Protection, Gender, and Inclusion

in Anticipatory Action

Snapshot from Nepal

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutu- al understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, reli- gious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any man- ner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Soci- ety in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Move- ment, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

Anticipatory Action for Floods in Nepal

According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, Nepal ranked 12th on the list of the world's most at-risk countries. The country is also among the 20th topmost disaster-prone locations.

With each disaster, the vulnerability of individuals already in precarious situations tends to get worse. They become exposed to increased risks of family separation, violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and tend to be left out of appropriate relief support. Hierarchical social structures and patriarchal attitudes often perpetuate the exclusion of those marginalized, including in disaster risk reduction and management.

In the face of increasing vulnerability to frequent and extreme disasters, incremental trust in the country's weather forecasts supports the development of innovative solutions to minimize, mitigate, and respond to predictable disasters.

The Forecast-based Action and Shock Responsive Social Protection (FbASRSP) Project

Within this context, Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and the Nepalese local authorities, with technical support from the Danish Red Cross (DRC), the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Center, Humanity and Inclusion, with financial support from the European Union Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) developed a Forecast-based Action (FbA) mechanism for floods in the Karnali and Babai river basins under Forecast-based Action and Shock Responsive Social Protection (FbASRSP) project in Lumbini and Sudhur Paschim Provinces.

The project supported federal, provincial and local authorities, as well as community-based organizations and community members, with the elaboration of five municipal Early Action Frameworks (EAFs) to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to the impact of floods by implementing pre-identified and financed early actions within three to seven days from predetermined triggers being reached.

The set of early actions includes early warning, evacuation, temporary shelter, community-based Helpdesk and referral mechanisms to prevent and respond to violence and community concerns, shock responsive social protection via multi-purpose cash assistance, distribution of non-food relief item (NFRI) and WASH - all with a strong emphasis on protection, gender and inclusion (PGI).

COMPREHENSIVELY INTEGRATING PROTECTION, GENDER AND INCLUSION

Recognizing that factors such as sex, age, gender, disability, or caste can create barriers to accessing support and services, and that these barriers become even more pronounced in times of emergencies, Protection, gender, and inclusion (PGI) considerations have been mainstreamed throughout the project to ensure that the needs and capacities of individuals in vulnerable situations were duly taken into account.

PGI is everyone's business

Cross sectoral coordination was strengthened between Local Disaster Management Committees (LDMC) and relevant thematic leads. In particular, the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) focal points at the municipal level were involved in emergency response and supported on many aspects, from data collection to beneficiaries' selection and case management.

Sensitizing for better planning

Furthermore, to ensure that the special needs of different vulnerable groups' populations were uniformly understood and acted upon, orientation sessions on the IFRC's Minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies were provided to all the stakeholders involved, including Red Cross volunteers and community members. With this knowledge, PGI mainstreaming action plans were developed to integrate PGI/CEA in the Early Action Frameworks of the five targeted municipalities.

Socially and economically vulnerable households were selected for multi-purpose cash assistance through the Social Security Allowance (SSA) mechanism. Early actions also considered the provision of food and non-food relief support. In particular, the composition of the dignity kits was reviewed to incorporate medicine and menstrual hygiene management items. Advocacy on the specific needs of different groups continues with the aim to further comprise nutritional supplements for children under two, and assistive devices such as folding chairs, wheelchairs, and crutches.

Considerations to the various needs of users in the design of the shelter also led to the prioritization of safety in the water facilities with attention to lightning and locks. In addition, toilets, pavements, taps, and rooms were made accessible to women, children and persons with disability.

Finally, given that schools continue serving as transitional shelters in times of disasters, advocacy for the consideration of alternative shelters remains a focus, as well as calls to ensure the continuity of education.

KEY CHALLENGES

Ensuring Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in practice

While all the stakeholders regard Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as a top priority, ensuring those considerations are taken into account for the identification of the individuals who would find themselves in the most vulnerable situation in times of emergencies proved challenging. Specifically, it required a common understanding of the necessary data, practically getting this data, and agreeing on the selection criteria for the affected population.

In particular, one of the major issues was the lack of disaggregated data which made it difficult to reach the individuals in the most vulnerable situations. With collective efforts, the beneficiaries' list of the Social Protection department, the disaggregated data collected by the GESI sector, and the risk and vulnerability data of the LDMC in the working areas were triangulated to prioritize the most marginalized individuals for rescue and relief.

