

From Recovery To Development: Piloting Disability Inclusion in Earthquake-Affected Communities of Nepal



Photo: Members of the Self-Help Group Kotdarbar in Tanahun District

Persons with disabilities are often excluded from humanitarian response and recovery efforts. This is partly due to the marginalization of persons with disabilities in their communities and partly due to the lack of data and information on the situation of persons with disabilities. This Case Study Series provides examples of practices and learning on inclusion of persons with disabilities, on disaggregated data collection and its use, and on the impact of inclusive practices on both persons with disabilities in the affected communities, as well as within Movement organizations.

CONTEXT

On the 25th April 2015, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, killing over 8,000 people and injuring another 22,300 individuals.¹ Destruction was widespread with 57 of the 75 districts across the country affected.² Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), with support from 11 in-country Movement partners,³ has been implementing recovery actions across four critical sectors – shelter, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health and livelihoods – in the 14 districts most affected by the earthquake. Throughout the Earthquake Response Operation, persons with disabilities were identified as one of the “vulnerable groups” for shelter and toilet reconstruction, along with livelihoods efforts. As the Earthquake Response Operation has now shifted into recovery and development phases, there is now a focus on “building back better” and promoting institutional capacity building.

NRCS POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Disaggregated Data Collection Approaches

The needs assessment collected data on persons with disabilities, disaggregated by sex, and using the Government of Nepal categories for type and degree of disability. Survey findings suggest that the most common types of disability are hearing (29%), multiple disability (28%) and physical disability (27%), with 35% of these individuals being over the age of 50 years.⁴

NRCS is committed to ensuring that all women, men and children, inclusive of persons with disabilities and those from minority groups, have equal access to and meaningful participation in programs and services.⁵ In line with IFRC Minimum Standards for Protection Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies, NRCS has looked for strategies and approaches which foster dignity, access, participation and safety of persons with disabilities throughout earthquake response operations.⁶

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Recognizing the importance of promoting social inclusion across recovery efforts, NRCS in partnerships with Danish Red Cross and Hong Kong Red Cross, conducted a detailed assessment of the situation of persons with disabilities in Tanahun and Lamjung Districts finding that:

- More than half of person with disabilities (58%) did not have Disability ID Card holders, which would facilitate access to Government support and benefits.
- 64% of persons with disabilities reported that their families have a negative perception towards them.
- 56% faced physical barriers at school, 68% at meeting points, 66% at health posts and 43% at water points in their community.
- Nearly half (46%) did not participate any form of income generating activities, for themselves or their family.
- Finally, organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) and self-help groups lacked the organizational capacity and skills to effectively advocate on inclusion, with persons with disabilities being unaware of their rights and the benefits they are entitled to by law.⁷

PROGRAMMING SUMMARY

The pilot project, ***Empowerment and Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Earthquake Affected Communities*** supports disability inclusive recovery and resilience-building in Lamjung and Tanahun by:

1. Empowering persons with disabilities, through self-help groups, to raise community awareness and advocate for inclusion in community social services and response mechanisms.
2. Promoting an accessible environment in selected Village Development Committees affected by the earthquake, through reconstruction / up-grading of homes and public buildings.
3. Increasing livelihoods opportunities for persons with disabilities and their households, through a revolving fund provided to the self-help groups and training on technical skills.

Humanity & Inclusion, a non-governmental organization working with persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations, provides expertise for training and capacity development on disability inclusion, with technical and financial support from Hong Kong Red Cross and Danish Red Cross.

“NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US” – THE ROLE OF SELF-HELP GROUPS

Supporting persons with disabilities to form representative organizations or groups facilitates their effective participation in program planning, as well as their capacity to advocate to local governments and authorities on access to appropriate services and assistance. The pilot project has supported persons with disabilities to meet each other, organize into groups, identify needs within their community, and to advocate for change at local levels.

“WHAT WORKS” IN MOBILIZING SELF-HELP GROUPS

- Identifying and supporting people with disabilities to access Disability ID Cards and subsequent government benefits.

“After the Red Cross, we now know about the government cards and benefits. I have advocated for 3 friends with disabilities to get this card. They now have a travel allowance and pay less tax.” – Self-Help Group member, Kotdabar, Tanahun District

- Facilitating regular empowerment meetings which provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to meet each other, discuss priorities and establish strategies for communication with their community.

“The biggest challenge is the [terrain] in this area which makes it hard for people to come to meetings. So, we have a member from each ward or area in the self-help group, so that they can inform people with disabilities in their area.” – Self-Help Group member, Kotdarbar, Tanahun District

- Providing training to Self-Help Group members on topics such as rights and social inclusion, physical accessibility and community-based disaster risk reduction.

“Because of all the trainings, we have got to know a lot of new things. The main thing is now we know about the rights of persons with disabilities, and how to use the correct terms.” – Self-Help Group member, Kotdarbar, Tanahun District

- Strengthening the capacity of the Self-Help Groups to act as a Disability Inclusion Focal Point with local government authorities.

