

# THE PROSPECTS AND SITUATION OF ACCESSIBILITY IN NEPAL

*The Collection Of Articles*





# **The Prospects And Situation Of Accessibility In Nepal**

## **The Collection Of Articles**

### **Published by:**

National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal (NFDN)  
In partnership with CBM

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Accessibility is a key prerequisite for the rights promotion of persons with disabilities. Accessibility enhances their general mobility, active life, public participation and independent living. It crosscuts in each of the agendas of inclusive development. This is one of the key principles of the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), as accessibility needs to be ensured while implementing all other articles and relevant provisions. Moreover, article 9 of this convention has provisions related to the accessibility to be ensured by the state. The article 9 says "To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities also access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas."

NFDN has been promoting accessibility issues from its establishment through advocacy initiatives, capacity building and awareness raising activities. The government (Council of Ministers) passed a separate guideline with minimum standards and specification in 2012 to ensure the public physical infrastructures provide accessibility to persons with disabilities. NFDN has also started implementing a project called "Accessibility for Inclusion" with the support from CBM and in close cooperation of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), to promote accessibility issues as the part of development activities.

There are various activities undertaken through the project, such as working closely with KMC for ensuring accessibility is included in the ongoing policy and practice of the local government, creating model works by ensuring accessibility standards and promoting Universal Design, providing technical training on accessibility and raising awareness about accessibility in the community.

In this course of action, NFDN has published this collection of articles on "Accessibility" with the support of architects/engineers, academicians (University professors), disaster actors, accessibility promoters and disability rights activists.

The key objectives of publishing this book are,

- A. To raise the issues of accessibility and make stakeholders and people aware on its wider importance, various dimensions and other aspects (such as social, technical, financial etc.),
- B. To contribute in fulfilling the gap of accessibility related quality literatures in the context of Nepal for the students of universities, architects, accessibility practitioners, promoters, engineers, media persons and general readers and
- C. To promote successful or good practices on accessibility through the book.

This book has covered different aspects of accessibility and universal design. It has treated accessibility as crosscutting issues for various sectors i.e. sports, disaster risk management, transport system, tourism, employment and Water and Sanitation hygiene (WASH). It has also provided a good picture of the situation of accessibility in Nepal, barriers facing by persons with disabilities due to inaccessible environment, appropriate solutions considering the socio-economic context of Nepal, its potentials and challenges as well. NFDN is therefore confident, that the book will be useful for university students, architects and Engineers (Groups/associations/individuals), disability Rights or accessibility promoters/activists (individuals, groups, organizations, I/NGOs), government and non-government agencies working in development sector and general people who are interested in accessibility issues.

The selected articles are collected through the support of various academicians, accessibility promoters and practitioners, architects and engineers and disability rights experts working in national and international level. The articles presented in this book are based on primary and/or secondary data and are creative and analytical presentation of the evidences of good practices and experience of rights holders.

All our writers from national and international background have prevalent knowledge on accessibility, disability and inclusion. Likewise, our Nepali writers also have significant exposure of their expertise in the field of accessibility and disability and most of them have tried to uncover the local issues and national practices. Our writers are also exploring potential solutions on the role of government and other stakeholders.

In a nutshell, the book speaks of the issues rampantly prevailing in the field of accessibility and disability. Most of the articles have explained the gap of policy implementation at the Federal, provincial and local level. It is the duty of the concerned personnel, government authorities and other stakeholders to compulsorily apply the guidelines in all stages of design and construction works. In regards to the public physical infrastructures and other services, majority of the authors have strongly recommended, the accessibility guidelines be made mandatory for all public infrastructures and communication services and establish such guidelines as the integral part of the building code.

It is our privilege to present the collection of articles on accessibility. We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all of those authors who contributed in the development of articles. Our special thanks goes to Ms. Gianna Catolico and Nirmal Bhandari who actively participated in proofreading and editing the content of articles. Our debt is beyond the reckoning to Mr. Manish Prasai, Admin Manager and Mr. Bimal Paudel, Program coordinator of NFDN, whose tireless efforts have shaped the book in its final form. We are equally thankful to the board members and staff of NFDN and CBM Nepal country office for their insightful comments/inputs and persistent support.

## MESSAGE FROM CBM

I am hopeful this publication will be a major source of knowledge from academic perspective to promote accessibility in Nepal. I'd like to congratulate the National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal and its contributors who gave life to this publication.

Despite disability rights activists and disable people organizations working and advocating for long, accessibility is still new to Nepal. Accessibility is often misunderstood as limiting it to only persons with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to understand that accessibility has a very broad scope to address the needs and requirements of people with diverse abilities and not just disabilities.

The task that NFDN in partnership with CBM has done by producing this strong academic resource compiling different articles in accessibility under the Accessibility for Inclusion Project is commendable. Accessibility is a shared venture of multi-stakeholders. Therefore, I fully believe that this resource will contribute significantly to widen the horizon of accessibility in Nepal to make the right real.

.....  
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**Sagar Prasai** is Employment Project coordinator of National Federation of the Disabled - Nepal. He has been working here for 4 years. Before that, he had experience of working in other national and international NGOs. He is also a disability rights activist and is actively involved in various campaigns for the promotions of rights of persons with disabilities in Nepal for past several years. Sagar is Physics Graduate and is also an IT enthusiast. He also actively writes blogs and articles on social media sites.

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# INCLUSIVE TOURISM IN NEPAL: CHALLENGING THE ABLED BODY / DISABLED BODY AND ACCESSIBLE / INACCESSIBLE BINARIES

McIntyre, Emily<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT:

The following research paper applies disability rights and inclusive design for accessible tourism in Nepal. The research is particularly topical because a new act governing disability rights was passed in Nepal in late 2017. Field work and observation in Nepal included interviews of 10 service providers in the tourism industry, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and disabled people's organizations (DPO). The findings suggest that spaces were either inaccessible or inequitably available to not only people with disabilities, but also other minority groups such as women or individuals from a certain caste. Service providers were willing to become more inclusive, but felt that structural barriers and a general lack of awareness about disability rights hindered accessible services. This study suggests future areas of research, including better understanding the experiences in Nepal of tourists with disabilities, employment numbers of individuals from different minority groups, and reporting on the technical nuances of space.

**Key words:** Nepal; tourism; disability; accessibility; inclusive design

## INTRODUCTION

Accessible tourism has not been defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2016) because the concept is evolving. Among its different synonyms are inclusive tourism and universal tourism. Darcy & Dickson, (2009, p. 34) define accessible tourism as follows:

"Accessible tourism enables people with access requirements, including

mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition is inclusive of all people, including those travelling with children in Prams, people with disabilities and seniors".

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This article takes the position that accessible and inaccessible tourism should not be considered as binary alternatives, nor should they be measured solely by focusing on disabilities. Inclusive tourism can build off inclusive design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference (Inclusive Design Research Centre, 2017); aims to orchestrate inclusive experiences with many diverse perspectives (Pullin, Treviranus, Patel, & Higginbotham, 2017); and additionally is a holistic measure of several variables such as but not limited to: physical spaces, the environment, attitudinal spaces, technology, employment, social power, social and economic benefits, infrastructure and transportation, safety and government support that can create varying levels of or hinder access.

To consider inclusive tourism for people with disabilities in Nepal, understanding structural and systemic issues, power dynamics and how spaces are disabling may be more effective than focusing on a disability at the individual level. The barriers to accessible tourism presented in this study were: infrastructure and transportation, lack of employment for people with disabilities outside of DPOs, the attitudes and political incorrectness of society and a lack of government support

## **METHODOLOGY**

Data was collected through a combination of 10 semi-structured interviews, an in-depth case study, field notes and an observational journal. The research included site visits to hotels with engineers and an architect. Participant voices were heard, and not deemed insignificant, but rather recognized for their complexity (Treviranus, 2014; Treviranus 2015). In disability research, solely relying on statistics is not reliable as there is no homogenous sample group that is large enough to reach statistical significance given the variability variety of people with disabilities (Treviranus, 2014). A small sample size allowed for thick descriptions (Van Manen, M., 1991) of stories that are reflective of the people in Nepal. Individual respondents are anonymized. Service providers resided in Kathmandu or Bokhara were identified through an internet search, snowball sampling, and time spent approaching businesses or organizations. Codes were created using NVivo as a tool for analysis and then, were placed into related clusters and made into themes that were refined.

## **THE NEW DISABILITIES ACT IN NEPAL**

A new disability rights bill, The Act regarding rights of persons with disability 2074, was enacted in Nepal very recently: passed by the legislature on August 6, 2017 and enacted by the President on October 18th, 2017 (National Federation of

Disabled-Nepal, 2017) Under the new Act, the definition of disability is:

"A) "Disabled persons with disability" means a person with disabilities who cannot afford life without having a property or a family member or guardian, or living independently.

B) "Persons with disability" means a person who is impaired to the physical and mental or long-term disability, due to physical restrictions or existing obstacles, to be intermediate and effectively interrupted in social life."

The Act defined accessible as follows: "Accessible" means for manually disadvantaged people to live independently and to enable them to be fully involved in every aspect of life and the use of man-made physical infrastructure, the means of transportation, information and communication equipment and the technology to be used without the service and convenience of the public service."

In theory, this ought to be a groundbreaking time for disability rights in Nepal and could ultimately positively affect linkages in the tourism industry, but many respondents seemed skeptical about how effective the new Act will be. Ayush<sup>2</sup>, who works at a DPO, observed: "Nepal is good about passing the law and signing the treaties, but very bad about implementing and enforcing and monitoring them so unless there

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2 Fake names have been used in this article to ensure anonymity

is a monitoring mechanism, then it would not be as effective as it should be"

Dave, a Founder of an NGO, attributed barriers in government to "structural issues, that's why Nepal's poor, it's not resources, its bad management sadly." These barriers make Dave unable to hold his breath waiting for a "political revolution around stimulating the rights of the persons with disabilities". He thinks that it will remain a very difficult country for people with disabilities.

Dipesh, an individual who has had to access the system and advocates at the DPO level, appreciated that the new act is mostly "based on the rights-based approach rather than the pity-based approach", but remains a skeptic. Dipesh's skepticism is rooted in the belief that the "government makes so many nice laws in so many issues, but, until and unless the people with disabilities and DPOs take a leading role, I think it is very hard to implement in reality. This is much stronger than the government itself".

Cam, a Guide in adventure tourism, believes that the new Act will improve understanding of disability rights more, but its effectiveness will depend on how it is applied: "I mean, if they just apply it and don't educate people, studies are in that doesn't work, kind of like how prohibition doesn't work, it's not just implemented and then expect people to understand it, they will just go against it".



## LACK OF ACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Respondents repeatedly identified lack of infrastructure as a problem. In turn, the Nepal Economic Forum (2017) has blamed unsatisfactory implementation of infrastructure projects on unstable governments and continuous political interference. Sraddha, a Manager at a hotel who provides guests with 5-star travel services stated that “the main [limitation to accessibility] is the roads, it’s not properly managed” and that better infrastructure needs to be a priority.

Ayush experiences barriers to transportation daily. “I cannot use a bus even today, transportation is also very expensive because we have to get a taxi,” he stated. Even when a bus is “accessible”, it only means that: “A bus driver gets off the bus to get along wooden plank...but then there’s a lot of traffic jams so pulling that out and pushing someone in a wheelchair will take a long time so what they do is normally they would just carry the wheelchair, the bus helper and driver will come down and some other passengers will come down and just pick up the wheelchair, so it is not accessible”.

Owning your own accessible vehicle or scooter may also be costly, and the accommodations required may not be available.

Ayush is also well-traveled and says that his travel experiences have created a larger interest in accessible tourism spaces:

“It made me feel really independent... there are very few places here where I can go independently, but in [names place] I could do a lot of things, like watch movies by myself, cook, laundry and small things which were very accessible and I found that accessibility it will make people independent and will have a larger impact on their competence, so after that... I have done some sports called Ultra light, in a small aircraft and it takes you right near the mountains also, it’s a bit expensive but I did that also. And then I thought, you know, if I did that and felt good every person with disability would feel the same if the tourism sector was accessible. And not only Pokhara and Kathmandu, small places here like cafes and hotels because a lot of it in Nepal when you talk about accessible, not only 5 stars like big hotels have accessible facilities and not everybody can afford it... we have also recognized private life, right to recreation, becoming independent, also as main rights.”

The Ayush’s statement highlights the importance of both being able to enjoy the rapture in experience, but also the simple everydayness of activities.

Dipesh, has also traveled abroad, but has limited travel experiences in Nepal, as he found that travel in Nepal compromised his independence:

"I have traveled abroad, many times rather than in Nepal because transportation is one of the biggest problems because I cannot travel a long distance with my bike and I must have to use the assistance when I go outside Kathmandu, because most of the places are not accessible".

Dipesh spoke passionately about wanting to visit his own country and about his willingness to "accommodate as badly as [he] can in every place and [that he] loves the adventurous". He laconically observed, "I have also experienced traveling using the public bus as well...which is totally inaccessible for me. I can crawl a little bit." His passion for traveling overcame even these indignities. While some individuals are still willing to travel even in such circumstances, many individuals would not want to adapt to inaccessible environments.

## **INCLUSIVE TOURISM IN NEPAL**

Nepal is on the inaccessible to accessible spectrum, which cannot be measured as a binary, as there are so many variables to consider, some harder to objectify such as attitudes. Inclusive tourism in Nepal is a limited phenomenon at present, if measured against the accessibility standards used in the global north. An individual with a disability would have to be aware that travel experience in Nepal may be messy, and, at times, lack comfort and the quality of service that they may be used to. Burnett & Baker (2001)

found that 66.3% of participants with mobility impairments would travel more if they felt more comfortable and welcome in lodging and 71.8% of people would travel more if they could find a room to accommodate their needs. Limbu narrows in on hotel infrastructure and notes:

"They claim to have as a ramp, actually in most the places are built for the luggage, so that is 45 degrees or 60 degrees, sometimes which is not for independent movement of the traveler who is on an electric or manual wheelchair. So, there has been gaps... they don't realize what kind of effect or impact it does to the traveler, and that is can ruin the whole experience of the trip because of the wrong kind of hotel or the physical facilities. They never expected, in other words, that makes a big dent to the destination".

