

March 2023
Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Synopsis (UDAS)
Monthly Reports

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation
Dehradun, Uttarakhand

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About UDAS Monthly Reports

Uttarakhand Disaster & Accident Synopsis (UDAS) is a monthly initiative by Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation. The goal of the UDAS reports is to document disasters and accidents in Uttarakhand, leading to human and ecological casualties. UDAS is based on media reports in respectable publications in English and Hindi newspapers, as well as news portals. UDAS neither attempts nor claims to document all disasters and all accidents in Uttarakhand; its focus instead is to document major casualties and non-casualty events on a regular basis.

We strongly believe that with the perils of inclement climate and unabated disasters, the ecologically fragile and earthquake-prone state of Uttarakhand needs to take many more steps to increase its disaster preparedness. We, therefore, see UDAS as a document that highlights attention towards the urgent need of a holistic disaster management and accident minimization policy framework in Uttarakhand.

It is our earnest hope that UDAS will spur political leadership, policy makers, bureaucracy, research and academic institutions, businesses, civil society organizations, media and the citizenry at large to initiate inclusive, regular and action-oriented conversations on the subjects of resilience, mitigation and adaptation in Uttarakhand. With mainstreaming and a greater focus on the issue, there is likely to be an improvement in the process of planning of climate actions and disaster management in Uttarakhand.

1. March 2023 update : Joshimath “sinking”

Compared to the months of January and February 2023, the situation in Joshimath in March 2023 appeared to be comparatively less volatile. The biggest issues coming out of Joshimath in March 2023 related to compensation for rehabilitation and the need for housing for those families that were impacted due to the sinking phenomenon.

Times of India had reported on March 28, 2023 that relief funds were disbursed to only 10% affected families. Over two months after the Uttarakhand government sanctioned Rs 45 crores as immediate relief for the people of subsidence affected Joshimath, the process of disbursement of relief money is proceeding at a snail's pace.

Apart from relief distribution, the prefabricated houses being made to accommodate affected families in Joshimath have not received much response from the residents of Joshimath. Till

March 20, 2023 only five 2BHK houses had been made in Dhak by the Rural Works Department of the state govt.

Joshimath: Not many takers for prefab houses

Disaster-hit Families Want Cash Settlement

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Dehradun: Dehradun: The prefabricated houses, which are being made to accommodate affected families in Joshimath, have not received much response from the subsidence-hit town's residents, who have been living in government-run shelter homes for over two-and-a-half months now.

Till date, only five 2BHK prefabricated houses have been made in Dhak, about 10 km away from Joshimath, by the Rural Works Department (RWD) of the state government. The government has also mandated National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) and Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) to install a total of 4,000 prefabricated houses for subsidence-affected families.

However, the work for these houses is yet to begin, since land has not been identified for the project and neither has there been much demand or interest shown by locals.

Chamoli district magistrate (DM) Himanshu Khuranna, when queried about the status of occupancy of the few prefab houses that have got ready, told TOI, "We have received a few applications recently, which are being verified." However, he did not divulge the number of appli-



Chamoli DM Himanshu Khurana recently inspected the site where prefabricated huts are being made for disaster-hit families

cations received.

Meanwhile, the Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, a citizens' collective agitating for faster redressal of the town's issues, said that the affected people are "not interested in going to the prefab houses at Dhak, mainly because they are still not fully ready, lack basic facilities and are quite far from Joshimath".

"No one would prefer to stay there. Who would want to ruin their livelihood by living so far from the town? Moreover, the prefabricated houses still lack basic facilities," said Atul Sati, convenor of Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti.

Krishna Sati, a resident of Singhdhar, currently living in a shelter home, added, "We do not want to stay in prefabricated huts. We instead want compensation so that we can start our lives from scratch once again."

Till March 18, the administration had claimed to have disbursed a sum of Rs 5.74 crore to 22 families as part of the Rs 45 crore initial relief package provided by the state government.

