, streamlines communication between various agencies, and supports the establishment of response strategies during disasters. She highlighted the importance of its proactive approach in disaster preparedness, including continuous risk assessments, capacity building, and preparedness planning. She further noted that the PHEOC's role in disaster response is indispensable, as it helps to minimize the impact of crises on public health by ensuring a timely, well-coordinated, and effective response to emergencies.

After the presentation on the RRT guidelines, team formation and key roles and responsibilities of RRT and RRC team member, HO chief presented on the Disaster experience, outbreak investigation of Jhapa RRT team and team composition at the district level. He also highlighted the importance of RRT team member in the prevention of further spread of outbreak. He highlighted the key role of the local level stakeholders including health and non-health personnel for the management. Apart of the health-related events, disaster is also common in Jhapa district especially flash flood in various areas. As Jhapa rural municipality is close to Bering River, there is a chances of flash flood in the human settlement areas. He also highlighted about the dengue

prevention activities conducted at the local level units of Jhapa district and health awareness campaign for various activities.

After the technical session ended, health section chief of Bahradashi Rural Municipality formed the RRC and RRT team members and briefed on the roles and responsibilities of RRT and RRC members. He emphasized to keep the medicine stock in buffer for emergency response and also suggested the ward official to allocate funds for health-related response. He shared his experience about the various health awareness campaign held at the ward level. The establishment of LEOC at Bahradashi rural municipality of Jhapa district. Bahradashi rural municipality was the first in Jhapa to cover a hundred percent of target population for HPV campaign. He thanked WHO and HO Jhapa team for supervision and support at the immunization centers.

Similarly, Ward chairman also thanked MOH, Health office Jhapa and WHO for conducting this sensitization and awareness program. It is important to strengthen the capacity building of health care workers. Health desk will be established at the palika level. He emphasized the close relationship and coordination with disaster response and health sector. He stressed on the first aid treatment to the local people focusing on the health awareness campaign at the ward level.

20,000 budgets has been allocated for outbreak management at the ward level of Bahradashi Rural Municipality

Main Bottlenecks

- Timely reporting of the disease outbreak at the grassroot level is very challenging. In case of the delay in reporting of the cases, it might result in the further outbreak if not managed on time. This feedback was shared by the medical officer.
- Coordination and communication with different tier of the government authorities plays a significant role in outbreak and disaster management. Information repository of major stakeholders needs to be maintained before pre disaster phase.

Lessons Learned

- The Chairperson's emphasis on preparing committees and teams underscores the need for flexibility in disaster response. Since disaster management requires a tailored approach rather than a fixed solution, it is crucial for response teams to adapt to the unique challenges of each situation. The ability to quickly adjust and respond to different disaster scenarios plays a vital role in ensuring effective crisis management.

Recommendations

- Strengthening the skills and knowledge of newly formed team members is essential for improving their effectiveness in emergency response. The RRT/RRC meeting should be held at least once in two months for updates and response management.
- Proper identification of the outbreak prone areas is must and hazard risk assessment should be done accordingly.
- Public health awareness campaign to be continued.

- Coordination and communication with the higher authority for management and response
- Focus on the preventive measure than cure.

Overall comments and conclusion

The ward chairperson of Bahradashi rural municipality highlighted the connection between disasters and the health sector. While local representatives, the police, army, and Red Cross play key roles in disaster management and rescue operations, health is also a crucial aspect. Health workers, particularly members of the Rapid Response Team, should prioritize prevention over cure. He stressed the importance of close coordination between the RRC and RRT teams in effective crisis management. Looking forward, he expressed confidence that the newly formed committees, established under clear guidelines, will preparedness and response efforts.



Pic: Participants of RRT/RRC advocacy program at Bahradashi Rural Municipality

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
16	9	25

Gauradaha Municipality

Venue: Gauradaha Municipality Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 18th Feb 2025

Participants: Vice mayor, CAO, Ward chairpersons, Sr AHW, Sr ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

District Presentation

Biswanath Shrestha, a resource person from the Health Office Jhapa, delivered an insightful and comprehensive presentation on the significance of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and Rapid Response Committees (RRC). He elaborated on the process of forming these teams and committees, emphasizing their critical roles and responsibilities in managing public health emergencies.



Pic: Resource person from HO Jhapa delivering his presentation

Drawing from his firsthand experience in handling a food poisoning outbreak in Arjundhara Municipality, he discussed the key challenges encountered and the valuable lessons learned in addressing such crises. He also provided essential recommendations for managing outbreaks like COVID-19, underscoring the importance of preparedness, swift response, and coordinated efforts among stakeholders.