From making several visits to hotel sites, on several occasions, ramps were temporarily placed to accommodate an individual, but were not kept there which appeared to be for aesthetic reasons.

Limbu attempts to respond to service gaps by informing tourists so that the "delivery and expectation gap would be minimized".

## **INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT**

Inclusive tourism requires inclusive employment. None of the five tourism operators interviewed in this study have ever employed individuals with disabilities. Limbu stated he had an interest in employing people with disabilities,

“Yes... that is very much on the cards. But what we don’t want let me tell you is not out of sympathy, because we know that will not sustain, even the person who comes in or works for us should have a sense of achievement, a sense of being, a sense of importance right. So, the right job fit match is something we are striving for. We thought okay the mobility impaired staff, but I think we can start with vision or low vision and then hard of hearing and eventually as you’ve seen this building is an old one and the other one has elevator but this we don’t...So, once we address to that perhaps we can have but before waiting, turning it into wheelchair accessible office, we are in I think by next year we should have some staff who have some sort of disabilities.”

Limbu made some compelling points about shattering models about hiring people with disabilities out of sympathy or merely to meet a disabled quota in the workplace. He understands the importance of the right job fit for both parties, and is looking for a certain set of skills in the workplace. On the other hand, a disability should not be handpicked

in advance, as sometimes visible disabilities seem to be of more interest than someone who may have an invisible disability. However, there is recognition that inaccessible office spaces would need retrofits to be accessible for wheelchair users such as in Limbu’s office.

One DPO had a staff member with a disability, but operated out of an inaccessible building, Benny stated, “...Our office is actually not accessible. It’s a big problem, it’s not accessible.... Our colleague (name name)...so he has some difficulties to climb up, so something that we know and we are trying to find the right place but it’s also about finding”.

## **RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

Inclusive spaces also need to be tailored to other groups that may not face equality in society. Dhungana (2006, p. 134) stated that women in Nepal are treated as inferior, and “are never expected to receive equal opportunities that are available to men.” While women had a strong representation in the employment sphere in this study, there were far fewer women in management positions and in adventure and sporting based job positions such as guides.

Cam speculated why women are not hired at his company:

“From what I’ve gathered from

information from other guides I've haven't seen any female Nepali raft guides and I think that's a cultural thing considering women's rights is slowly coming along here..."

Cam postulated that guiding was better suited to a male body:

"With the international guides, there's quite a strong amount of female international guides, but mostly male guides. It is quite a physically enduring sport so you do need the strength, it would be a bit tough. But the girls that get out there are quite fit".

If a woman is also a persons with disability, the bias against her is exacerbated. Dhungana (2006) call this "double discrimination". To extrapolate on this, worse yet is the situation of a woman with a disability from a certain caste who faces triple discrimination.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Nepal, at present, is partially inclusive only for the adventurous and those willing to have misadventures and a lack of comforts available in the global north.

However, accessible tourism should be defined uniquely in each country, as resources vary widely. It is not fair to assume that countries with little government support, environmental disasters and complicated terrain will be equal to others in terms of accessibility standards. Further, credit needs to be given where it is warranted. There is no point in asking

communities to meet impossible standards with the resources available as that could potentially deter them from practices and feasible accessibility initiatives.

Countries with inaccessible environments, or societies with limited understanding of disability rights, that are working to be included, should not immediately be deemed as inaccessible, but rather, recognized on a scale of inclusivity. There are parallels between challenging the abled bodied/disabled body binary and the inaccessible/accessible tourism binary and both need to be unpacked. Countries, tourism, and tourists need to be recognized for their unique and diverse circumstances.

International disability rights and inclusive spaces will be achieved progressively and not necessarily immediately (Hill & Blanck, 2009). Tourism stakeholders should challenge the disabled/nondisabled binary in decision making. One recommendation is to provide a comprehensive tourism specific sensitivity training package, spearheaded by individuals with a range of disabilities. Another recommendation is to expand employment opportunities beyond the able-bodied individual, and make tourist activities more affordable for locals. In endeavoring to deconstruct and redefine tourism spaces, it is not sufficient to only consider the perspective and experience of the international client.

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# ACCESS TO TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN KATHMANDU

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## ABSTRACT:

This article analyzes the current scenario regarding access to transport services for person with disability (PWD) in Kathmandu Valley. It describes the problems faced by people with disability in access to transportation and highlights the gaps between available policies and their implementation. Nepal has introduced several laws, policies and guidelines, including the recently promulgated People with Disability's Rights Act, 2017, which establishes the rights for persons with disabilities, include the right to mobility and the right to access all public facilities. Nepal has also signed international conventions related to persons with disabilities which require the state to provide adequate facilities for universal access. However, in spite of a few initiatives, including the recently introduced disable-friendly buses by Sajha Yatayat which have space and ramps for wheelchairs, Nepal still has a long way to go make universal access a reality and ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy their constitutional rights. This journey could start by the government immediately formulating and enforcing Urban Street Standards with universal designs which are applicable for all citizens.

**Key words:** transport services; disability; accessibility.

## INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities are a part of our society and they have rights just as other citizens. All of us will be temporarily or permanently disabled at some point in life, and those of us who survive until old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning. Furthermore, most people have family members or friends who are temporarily or

partially impaired in some way or another who may need assistance. Access to transport infrastructure and services is important for employment, education, healthcare, and social and recreational activities for all. In the absence of access to transportation, persons with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from essential services and social interaction.

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Therefore, it is essential that our societies are sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities and our cities are designed to ensure that their right to transportation and access to public spaces and services are not hindered in any way. In other words, cities need to be designed for universal accessibility.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over a billion people, or one in seven people or 15 percent of the global population, has some form of disability. The WHO further states that the percentage of persons with disabilities are increasing globally due to aging population and increases in chronic health conditions, among other causes. (WHO, 2017).

The official figures for the number of people with disability in Nepal is lesser than what WHO estimates, which may be because many people with some form of disability have not been identified as persons with disabilities. According to the 2011 Census, 1.94 percent of the total population of Nepal has some kind of disability. Although this estimate is much higher than the previous census from 2001, when the prevalence of persons with disabilities was estimated to be only 0.46 percent, it is much lower than the Nepal Living Standards Survey 2010-2011, which estimated that 3.6 percent of the population has some form of disability. The Central Bureau of Statistics agrees that the quality of census data on persons with disabilities needs to be improved (Malla, 2012) and representatives of

organizations working with persons with disabilities claim that the number of people with disabilities in the country is higher than the official records of the government (Lamsal, 2017).

According to the 2011 census, the number of people with disability in Nepal was found to be highest in Kathmandu district with 17,122 people, although in terms of percentage of the total population it was the lowest at 0.98 percent. In Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, 1.05 percent of the total population was found to have some kind of disability. In total, the three districts have over 25,000 people with disabilities. Although this is probably an underestimate, it is still a significant number and their needs to be addressed. Furthermore, many people are temporarily disabled, either because of illness or old age, which causes difficulties in their functioning.

## **MOBILITY NEEDS AND RELATED DIFFICULTIES FACED BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Persons with disabilities, like other citizens, need to access public facilities such as schools, hospitals, markets, workplaces, and entertainment centers. The survey was conducted by Clean Energy Nepal for this paper among 84 people with disabilities in Kathmandu about mobility needs and problems faced regarding transportation in Kathmandu. Majority (77 percent) of

the respondents of the questionnaire survey which included 50 wheelchair users, 27 persons with visually-impairment and seven persons with hearing-impairment, said that they had to travel outside their house at least once a day for various reasons and most of them either walked/used wheelchair or used public transportation for their travel needs (Figure 1). Walking/wheelchair was most commonly used for going to the market followed by going to school or workplace. Public transport was commonly used for visiting friends and relatives or places of worship or recreation. Only five of the 84 people surveyed said that they used car or taxi, while 10 said that they used disabled-friendly scooters with four wheels.

Figure 1 Frequency of travel outside home

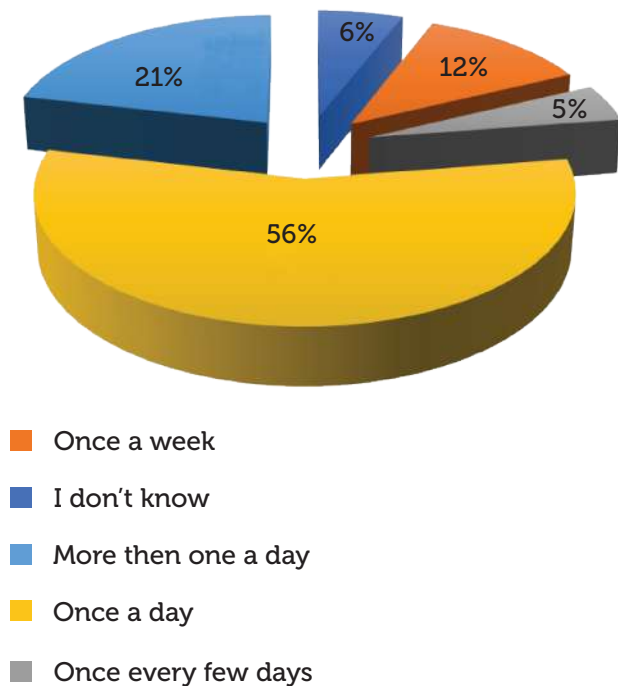
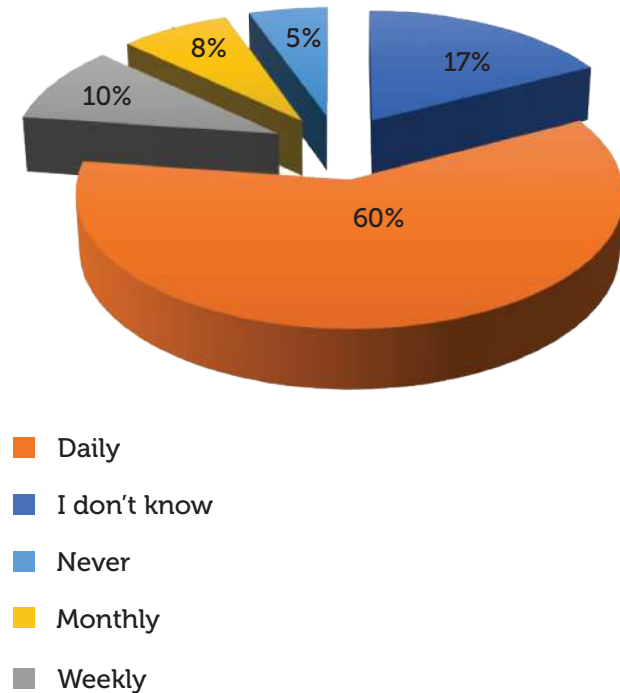


Figure 2 Availability of transport seen as a problem



During the survey, 60 percent of the respondents said that they faced difficulties related to access to transportation on a daily basis (Figure 2). This clearly demonstrates the need for disabled-friendly transport facilities and services in Kathmandu. The respondents of the survey also mentioned the importance and need for convenient buses which they can board and get off easily, as well as bus stops with shelters. While 93 percent said that ease of getting on and off the buses was important or very important only 17 percent of the respondents said they were satisfied with this service. Equally important is the ease to cross the streets and access public transportation. While 92 percent of the respondents said that safety while crossing the street is important or very important, only 7 percent felt safe or mentioned that they were satisfied with the current condition of street crossings.



Besides the facilities, the attitudes and behavior of drivers, conductors, and other passengers of public transport were also found to be important for persons with disabilities. Almost all the respondents felt that the drivers and conductors of public transport vehicles need to be friendly and courteous and there should be no harassment. However, compared to the satisfaction level of facilities, more respondents said that they were satisfied with the behavior of the public transport vehicle staff as 52 percent said that they were satisfied with the behavior of drivers and conductors.

Another important need for people with disabilities is access to information regarding transportation systems. Over 51 percent of the respondents felt that the availability of reliable information was very important and 42 percent said it was important for them. However, only 19 percent of the respondents felt satisfied without the access to information about the transportation system and services in Kathmandu.

Many studies have shown that mobility can be a serious challenge for persons with disabilities as they face different types of obstacles and difficulties on the streets or public transport systems. The nature and extent of these difficulties vary according to the type of disability (IbGM, n.d.). People who are unable to walk usually use wheelchairs, but wheelchair users often face several obstacles on the road and public transport facilities. On the road,

wheelchair users find it difficult to negotiate curbs, stairs, steep slopes, long road gradients, narrow paths and uneven road surface with potholes. Similar to public transport vehicles, obstacles for wheelchair users include narrow entrance, steps, and insufficient space to accommodate wheelchairs. Furthermore, public transport services need to have accessible stops, counters, and information. Some of these difficulties can be overcome with assistance, but the need for assistance should be avoided if possible to promote self-determined life.

People those face mobility challenges may not need wheelchairs but they usually require a walking aid such as crutches or artificial leg. They face difficulties in crossing roads with high traffic volume and in overcrowded places. Because they may require putting in a lot of effort to walk, they often move slowly and may get tired more quickly thus requiring resting spots. Unlike wheelchair users, visually impaired people may not face physical challenges in overcoming steps and narrow passages, but they have difficulties in orientation. Like people with physical disabilities, visually-impaired people also face difficulties in crossing streets and crowded places.

People with cognitive and mental impairment often face many difficulties on the street and in public transport as they are generally not comfortable in unfamiliar environments and they adapt slower to strange situations. They may also

suffer from orientation, concentration and memory disorders and some people with mental impairment often suffer from anxiety and panic attacks that may result in loss of control. People with Hearing impairment face difficulties in communication on the street and public vehicles, but physical obstruction of the streets or public transport vehicles may not cause major difficulties.

