

Image: Reference

18 Years of Literacy Campaign: Investment Increased, but the Goal Remains Unfulfilled

Nepal has spent over Rs. 36 billion in the last 18 years in literacy and continuing education but the country has not been able to achieve its target of being fully literate. According to the Department of Education, 68 districts have been declared literate and 112 local units of nine districts are yet to be declared.

In FY 2008/09 the government launched the National Literacy Campaign with the first goal of abolishing illiteracy in two years. It later proclaimed FY 2014/15 as the Year of Illiteracy Elimination. It then came up with the idea of 'Literate Nepal Year' in 2019 and again set a deadline to declare the country literate within two years. But with all these new initiatives and shifting deadlines, the goal of reaching full literacy has not yet been reached. So far, all districts of Koshi, Bagmati, Gandaki, Lu.mbini and Sudurpaschim provinces have been declared literate. The Department of Education department said only Chharka Tangsong Rural Municipality of Dolpa is yet to be declared literate in Karnali, while in Madhesh, no district has been declared literate yet.

However, past concerns about the use of inaccurate or inflated data by some local governments in their literacy declarations have led to stronger monitoring. There are also questions around local ownership, continuity of learning and whether literacy programs have become more about achieving declarations, rather than sustained learning outcome.

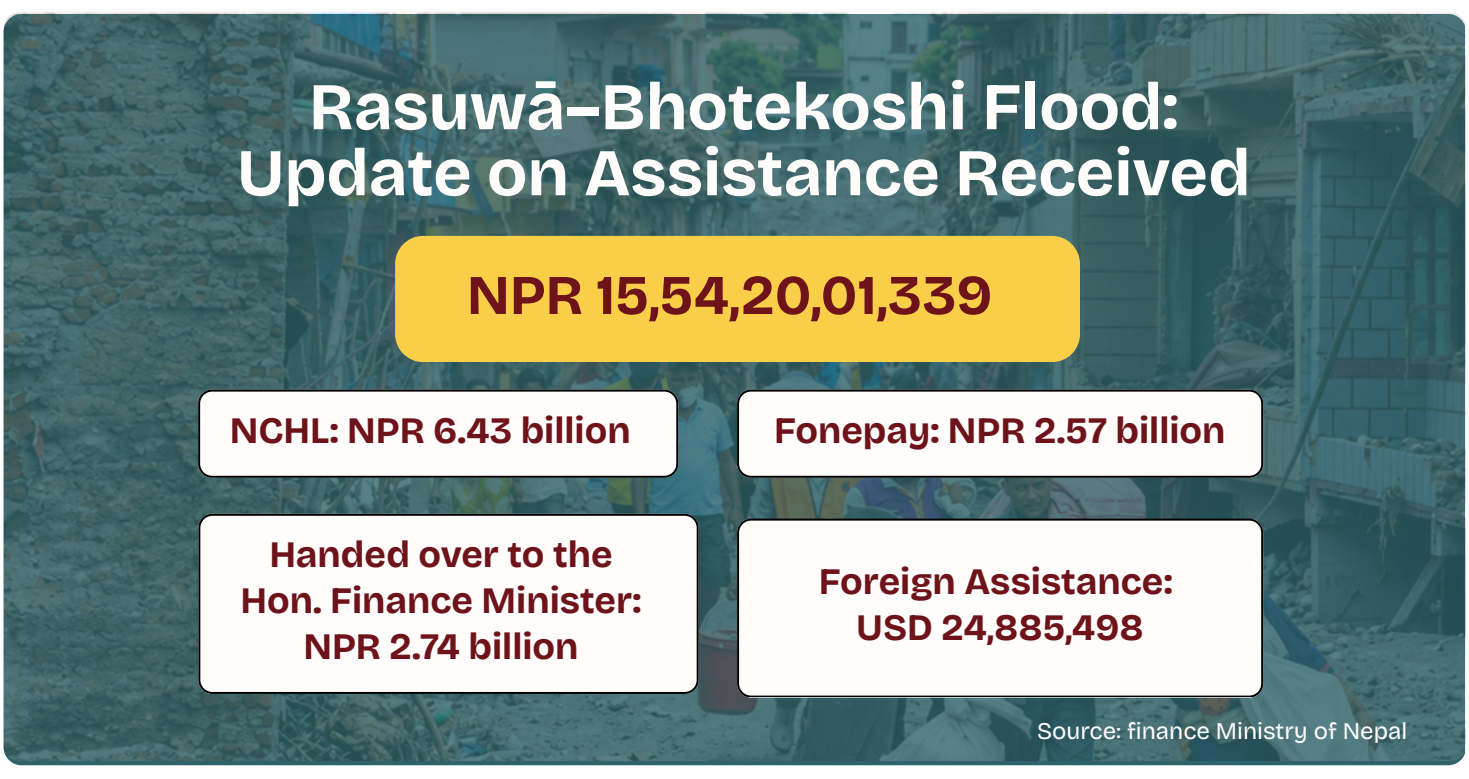
The Madhesh Challenge

Madhesh Province poses the biggest challenge to the government's goal of making Nepal fully literate. The 2021 National Census found that 76.2 percent of the population in Madhesh aged five and above was literate. The literacy rate for men was 83.6 percent, but for women it was only 69.4 percent, a wide gender difference.

More than 8.33 lakh people of 15-60 years age group in Madhesh are still illiterate, it is said. Madhesh is of particular importance for the achievement of the national target because not a single district in the province has yet been declared literate. The government had allocated Rs.139.4 million in the current fiscal year to expedite the campaign but again the government's target was not achieved.

Literacy should not be seen only as a certificate or a declaration by a local government. It is equally important to ask whether literacy skills improve people's everyday lives. The government's 12 literacy indicators suggest that a person is literate if they reach at least 50 percent capacity in various areas such as reading and writing, basic numeracy, understanding information, mobile phones and calculators, filling out bank forms and applying knowledge in everyday activities.

Now, the challenge for the government is not just to make another 'Literate Nepal' declaration, but to sustain literacy in areas already declared literate. Further investment in re-learning opportunities for illiterate adults, women-friendly programs, local-language materials, stronger community learning centers and regular assessment could help turn the achievements of an 18-year campaign from declarations on paper into meaningful learning outcomes in people's daily lives.



