

An Update from Isha Foundation on the Nepal Floods

Two weeks have passed since the flash floods struck the Nepal-Tibet border. Our thoughts and wishes remain with the families affected by this tragic disaster, and with the wider communities across Nepal who continue to face the consequences of this catastrophe.

At this moment, our top priority is supporting the families affected. We will share verified information with the families as soon as we receive it.

Government and Embassy Liaison:

Isha remains in regular contact with Chinese, Indian, and Nepali authorities and with the relevant embassies of 19 countries in India, Nepal, and China. Our teams are actively following up through these channels to seek information on the affected individuals, understand the official processes and next steps, and help make sure that information received through government and consular channels is passed on to the affected families.

Where appropriate, identification details, photographs and other relevant information have been shared with authorities and search-and-rescue teams to support the identification and search efforts.

Isha volunteers have also been in contact with government agencies such as the US State Department and Global Affairs Canada, whose assistance in obtaining updates from the Chinese government has been helpful. Where we have learned of a process that the Chinese authorities have communicated to families of one nationality, we have shared that information with other governments so that they can seek the same for their own nationals.

Any new information that can appropriately be shared will be communicated to the affected families first and made public where it is legal, ethical, and appropriate to do so.

We wish to protect the anonymity and privacy of the families and volunteers affected, so we will not publicize names, images or personal information of those affected on any public platform or with any media outlets.

77 participants of the Kailash Manasarovar Sojourn and 3 volunteers remain unaccounted for. This number is unchanged since our last update. The authorities have indicated that identification work at the site is ongoing and, given the conditions, may take considerable time. Isha is committed to assisting this process in any way possible, and will support in whichever way the authorities ask of us.

Access:

Access to the site at Gyirong Port, on the Chinese side of the Nepal-Tibet border, remains restricted by the Chinese authorities for forensic and rescue purposes, and access on the Nepal side remains restricted by the Nepali authorities. No private individuals or organizations have been allowed near the site. Isha volunteers were stationed in Gyirong Town to obtain updates on the relief effort until the Chinese authorities required all non-official personnel to leave the area. We will provide updates as soon as we are aware of new access being granted.

Ground Coordination:

In Nepal, a team of around 25 Nepali volunteers has been deployed to support the on-ground effort. Their ability to speak the local language has been particularly valuable in coordinating with hospitals, mortuaries, police, government offices and other local authorities, and in understanding information being released locally.

The team has approached both Nepal Police and Nepal Tourist Police, shared the full list of affected individuals and available documentation, established points of contact, and remained in regular communication with them. Through the volunteer network, contact has also been established with the Nepali Army and information on the missing individuals shared with the search-and-rescue side to widen the effort.

Official Information and Identification:

Our volunteer teams are monitoring official Nepali and Chinese government and police sources regularly for new information relating to rescue efforts and identification.

Following the disaster, there was initially no clear centralized system for information. The Nepal volunteer team therefore personally visited hospitals and mortuaries to gather available information and understand the identification process, and has continued checking with them regularly.

The team has also visited the DNA center to understand the identification process and requirements. As this process differs by country, it is being coordinated through the respective countries' consular services.

Communication with Families:

Information and processes received from embassies and authorities are being communicated to the affected families so that emergency contacts receive the information the authorities have shared and understand the next steps.

We remain committed to continuing this follow-up with local authorities and emergency services, and to sharing relevant information with families as soon as it becomes available.

Media Coverage:

Media access was granted to the international press on Day 12; however, their reports have not provided any new facts.

Hotline:

Our dedicated team of volunteers is working around the clock to respond to every email and phone call received at our email address and hotline in 8 countries. We will endeavor to respond to every query within 24 hours.

For any information, questions, or tips, please email: yatra.kailash@ishausa.org

If you have any new information that could be of assistance to us or the emergency services, please get in touch via the channels above.

Practical Support:

Our team is also supporting families with practical matters arising from the situation. This includes working with the Nepal tour operator and DHL to arrange the shipping of belongings left behind by participants in Kathmandu.

We would like to offer our thanks to the emergency workers who have been at the frontline of the response, and to the Nepali, Chinese and Indian embassies, diplomats, government authorities, police, search-and-rescue teams and forensic teams currently working on this rescue mission.

This is an incredibly difficult time for everyone affected. We appreciate your ongoing support, patience, and compassion.

We remain committed to seeking out, following up on and sharing relevant information with the affected families and with you all as soon as we are able to do so.