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Till now the govt has distributed Rs 8.3 crore as one time settlement under the Joshimath rehabilitation policy to 31 families, which is just around 10% of the total identified families that are affected. Affected families are also being forced to run from pillar to post to get necessary no objection certificates and clearances for seeking monetary relief under the rehabilitation policy. Residents are apparently being asked to get 12 NOCs from banks in Joshimath, Jal Sansthan, electricity departments and municipality regarding house construction. Residents have further claimed that the process of applying and getting the compensation money under the rehabilitation policy has become strenuous.

Relief funds disbursed to only 10% affected families

**Around ₹8 cr
Of Total ₹45 cr
Distributed**

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Dehradun: Over two months after the Uttarakhand government sanctioned Rs 45 crore as immediate relief for the people of subsidence-affected Joshimath, the process of disbursement of relief money is taking place at a snail's pace.

Till now, the government has distributed Rs 8.3 crore as one-time settlement un-

der the Joshimath rehabilitation policy to 31 families, which is just around 10% of the total identified families that are affected.

The district administration has also distributed additional relief money to the

JOSHIMATH CRISIS

tune of Rs 6.58 crore to the affected families, which included immediate help of Rs one lakh to almost 324 affected families whose houses developed cracks, Rs 50,000 grant to 357 families for shifting their houses etc.

Initially, nearly 300 affected families were shifted out of their houses to the

government-run shelter homes in the first week of January, out of which, 115 families have now gone to either a rented accommodation or to their relative's place. Ranjit Sinha, secretary in the disaster management department, told TOI, "The government in the recent budget has earmarked Rs 1000 crore for Joshimath and other areas facing land-subsidence."

When asked whether the Centre has reverted on the proposal sent by the state government seeking funds for Joshimath, Sinha said, "Everyone will get to know if there is a development on that front."

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The construction of the Helanf Marwari bypass under the Char Dham all weather project which was suspended by the Chamoli administration in the first week of January 2023 following the aggravation of the Joshimath land crisis continues to remain in limbo for nearly three months. The concerned authorities are still waiting for the report of IIT Roorkee to decide if the restart of the bypass project would aggravate the land crisis problem.

Bypass project stuck in limbo awaits IIT report

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DEHRADUN: The construction of Helang-Marwari bypass under the Char Dham all-weather project, which was suspended by Uttarakhand's Chamoli district administration in January first week, following the aggravation of Joshimath land crisis, continues to remain in a limbo for nearly three months. The concerned authorities are still waiting for the report of the IIT Roorkee to decide if the re-beginning of work would aggravate the land crisis problem.

The work on the bypass and other construction activities were halted by the district administration on January 5 after protests by local residents. Under the Centre's ₹12,000 crore Char Dham roads project, the Helang-Marwari bypass, which is being built some 13km from Joshimath at its foothill, aims to shorten the distance to the Badrinath shrine by 30km.

Confirming the development, additional secretary, disaster management, Anand Srivastava said, "We are waiting for the expert report on the Helang-Marwari bypass from IIT Roorkee, which will make it clear whether the commencement of



The authorities are waiting for the report to decide if starting the work again would aggravate the land crisis problem. P71

bypass construction work will affect the land submergence-affected area in Joshimath."

He added, "Though IIT Roorkee had recently submitted a report, it has been asked to submit the report again since it wasn't satisfactory."

Talking about the financial losses suffered due to the work being halted, Major Aaina Rana, commanding officer of the 75 Road Construction Company (RCC) Border Road Organisation said they have suffered a loss of around ₹10 crore due to the suspension of the work.

She said, "We will re-begin the construction of the bypass only on the orders of the district

administration."

She said the work of cutting about two kilometres of rock from Helang and half a kilometre from Marwari end has been completed.

Meanwhile, experts and town residents have attributed the crisis to the damage caused to the underground water strata from power utility National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)'s tunnelling work for a hydro-power project, unplanned development, and the use of heavy machinery for construction of the Helang-Marwari bypass as part of the Char Dham roads project.