Weekly Snapshot



Image: Reference

- The proposed Federal Civil Service Bill allocates 49% of positions filled through open competition for reservation. Half of these positions would be reserved for women, while the remaining half would be open to other targeted groups. Women's quotas are further divided among eight groups, including Indigenous nationalities, Madhesis, Dalits, Tharus, Muslims, disadvantaged regions and women with disabilities. **Read more**

- Scrub typhus has spread across seven local levels in Salyan, with 472 cases confirmed among more than 2,400 people tested. Eight people have died in Darma Rural Municipality. Health workers say dependence on farming, livestock and forest areas increases exposure to infected mites. Although timely testing and treatment have helped prevent recent deaths, delayed diagnosis and self-medication remain concerns. A team from the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division in Teku is preparing to visit Salyan to study the outbreak. **Read more**



Image: OnlineKhabar



Image : Nayapatrika

- A case in Belaka Municipality, Udayapur, has raised serious concerns over identity theft and financial fraud. More than 500 citizens' identity documents and photos were allegedly misused to open 19 bank accounts and 301 eSewa accounts, involving transactions worth millions of rupees. Police are investigating Prakash and Ritesh Paudel on charges including organized crime, fraud and criminal gain. The accounts were reportedly linked to online betting and cryptocurrency transactions, highlighting serious gaps in personal data and financial security. **Read more**

- On September 10, 2025, thousands of prisoners and detainees escaped from prisons and juvenile correction homes across Nepal amid violent protests. According to the Prison Management Department, 3,556 prisoners and detainees remained outside custody as of August 2026. Of the 13,585 who escaped from prisons, 10,029 have returned or been arrested. Police say some escapees have since been linked to new crimes, while authorities continue efforts to locate those still missing. **Read more**



Image : Ukalo



Image : Setopati

Nepal's long-debated Federal Civil Service Bill has been registered in Parliament. The bill proposes mandatory retirement at age 55 or after 30 years of service for employees serving when the law takes effect, while the general retirement age would later be 60. Pension benefits would not be reduced, with up to three additional years counted for pension purposes for those retiring at 55. The bill also proposes two-year terms for the Chief Secretary and three-year terms for Secretaries. **Read more**

Nepal Governance Weekly is an analytical update of Nepal's current affairs based on media and real sources mining, to sensitize the communities on hot news on various political, economic, governance, and policy issues from the perspective of accountability.

Presented By accountabilitylab NEPAL
Technical support from Open Co Hub
nepal@accountabilitylab.org
Join us online

Copyright © 2026 Accountability Lab Nepal, All rights reserved.