Furthermore, he broadened the discussion to include global perspectives on both communicable and non-communicable diseases, highlighting their impact on public health. His presentation served as a valuable learning opportunity, reinforcing the need for robust health surveillance, early detection systems, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen overall response mechanisms against public health threats.

Main Bottlenecks

Road transportation remains a challenge in rural areas, affecting accessibility and timely response efforts. Additionally, effective coordination among different tiers of government is crucial to ensuring seamless implementation of policies and programs.

Lessons Learned

The Acting Mayor's emphasis on the preparedness of committees and teams underscores the importance of flexibility in disaster response. Effective disaster management is not a one-size-fits-all approach; it requires the ability to adapt to the unique challenges of each situation. Ensuring that response teams can swiftly adjust to varying disaster scenarios is crucial for effective and efficient crisis management.

Recommendations

- Enhancing the skills and knowledge of newly formed team members through capacity-building initiatives is essential. Additionally, support in providing logistical resources from the provincial and central governments plays a crucial role in strengthening response efforts.

Overall comments and conclusion

The Acting Chairman of the Municipality shared insights into the challenges faced by Gauradaha, a rural area in Jhapa, particularly during emergencies. He pointed out that difficult road conditions often hinder the transportation of essential logistics and equipment, posing a significant challenge for the municipality.

Despite these obstacles, the community made commendable efforts in tackling COVID-19 and other disease outbreaks. He emphasized the vital role played by previously formed committees and teams in emergency response, which contributed to effective crisis management. Additionally, he highlighted that the newly established committees, formed in alignment with official guidelines, are expected to enhance future preparedness and response to health emergencies, ensuring more efficient management moving forward.



Pic: Vice Mayor of Gauradaha Municipality providing his remarks during closing of RRC

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
18	10	28

Bhadrapur Municipality

Venue: Bhadrapur Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 19th February 2025

Participants: Chairperson, Vice chairperson, CAO, Ward chairpersons, AHW, ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

Province/ District Presentation

Ms Upama Koirala a resource person from the PHEOC, Ministry of Health (MOH), delivered a presentation underscoring the essential role of Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. He emphasized the RRC's key duties, focusing on its significance in ensuring effective coordination, timely action, and resource mobilization to reduce health risks and efficiently manage crises.



Pic: Opening remarks by Chairperson of Bhadrapur Municipality, Jhapa

She also shared valuable insights into the vital role of the Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) in disaster preparedness and response. She explained that the PHEOC is a critical framework for managing public health emergencies, enabling resource mobilization, improving communication between agencies, and supporting response strategies. She highlighted the importance of proactive disaster preparedness, including ongoing risk assessments, capacity building, and planning, noting that the PHEOC's role is vital in minimizing the impact of crises by ensuring a well-coordinated and timely response.

The technical session commenced with a brief presentation by the health office chief of Jhapa district, offering an overview of the district's response to outbreaks and disasters. He emphasized the significance of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and shared an example of their deployment during a food poisoning outbreak in Arjunthara Municipality, Jhapa. Additionally, he presented data on the timeline of symptom onset, gender-specific case classifications, symptoms experienced, age group distribution, food consumed at the event, and lab results in collaboration with officials from Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur.

In open discussion session, medical superintendent also shared his idea on the laboratory diagnosis report of food borne outbreak that was reported from Arjunthara municipality. The samples was transported to Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur for testing. It shows there was contamination in the food which led to food poisoning, The root cause of this outbreak is still unknown, however entamoeba histolytica was reported in few samples. He emphasized that the advanced lab technology equipment is required to test the samples and produce good test results and findings.

Main Bottlenecks

- At the local level, there are constraints due to limited budget and resources, which may hinder the effective management of outbreaks at the palika level.
- Technical training for RRT members is crucial for outbreak and disaster management and response.
- Monthly meeting and follow up regarding the health-related news or event should be continued

Lessons Learned

- The Chairperson shared information about the proper outbreak management done by Bhadrapur municipality. After disaster, there may be possibility of further outbreak such as water borne disease, food borne disease. Necessary preparation should be done at the ward level, health facility level and palika level to strengthen the capacity to respond to public health emergencies.
- Till date, no such diarrhoea or water borne outbreak has taken place at Bhadrapur municipality. The municipal level had in control in case of supply of medical commodities and necessary supplies.
- During Covid-19 pandemic, they shared a good experience in the outbreak management and response in close collaboration and coordination ward level authorities, health facility, health care workers at the grass root level.