## **POLICIES AND LEGISLATION RELATED TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS**

Over the years, Nepal has introduced several laws, policies, and guidelines establish the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to access transportation facilities. Initially, the Disabled Protection and Welfare Act, 1982 and its regulations which only came 12 years later in 1994, looked at persons with disabilities through a welfare lens, but more recent policies and legislation look at disability from a human rights perspective.

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has guaranteed all citizens, including persons with disabilities, fundamental human rights, including the right to live with self-respect and access all public services and facilities. In addition, Section 4 of the Constitution, which lists the State's directive principles, policies, and responsibilities, has a provision of safe, well managed and disabled-friendly transportation sector to ensure easy and equitable

access to transportation services for all citizens.

The recently promulgated People with Disability's Rights Act, 2017 further establishes the rights for persons with disabilities, include the right to mobility and the right to access all public facilities.

Nepal has also signed international conventions related to persons with disabilities which require the state to provide adequate facilities for universal access. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which Nepal has signed and ratified in 2010, has a provision on Accessibility which states (UN, 2006):

"To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas." The Convention further states that these measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:

Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical

facilities, and workplaces;

Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.”

Similarly, Article 20 of the Convention, which relates to personal mobility, states that Parties shall take effective measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities, including by:

Facilitating the personal mobility of persons with disabilities in the manner and at the time of their choice, and at affordable cost;

Facilitating access by persons with disabilities to quality mobility aids, devices, assistive technologies and forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including by making them available at affordable cost;

Providing training in mobility skills to persons with disabilities and to specialist staff working with persons with disabilities;

Encouraging entities that produce mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies to take into account all aspects of mobility for persons with disabilities.

In order to implement the convention, governments and civil society members in the Asia Pacific Region agreed on the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for a guiding framework for disability-inclusive development in the Asia Pacific

region in 2012. The strategy has 10 goals 27 aligned targets and 62 corresponding indicators. Goal 3 of the Incheon Strategy is to “Enhance access to the physical environment, public transport, knowledge, information, and communication,” (UNESCAP, 2017).

Nepal has also signed the Sustainable Development Goals, which with its overarching objective of “leaving no one behind” addresses the needs of persons with disabilities is essential for meeting all the goals. While many of the goals can be linked to persons with disabilities, Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities specifically deal with universal access. Two of the 10 targets within Goal 11, specifically mention persons with disabilities. SDG target 11.2 is to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of persons in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons by 2030. Similarly, SDG target 11.7 is to provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green public spaces, especially for women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities. Nepal will need to make significant investments in policies and public infrastructure in order to meet these targets of universal access. A recent review of progress on SDGs by the National Planning Commission does not include the review of Goal 11 (NPC, 2017).

## **GAP BETWEEN POLICY FRAMEWORK AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Although Nepal has some policies and legislation related to access to transport services for persons with disabilities, implementation remains weak. This is mainly because the policies have not been followed up by plans and investments and efforts have not been made to enforce the legal provisions.

The Five Year Strategic Plan for Road, Rail, and Transport Sector (2073-2078) recently prepared by the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport mentions that in urban areas all roads will be made pedestrian and disable friendly. But the Plan does not provide any further details on how this will be done or by when.

Design and construction of roads and other mobility related infrastructure in a country is normally governed by the Road Standards or Street Design Guidelines of that country. However, in the case of Nepal, the Nepal Road Standards, 2027 (NRS) mentions that it shall apply only for Strategic Roads in rural areas which are normally national highways, and for non-strategic (local Roads) and urban roads separate standards shall be considered. But, Nepal does not yet have any standards or guidelines for local or urban roads. Therefore, there are no standards or guidelines which can or should be used in designing urban and local roads. However, the NRS does have a few provisions for urban streets. For example, in the case

of footpaths in cities, it says, "Width of the footpath depends on the volume of anticipated pedestrian traffic. But a minimum width of 1.5 m is required." However, it should be noted that the pavement width of 1.5 m is not sufficient for two wheelchairs to pass one another. For this, a minimum of 1.8 m would be required.

Similarly, the NRS also mentions that "all overpass or underpass pedestrian crossings should be provided with a ramp for wheelchairs or other alternative measures (e.g. lifts) for comfortable movement of people with disabilities." It also mentions that the maximum grade on the ramps should not be steeper than 8 percent. However, the Guidelines for Access to Physical Facilities and Information for People with Disabilities, 2069, which was approved by the government in 2013 mentions that ramps should have a slope of 1:15, which is 6.7 percent (MoWCSW, 2012). These guidelines, which are not mandatory, have detailed specifications for wheelchair ramps, parking spaces, and other facilities. This together with other international standards can be used to upgrade the Nepal Road Standards or prepare an Urban Roads Standards to ensure persons with disabilities' right to access transportation services.

Different countries have introduced legislation and standards to ensure universal access to transport. In the US, The Department of Justice (DOJ) revised the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990 (ADA) in 2010 and published Standards for Accessible Design. It

has also compiled Guidance for the 2010 standards and many cities have prepared manuals based on these standards. For example, the Street Design Manual of New York City states that “Projects should meet all applicable federal, state, and or local accessibility standards for public rights-of-way, including minimum clear sidewalk widths, inclusion of ADA-compliant pedestrian ramps, and provision of accessible waiting and boarding areas at transit stops.” It also states that “Sidewalks must conform to ADA requirements for minimum clear path width and provision of spaces where wheelchair users can pass one another or turn around; beyond the ADA minimum, provide an unobstructed clear path of 8 feet or one-half the sidewalk width, whichever is greater (NYCDOT, 2009).”

In India, Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (Sec 44) recommends guidelines for persons with disabilities. In this context, different cities have introduced guidelines to promote universal accessibility. For example, one of the goals of Delhi Street Design Guidelines is to ensure universal accessibility and amenities for all street users by following universal accessibility design standards to make public streets and crosswalks fully navigable by the persons with physical disability. It has a section on Universal accessibility which has details for curb ramps, road crossings, tactile paving, auditory signals and accessible infrastructure (DDA, 2010). Similarly, Pune’s Urban Street Design Guidelines has a dedicated chapter

on Universal Accessibility and Disable Friendly Design (PMC, 2016). These guidelines can be useful for Nepali cities to develop their own standards and guidelines.

The gap between policy and practice is, however, not unique to Nepal. A survey of 114 countries done by the UN in 2005 found that while many had policies on accessibility, they had not made significant progress in implementing these policies. Among the surveyed countries, 54 percent reported that they did not have accessibility standards for outdoor environments and streets, 43 percent had none for public buildings, and 44 percent did not have them in schools, health facilities, and other public service buildings. Furthermore, 65 percent had not started any educational programs, and 58 percent had not allocated any financial resources to promote universal accessibility. Similarly, although 44 percent of the country had a government body responsible for monitoring accessibility for people with disabilities, the number of countries with ombudsmen, arbitration councils, or committees of independent experts were very low (South-North Centre for Dialogue and Development, 2006).

Experiences from other countries indicate that accessibility is more easily achievable incrementally in all stages. Initial efforts should aim to build awareness and a “culture of accessibility.” Once the concept of accessibility has become ingrained or institutionalized, it will become

easier to raise standards and attain a higher level of universal design. Recently, the community in Jorpati area of Kathmandu had initiated a small project to make 100 meter stretch of the main road in Jorpati disabled-friendly (CEN, 2013). Although this project was not completely successful in constructing the street as per design, it has raised awareness and demonstrated how it is possible to make existing streets disabled-friendly with little investment.

## CASE STUDY

### **KHAGENDRA ACCESSIBLE ROAD PROJECT IN JORPATI, KATHMANDU**

As a large number of persons with disabilities live in the Jorpati area of Kathmandu, the local community in collaboration with Khagendra New Life Center and Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Center initiated the Khagendra Accessible Road project to demonstrate an access road in 2011. They raised funds locally and designed a 100-meter stretch of a disability-friendly road with accessible sidewalks and other facilities. They also managed to convince the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport to partly invest in the project and implement it. This project was expected to benefit more than five thousand people with disabilities. The total estimated cost for the project was Rs. 1.8 million. The community rose about Rs. 0.6 million locally and handed it to the Department of Roads for construction. However, the contractor hired by the Department did not do a very good job. Although today the road is far from ideal, local persons with disabilities say that it is still a good start and many use this stretch on a daily basis for their shopping and other purposes.

Recently, Sajha Yatayat has introduced a few disabled-friendly buses in Kathmandu which are equipped with ramps and the doors and the gangways are wide enough for wheelchairs. The buses also have space for parking and strapping wheelchairs. This is a good initiative which can be a good example for other public transport operators as well. In addition, this may also encourage the government to make the bus stops and roads disabled-friendly as well.

## WAY AHEAD

While Nepal has made some progress in formulating policies and legislation related to access to transportation for people with disabilities, it still has a long way to go make universal access a reality and ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy their constitutional rights. This journey can start by taking the following initial steps:

As Nepal is a rapidly urbanizing country, the government's Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and transport needs to immediately formulate and enforce Urban Street Standards with universal designs which are applicable to all citizens.

All stakeholders, particularly related government and municipal officials, engineers and contractors need to be trained on Universal Design of streets and public facilities.

Government should work in partnership with local governments, public transport operators and local communities to make major streets and public transport systems in cities disable-friendly.

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# ACCESSIBILITY IN SPORTS: A STEP TO INCLUSIVENESS

## HOW SPORTS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO MAKE NEPAL MORE DISABLE FRIENDLY AND DIVERSE

Pawan Ghimire<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT:

Sport is the integral part of all human being disregarding their caste, ethnicity, age, sex, and physical status. It has always stood as an effective tool for social harmony, conflict resolution, and enhancement of the physical and mental well-being of individuals. When a player happens to be a person with disability, its importance is doubled, as sport bears a power to rehabilitate, empower, corrects/ his mobility skills and cure many of his physical disorders. However, access of persons with disabilities in sports activities in the context of Nepal is relatively low due to lack of accessible sports facilities such as playfield and equipment. Accessible sports, also coined as inclusive sports, are fundamental to inclusion as it allows both and people with and without disabilities to use the same facilities. Nevertheless, some of the modification that is needed to adjust persons with disabilities rather supports athletes persons without disabilities as well. When services and facilities are being built up, their conceptualization, planning, and construction are exclusively focused on athletes without disabilities; they do not keep into account the special needs of persons with disabilities. However, physical barriers always limit a certain group of people like people with disabilities from using the services. In fact, as rightful citizens of the same society, it is the right of all persons with disabilities to use all the available services with full enjoyment, independence, and dignity. Little progress has been observed in promoting accessible sports like cricket, basketball, football, Boccia, athletics, and swimming.

**Key words;** Accessibility in sports, inclusiveness, disability friendly.

### INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of disability as a human rights issue, accessibility has been a major topic of discourse, chiefly on whether the freedom and independence of persons with

disabilities can be ensured or not. Its emergence as a human rights topic plays a vital role in creating an inclusive society where persons with and without disabilities enjoy every

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facility without any havoc in mind and any obstacles to overcome. Simply, accessibility is a fundament of disability-inclusive development and also a tool for community-based inclusive development. Out of the several aspects where accessibility has been considered, sports are certainly an important one. The Constitution of Nepal guarantees sports as the right of all and Article 30 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) quotes access to sports as the rights of persons with disabilities. Sports has been considered as one of the important component as it has the power to rehabilitate, empower, build a sense of leadership, and enhance physical and mental robustness.

It does bear the caliber to correct a number of physical disorders, curb anxiety and depression, and provide a common platform to find and raise the people's voice for such an important issue such as social inclusion. Thus, accessible sports, also known as an inclusive sports, is considered as one of the important factors of disability mainstreaming as it provides an conducive environment for people with disabilities to use the same services and facilities athletes without disabilities use. However, this might need certain modification in infrastructures and technologies to make it adaptable. Hence, accessible sports are also known as adaptive sports. Through sports, persons without disabilities interact with persons with disabilities in a positive context, forcing them to reshape

assumptions about what persons with disabilities can and cannot do<sup>5</sup>

When services or facilities are being made, the needs of persons with disabilities are not considered or fully taken into account. Different physical and technological barriers prohibit a certain group of people like people with disabilities to freely access these sports facilities. It has to be taken into consideration that anything that is suitable for persons with disabilities is also suitable for others as well. Basketball courts, cricket grounds, and table tennis venues should be modified for the use of athletes with disabilities. Athletes with and without disabilities to play together can create a mutual understanding between them, understand the hidden potential of persons with disabilities, and ultimately aid in establishing an inclusive society where people with and without disabilities live a harmonious life sharing the common benefits (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005).

## **CURRENT SITUATION OF ACCESSIBLE SPORTS**

Since the primitive era, people with disabilities have been facing many obstacles in achieving equality. Discriminatory social practices have resulted in the exclusion of people with disabilities face at all levels from the family to the highest official positions. For years together the discrimination in law and practice

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5 (United States Access Board, <https://www.access-board.gov/>)

were justified on the grounds that people with disabilities are different from general people and differed in physical, mental and psychological aspirations, the result of the formal approach to understanding equality (Hilary, 2008). Certain amendments and policies have been successful in uplifting the status of people with disabilities. Yet, there haven't been substantial changes in the lives of athletes with disabilities as accessible spots could neither come under the national priority and not under the priority of persons with disabilities themselves. Unless more people with disabilities are encouraged and a favorable ambiance is created to welcome youths to the playfield, it will be difficult to create a common habit among them to join a sport. Indeed, it is always very difficult to persuade and convince them to join a practice at the beginning.

The total annual budget allocated by the Ministry for Youth and Sports for the fiscal year 2017 to 2018 depicts that government investment for non-disabled athletes is twenty-five Rupees whereas only two Rupees fall under the share of each disabled athlete (Nepal Spinal Cord Injury Sports Association, 2016). Hence, in this adverse situation, it is obvious for accessible sports to remain hidden from the society and its importance not known to many.

With the promulgation of the New Constitution of Federal Nepal in 2015 and Disability Rights Act in 2017, person with disabilities have been successful in gaining many of

their political, social, and economic rights. The country has been at least nominally more inclusive and the government has been more cognizant of the rights of indigenous or disadvantaged groups. But the same positive change does not apply to persons with disabilities, especially those living under societal suppression and underestimation.