Ensuring inclusivity also required working on addressing practical barriers to access social protection for the individuals who were eligible to social protection but lacking adequate documentation to formally register.

For instance, concrete solutions were developed for those who were lacking required documentation such as birth certificates, ID card, or proof of land registration by resorting to student ID cards, school recommendation letters, land/homeowner's recommendation letters, as well as accepting mothers' identities alone for the children whose paternal identity was unknown.

These suggestions were further presented to the authorities with key recommendations to encompass PGI dimensions in the local policies. Furthermore, newly identified vulnerable individuals were integrated into the social protection system, expanding its reach.

Photo: S. Noel / Poul Henning Nielsen/Danish Red Cross

KEY SUCCESSES

Inclusive Communication

Central to the success of the interventions was the frequent and meaningful engagement of the community members most exposed to risks, as well as networks representing women, children, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Their experiences of past flood events were taken as a starting point, followed by consulting them at each stage of developing, piloting, and refining the early actions.

Appropriately reflecting the make up of the communities was also key in the development of inclusive early warning communication. The consultation phase brought to light the challenges faced by indigenous people, women, children, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities to access and take seriously the early warning messages broadcasted on radio, FM stations, mobile messages, and television.

In addition, multiple means of communication and methods were applied to disseminate the messages, including peer to peer communication whereby pre-identified community members, including children and youth, would personally inform and support those often left behind due to challenges with the communication language, reading skills, or accessing or operating mobile phones, to ensure that they too could adequately prepare and receive support to pre-evacuate when needed. These last mile communication channels present the advantage of bringing about social cohesion and emphasize the benefits of engaging children and other community members as agents of change.

Information, education, and communication (IEC) materials were devised for the broader community. Inclusive in both design and content, the posters, radio jingles, and animated videos convey key messages on how to protect oneself and take early action in the local Tharu dialect, as well as in sign language.
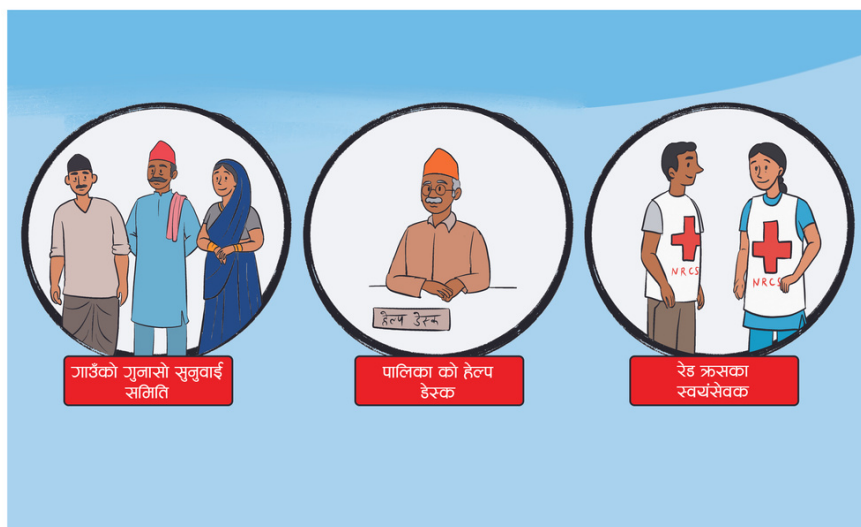

सुरक्षित आश्रय स्थल: आश्रय स्थानमा हुन सक्ने घटना हरु

नेदभाव दुर्व्यवहार चोरी जिस्काउने

झैझगडा बच्चा हरु लाई बेवस्ता गरेको र एक्लै बसेको प्रलोवन, भ्रस्टाचार अरु के हुन सक्छ?

Translation of the captions in Nepali:

Protection issues occurring in shelter: discrimination, abuse, theft, teasing or bullying, physical violence, neglect, fraud.
Any others?

घटना घटित भएमा कहाँ गएर उजुरी गर्ने

Translation of the captions in Nepali:

Where and how to report issues of child protection, gender-based violence (GBV), and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)?
Community or ward level committee, municipal level Helpdesk, Red Cross volunteers.