Recommendations

Strengthening the capacity of RRT members through regular training sessions, receiving logistical support from the provincial and central governments, and ensuring the availability of IEC materials are essential for effective disaster management.

Overall comments and conclusion

The Chairman of the Bhadrapur Municipality thanked the provincial government and WHO for organizing the program. He pointed out, however, that it would have been more helpful if logistical support or kits had been provided to the newly appointed teams to improve their preparedness. He also expressed a desire for future training opportunities for the Rapid Response Team (RRT), stressing the need for ongoing capacity building to enhance their ability to respond effectively to emergencies.



Pic: Participants of RRT/RRC advocacy program at Bhadrapur municipality, Jhapa

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
12	14	26

Kamal Rural Municipality

Venue: Kamal Rural Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 20th Feb 2025

Participants: Vice mayor, Ward chairpersons, Sr AHW, Sr ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

District Presentation

Biswanath Shrestha, a resource person from the Health Office Jhapa, delivered a detailed and insightful presentation on the importance of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and Rapid Response Committees (RRC). He explained the process of forming these teams and committees while highlighting their crucial roles in managing public health emergencies.

Sharing his firsthand experience in handling a food poisoning outbreak in Arjundhara Municipality, he discussed the major challenges faced and the valuable lessons learned in crisis management. He also provided key recommendations for addressing outbreaks like COVID-19, emphasizing the need for preparedness, prompt action, and coordinated efforts among stakeholders.



Pic : Resource person from HO Jhapa facilitating RRC workshop at Kamal RM

Additionally, he expanded the discussion to global perspectives on communicable and non-communicable diseases, shedding light on their impact on public health. His presentation served as a valuable learning experience, reinforcing the importance of strong health surveillance, early detection systems, and capacity-building initiatives to enhance public health response efforts.

Main Bottlenecks

- Inadequate budget and resources at the local level.
- Challenges in ensuring effective coordination among different tiers of government.
- Delayed updates from the central government hinder disease control efforts.

Lessons Learned

The Chairperson's recognition of the gap in health-oriented disaster management highlights the importance of prioritizing health-related preparedness. The discussion between the Chairperson and the Ward Chief stressed that effective disaster management relies on collaborative efforts.

Recommendations

- Continuous capacity building and training for RRT members.
- Logistical support provided by the provincial and central governments.

- Access to IEC materials to facilitate effective communication.

Overall comments and conclusion

The Vice Chairman of the Rural Municipality expressed his appreciation to the provincial government and WHO for organizing the program. However, he noted that providing some logistical support or kits for the newly appointed teams would have been more beneficial in improving their readiness. He also expressed hope for future training opportunities for their Rapid Response Team (RRT), stressing the importance of ongoing capacity building to enhance their preparedness and response capabilities.



Pic: Chairperson of Kamal RM providing his remarks during closing of RRC workshop

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
9	11	20

Haldibari Rural Municipality

Venue: Haldibari Rural Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 20th Feb 2025

Participants: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, CAO, Ward chairpersons, HA, AHW, ANM, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

Province/ District Presentation

Mrs. Upama Koirala PHEOC, a resource person from the Ministry of Health (MOH), delivered a comprehensive presentation that highlighted the crucial role of Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. She began by stressing the importance of the RRC as a vital mechanism in responding to health crises effectively.

Mrs. Koirala outlined the key responsibilities of the RRC, emphasizing its critical role in ensuring seamless coordination among various stakeholders involved in disaster management. He further discussed how the RRC is essential in ensuring timely interventions, mobilizing necessary resources, and enabling swift action during emergencies. She emphasized that coordinated manner is vital in reducing health risks and preventing the escalation of crises. He also emphasized that the success of the RRC in managing health emergencies relies on the readiness and preparedness of the teams involved, and the RRC's role in facilitating communication, resource allocation, and overall crisis management to minimize health impacts and protect communities.



Pic: Public health officer of Haldibari rural municipality facilitated the VPD outbreak session

Additionally, he presented data on the timeline of symptom onset, gender-specific case classifications, symptoms experienced, age group distribution, food consumed at the event, and lab results in collaboration with officials from Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur. He also emphasized that the Jhapa district is prone to dengue, flood zone areas and Road Traffic Accidents.

