Blockade affecting aid in Nepal

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AID workers are being trapped by fuel shortages and political violence in Nepal due to two weeks of blockades on the Indian border.

In the southern Terai region, workers said necessities such a medicine were not making their way into Nepal and were worried about possible food shortages as trucks sat stationary, choking supplies since Thursday.

The recent adoption of a new constitution by Nepal's Government led to violence around the country and at least 40 people have been killed in clashes during the past month - while thousands of protesters have blocked the border.

Border regions have become too violent to work said aid workers, preventing help from reaching the area's most vulnerable, while there are reports of street children being used in clashes with police and others seeking refuge in India.

Street children in the border town of Birgunj are being used by Madhesi parties to throw stones and attack vehicles, according to staff from UK and Nepal-based NGO Our Sansar.

“We can't even reach out to them to try and help them due to safety reasons,” Our Sansar director Julia Krepska said.

“People in Raxaul – a town in India on the border - are providing food to the protesters as they are supporting the protests against the constitution, and now many street children from Nepal are going across the border and get fed there.”

According to Our Sansar, that runs the only home for street children in the area, the situation had become critical.

“We are still provided with some supplies - we just need to call the shop owners and then they provide us with food - but we don't know how long this will last for, and the supplies will end at some point,” Krepska said.

“We cannot visit our projects easily, children don't go to school, many shops are closed.”

Strikes and protests have also affected public services and children have been out of school for nearly two months - while around the country, all non-emergency transport has been halted.

“The schools have been now closed for about 50 days, before then they were closed due to the earthquake, then summer holidays - so children in the Birgunj area this year have hardly had any classes,” Krepska said.

“Our project manager can't even refill his motorbike to visit and reach out to children in more remote villages, which is an essential part of our work.”

Nepal was still reeling from a devastating earthquake which killed more than 8,700 people in April and the unrest was now pushing up prices for necessities for those who could least afford them.

“Because of the fuel shortage, people can't get to work, factories are shut, there is no milk,” Krepska said.

Our Sansar also operates an emergency transit home for children displaced or affected by the quakes in the centre of Nepal and have been prevented from reuniting families because of the shortages.

“We can't send some of the Dhading children to their families due to the lack of transport - we're all pretty much stuck where we are,” Krepska said.

www.oursansar.org

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