Featuring community members from the region, those contextualized materials promote an inclusive approach, notably by spotlighting a girl with disability as the key stakeholder in initiating preparations before a flood, and convincing other members of the community to alert and support the most vulnerable villagers, notably the elderly, people with disability, pregnant women, and single heads of households ahead of time.

The culturally appropriate scenarios reflect local challenges and solutions and inspire behavioral change by promoting positive examples notably on child participation and peer influencing. Awareness raising about increased risks of violence is also embedded within the posters on violence prevention and available community mechanisms for response and support.

In particular, given the concern that children were often excluded from decision-making processes (including on disaster risk reduction), efforts were made to involve them in the action.

Following a mapping of existing Junior Red Cross clubs, informal community-level child clubs, and more formal municipal level networks, support was provided to set up, resume, or strengthen such structures and provide interactive orientation sessions.

The adolescents were then invited to join the capacity building sessions with the other community members and considered as key actors in the two-way communication channels established for emergencies.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence Mitigation

Following a simulation exercise, consultations were further carried out with all the stakeholders, including child clubs and women and girls' networks, where adolescent girls were able to share specific concerns around intimacy and risks of violence.

Their concrete suggestions improved the response for all. Following their advice, it was decided to improve the temporary evacuation sites by strengthening the separation of toilets and showers, and to delineate a space for breastfeeding and changing rooms.

Photo: S. Noel / Poul Henning Nielsen/Danish Red Cross

Another concrete measure to prevent and respond to any acts of violence was the planning for the establishment of a Helpdesk where violations could be reported to the community health female volunteers nominated by the authorities for follow-up. Coordination between the Local Disaster Management Committees (LDMC) and the sectoral leads, notably for health, education, and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), was tested to ensure they could adequately address potential issues, notably Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and child protection.

Toll free numbers and other contact details to report cases of SGBV were disseminated, while child clubs, women groups, Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV), and Badghars (community elected representatives of the Tharu community whose primary duty is to look after the management of the community) were mobilized to collectively ensure that all the groups were receiving live-saving messages on protection including SGBV.

These actions have notably been included in the Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA) training conducted at the municipality level to ensure safe, inclusive, and accessible transitional shelters in the future.

Lessons Learned

1

Data

Capturing relevant data is crucial for the rest of the program as it lays the foundation for the identification of the affected population. In this respect, running PGI capacity building was a great enabler as it exemplified why and how data collection tools could be more inclusive, and pointed to the importance of disaggregating any data collected by sex, age, and disability.

2

Simulation

Running simulation exercises to test structural coordination as well as participants' reactions reinforces the need to take actions based on dignity, access, participation, and safety for all the people affected by disasters and crisis. This also serves as a clear demonstration of the benefits of anticipatory action for invited observers interested in possible future scale up.

3

Child Participation

Child participation is very effective in early warning communication as children are eager to be asked about their concerns and contribute as active communicators and agents of change. They can convince their families and friends and consequently cover a large spectrum of the population in a short period of time. Household visits are also key to reach out and communicate with excluded individuals to disseminate early warning messages.

4

Advocacy

Continuous advocacy to all the levels of governments is required to prioritize protection, gender, and inclusion in local preparedness plans, budgets, and policies, as well as ensure the inclusive and meaningful participation of all groups in decision making process.

TIPS

- Ensure that national and local authorities in charge of disaster risk reduction and management, service providers, and community members are continuously informed about PGI-related issues and equipped to focus on vulnerable groups in times of emergency.

- Establish partnerships to review data collection tools and ensure that they are inclusive, notably by integrating the Washington Group Questions designed to identify people with impairments to support accurate disability-disaggregated data.

- Develop child-friendly participatory mechanisms and ensure children, adolescents and youths are provided with opportunities to learn through child-friendly materials and contribute to disaster preparedness and anticipatory action as active agents of change.

- Pilot, update, and regularly test referral mechanisms to address child protection and sexual and gender-based violence, improve service delivery and case management. Discussing these issues with children and concerned communities ahead of disasters contributes to prevention efforts and helps them identify whom to turn to in case of need.

- Consider continuous community engagement and accountability to help identify remaining gaps and challenges in mainstreaming PGI in Anticipatory Action and formulate related recommendations.

Our child club can play an active role in community awareness and support the most vulnerable against Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Anticipatory Action.

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