Similarly, technique session on role of RRT in VPD outbreak was explained by Public health officer of Haldibari rural municipality. He brief on the "Diseases under surveillance in the National Immunization Program, Surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases (Acute Flaccid paralysis-AFP_ Surveillance, Measles like Disease, Neonatal Tetanus, Acute Encephalitic Syndrome (AES) Surveillance, 52 Notifiable communicable disease issued by the MOHP, Suspected Measles and Rubella Outbreak" and its reporting mechanism, Outbreak investigation done in Jhapa district, Suspected case definition for Measles Rubella.

Main Bottlenecks

- Good coordination between three tiers of the government is always challenging. But despite of that local level government authorities were able to manage the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020 with minimal budget and human resources, logistics and so on,

Lessons Learned

- The Chairperson's thanked Ministry of Health, WHO and District health office for conducting this sensitization program at the palika level. He also shared his experience of working during Covid-19, and coordination with different level of government for Covid-19 case management. In coordination with health care worker, ward level representative, they were proactively involved in the sample collection at the house and transported the samples to PPHL for testing. They were able to manage isolation centers and quarantine facility during Covid-19.
- By prioritizing health-related preparedness, the Chairperson highlights the importance of ensuring that health systems are well-equipped, well-coordinated, and ready to respond to emergencies. This approach is essential for minimizing the health impacts of disasters, ensuring a rapid and effective response, and ultimately safeguarding the well-being of the affected population.

Recommendations

There is a need to enhance risk communication activities, along with continuous capacity building and regular training for Rapid Response Team (RRT) members. Health awareness campaign needs to be continued. A good appraisal from the higher-level authorities and recognition for their active work can motivate them to work better together to combat public health emergencies and disasters in future.

Overall comments and conclusion

The Chairman of the Rural Municipality expressed gratitude to the provincial government and WHO for organizing the program. They are highly active and are able to manage the basic hospital with the minimal resources and it provided 24-hour service at the rural municipality level. He also emphasized that the health care workers need to be mobilized to ensure safety of the people. There has been good practice of health care service management by haldibari rural municipality. The Chairman also emphasized the importance of quarterly meeting of Rapid Response Team (RRT) to ensure continuous capacity building for effective emergency response.



Pic: Public health administrator of HO Jhapa sharing his Presentation on the importance of RRT

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
12	9	21

Kachankawal Rural Municipality

Venue: Kachankawal Rural Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 24th March 2025

Participants: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, CAO, Ward chairpersons, HA, AHW, ANM, Disaster focal person, IT officials, Lab technician and FCHVs

Province/ District Presentation

Mrs. Upama Koirala, a resource person from the Ministry of Health (MOH) at the Public Health Emergency Operation Center (PHEOC), delivered an insightful presentation emphasizing the critical role of the Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. She began by underscoring the RRC's significance as a key mechanism for effectively addressing health crises.



Pic: Resource person from MOH, delivering her presentation on RRT Guidelines, PHEOC presentation

Mrs. Koirala outlined the main responsibilities of the RRC, highlighting its pivotal role in ensuring smooth coordination among various stakeholders involved in disaster management. She further discussed how the RRC is essential in facilitating timely interventions, mobilizing necessary resources, and enabling swift actions during emergencies. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts in reducing health risks and preventing crises from escalating. Mrs. Koirala also stressed that the success of the RRC in managing health emergencies depends on the readiness and preparedness of the teams involved, as well as the RRC's role in streamlining communication, resource distribution, and overall crisis management to mitigate health impacts and safeguard communities.

Furthermore, public health administrator district health office chief of Jhapa district provided brief update on the role of RRT team and committee during outbreak and shared his experience in outbreak investigation by HO Jhapa RRT team. He discussed media monitoring, rumor verification, and the activation of district-level RRTs for further investigation. Patients were treated at both local health facilities and the municipal hospital, with healthcare workers mobilized to care for those affected. "An emergency meeting was quickly held with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and medical professionals to determine the triage and patient allocation process based on urgency." Coordination was swiftly established with the Medical Superintendent and the Emergency Department head at Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur for patient transfers. Additionally, he presented data on the timeline of symptom onset, gender-specific case classifications, symptoms experienced, age group distribution, food consumed at the event, and

lab results in collaboration with officials from Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur. He also emphasized that the Jhapa district is prone to dengue, flood zone areas and Road Traffic Accidents.

Mrs. Suvechchha Subedi from WHO-WHE delivered a presentation on the crucial role of the RRT team and its connection with the Surveillance Outbreak Response and Analysis System (SORMAS). She briefly explained how the RRT team plays a key role in identifying events at the community level and updating the line list using the SORMAS app. She emphasized the importance of digitizing data electronically for analysis and informed decision-making at the Palika level. Mrs. Subedi also highlighted the significance of effective data management during health emergencies.