Although the government and other stakeholders are positive towards health and education, circumstances reveal the clear apathy of these institutions in promoting accessible sports. It seems like disability sports are almost in a same place when it was started forty years ago. One of the major causes of its setback is its behavioral and policy accessibility. According to population census of 2011, the disability population of Nepal is found to be 1.94 percent out of which almost 50 percent is being occupied by the population of youths and children who can be involved in the sports and recreational activities (CBS, 2011).

According to the Department of Education, there are 89 inclusive schools for the visually-impaired and four schools catering to students with hearing impairments. However, data on the number of special schools and number of children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools are unavailable. Not more than ten percent of these schools have accessible facilities that can encourage students with disabilities to the playfield. Even teachers do not encourage students with

disabilities to play as they do not have knowledge on disability sports. The issue is that they are not well aware and sensitive about disability issues and cannot imagine or understand the importance of having accessible infrastructure in their schools.

As a result, while students without disabilities play, students with disabilities either mingle with their classmates or sing along. The negative attitude and apathy of teachers and school management towards promoting accessible sports have contributed in isolating non-disabled students for disabled students. A survey by the Cricket Association of the Blind (CAB) (2011) also depicted that in a school which has locked many of the sports materials in a store do not have a single sport material for their blind students. The school management must understand that if they don't create a conducive atmosphere for students with and without disabilities, their educational mission can never reach to the climax.

Accessibility is one of the greatest challenges that athletes with disabilities face in playing their preferred sports. Though 22 organizations have been registered as non-government organizations (NGO) to develop disability sports, but not more than five are active at the present day context. Sports like basketball, blind cricket, deaf cricket, swimming, para-taekwondo, Boccia, and disability-friendly table tennis are being organized but other sports are still struggling to survive. This is

mainly because of lack of accessible playfield and equipment. No any accessible sports materials have been produced in Nepal so far. These organizations do not have their own playfield and as they have to use other facilities to continue their activities, they have been interacting with the concerned authorities to make the venues accessible. Nepal Para-Table Tennis Association has been successful in making accessible table tennis hall at the Nepal Disabled Association, the house owner of spinal cord injuries has let them make their office accessible, some of the swimming pools have ramps and players can have their access to cricket grounds in Pulchowk and Kirtipur.

After the destruction of DasarathRangasala Stadium in 2015, the availability of accessible playfields rose as a crucial issue. On the other hand, this has also given an opportunity for the Government to construct accessible and disabled-friendly infrastructures as guided by the accessibility guidelines of 2013 which has made all public venues and infrastructures to be accessible (i.e. to be used by all disregarding their age, sex, and physical status (Government of Nepal, 2013). Despite efforts, athletes with disabilities are reluctant to use some of the accessible sports venues, like the swimming pool in Satdobato ANFA Complex, two cricket grounds in Pulchowk and Kirtipur, and a table tennis hall in Lainchour. Though they seem to be accessible, they do not have other accessible features like accessible

bathrooms and kitchen. Moreover, the lack of accessible features hit women with disabilities more as they often have to use restrooms for sanitary purposes. Availability of coaches with knowledge of sign language, installation of light system, display of information on the screen, information in braille and audio formats, and mandatory safety features is what cannot be experienced in these public sports venues. The absence of these integral features has resulted in poor performances of athletes with disabilities in international events.

Nepal doesn't have specific laws for accessible sports including sports for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, access to sports and recreational activities by persons with disabilities have been guaranteed by several legal instruments and compacts such as UNCRPD, Sustainable Development Goals, Incheon Strategies, Disabled Protection and Welfare Act of 1982, National Sports Policy of 2009, Sports Development Act of 1991, and the recently-approved Disability Act. Despite of UNCRPD been ratified by the Government of Nepal in 2009 and the Government having approved accessible guidelines being in 2013, no appreciable progress has been observed in promoting accessible sports in the context of Nepal.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

To study the current situation of accessible sports in Kathmandu Valley.

To draw concerned authorities' attention towards promoting accessibility in sports and recreational activities.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The findings of this research are based on the direct observation of some of the well-known sports venues in Kathmandu Valley like Dashrath Stadium, the basketball court at the National Sports Council (NSC) in Siphel, the cricket grounds at Pulchowk and Kritipur, the swimming pool at the NSC office in Satdobato and the table tennis hall at Lainchaur. Two blind schools such as Namuna Secondary School and Laboratory Boarding School were visited and examined to analyse its implementation of accessibility sports.

Similarly, primary data have been collected through interviews with leaders of Kathmandu Valley-based accessibility sports NGO and athletes with disabilities. Secondary data, including laws, newspaper articles, and other pertinent documents, have been collected. Some of the NGOs who took part in this study were the Paralympic Spinal Cord Injuries Sports Association, Blind Cricket Association, Boccia Association, Deaf Cricket Association and Physically-

Disabled Table Tennis Association have been consulted about the accessibility causes they are working for. A survey has been conducted within schools to test the knowledge and awareness of respondents regarding accessible sports.

## **FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

Flaws were found in the implementation of the existing laws and policies promoting sports for persons with disabilities. Based on the results of the survey, 70 percent of the policymakers at ministries and NSC are not aware of these policies. Most of the infrastructures at the NSC and other premises are inaccessible and have several barriers to overcome. Ninety percent do not have followed accessible guidelines, while some of them have ramps but no any other accessible facilities. Events are being conducted installing temporary and unsafe restroom during the events. Only 10 percent of the disability sports organizations have partly maintained accessibility in their offices. No progressive renovation has been done to the heavily destructed sports infrastructures at Dashrath Stadium. Production of accessible sports materials is almost zero and coaches having sufficient knowledge of braille, sign language interpretation, and disability only account one percent. Moreover, 90 percent of the children were reluctant to play due to lack of accessible sports materials and venues. No any sports venues have an availability of medical kits and assistive devices. Only 0.5

percent of print media covered about information on accessible sports while two percent of the public has heard about accessible sports.

The devastating earthquake has not only created a problem, but has also given an opportunity to build and modify all the inaccessible infrastructures into disability-friendly spaces. Dashrath Stadium and a number of office buildings have been ravaged by the earthquake and the NSC is in a process of reconstructing all these damages. However, not even a single consultation has been done with representatives from disability sports organizations. There is a doubt that whether accessibility guidelines of 2013 will be followed or not. In some of the cases, the condition of the land area does not allow the venue to be made fully accessible. Along with this attitude of persons working in the public sports venues are also not positive as they do not have any knowledge on the competency of persons with disability and need of inclusive sports for their overall development.

The Kirtipur international cricket ground is free for mainstream cricket players but athletes with disabilities are required to pay exorbitant fees. The observation shows that no preliminary accessible features such as ramps in toilets, audio system, safety measures and safe changing rooms for women with disabilities have been properly maintained in almost all of the public sports venues. Accessibility guidelines were not followed. So much so, the

NSC doesn't have any employee who is proficient in sign language and braille. On the other hand, lack of accessible transportation always hinders persons with disabilities to reach to the sports venues and conduct regular practices. Lack of coordination between the water supply board, telecommunication, and transportation divisions have also created problems in maintaining safe access to sports venues as well.

## **CONCLUSION**

Accessibility in sports is an emerging issue in human rights discourse. However, prolonged intervention is required to make public sports fully accessible. Though few of the existing policies support the promotion of inclusive sports, it is imperative to have a specific policy which can contribute in the development of accessible sports in Nepal. A mission to build an inclusive society can only come true if people with and without disabilities enjoy the same services and facilities with full independence, dignity, and autonomy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the aforementioned observations, the following recommendations must be undertaken by the government to promote accessible sports in Nepal, such as:

- Access audit of all public sports venues including NSC should be done.
- Strengthen and follow-up the implementation of existing policies
- Form an accessibility group of disabled sports organizations who will continuously monitor all public sports venues to ensure the proper guidelines are followed
- Form a National Accessible Board
- Spread a public service message about accessibility through all media channels
- Sensitize officials of mainstreaming sports about accessibility and disability
- Manufacture and assemble disabled-friendly sports equipment.

## ANNEX 1

### **UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (UNCRPD)**

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first legally binding international instrument to address the rights of persons with disabilities and sport. Article 30 of the Convention addresses both mainstream and disability-specific sport and stipulates that “States Parties shall take appropriate measures to encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels”. It also calls upon Governments, States party to the Convention, to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sport and recreational venues – as spectators and as active participants. This also requires that children with disabilities be included in physical education within the school system “to the fullest extent possible” and enjoy equal access to “play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities (UNCRPD, 2006). In conjunction to this, article nine also speaks about ensuring accessibility of persons with disabilities to all public venues, transportation, and communication system on an equal basis to other. And maintain minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities.

## ANNEX 2

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDGS)**

With an aim to fulfill the gaps seen in Millennium Development Goals “MDG’s”, United Nations “UN” general Assembly passed Sustainable Development Goals “SDG’s” to be implemented from the beginning of 2016. These SDGs incorporates seventeen goals related to different thematic issues. The goal eleven of SDGs is about making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Based on this goal, target 11.7, sub targets. Target 11.7.1 and 11.7.2 envies, By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, enough open spaces in build-up areas and , in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities [UNO, 2016]. Here public venues and open spaces also refer to accessible public play field as well



## **ANNEX 3**

### **INCHEON STRATEGY**

The Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia & the Pacific, Asian & Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022.] This strategy has ten goals and 27 targets. The goal, three of this strategy is about ensuring Access to physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication. Similarly, to ensure accessibility of all, this goal has set four targets to be achieved.

Targets 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D are about access to public spaces, transportation, information and communication system and assistive devices respectively] UNSCAP, 2013]. As incorporated by this goal, assistive devices, accessible public venues like, hall, use of accessible information and communication system, and transportations are the inevitable components of the accessible sports.

## **ANNEX 4**

### **SPORTS DEVELOPMENT ACT 2048 (ACT AMENDED IN 2053, 2063 AND 2066)**

Functions, duties and powers of Council: Under the Article 10 sub-article (I) talks about making arrangement for the organization of trainings and competitions for the development of sports by persons living with disabilities who have met disabilities physically and mentally due to various causes and make, or cause to be made publicity about the importance of such sports, as per necessity.

## **ANNEX 5**

### **NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY 2009**

This policy which has been made with somehow forward looking perspective has several disability related articles. Under article 3, it has been mentioned to upgrade and update physical infrastructures according to international standard along with providing an emphasis on the development of disability sports, according to the need and interest of persons with disability and ensuring promotion of participation. Similarly, under Article 5, Sports and physical infrastructure must be built taking into consideration the type or nature of disability.

**DISABLED PROTECTION AND WELFARE ACT 1982**

In 1982, The then His Majesty 's Government of Nepal under the Social Welfare Council formed the ever first act called Disabled Protection and Welfare Act "DPWA" with an aim to protect and mainstream the issues of people with all kinds of disabilities. This act based on charity modality was followed significant provisions regarding the promotion of disability sports;

1. Under article five and sub article 1 v which is about right to equality quotes that no disabled persons shall, solely on the basis of their disability, be denied entry into any association or club or community or function providing education or training or launching social or culture programmers within the Kingdom of Nepal, while sub- article 2 of article 10 speaks about giving special priority and making special arrangement to those wishing to take part in sports and recreational activities.

Article 10 (2) if any person with disability wants to take part in sports, recreation or cultural shows, there is a provision for providing appropriate training, teaching and giving priority to that work in related institution for that purpose. (DPWA, 1982)

4.5. Disability right act, 2017:

Article 34 was recently ratified disability act highlights persons with disabilities right to sports. This article draws Nepal Government's attention to take appropriate steps to incorporate persons with disabilities in sports activities on an equal basis to others. This article also stresses in modifying the existing infrastructures, developing inclusive sports curriculum and inclusion of children with disabilities in school sports programmes) (NFDN, 2017).

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# DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN NEPAL

## SITUATION, GAPS, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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### ABSTRACT

This article is about disability inclusive disaster risk reduction. It analyzes the current situation, explores gaps between policy and practices, and builds resilient capacity. Inadequate information and reflection on disability are the key drawbacks and challenges while planning, knowledge management and dissemination of issues related to risks and vulnerabilities. This study is based on qualitative and quantitative data. Despite of its importance, very few many agencies are working on DiDRR. Many agencies undertake DRR as standalone without considering the risks and vulnerabilities of person with disabilities. They have been treated as recipients. The participation of person with disabilities in different phases of the disaster management cycle is still minimal. Not all agencies working in DRR sector address the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Disability risk reduction, disability perspective, Inclusion, CBM, DiDRR.

### CONTEXT

Disability is a complex phenomenon, one reflecting an interaction between the features of a person's body and the features of the society in which he or she lives. The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR, 2016-2030) firmly establishes that persons with disabilities and their advocacy organizations are legitimate stakeholders and actors in the design and implementation of DRR policies

and practices. Often, government, NGOs, and relief organizations lack information and knowledge about the issues, concerns, needs, and aspiration of persons with disabilities. The government and other service-providing stakeholders are not well-versed in the benefits of adopting a disability-inclusive DRR (DiDRR). Nepal has recently adopted a DiDRR but its full implementation has yet

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to be realized and the relatively weak information systems related to DRR and disability have resulted in ignorance about the inclusion issues related to persons with disabilities.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of this situation assessment is to analyze the situation of DiDRR in Nepal, in particular exploring the current status of DiDRR in Nepal and identifying the roles that CBM and other stakeholders should play to promote DiDRR.

## **STUDY METHODS AND APPROACH**

The study team was mobilized to collect and take stock of relevant data and reports and to prepare a study programme. The team reviewed relevant reports and documents related to DiDRR and relevant international, national, and sectoral policies. The team thoroughly reviewed international policies and strategies. Primary information was collected from comprehensive checklist and guide questions. To discuss the results, a workshop was organized on 16th April 2017 for CBM's partner NGOs and organizations. This workshop was instrumental in identifying issues related to DiDRR, exploring emerging gaps, and paving the way forward. In addition to that government level stakeholders from MoHA and MoFALD and representatives of DPNet and AINTGDM were consulted. These discussions shed light on DiDRR issues and also

identified challenges and constraints, both structural and non-structural, as well as their underlying causes and possible solutions. In order to make the issues clearer, the study team called and emailed partner NGOs. All the information collected from different sources was then tabulated, synthesized and analysed using the content analysis tool. Preliminary observations and findings were then shared with CBM and its partners at an internal validation workshop.