“Whatever house has been affected by the earthquake, we are going and giving [the local authorities] information and advising them on how to make these disability-friendly.” – Self-Help Group Member, Rising Ranipokhari, Tanahun

- Supporting Self-Help Groups to establish processes for identifying and selecting beneficiaries for specific activities, such as livelihoods training and grants.

“The Self-Help Group members received training on how to complete the form and collect this information from all the people with disabilities in our area. The training made it easier to complete the form, and this activity helped to re-mobilize the group and make us active again.” – Self-Help Group member, Kotdarbar, Tanahun

MOBILIZING & INFLUENCING – OUTCOMES FOR SELF-HELP GROUPS

Self-Help Groups – Representing a Diverse Community

Of the 108 Self-Help Group members involved in the project, 70 are male and 38 are female, with approximately 20% being family members of persons with disabilities. Of those members with disabilities, the vast majority (76%) are persons with physical disabilities; followed by people who are Deaf or hard of hearing (10%); people with vision disabilities (8%); communication disabilities (3%) and intellectual disabilities (2%).

Self-Help Groups have successfully influenced others, including local government officials, families and peers with disabilities. In some locations, disability has been successfully integrated into Community Disaster Management Plans at ward levels and local governments have agreed to provide financial support directly to the Self-Help Groups given their critical role in the community.

“I have come to know that our empowerment can be used to advocate. We are now asking the local government for a separate fund for the Self-Help Group. Before we were passive, but now we are active volunteers in our community.” – Self-Help Group Member, Kotdarbar

NEXT STEPS

The sustainability of the Self- Help Groups depends on them representing the diversity of persons with disabilities in their communities, with appropriate systems and processes for governance and decision-making. As such, the pilot project will be finalizing and training the groups on Self-Help Guidelines, which will strengthen their structure and function at ward levels, including strategies to ensure equal representation of women and men with different types of disabilities, local government advocacy, and linkages with other civil society organizations, networks and groups.



Photo: Members of the Self-Help Group Rising Ranipokhari in Tanahun District

LEARNING BY DOING – OUTCOMES FOR NRCS

The common purpose of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is to save lives and promote dignity of vulnerable people. NRCS has been advocating for gender equality and promoting social inclusion through all its activities and services, with a specific focus on increasing the participation of marginalized and vulnerable communities in decision making roles.

Earthquake response needs assessments and evaluations highlighted that persons with disabilities were among the most vulnerable in any affected community, leading to their prioritization for assistance. Concurrently, the pilot project on disability inclusion has demonstrated that with appropriate training and capacity development, persons with disabilities and their representative groups can play a critical role in community recovery and development.

“We used to see persons with disabilities walking in the street using a cane or a stick, but we never realized how high the number of persons with disabilities really is... They are part of the community. We have to take them forward.” – Member, NRSC Tanahun District Chapter ⁸

These lessons have informed wider NRCS policies and plans. Promoting protection, gender equality and social inclusion is now one of the four Strategic Aims in the NRCS 7th Development Plan (2016 – 2020).⁹ Steps are also being taken to develop Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Guidelines to ensure the systematic integration and participation of persons with disabilities (among other groups) across all NRCS programs and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL SOCIETIES

- Make disability mainstreaming systematic with clear outcomes, indicators and a budget for disability inclusion across all programs.
- Include disability as a criterion for targeting programs and services – Adapt data tools to ensure that disability-disaggregated data is collected in needs assessments.
- Analyze sex and disability disaggregated data to ensure that both women and men with disabilities are participating in decision-making, and that a diversity of persons with disabilities are represented in activities.
- Pay particular attention to women and children with disabilities who are more vulnerable to violence and human trafficking in an emergency.
- Draw on partner National Societies for expertise and learning on disability inclusion from different countries and contexts on disability inclusion – Share your challenges, as well as successes with each other.

“Partnership, relationship, commitment, devotion – without this, our response is disabled.” – Ms. Puja Koirala, Director, General Services and Coordination Department & PGI Lead, NRCS

REFERENCES

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2. Nepal Red Cross Society (2018) Report on the Nepal Earthquake Response Operation January 2016 – March 2018.
3. In-country Movement Partners include IFRC, American, Australian, Belgium – Flanders, British, Canadian, Danish, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian and Spanish Red Cross.
4. Alejandro Fuente Espeja (2016) Assessment on Social Inclusion and Livelihood Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Lamjung and Tanahun Districts, Nepal.
5. Nepal Red Cross Society Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Technical Guideline (2016 to 2020).
6. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2018) Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies.
7. Alejandro Fuente Espeja (2016) Assessment on Social Inclusion and Livelihood Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Lamjung and Tanahun Districts, Nepal.
8. For more information about changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices of District Chapter Members, please refer to Case Study – From Recovery To Development: Our Journey in Disability Inclusion.
9. Nepal Red Cross Society (2017) 7th Development Plan (2016 – 2020): Partnership and Coalition Building for Community Resilience.

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