Following the technical session, Dr. Deepen Rajbanshi, a medical officer from the Primary Health Care Center (PHC) in Kachankawal, shared his experience managing a food poisoning outbreak. On 18th Falgun 2081, several cases with symptoms such as fever, diarrhea, and vomiting were reported. Despite limited human resources, outbreak management activities were conducted. With the technical support of the local RRT team, 19 cases were successfully managed at the PHC level, with all core RRT members being mobilized.

Main Bottlenecks

- RRT training should be conducted at the Palika level to enhance the capacity to manage health emergencies, disasters, or other outbreaks effectively.
- There is a shortage of human resources and medical equipment at the health facility level.
- Strong communication and coordination among the three tiers of government are essential for managing outbreaks and ensuring a swift response.

Lessons Learned

- The health coordinator of Kachankawal Rural Municipality expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Health, WHO, and the District Health Office for organizing this sensitization program at the local level. He also shared his experience of working during the COVID-19 pandemic and coordinating with various levels of government for case management. Additionally, in collaboration with healthcare workers, they successfully managed a food poisoning outbreak in Kachankawal Rural Municipality, Koshi Province, through the efficient mobilization of Rapid Response Team (RRT) members.
- He emphasized that maintaining strong coordination with the District Health Office in Jhapa has been a consistently good practice for effective response management at the local level.

Recommendations

There is a need to train healthcare workers at facility level to familiarize them with the SORMAS application. The health coordinator mentioned that they have received User's TOT on SORMAS

and emphasized that this training is crucial for Rapid Response Team members to ensure proper data management and digitization through the SORMAS application.

Overall comments and conclusion

The Ward officials of Kachankawal Rural Municipality expressed their appreciation to the provincial government and WHO for organizing the program. They highlighted the need to activate the RRT team members and hold quarterly meetings. The Chairman also stressed the significance of conducting regular quarterly meetings for the Rapid Response Team (RRT) to ensure ongoing capacity building for an effective emergency response.



Pic: Participants of RRT/RRC Program, Kachankawal RM, 25th March 2025

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
18	7	25

Shivasataxi Municipality

Venue: Shivasataxi Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 24th March 2025

Participants: Mayor, Vice mayor, CAO, Ward chairpersons, Doctors, Nurses Sr AHW, Sr ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

Province and District Presentation

Mr. Laxman Kharel, a representative from the Ministry of Health (MOH) Koshi, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the district's key public health initiatives. He focused on the vital roles and responsibilities of the Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in effectively managing health emergencies. Mr. Kharel explained that the Rapid Response Team (RRT) has been formally established and is actively involved in ensuring community health safety. The team holds regular meetings to stay informed, reviews ongoing strategies, and develops detailed action plans aimed at enhancing preparedness for potential epidemic outbreaks, ensuring a proactive approach to managing health crises.



Pic: Resource person from MOH Koshi delivering his presentation during RRC/RRT workshop

Biswanath Shrestha, a resource person from the Health Office Jhapa, gave a thorough and insightful presentation on the significance of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and Rapid Response Committees (RRC). He outlined the process of establishing these teams and committees, while emphasizing their essential roles in managing public health emergencies.

Drawing from his direct experience in handling a food poisoning outbreak in Arjundhara Municipality, he discussed the challenges faced and the important lessons learned in crisis management. Additionally, he offered key recommendations for tackling outbreaks like COVID-19, highlighting the importance of preparedness, swift action, and collaborative efforts among all stakeholders.

Main Bottlenecks

- Disease prevention and control measures have posed significant challenges.
- Inadequate budgeting for necessary resources.

- Lack of effective coordination among various levels of government.

Lessons Learned

The Chairperson’s acknowledgment of the gap in health-focused disaster management underscores the critical need to prioritize health-related preparedness. This recognition emphasizes that, to effectively respond to health emergencies during disasters, a stronger focus on health systems and planning is essential, ensuring that the necessary resources and strategies are in place to safeguard public health.