## **KEY STUDY FINDINGS**

The scale of presence of the many agencies involved in the DiDRR sector varies considerably. Very few actually focus on the DiDRR sector; the majority have only one or two components of DiDRR. Planning, implementation and monitoring of disability-inclusive DRR is still inadequate. Many agencies undertake different activities in the name of DRR and have been treating person with disabilities as recipients. The participation of person with disabilities in different phases of the disaster management cycle is still minimal. Not all agencies working in the DRR sector support the specific needs of person with disabilities or focus on reducing their multiple forms of vulnerability. Instead, their response is largely ad hoc.

Persons with disabilities are not adequately involved in disaster relief, emergency response, and DRR initiatives through capacity-building initiatives, awareness and

sensitization programmes, provision of and practice using tools and equipment that are beneficial for risk reduction through drills and simulation, dissemination of the right information at the right time using the right approach, and, most importantly, involvement in the design and decision-making processes of programmes. The majority of persons with disabilities are highly impacted during disasters because of (i) limited mobility due to the lack of accessible infrastructure and assistive devices, (ii) limited inclusion in CSOs and self-help groups, (iii) limited capacity due to the lack of training and orientation, and (iv) the widespread belief that persons with disabilities cannot contribute to DRR initiatives because of their physical and mental impairments. Impacts of disaster events on person with disabilities are high.

Even though many studies of disability inclusion in DRR have been carried out and many policies, strategies, guidelines, and plans have been prepared to promote the well-being of persons with disabilities, very few agencies are aware of this policy provision. As a result, advocacy and campaigning for persons with disabilities are weak. There is a lack of disaggregated data on disability, gender, and age, which also hinder effective advocacy. Many agencies like ASB, Handicap International, and CBM have developed tools, but they are not put to optimal use because there is no information-sharing culture. Very few inputs like induction, training, orientation, drills,

and simulations have been provided to persons with disabilities or their representative organizations to explain the proper use of these tools.

The participation of persons with disabilities in community risk assessment and DRR planning exercises is very limited. Such programmes are almost always led by persons without disabilities and it is they who decide what the concerns and issues of persons with disabilities are and they who include them in planning but do not ensure their genuine participation. As a result, disability and inclusion issues are often diluted and not sincerely included in DRR planning. The involvement of persons with disabilities in community groups and local government bodies is minimal and their political representation, minimal.

## **CHALLENGES AND GAPS**

### **A. Policy formulation and implementation**

Many organizations work in the disability and DRR sectors but these two sectors are not adequately integrated in terms of programme planning, design or implementation. DRR policies do mention accessibility, protection, and prioritization of persons with disabilities, but the involvement of persons with disabilities in policy reform and amendment is minimal and they are not involved in the implementation of such policies. Instead, persons

with disabilities are silent observers. Most agencies which undertake DRR activities treat persons with disabilities as no more than 'recipients of benefits'. Thus, the concerns and issues of persons with disabilities are not adequately mainstreamed in policy. This is a major gap at both the national and the sub-national levels.

## **B. Inclusion**

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in different phases of the project cycle is minimal, even non-existent. Not all agencies that provide support and services for vulnerability and risk reduction even have a specific focus on persons with disabilities, and even fewer focus solely on the issues of persons with disabilities in disaster preparedness and DRR. In some areas, persons with disabilities did participate in the PDNA in that they were present at different meetings organized by governmental and civil society organizations. However, very few initiatives were taken to include persons with disabilities during disaster preparedness, DRR and humanitarian response programmes even after the earthquake of 2015. That said, their representatives in CSOs and DPOs did increase after the earthquake, although it was usually the result of filling quotas. Programmes prioritizing inclusion and reducing the disaster risks of persons with disabilities are few, so the real issues and concerns of persons with disabilities are not adequately reflected in planning and programmes. Persons without disabilities are unable to take forward

the issues of persons with disabilities but they continue to dominate planning and programmes. This is another gap in programme design, planning and implementation. Theoretically, agencies working in disability and DRR are guided by DiDRR, but this policy is not being implemented by either governmental or non-governmental and organizations working in disability and DRR.

## **C. Information and communication**

One notable initiative undertaken by both state and non-state actors was the preparation of IEC materials in formats accessible to people with different types of disabilities, including limited vision and limited hearing. However, not all IEC materials are available in such formats. As a result, not all persons with disabilities have access to IEC materials for knowledge building.

## **D. Recognition of values, experiences, and ideas**

Even though the participation of children and women with disabilities during emergency response and DRR activities is good, these groups are rarely involved in programme planning, designing, and implementation. They are treated largely just as passive recipients. Their experiences and ideas are almost never taken into consideration during programme formulation.

## **E. Dissemination of knowledge products**

A handful of organizations and agencies focused on persons with disabilities have developed different knowledge products like training toolkits, manuals, guidelines, and reading materials which promote DiDRR. However, there is no culture of sharing of such knowledge products among agencies for cross-fertilization of knowledge. Because materials are not shared, time, resources and effort are wasted. Knowledge products produced solely for a particular project intervention are rarely used in the future, thereby leading to the need to “reinvent the wheel.” The duplication of knowledge products and the confusion of issues are two negative results of such inefficiency.

## **F. Database**

One of the guiding principles of SFDRR is that DRR requires robust disaggregated data to use in program planning and designing. Collecting accurate disaggregated data at the national and sub-national levels in collaboration with state authorities can only support concrete planning in favour of persons with disabilities. The disaggregated data currently available in terms of sex, age and disability are not available in useful formats. In fact, not all available data, whether disaggregated or not, is accessible, and much of what is accessible is not in a ready-to-use form. The lack of comprehensive data and information on persons with disabilities has rendered advocacy

and campaigning targeting persons with disabilities ineffective and prevented persons with disabilities from claiming their fundamental rights to their fullest degree. There is no proper local-level system to collect administrative data that captures the details of persons with disabilities. What data there is not generated or updated regularly either. Due to these data gaps, persons with disabilities are systematically excluded from development and DRR initiatives. Their exclusion undermines their access to and control over community resources. Because the database system is badly flawed, plans and programmes can do no better than provide blanket solutions. They do not address the issues and concerns of persons with disabilities, who, as a result, fall further and further behind in a vicious cycle of exclusion.

## **G. Assistive devices and technologies**

Some effort was made to provide assistive devices and technologies to persons with disabilities before the earthquake but that effort intensified afterward. During the recovery and reconstruction phase, there was a dramatic increase in the construction of infrastructures with ramps, railings, and other disabled-friendly features. Ease of access was reported to be highest in infrastructures built by humanitarian agencies. Since a holistic approach to accessibility was not adopted, simply having assistive technology will not, however, fully guarantee the needs of persons with disabilities. In many cases, even



humanitarian agencies did not fully incorporate minimal conditions of accessibility in their infrastructures. Some had only a single ramp but nonetheless declared themselves “disability–friendly.” There is also an information gap regarding the availability of assistive devices and the minimal conditions (documentation) for accessing them.

## **H. Access to information on DRR**

Much DRR information is not available in accessible formats. Only a few organizations, like NFDN, ASB, and CBM, have produced informative materials in accessible formats for persons with disabilities. However, even this information is not available to persons with disabilities living in rural areas as it is found only on their websites or in their central offices in Kathmandu Valley.

## **I. Barriers and challenges**

Some factors that make it hard to integrate disability with DRR include social factors (caste-, ethnicity-, and gender-based exclusion), attitudinal factors (low self-esteem of persons with disabilities, disability inclusiveness is not prioritized, serving persons with disabilities is seen as charity not rights fulfilment, and disability is seen as inability), cultural factors (disability is seen as a result of sins, victimization of persons with disabilities by community and family members), physical factors (inaccessible infrastructures and information portals, lack of facilities and amenities), economic factors

(struggle to earn a livelihood, inaccessibility of savings-and-credit facilities), and institutional factors (under representation of DPOs, lack of disaggregated data, insufficient planning and implementation).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. FOR GOVERNMENT**

Orient local government staff, newly elected political representatives, community-based organizations and other stakeholders to DRR policies so that they are familiar with their key provisions of policies. Mechanisms should be in place to ensure that new infrastructures and services are accessible to persons with disabilities. Government should ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and most-at-risk groups in DRR planning, design and implementation in order to mainstream DiDRR issues in development plans and programs. In collaboration with relevant agencies and following a thorough training needs assessment, the government must develop standard training curricula and session plans. Government must contribute and support on action research that promotes the CRDP and enable persons with disabilities to exercise their rights.

## 2. FOR NON-GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

To address include persons with disabilities in DRR, the capacity of DPOs and persons with disabilities should be enhanced through a process approach including training, orientation, and review-and-reflection sessions. Training toolkits, guidelines, training materials and handouts should be developed in accessible formats and templates. Print and electronic media should be mobilized on a regular basis to effectively take forward inclusion issues. To ensure the access to information resources and benefit, IEC materials should be made into accessible formats. To effectively address their issues, the government, CSOs, and DPOs should run debate and discussion platforms in the presence of public and private stakeholders. A holistic approach to making infrastructures accessible is needed if persons with disabilities are to be able to fully claim their fundamental rights. New designs should also include universal design and accessibility features. Agencies should expand their efforts and resources on developing barrier-free infrastructure. To accomplish this end, agencies should engage in advocacy, campaigning and lobbying to get government stakeholders to change their priorities.

## 3. FOR CBM PARTNERS

### STRUCTURAL COMPONENT

Reducing physical vulnerability through risk reduction, this refers to taking several measures such as:

- Carry out structural and non- structural assessment of office buildings and initiate corrective measures
- Build ramps, railings, and hand bars in appropriate places in organizational premises for persons with disabilities
- Display directions and important notices in visible places for visitors with auditory disabilities (signage)
- Trim tall trees in the premises of the offices to avoid risk of thunderstorms
- Produce IEC materials in accessible formats
- Put place signs and notices of open space, evacuation routes and exit routes
- Stockpile necessary materials in case of emergency (food and non-food (medicine, first aid, appropriate assistive device), SAR materials, etc.) for neighbourhood
- Revisit for other important issues under structural measures

## NON-STRUCTURAL COMPONENT

### Capacity building

- Organize disaster preparedness and humanitarian response orientation to board member, staffs and volunteer's/outreach facilitators at partners' level
- Impart DiDRR Standard training incorporating contemporary issues, policy provisions, ADCAP, SFDRR, existing practices, gaps and the way forward (Managers and Facilitators)
- Organize DiDRR facilitators training/ orientation (disaster management cycle) in the project area
- Coaching session to mainstream DiDRR issues in the organizational internal system: Bidhan (Constitution), Policies (HR, GESI, etc.), strategy plan (3-5 years) and business plan

### Research and Knowledge management

- Commission studies and research on DiDRR issues and share in the Media/ Stakeholders/Networks
- Develop an information platform to manage sex, age and disability (SAAD) aggregated data
- Develop and design DiDRR related training curricula,

resource manual, toolkits incl. IEC

- Document good practices and lesson learned for wider dissemination
- Produce policy brief, knowledge products (thematic learning and change stories)

### Policy Advocacy

Policy advocacy for promoting DiDRR initiatives in all DRM phases

Support to advocate for:

- Mainstream DiDRR issues in local government (urban/ rural municipality) periodic plan
- Emphasis on accessible infrastructures (local transport, public WASH, public office buildings, etc.) to address the specific needs to persons with disabilities
- Allocate budgets to execute DiDRR focused (and pilot) program
- Support to prepare disaster related citizen charter and information are accessible to persons with disabilities.

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# ACCESSIBLE WASH; PERSPECTIVE AND PRACTICES

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## ABSTRACT

This article is written to explore the perspective and practices in accessible WASH in Nepal. The analysis was done using the empirical data collected from the field interviews from diverse stakeholders in different districts of Nepal. These data were complemented by policies and guideline, author's first hands field observations and published reports and literatures. This article argues that only building a ramp or other infrastructures is not enough, it should be accessible from the other perspectives. Accessible infrastructure seems to be useful to mainly people with disabilities, but it is in fact useful for everyone, in so doing, it is about accessible of WASH perspective. It also focuses on policies and guideline made and the current implementation practices as well.

**Key words;** WASH, accessible, disability friendly

## BACKGROUND

The dictionary meaning of "accessible" is obtainable; attainable: easy to approach, reach, enter, speak with, or use, that can be used, entered, reached, etc. WASH stands for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene. Basically, the WASH facilities/services which are easy to approach, reach, enter, and use is known as Accessible WASH. Water, sanitation, and hygiene services and facilities are traditionally designed for the so called average persons, which ignore the fact that in the real communities, people come with a wide range of shapes, sizes, abilities, and needs. As a result, a large number of people are excluded from normal services and facilities. One such group is people with disabilities.

Over a billion people are estimated to live with some form of disability. This corresponds to about 15 percent of the world's population. Between 110 million (2.2%) and 190 million (3.8%) people 15 years and older have significant difficulties in functioning. Furthermore, the rates of disability are increasing in part due to aging populations and an increase in chronic health conditions. Apart from this, the growing conflicts, natural disasters, and humanitarian crisis around the world have significant impact to increase the disability numbers. The South-East Asia Region has the second highest prevalence rate of moderate disability (16%) and the third highest prevalence

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rate of severe disability (12.%)<sup>i</sup>. As reported in Post Disaster Need Assessment Report (PDNA) 20015, about two percent (or 513,321) of the total Nepali population is reported to have some kind of disability. Physical disability constitutes 36.3%; followed by blindness/low vision (18.5%), deaf/hard to hearing (15.4%), speech problem (11.5%), multiple disabilities (7.5%), mental disability (6%), intellectual disability (2.9%) and deaf-blind (1.8%). Within the 14 most affected communities, it can be deduced that 322,110.78 have physical disability, 163,043 of which are women and girls<sup>ii</sup>.