Atul Sati, convener of Joshi-

math Sangharsh Samiti, said, "If the work of the Helang-Marwari bypass would be started again, it will aggravate the Joshimath land subsidence problem. We have been of the view that cutting of rock and use of blasting for this road project would destabilize the slope."

Hemant Dhyani, an environmental activist and former member of the Supreme Court-appointed high-powered committee on the Char Dham Project, said, "We had recommended the Helang-Marwari bypass to reduce the burden of floating population on the Joshimath slope with some conditions like a geological survey of the proposed project and minimum width of the road that requires less cutting of the rock."

"I don't know if our recommendations were followed or not. If not, it would further destabilise the slope and add to the land subsidence problem in Joshimath," he claimed.

The foundation stone for Chardham all weather road project was laid in December 2016 to provide all-weather connectivity to four major Hindu shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri located in the upper Himalayas of Uttarakhand.

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2. January to March 2023 : Between Earthquakes

Earthquakes were recorded on every 4th day during the time period of January to March 2023. The following are the details for some earthquakes that were reported during this period

- 20 January, 2023 : 2.8 magnitude in Dehradun
- 22 January, 2023 : 3.8 magnitude in Pithoragarh
- 25 January, 2023 : 2.1 magnitude in Pithoragarh
- 29 January, 2023 : 2.0 magnitude in Chamoli
- 10 February, 2023 : 2.5 magnitude in Rudraprayag
- 20 February, 2023 : 2.5 magnitude in Bageshwar

- g) 24 February, 2023 : 2.5 magnitude in Pithoragarh
h) 2 March, 2023 : 2.4 magnitude in Pauri
i) 2 March, 2023 : 2.6 magnitude in Bageshwar
j) Three earthquakes, all of slight intensity jolted the seismically vulnerable Uttarkashi district within twelve hours on Sunday, March 5, 2023. The first, a 2.5 magnitude tremor was recorded at 12.45 AM in the intervening night of March 4 and March 5. Another quake with very low intensity followed soon after. The third tremor was recorded at 10.10 AM on March 5 with a 1.8 magnitude.
k) 6 March, 2023 : 2.2 magnitude in Pithoragarh
l) 8 March, 2023 : 2.1 magnitude in Pithoragarh
m) 13 March, 2023 : 2.1 magnitude in Chamoli
n) 15 March, 2023 : 2.3 magnitude in Uttarkashi
o) 16 March, 2023 : 2.1 magnitude in Nainital
p) 19 March, 2023 : 2.1 magnitude in Rudrapur



22 MARCH, 2023
HINDUSTAN

3. March 25, 2023 : 350 goats struck dead by lightning in Uttarkashi

Around 350 goats were struck dead by lightning in a forest at Mathanau Tok near Khattukhal village in Dunda development block of Uttarkashi. Shepherds in the Barsu region take their goats to the hilly areas for grazing when the summer starts. On Saturday, March 25, 2023 villagers Ram Bhagat Singh, Pratham Singh and Sanjeev Rawat were on their way to the forest with their 1200 sheep and goats when the tragedy struck.

Tehsildar Dunda Pratap Singh Chauhan said information about the death of goats due to lightning has been received and he has informed the district administration and veterinary department about the matter.

About Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation

SDC Foundation is a Dehradun-based environmental action and advocacy group engaged in communication, citizen engagement and capacity building in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. The foundation works in partnership with the institutions of Government of India, Government of Uttarakhand and other stakeholders such as research & academic institutions, community groups, civil society, media partners, NGOs, businesses & trade bodies, schools & colleges in the state.

Climate and environment conservation, waste management, sustainable urbanisation and a basket of sustainable development issues are key focus areas of the foundation.

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PS : Errors or omissions in UDAS documentation, if any, are purely unintentional. In case any errors or key omissions are detected or any fresh updates are available for events that are already documented, SDC Foundation may kindly be notified at email id contactsdcuk@gmail.com. We shall make the necessary corrections in subsequent versions of the monthly reports of UDAS.