Recommendations

- Increase in risk communication activities
- Capacity building and regular trainings of RRT members
- Support in logistic items from province and central government

Overall comments and conclusion

The Chairman of the Municipality shared that Shivasataxi is a region that is highly susceptible to dengue, with numerous cases reported each year. Despite the recurring nature of the disease, he acknowledged that the municipality has not implemented significant preventive measures to address the issue. He admitted that this failure to take proactive, cost-effective steps is a weakness on their part. However, he expressed that the program has provided them with valuable insights into better preparedness strategies. Looking ahead, the Chairman emphasized that they are committed to mobilizing the Rapid Response Team (RRT) for effective dengue control and other health-related events, ensuring improved preparedness and more efficient response in the future.



Pic : Mayor of Shivasataxi providing his remarks during closing of RRC workshop

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
20	16	36

Kankai Municipality

Venue: Kankai Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 25th March 2025

Participants: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, CAO, Ward chairpersons, HA, AHW, ANM, Disaster focal person, IT officials, Lab technician and FCHVs

Province/ District Presentation

Mrs. Upama Koirala, a resource person from the Ministry of Health (MOH) at the Public Health Emergency Operation Center (PHEOC), delivered an insightful presentation emphasizing the critical role of the Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. She began by underscoring the RRC's significance as a key mechanism for effectively addressing health crises.



Pic: Resource person from MOH, delivering her presentation on RRT Guidelines, PHEOC presentation

She outlined the outbreak response conducted by PHEOC to respond to event, information management and circulation of report to provincial and district level stakeholders. She also shared experience about the health facility assessment during 2024 Koshi Flood and Landslide conducted by PHEOC.

Furthermore, WHE IMA also highlighted the importance of SORMAS application linking with RRT team. Key role of RRT and RRC team member in capturing the event at the community level and data management during health emergencies.

In addition to this, after technical presentation from representative from PHEOC MOH, Health office chief Mr Ramesh Barakoti gave a brief presentation on the Major disaster management related activities conducted by health office, Jhapa and food poisoning outbreak management done by mobilizing RRT and RRC team members.

The Public Health Administrator, Chief of the District Health Office in Jhapa provided a concise update on the role of the Rapid Response Team (RRT) and the committee during outbreaks, sharing his experience in outbreak investigations conducted by the HO Jhapa RRT team. He highlighted the importance of media monitoring, rumor verification, and the activation of district-level RRTs for further investigation. Patients received treatment at both local health facilities and the municipal hospital, with healthcare workers mobilized to provide necessary care.

Additionally, he presented data in collaboration with officials from Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur, covering the timeline of symptom onset, gender-specific case distribution, reported symptoms, age group classifications, food consumed at the event, and lab test results. He also emphasized that Jhapa district is highly susceptible to dengue, flooding, and road traffic accidents.

Similarly, the presentation was followed by public health inspector of Kankai Municipality Health Section to provided brief update on the VPD outbreak session to sensitize the local level health stakeholders and ward level representation. He provided a briefing on the diseases monitored under the National Immunization Program, focusing on surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases such as Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP), Measles-like Disease, Neonatal Tetanus, Acute Encephalitic Syndrome (AES), and the 52 Notifiable Communicable Diseases as issued by the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP). He also discussed the reporting mechanism for these diseases, the outbreak investigation process in Jhapa district, and the definition of suspected cases for Measles and Rubella.

Main Bottlenecks

- Coordination and communication with different tier of the government authorities plays a significant role in outbreak and disaster management. Information repository of major stakeholders needs to be maintained before pre disaster phase.
- Limited human resources and financial difficulties is a challenging and big concern to manage health related emergencies and response.

Lessons Learned

- Bipad focal person shared his experience about the disaster management related activities conducted at the Palika level with support from local level health authorities. He shared that it is important to involve the health care worker team for health-related response after disaster.
- As we are close to Kankai river in this municipality, it is prone to flood if there is consistent rainfall, so a part of preparedness necessary plans should be initiated and updated on a timely basis for the response.



Recommendations

- The sub mayor of Kankai municipality acknowledged ministry of health and WHO for conducting this RRT/RRC advocacy workshop. It has provided a good insight about the role of RRT and RRC team in health-related events like disasters or outbreaks. This awareness program has been very fruitful, and we shall continue to conduct RRT/ RRC meeting in a quarterly basis and shall update the list of focal persons for response management at Palika level.