In recent decades, Nepal has made significant progress in access to WASH facilities in communities, public institutions, and schools. Coverage of the water supply has been estimated to be 87.0 % (DWSS 2072/73) that includes 52.3 % coverage by piped water supply systems. All of the districts have coverage above 70%<sup>iii</sup>. Nineteen districts have coverage of more than 90 percent, 41 districts between 80 to 90 percent and 14 districts below 80 percent. Rupandehi, Manang, and Kailali reported nearly 100 percent coverage. Coverage of basic sanitation has been estimated to be 87.3 percent (DWSS 2072/73). Coverage is highest in Mid-Western Region, followed by the Far-Western Region, Western Region, Eastern Region and Central Region, respectively.

The government of Nepal had aimed to achieve the universal sanitation coverage by 2017 and the progress has

been made rapidly. Due to the hard hit from 2015 earthquake and other unavoidable circumstances, this has delayed the momentum and could not meet the target as envisioned. However, the government including civil societies are working hard to make it happen with active participation and engagement of the local government and community.

The universal coverage of WASH services means the access to WASH services by all. The government also has the mandate to ensure the accessible WASH to everyone and all the WASH development programmes have a mandate to implement the inclusive WASH with no one left behind. Although the government, including civil societies and WASH stakeholders are talking about the Accessible WASH; I am interested to know what does this Accessible WASH means, understanding and people perceptions of diverse actors.

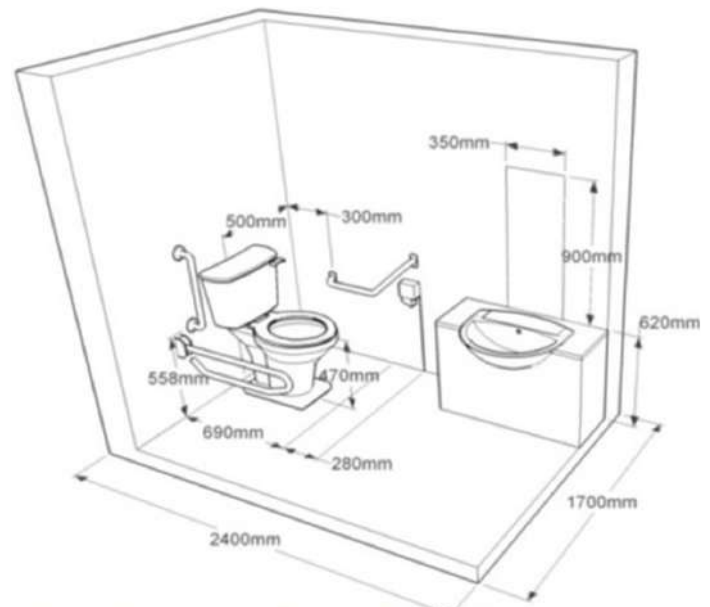
To date, I worked with WASH and non-WASH professionals, including community development workers, university students, NGO leaders as well as non-WASH actors (who do not directly work in WASH). When I talked about the accessible WASH I found diverse and interesting views from them. I decided to explore more on people's perceptions, understanding and practices. Therefore, this article is written based on the qualitative study where people from diverse fields were interviewed during field visits and individual meeting regarding the accessible WASH issues.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK, NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDELINES

The global development agenda SDG#6 target number 6.2 states "By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations"<sup>iv</sup>.

After the earthquake 2015, Ministry of Health come up with standard guidelines for post-disaster guidelines which give description and drawings of "Universal toilets" that needs to be constructed in each reconstructed health facilities. "Universal toilets": A separate toilet for non-disabled person should be provided with appropriate standard size to accommodate a wheelchair equipped with grab bars. No steps are allowed in toilets which inhibit the wheelchairs to enter. For this, prior arrangements should be made during construction of structural frame such as the design of dropped slab or ramp for the raised toilets.

The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016 highlighted that lack of disabled friendly WASH facilities is a barrier for children with disabilities to enroll and remain in school. Hence, SSDP 2016 makes mandatory to have a gender-segregated and disabled friendly WASH facilities in school. A separate toilet for differently able person should be provided with appropriate standard size to accommodate wheelchair equipped



Design of Toilet placed in Guideline

with grab bars. No steps are allowed in toilets which inhibit the wheelchairs to enter. For this, prior arrangements should be made during construction of structural frame such as design of dropped slab or ramp for the raised toilets<sup>v</sup>.

## PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES ON ACCESSIBLE WASH

### A toilet is everyday business for all: a case of Audit

In early 2017, I was dealing with an audits firm who came to do an audit of WASH and Nutrition integrated project which was implemented in two earthquake-affected districts in Nepal. Together with Financial Audit, they planned a field visit to Rasuwa district for the field verification of the expenses. As a part of WASH intervention, the project had supported to construct CGD (Child, Gender, & Disability) friendly WASH facilities in schools and healthcare

facilities. There were around one-third of the project cost was allocated for CGD friendly WASH services in school and the expenses were made accordingly. After the field visit, auditor came back with a comment; I found disable friendly toilets constructed in a school where the school itself is in hill and school itself is not accessible for disabled people. The construction of disabled-friendly toilet at that school is a waste of resources.

Being responsible person of the project, I had to elucidate the reason of constructing CGD friendly toilet. Its government mandate to construct CGD-friendly toilet and every development actor should follow the government mandate-which was the very first response came to my mind. At the same time I also accept the comment raised by the audit. The school is not accessible for persons with disabilities, what is the significance of having disable friendly toilet? Also, I was not sure whether there were children living with disabilities were in those schools or not. Suddenly, I remembered one of my friends who was suffering from Polio since his childhood. He shared that his brother used to take him to school by carrying him on his back, but when he had to go to the toilet to pee, it was difficult for him and he had no option rather than controlling the pee during school time. Taking this example, I addressed the comment of the Auditor.

These days, people are aware and there is no such discrimination, myths,

and misconception towards person with disability. People can admit their children into school, and it is urgent requirements to have an accessible WASH facilities in school. On another hand, maybe people may not admit their children with disabilities to school thinking of the difficulties they might face in school due to lack of accessible WASH services. As an inclusive agency, we need to promote inclusive WASH facilities in school, so that parents can be encouraged to send their children to the school. Also, it has been made a mandatory by the Ministry of Education to have a gender segregated and user-friendly WASH facilities in school.

This story was shared by a WASH colleague while discussing about the accessible WASH few weeks back. I realized people have a lack an understanding of accessible WASH and is unaware about the essence of accessible WASH. In view of the audit perspective, they were looking from the perspective of access to roads and geographical remoteness. However, the geographical remoteness and the senescence of accessible WASH services are dissimilar. It's high time to ensure the accessible WASH services in all the institutions matter what the geographical location is as the doing WASH is every day and every hour business, another setting may differ and maintain by the time.

### **How do you showcase the structures really matter**

During my working tenure in 2016/17 after the hard hit by the



Nepal earthquake in 2015, we had implemented WASH recovery programme in two earthquake-affected districts; Nuwakot and Rasuwa. The project was mainly focused on construction and rehabilitation of rural community water supply as well as WASH infrastructure construction in schools and health facilities in different rural municipality of the districts as per the government mandate. In a field monitoring visit in a health post in Nuwakot district, I observed an appreciative work with 24 hours water supply, separate gender and person with disability friendly toilet blocks with ramp, drinking water tap and hand washing platform. The Nurse in Health post was happy with the support provided by the project, especially having water tap with twenty-four hours running water in a birthing center. Before there was no continuous water supply and it was difficult to maintain the hygiene. Apart from that, I saw a locked toilet which was tagged as "disabled-friendly toilet". I was curious to know why that toilet is not in use.

This toilet is built for persons with disabilities and these people hardly visit the health facilities. None of the persons with disabilities patient visited after the construction of new building. Persons without disabilities really do not want to use that toilet as that was tagged as "Disabled-friendly toilet- a Watchman explained.

The Ministry of Health of the Nepal Government has a mandate to construct accessible WASH

facilities in health facilities. The reconstruction programme has been done accordingly. Being a WASH professional, I am happy to see the progress made as the accessible WASH facilities is in priorities. At the same time, I felt as embarrassed as still we are far behind to create harmony among the people. The above case-person without disability does not want to use disabled-friendly toilet not because of the toilet is being occupied by the disable people, but they do not want to be tagged as persons with disabilities by using disabled-friendly toilet. I can easily sense the presence of discrimination among people living with disabilities and non-disabled people. Now the question arises is it necessary to tag the toilet itself as for persons with disabilities? Are we (development agencies) using appropriate words to introduce the people living with disabilities? I realized that it would have been used, if we said that this toilet is accessible toilet and every type of user can access and use this.

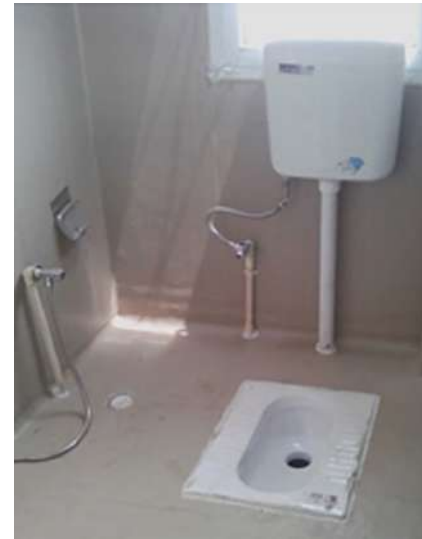
### **Just having Ramp does not mean an accessible**

In a newly constructed prefabricate health post building, I saw a good toilet facility which was constructed by a reputed organization advocating for accessible WASH. The health post is also functioning as birthing center. According to the health post In-charge, in an average six delivery cases are coming every month. I noticed the health entrance of the health facilities is well constructed with ramp and room were easily

accessible. When it comes to the toilet, it's very neat and clean, well equipped with 24-hours water supply but the toilet is not comfortable to be used by persons with disabilities.



**Health Post Building with Ramp**



**Toilet Inside the Building**

In addition, not only people living with disabilities need comfortable toilet. It is equally important to have an accessible toilet for the pregnant and newly-delivered women. Based on the observation from this health post, it seems having ramp means accessible to all the visitors. The government guideline clearly mentioned about key requisites for the user-friendly toilets (universal toilet) however, still there is a gap in its execution at a field level. This is just an example and it's high time to give special attention to consider all the requirements for making the facilities accessible for all.

### **Take initiative first, perfection comes spontaneously**

#### **- A case from Rasuwa**

At the time of a partner visit in Rasuwa district of Nepal, I saw three cubicle toilets in one of the local NGO offices. Each cubical was tagged with different name such as "Male", "Female" & "Disable". I was keen to know if a toilet labeled with name "Disabled" has different features. However, I could not find any difference in interior of these toilet units. I observed that they built it just for the formality. I decided to ask to the organization head the reason behind leveling one toilet as "Disable". Without any delay and pointing towards the toilet blocks,

I asked him- how did you come up with the idea of labeling similar toilet block with different names?

He hesitated for a while (maybe he was not sure what to say and not) and said- he is aware of the persons with disabilities different needs through television advertisements and during social campaigns. But these issues came up in his priority only after the earthquake in 2015. In the past days, disability was not on their priority of intervention rather more focused on environmental conservation and sports programme.

During earthquake in 2015, some people were injured who had a difficult time due to lack of accessible infrastructures. Even family members spent time to take care of the persons with disabilities for personal cleanness and hygiene purpose. I realized, if we start with our organization, it can be easier for the people who visit our office as well as it can be model to others. This is how we decided to construct this cubicle for people with disabilities. We had no idea about the exact design of the persons with disabilities toilet. If we can construct separate toilet for them, at least they will feel comfortable to use the toilet. Our organization has a training hall which often use by many organizations for training and meeting purpose. We have been organizing several meeting and training ourselves. Persons with disabilities have also been attending the meeting, training and consultation workshops.

In one training workshop, one participant was using crutches. During break, I saw a queue in both male and female toilets. At the same time, I noticed that people who used crutches went to the toilet and came back. Once he came back from toilet, I talked to him and asked about his experience and benefits of having separate toilet. He explained that if there was no designated toilet for him, he had to be on that queue standing with support from that crutches and which is bit difficult. He was not just happy to have a separate toilet but also thanked to me and my organization. Once I heard this, it

gives me more satisfaction that we constructed this toilet although we did not have enough idea of what does accessible toilet look like. A summary of the story shared by Mr. Santosh Ghale, Chairperson of the organization.



Outside view of Toilet with handwashing basin



Inside View of Toilet

This organization is one of the major implementing actor of the Earthquake Post Recovery programme in a district. Now, their capacity have been developed by many international development organizations who are partnering with. They have been constructing many toilets in schools and health care facilities in WASH recovery and temporary learning centers.

This case of NGO from Rasuwa can represent many other districts. Yet, the disability issues are not a priority of the people unless they have a programme or are aware and empower enough themselves. Still, the frontline workers have limited knowledge, skills and understanding of the accessible WASH. Together with the development works, the understanding and practices are being replicated over time. But this is not enough if we really want to see the progress in inclusive development from the beginning. There is urgent need to create enabling an environment for developing the capacity and skills in from grassroots level. With the recent decentralization in federal states, every local government unit requires the development of public institutions (governmental offices, health facilities, schools, and institutions). Based on the current practices and understanding, it is hard to ensure the accessible WASH facilities. The policy and guidelines do not merely work unless this is disseminated and initiated by concerned people. The government and civil society need to work out

together for creating the enabling environment to ensure the accessible WASH services everywhere which requires joint effort, solid planning, and prompt implementation.