Group picture of RRT/RRC advocacy workshop conducted at Kankai Municipality, Jhapa district on 25th March 2025

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
21	10	31

Buddhashanti Rural Municipality

Venue: Buddhashanti Rural Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 25th March 2024

Participants: Act Mayor, CAO, Ward chairpersons, Sr AHW, Sr ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

Province Presentation

Mr Laxman Kharel, a resource person from the Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC), delivered an insightful presentation highlighting the vital role of Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. She explained the key responsibilities of the RRC, emphasizing its importance in ensuring a timely and organized response to health crises. The presentation detailed how the RRC coordinates various stakeholders, including health workers, local authorities, and emergency response teams, to effectively address outbreaks and other public health threats. Mr. Kharel described how the RRC functions as the central point for communication, resource management, and strategic decision-making, ensuring prompt and efficient action. She stressed that a structured and coordinated approach is essential for reducing confusion and delays during health emergencies, ultimately improving response efforts and minimizing harm to communities.



Pic : Resource person from Province facilitating RRC workshop at Buddhashanti RM

Dr. Samyam Mahat from the World Health Organization (WHO) provided a comprehensive overview of the key role played by the Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) in disaster preparedness and response. He highlighted that the PHEOC is a critical framework for managing public health emergencies, ensuring that actions are swiftly and effectively implemented. Dr. Mahat explained how the PHEOC facilitates rapid resource mobilization, streamlines communication between various agencies, and aids in developing response strategies during disasters. He underscored the importance of a proactive approach in disaster preparedness, which includes continuous risk assessments, capacity building, and preparedness planning. Dr. Poudel further noted that the PHEOC's role in disaster response is crucial, as it helps minimize the impact of crises on public health by ensuring a coordinated and efficient response.

Main Bottlenecks

- Limited budget and large number of priorities
- Coordination among different tiers of government
- Geographical difficulties due to remote part of province

Lessons Learned

The Acting Chairperson’s acknowledgment of the gap in health-centered disaster management emphasized the need to prioritize health-related preparedness to better handle emergencies. During a discussion with the Ward Chief, it was highlighted that successful disaster management depends on collaborative efforts. Both leaders agreed that a coordinated approach, involving various stakeholders, is essential to effectively address and manage disasters, ensuring a more organized and efficient response to public health crises.



Pic : Group photo after completion of RRC workshop at Buddhashanti Rural Municipality

Recommendations

- Capacity building and regular trainings of RRT members
- Support in logistic items from province and central government
- Support on disease prevention from province and central government

Overall comments and conclusion

The Acting Chairman of the Rural Municipality expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the provincial government and WHO for their visit to the municipality and for organizing such a valuable program. He acknowledged that this initiative was one that the municipality should have launched earlier but appreciated the support it received from the provincial level.

The Acting Chairman emphasized that the program provided an opportunity for the provincial government to engage directly with the local level, which was highly significant for the municipality. He also mentioned that during the COVID-19 pandemic, they had heard much about WHO's efforts, and it was a privilege to have WHO representatives present at the palika level. He further shared that the program had raised awareness about preventive measures, and going forward, they would place a stronger focus on these measures while seeking ongoing support from the provincial government for their effective implementation.

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
18	16	34

Arjundhara Municipality

Venue: Arjundhara Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 26th March 2025

Participants: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, CAO, Ward chairpersons, HA, AHW, ANM, Disaster focal person, IT officials, Lab technician and FCHVs

Province Presentation

Resource focal person from the Ministry of Health (MOH) at the Public Health Emergency Operation Center (PHEOC), gave an informative presentation highlighting the essential role of Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in managing health emergencies. She began by emphasizing the importance of the RRC as a key mechanism for effectively addressing health crises. She described the outbreak response carried out by PHEOC, focusing on event management, information handling, and the dissemination of reports to provincial and district-level stakeholders. She also shared insights from the health facility assessment conducted during the 2024 Koshi



Flood and Landslide by PHEOC.

Pic: District health office of Jhapa district presenting on RRT and its importance during health emergencies management

District Presentation

The Public Health Administrator, who is the Chief of the District Health Office in Jhapa, gave a brief update on the role of the Rapid Response Team (RRT) and the committee during outbreaks, sharing his experiences with investigations led by the HO Jhapa RRT team. He emphasized the importance of monitoring the media, verifying rumors, and activating district-level RRTs for further investigation. Patients were treated at both local health facilities and the municipal hospital, with healthcare workers mobilized to provide necessary care.

"An emergency meeting was quickly organized with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and medical professionals to set up a triage and patient allocation system based on urgency." Coordination with the Medical Superintendent and the head of the Emergency Department at Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur was swiftly arranged for patient transfers.

He also presented data, in collaboration with officials from Provincial Hospital Bhadrapur, covering the timeline of symptom onset, gender-specific case distribution, reported symptoms, age classifications,

food consumed at the event, and lab test results. Additionally, he highlighted that Jhapa district is highly vulnerable to dengue, flooding, and road traffic accidents.