## **TAKE AWAY NOTE**

- The accessible WASH facility is more familiar among developmental agencies working on WASH. The government mandate, guidelines and skills are not transferred at the local level. More work is yet to do for awareness raising, capacity and skills development and implementation.
- The inclusive and user friendly WASH facility sounds better than the current practices of tagging the “disabled-friendly toilet”, where everyone can free to use easily and efficiently. By doing so, this will also help to change the thinking of the ordinary people as well as people living with disability and create equity and equality. Let’s make the same toilet as user friendly/accessible for everyone.
- In the context of developing accessible WASH facilities, this is more practice and adopted in reconstruction programme after the earthquake as compare to before. Good perception towards accessible WASH is there but proper knowledge and skilled is still yet to develop. With the recent decentralization in federal states, every local government unit requires the development of public institutions (governmental offices, health facilities, schools and

institutions). The integration of accessible WASH facilities in the ongoing development of the local government structures will make remarkable changes.

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# ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT: CHALLENGES, LEARNING, AND GOOD PRACTICES

Utrist Raj Onta<sup>9</sup>

## ABSTRACT

"Accessibility is a right." It is a basic right of any individual, irrespective of age, gender or disability, to access the infrastructure on his or her own. It is the duty and responsibility of any individual to assure accessibility from the individual's side. But, in the context of Nepal, the attitude towards accessibility, even though it is improving, is still poor. Accessible infrastructure seems to be useful to mainly people with disabilities, but it is in fact useful for everyone. "In the context of Kathmandu where only 5 percent of the infrastructure is close to accessible", people think that accessibility is important only for people with disabilities; however, we don't consider the fact that anyone can have limited accessibility to infrastructures in their lifetime, either temporarily or permanently. For example, anyone can be in some kind of accident; women go through pregnancy in their life time, each and every one of us was children and eventually grow old.

Furthermore, there are different kinds of barriers that make it difficult or impossible to access the environment and or information, even for people without disabilities. These could be visible or invisible hindrances that most of us take for granted, like reaching the public transportation, commuting via public transportation, entering and navigating the workplace or any shopping mall, using the restroom. Hence, to make infrastructure accessible or easily useable, it is important to identify and remove these barriers, in case of existing infrastructure, and avoid these barriers in future infrastructure.

## INTRODUCTION

Whenever we see and hear the term 'audit' we visualize examination of financial records. The term 'audit' here, however, has nothing to do with finance. Accessibility audit is the review of how much infrastructure or information is accessible; the infrastructure being either physical or digital. Physical infrastructure

includes public and private buildings, transportation lanes, parks and open spaces; Digital infrastructure includes websites, operating systems in computers or phones. The main propose of an accessibility audit is to identify any or every barrier that affects the access or the ease of access to the particular infrastructure for a

9 Architect, Director, Square Unit Pvt. Ltd. (Kathmandu)

wide range of possible users; and get recommendations or design solutions on how to improve accessibility, where necessary. "Improving accessibility contributes to:

- More independence
- Social Inclusion
- Increased quality of life
- Building resilience
- Increased safety and mobility
- Less pollution
- Cost savings
- Energy savings
- Increased 'Social Capitals'
- Better health"<sup>10</sup>

WHO defines barriers as "factors in a person's environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability. These include aspects such as:

- A physical environment that is not accessible,
- Lack of relevant assistive technology (assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices),
- Negative attitudes of people towards disability,
- Services, systems, and policies that are either nonexistent or that hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition in all areas of life."<sup>11</sup>

It is clear from the definition that these barriers are of different types, and one encounters more than a single barrier at a particular time. The barriers, particularly in Nepal, may be divisible into following categories: physical, communicational, socio-psychological and technological.

**Physical barriers** are the architectural or structural features in any natural or manmade environment that make it difficult or impossible to access the environment. Generally, physical barriers are experienced by people who have physical disabilities. Examples of physical barriers include:

- Small width of door which is inaccessible for a person using wheelchairs.

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10 The Inclusive Imperative: Towards Disability- inclusive and Accessible Urban development. CBM, Disability Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development network. p. 10.

11 World Health Organization, International classification of functioning, disability and health. Geneva:2001, WHO. p. 214.

- Electric switches which cannot be reached by person of short stature.
- Poor lighting in spaces is difficult for person with low visibility.

**Communicational barriers** are any issues that make it difficult to perceive the available information. Communication barriers are mostly experienced by people who have visual impairment (complete or partial), disabilities that affect hearing or speaking, and intellectual disabilities. Examples of communicational barriers include:

- Use of small font size in prints
- Absence of Braille letters on elevators indicating floor numbers or on doors indicating room numbers.
- Signage without proper color contrast.
- Absence of sign language interpreters

**Socio - psychological barriers** include the poor attitude of people toward a person with disability. Examples of Socio-psychological barriers include:

- Not accepting students with disability in school or college
- Denying services, benefits, or opportunities in the workplace for qualified individuals with disabilities
- Mindset that people with disability are inferior

**Technological barriers** are mainly related with different tools and technology. Examples of technological barriers include:

- Websites with insufficient color contrast or no alternative text for non-text content.
- Phones without TTS (text to speech) service.
- An alarm system that doesn't have both flashing lights and audible signals.

## METHODOLOGY

The accessibility audit done by us, a technical team of architects, mainly focuses on the physical and communicational barriers. Initially a quick visual assessment of infrastructure/environment to be audited is done. Architectural drawings are then collected if available. A draft sketch is drawn for unavailable infrastructures. As per the visual assessment and drawings, a checklist comprising of all the probable barriers, is prepared considering chain of movement of users. Following features are considered en-route to the infrastructure.

1. Reaching the infrastructure
2. Parking
3. Paths around the infrastructure
4. Curb ramps and ramps
5. Main entrance
6. Inside the infrastructure
  - Horizontal movement: Accessible routes
  - Vertical Movement:



- Stairs, Elevators, Ramps
  - Services : Health, Education,
  - Commercial, recreational etc.
  - Equipment control and uses
7. Sanitary Facilities

The checklist (questionnaire) is based upon the guidelines stated in 'Accessible Physical Infrastructures and Communication Services Directive for persons with disabilities, 2069 BS (2012 AD)' approved by the council of ministers in Nepal. Since the manual is not complete in itself, various other international standards applied by other countries are incorporated.

Once the checklist is finalized, a team to conduct accessibility audit is formed; the team consists of architects/engineers and user group with different disabilities. The audit group may consist of 4 or more people including surveyors and user group. Each one should be assigned to perform a specific job such as taking measurements, filling out the checklist and taking photos. User groups are allowed to access the infrastructure, the barriers they face are identified and the required measurements are taken accordingly. All other probable barriers for a wide range of probable users are also considered. Recommendations and comments from the user group and the authority are taken at the end of the audit. Design solutions based on them is prepared.

## **UNICEF ROSA, A CASE:**

UNICEF- Regional Office of South Asia (ROSA), Lainchour approached NFDN (National Federation of the Disabled- Nepal) to conduct accessibility assessment of their premises and prepare design solutions accordingly. Square Unit has been technically assisting NFDN for the accessibility related projects, hence NFDN recommended Square Unit for 'Accessibility Audit in UNICEF-ROSA.' Proposal for the project was presented by Square Unit, and was agreed upon.

The main aim of the project was to provide inclusive environment for wide range of probable user group; hence UNICEF- ROSA wanted to enhance accessibility of premises and allocate resources towards it. So, in the first phase of their three levels: main entrance, parking, passage from main entrance to buildings, at least one room of the building, toilet, cafeteria and conference hall were to be made accessible. This ensured minimum level of accessibility and would help progressively move towards higher levels.

After the drawings of the premises were received, preliminary site visit for visual assessment was done. Based on requirement of UNICEF ROSA, drawings and site visit, questionnaire was prepared for the accessibility audit of the premises. NFDN arranged a team of user group for the audit. The team consisted of three user group having physical

disability (wheel chair user), low vision and hearing disability. Square unit made arrangement of technical team and helpers. Then with the coordination of concerned authority of the infrastructure, the premises and the buildings were audited. Recommendations and comments from user group was taken at the end of the audit.

Design recommendation was submitted and presented to UNICEF ROSA. A couple of design solution was provided to ensure the minimum level of accessibility, for the initial phase. The most feasible option was selected with the discussion among stake holders. Then, list of interventions to be made was finalized and detail design was done. Estimate and BOQ of the detail design was also provided. A construction company was given responsibility to do the intervention. The interventions were carried out and Square Unit examined if the construction was carried out as per the design.

The case of UNICEF: ROSA is noteworthy because of two main points. First, UNICEF: ROSA's approach to NFDN to conduct accessibility assessment of their premises. Usually, the approach is reverse and it is very hard to obtain permission to conduct accessibility audit. The approach by UNICEF: ROSA is highly appreciated and it also opens door for other stakeholders/organizations. The second is the quick construction of interventions as per the design solutions provided. UNICEF: ROSA made minor feasible interventions

as soon as they received design recommendations; and appointed a team for construction for major interventions once they received estimate and BOQ.

## **CHALLENGES**

Poor attitude of people towards accessibility is the major challenge faced during accessibility audit. It is not just the socio-psychological barriers, as discussed earlier, the features of accessibility are taken as an extra financial burden. However, people don't realize that it is costs less if they incorporate the features from the design phase, than if they incorporate the features later on. The fact that we have audited only built infrastructure, shows a correction making process after the mistake is made, when the mistake could have been avoided in the first place. If architectural drawings or plans are audited before the construction, then the probable accessibility barriers could be identified beforehand.

People do not realize that accessible infrastructure opens door to more customers. For example, accessible hotels have a chance of conducting more seminars and functions; some basic accessibility requirements are even required to conduct international programs. Accessible sports facilities can cater the need of not just audience with disabilities but also the athletes with disabilities. So, the chance of having different games with a wider audience is possible. More the infrastructure is accessible,

the better. Still, we are having a hard time getting permission from authorities to conduct accessibility audits. However, there are also some organizations who have realized the importance of having accessible infrastructure and are initiating accessibility of their infrastructure.

Another challenge is the limited role of architects and engineers in Nepal. Design and construction process isn't very inclusive in our context. The role of consultant (architect/ engineer) is limited just to submission of drawings. The contractor or construction team involved does the construction based on their understanding and the output may not be as per the drawings. Coordination between consultant, client/stakeholder and contractor is required throughout the project. Proper supervision of the construction by consultant is the least requirement to ensure the construction is done as per the design.

The cost of construction has also been the issue in some cases. The best solution may be the expensive one, but people go for the less feasible solutions just to save some money. However, being accessible with difficulty is better than being not accessible at all. The fact that NFDN, in association with CBM, is not just advocating but also being involved in making some infrastructures accessible by financing the intervention has to be highly appreciated.

## LEARNING

'Accessibility Audit for Persons with disability in Public Building of Kathmandu Metropolitan' was successfully completed in August 2016, in association with Independent Living Center (CIL)-Kathmandu for Women, Children and Social Welfare Ministry. All the probable barriers for wide range of probable users were identified and a questionnaire/checklist was prepared. An accessibility audit was then conducted with the coordination of architect and helpers. The audit conducted, included 200 public infrastructures including buildings, public parks, open spaces, roads & streets, pavements & pedestrian crossing, heritage sites and public libraries in Kathmandu Metropolitan; and identified the remedial actions necessary to make these buildings accessible for persons with disability, old age person, children & pregnant woman.

A progressive approach, however, was taken in 'Access audit of public buildings in three different cities in the Kathmandu valley' by the National Federation of Disabled-Nepal (NFDN) in partnership with CBM, in collaboration with Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC); successfully conducted in June 2018. A comprehensive questionnaire, prepared considering national and international codes, was finalized upon discussion among various user groups, DPO's and stakeholders. As mentioned in the methodology, a

team of architects and user group with different disabilities was formed to conduct an accessibility audit. This inclusive approach has been very much efficient to identify the practical barriers. The audit process itself has been able to make the stakeholders realize the barriers. Recommendations and comments from user group also added the user experience to the technical data collected by architect.

“Accessibility is not a feature, it’s a social trend.” - Antonio Santos<sup>12</sup>

Lack of awareness about accessibility has been a major issue for accessible infrastructure or environment. Even the basic bylaws and standards for accessible infrastructure are not considered during the designing and construction processes. Very few people have added some accessible features into their infrastructure, but most of them are not up to standard. On frequent changes of administration, barriers are placed such that accessible features can’t be used. We have seen placing of flower vase in such a way that the corridor is inaccessible by wheelchairs; parking being done such that the ramp can’t be accessed. If awareness is raised from grass roots level to the management and public sectors, the existing accessible features would be respected leading to more accessible infrastructure.

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12 Source: <https://www.universalaccess.me/certification-process>: January 2018.

Information is the key to accessibility. People must be made aware about existing accessible facilities, so that a large number of user group can take its advantage. Some infrastructures have attempted to make their facilities more accessible, they must be encouraged and promoted so that they can be an example, a source of motivation, to others. The accessible features must be highlighted so that it comes to light to those who are in desperate need. In addition to that, information on how to make any infrastructure or environment accessible must also be given properly, so that more infrastructures can be accessible or barrier-free.

## GOOD PRACTICES

Advocacy about accessibility is being done by NFDN (National Federation of the Disabled- Nepal) through different interactive training programmes and games. Initially, a technical training on accessibility and universal Design was conducted by Ar. Benjamin Dard, specialist in accessibility and Universal Design principles, on November 2016. A resource pool consisting of the trainees of the programme have been formed, and NFDN has been reproducing other such training programmes throughout Nepal with the help of the resource pool. Professionals and students of architecture and engineering field go through the process of self-realization about the need of accessible infrastructure. They are made aware of the basic bylaws and standards such that any

design or construction they come upon is accessible.

Accessible designs and recommendations are presented in the form of interactive graphics, 3D designs and models so that even the general public can easily understand them; they can easily perceive what is being trying to done and share their ideas and concerns.