Main Bottlenecks

- While the importance of practical exercises for the RRT and RRC was emphasized, there has been limited engagement in hands on training that would allow team members to fully understand and execute their roles during emergencies.
- The local level has not yet established sufficient stockpiles of essential items needed for rapid response during outbreaks or disasters. Budget allocation for disaster preparedness is crucial but not yet fully utilized for purchasing necessary supplies.
- While disaster budgets are allocated at the local level, they are not always directed toward purchasing the right items or preparing for unforeseen emergencies. This could impact the ability to respond effectively when a crisis occurs.

Lessons Learned

- It is evident that prioritizing preparedness is more important than focusing solely on response. Well-prepared communities can respond to disasters more quickly and effectively, minimizing the event's impact.
- Conducting practical exercises and regular drills is crucial to ensure that members of the RRT and RRC are familiar with their roles and responsibilities. Without this training, the response team may find it difficult to act quickly and confidently in emergencies.
- Stockpiling essential items like medicines, medical supplies, and personal protective equipment is critical for a timely response. These resources must be readily available and accessible when an outbreak or disaster strikes.

Recommendations

The sub-mayor of Arjundhara municipality acknowledged the WHO team for conducting RRT/RRC advocacy workshop. This program was a fruitful session, and we assure you that this RRT meeting will be conducted on a quarterly basis and RRT training will be strengthened. The RRT team members will be mobilized in future to combat health emergencies and outbreak response.



Pic: RRT Participants at Arjundhara Municipality

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
13	20	33

Mechinagar Municipality

Venue: Mechinagar Municipality, Hall, Jhapa District

Date: 26th March 2025

Participants: Mayor, Vice mayor, Chief Administrative Officer, Ward chairpersons, Doctor, Nurses, Sr AHW, Sr ANM, Lab personal, Disaster focal person, IT officials, and FCHVs

Province and District Presentation

Mr. Laxman Kharel, a representative from the Ministry of Health (MOH) Koshi, delivered a detailed presentation on the district's major public health initiatives. He highlighted the crucial roles and responsibilities of the Rapid Response Coordination (RRC) in effectively addressing health emergencies. Mr. Kharel shared that the Rapid Response Team (RRT) has been formally established and is actively working to ensure the health and safety of the community. The team conducts regular meetings to stay updated, reviews current strategies, and develops detailed action plans aimed at improving preparedness for potential epidemics, ensuring a proactive stance in managing health crises.



Pic : Resource person from MOH Koshi delivering his presentation

Biswanath Shrestha, a resource person from the Health Office Jhapa, presented an in-depth and insightful discussion on the importance of Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and Rapid Response Committees (RRC). He explained the process of forming these teams and committees, emphasizing their vital roles in managing public health emergencies. Drawing from his direct experience in dealing with a food poisoning outbreak in Arjunthara Municipality, he shared the challenges faced and the valuable lessons learned in crisis management. He also provided key recommendations for addressing outbreaks like COVID-19, stressing the importance of preparedness, quick action, and coordinated efforts among all stakeholders.



Pic : Resource person from HO Jhapa delivering his presentation

Main Bottlenecks

- Prevention and control measures for disease have been a challenge
- No appropriate budgeting
- Coordination among different tiers of government

Lessons Learned

The Chairperson acknowledged the existing gap in health-centered disaster management, emphasizing the need to prioritize health-related preparedness for more effective emergency response. During a discussion with the Ward Chief, it was highlighted that successful disaster management depends on collaborative efforts. Both leaders agreed that a coordinated approach, involving various stakeholders, is essential for effectively addressing and managing disasters, leading to a more organized and efficient response to public health emergencies.

Recommendations

- Increase in risk communication activities
- Capacity building and regular trainings of RRT members
- Support in logistic items from province and central government

Overall comments and conclusion

The Chairman of Mechinagar Municipality pointed out the area's heightened vulnerability to flooding, given its proximity to the Koshi River, particularly during the rainy season. He expressed concern that such floods could result in serious health and public health challenges in the future. As a result, he stressed the importance of receiving support from all levels of government and partners to help Mechinagar Municipality effectively tackle and mitigate the harmful impacts of floods in the coming years.



Pic : Vice chairman of Mechinagar Municipality providing his remarks during closing of RRC workshop

Participants Gender Analysis

Male	Female	Total
21	10	31