## **CONCLUSION**

Accessibility Audit is relatively a new approach in Nepal. In the aftermath of the devastating April 2015 Earthquake, we must follow the build back better concept. Existing facilities and infrastructures must conduct accessibility audits to identify the barriers and interventions should be made to overcome these barriers. All the new facilities and infrastructures constructed must at least follow the minimum standard of accessibility. Accessibility should be included in infrastructure design and construction should be done as per the design. The architects and engineers involved must be made aware about the bylaws and the minimum standards of accessibility so that the design itself is accessible and inclusive. Importance and advantages of an accessible physical environment must be explained properly. Awareness about accessibility and universal design must be raised from grassroots level.

# NEPAL'S RESPONSE TO EARTHQUAKE 2015: EXPERIENCE OF EMERGENCY RESPONDERS AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS IN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DELIVERY

Sapana Basnet Bista | Prof. Padam Simkhada  
Dr. Kim Ross-Houle | Rose Khatri<sup>13</sup>

## Abstract

The earthquake that hit Nepal in 2015 received worldwide attention for the devastation it caused to lives and infrastructures. Yet, the impact of it on people with disabilities and experiences of emergency responders and humanitarian assistance providers have remained under-researched. This study aims to explore first-hand experiences faced by emergency responders and humanitarian assistance providers to evaluate the effectiveness in the implementation of inclusive and accessible emergency response during disasters. In addition, this paper will identify good practices and barriers faced by them in facilitating inclusive and accessible recovery and rehabilitation post-disaster. Lessons learnt from barriers and challenges faced by the service providers, when addressed, will promote improved policies, processes and programmes around inclusive and accessible emergency and humanitarian response, recovery, and rehabilitation. This study is based on semi-structured interviews with 20 key informants and thematic analysis of data. Findings suggest that most stakeholders were engaged in inclusive disaster risk management (DiDRM), capacity building, and resilience developing awareness campaigns. However, there are significant gaps in policies, training, and practices. These gaps include, a dire lack of inclusive and accessible equipment and resources; lack of and failure to implement and utilize knowledge and resources available; lack of data and guidelines on disability inclusive emergency response (DIER); and lack of communication and coordination between emergency responders and DPOs. These challenges hindered the search and rescue (SAR) and relief efforts, which resulted in the slow recovery and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. This study recommends including persons with disabilities in planning, designing, and building inclusive and accessible emergency preparedness, response, SAR toolkit, and emergency shelters. Nepal now has opportunities to integrate accessible infrastructures, DiDRM and implementation at the community level. One way of achieving DiDRM at the community level could be building

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a bank of desegregated data, skilled volunteers, and accessible equipment meet the emergency needs of persons with disabilities.

Keywords: Nepal Earthquake, Accessibility, Humanitarian Assistance, Persons with Disabilities, Inclusive Emergency Respons

## BACKGROUND

A major earthquake on the 25th of April 2015 (addressed as 'Nepal earthquake' hereafter) resulted in the deaths of 9,000 and injured over 23,000 people [1]. The earthquake and an estimated 300 aftershocks destroyed infrastructures and livelihoods of approximately 2.8 million people and affected a further estimated 8 million [2]. In addition, it stretched the capacity of every humanitarian agency involved. Persons with disabilities were one of the severely-affected groups during and post-earthquake [3] [4] [5], however, the number of persons with disabilities affected, their experiences and the experiences of emergency responders and humanitarian assistance providers are barely focused in the academe.

Earthquakes and other natural disasters have detrimental consequences on the health, social, and economic welfare of persons with disabilities [6] [7] [8] [9]. This vulnerable group is disproportionately disadvantaged in humanitarian crises due to underlying disaster risk drivers such as their inherent and existing conditions, social inequalities, and disparity in accessible humanitarian assistance provided. This not only constrains their responses to the

disaster, but also shapes and deepens their vulnerability to further hazards in the post-disaster stage. Therefore, inclusive and accessible emergency response for persons with disabilities and the role of emergency responders and humanitarian assistance providers are crucial to ensure that the suffering of persons with disabilities are minimized at the time of disaster.

Nepal's institutional setup for disaster management dates back to 1982 with the National Calamity Relief Act and since then it has made progress in developing disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and programmes. Nepal has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (CRPD) and adopted disaster management frameworks such as Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. These frameworks have played a significant role in advancing the agenda for DiDRM in Nepal. Several DRR programmes facilitated by governmental and non-governmental organisations indicated that Nepal had been actively involved in pre-earthquake DiDRM campaigns. However, despite international frameworks and

national policies governing DiDRM and preparedness programmes, Nepal was considered unprepared for the earthquake and was extremely challenged in providing accessible and inclusive emergency response to persons with disabilities [3] [4] [5].

## **OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to explore first hand experiences faced by emergency responders and humanitarian assistance providers that, when addressed, will promote improved policies, processes and programmes around inclusive and accessible emergency and humanitarian response, recovery and rehabilitation. In order to achieve the above objective, this study aims to:

Evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of disability inclusive and accessible emergency response during disaster.

Identify good practices and barriers faced by emergency responders and humanitarian assistance providers in facilitating inclusive and accessible recovery and rehabilitation post disaster.

For the purpose of this study, Kathmandu valley is selected as the research site as it covers some of the hardest earthquake-hit areas (Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Kritipur, and Madhyapur Thimi) (Figure 1) with the second highest death toll and the highest number of injury; 1,751 deaths and 13,102 injuries (Figure 2) [10]. Kathmandu

valley, a capital city and hub for all development organizations, is expected to be the most prepared district in Nepal. However, it is also the most populated and hardest to evacuate at the time of earthquake due to its densely built-up area and narrow streets. This setting allows the study to explore experiences faced by emergency responders and humanitarian assistance providers in assisting persons with disabilities during and post-earthquake.



Figure 1 (Map of Nepal with hardest earthquake-hit districts)

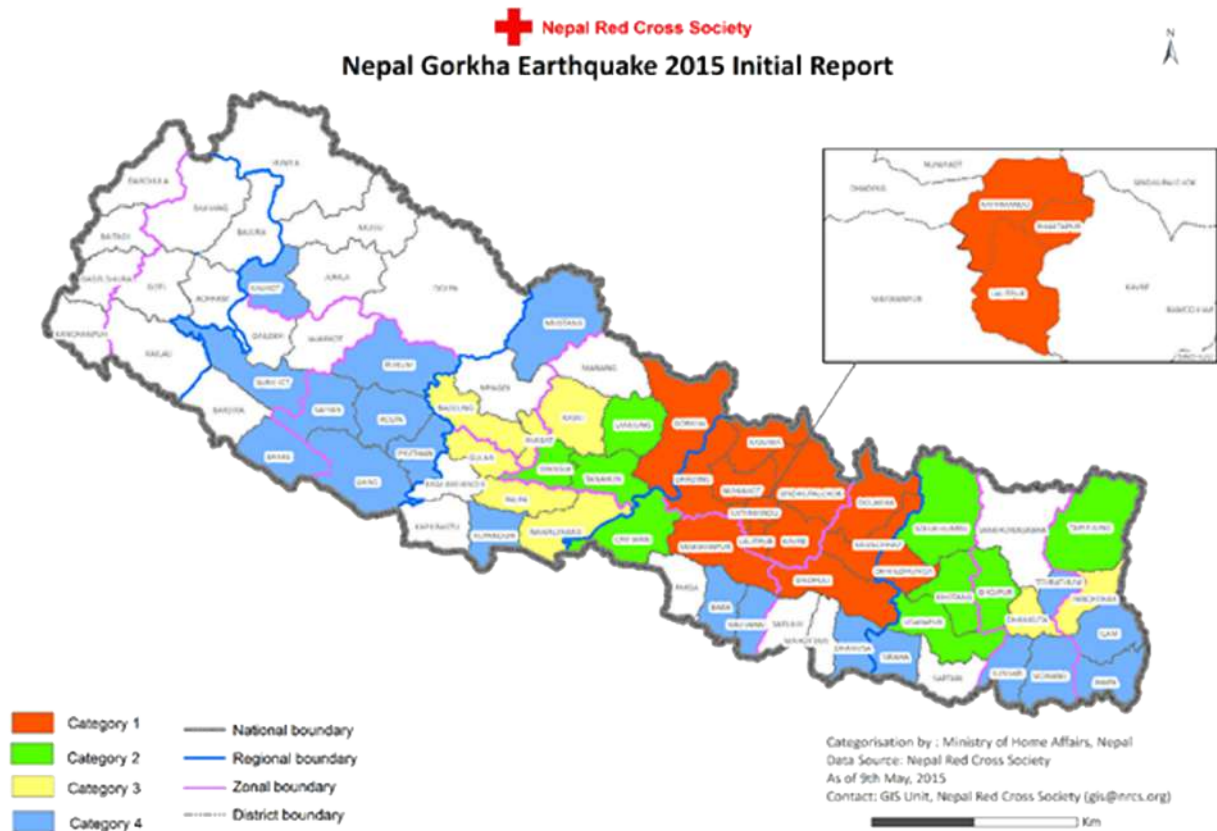


Figure 2 (Table of death toll and injuries) 15 Hardest Hit Districts by Nepal Earthquake 2015<sup>14</sup>

SN	DISTRICTS	TOTAL DEATH	INJURY
1	Sindhupalchok	3570	1569
2	Kathmandu	1233	7950
3	Nuwakot	1112	1050
4	Rasuwa	681	771
5	Dhading	680	1218
6	Gorkha	450	952
7	Bhaktapur	333	2101
8	Kavre	330	1179
9	Lalitpur	185	3051
10	Dolkha	180	661
11	Ramechhap	42	134
12	Makawanpur	33	229
13	Solukhumbu	22	100
14	Okhaldhunga	20	61
15	Sindhuli	15	230

14 Government of Nepal 2015, Ministry of Home Affairs, Data on Earthquake. Available at: <http://www.drrportal.gov.np/reports>

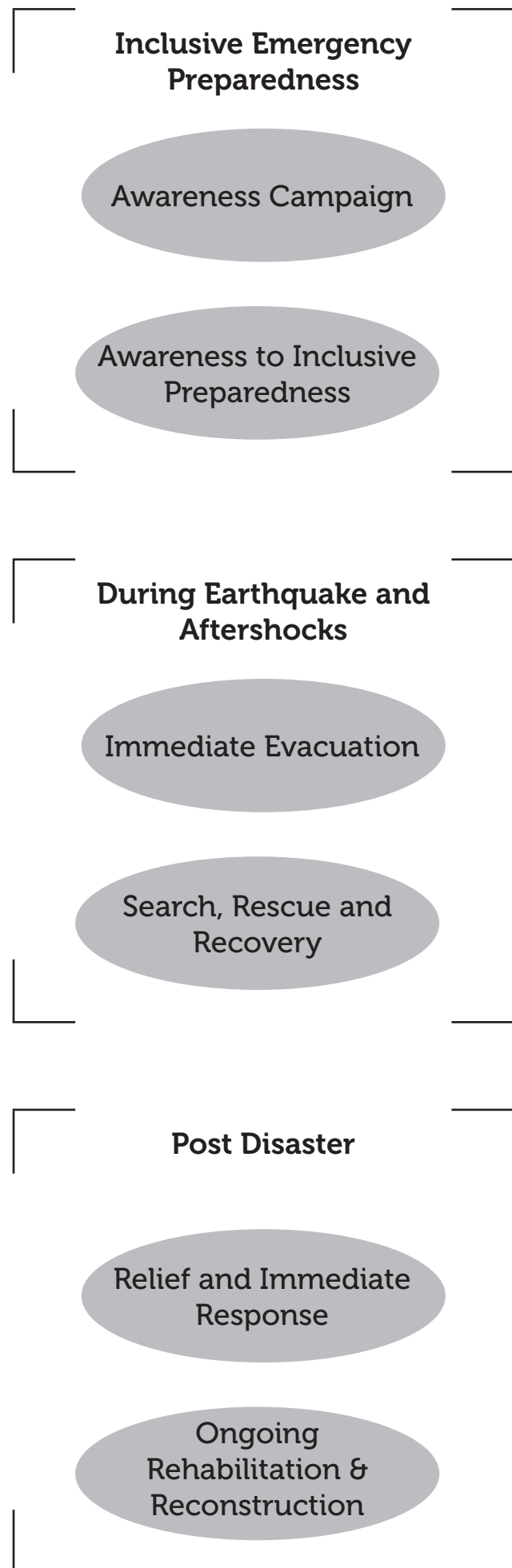
## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative methodological approach using semi-structured interviews with 20 key stakeholders representing DPOs, DRR policy makers, Nepal government's emergency response team and international humanitarian assistance providers. Interviews took place between June 2016 and March 2018. Stakeholders were recruited through purposive sampling facilitated through main researcher's professional links and networks<sup>15</sup>. Semi-structured interview method has been a powerful yet flexible tool for capturing the stakeholder's experiences. It is powerful in the sense that it has eliminated the risk of deviating from the topics or themes closely related to the research questions. It is flexible because it has allowed the researcher to be reflexive during and after each interview. Data was coded manually and analysed using thematic analysis.

## FINDINGS

Three key themes and six subthemes emerged from the stakeholder interviews

15 Ethical approval was obtained from Liverpool John Moores University ethics committee and Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC).



## **INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

Theme 'Inclusive Emergency Preparedness' emerged from discussions around DiDRM and preparedness programmes. These discussions also raised questions about awareness campaigns, accessible resources available to match preparedness plans and emergency needs of persons with disabilities.

## **AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

The majority of stakeholders mentioned awareness initiatives from both government and non-governmental organisations and some believed that these efforts might have mitigated the extent of devastation.

"If awareness about inclusive disaster risk reduction and earthquake safety had not been circulated through national, local and community radios and television, I think, the devastation would have been 20 times bigger."  
(R 1)

"Awareness and preparedness programs have definitely helped the government run hospitals to react to the emergency situation effectively."  
(R 2)

All stakeholders reported to have attended numerous awareness raising workshops, conferences and consultations. Some were critical of these being non-inclusive and non-country specific.

## **AWARENESS TO INCLUSIVE PREPAREDNESS**

Whilst awareness efforts had been apparent, this study identifies gaps between awareness campaigns, training, policies and practice. A majority of emergency responders reported inclusive emergency preparedness in practice as "negligible" and "focus-less".

"All the workshops and seminars I attended mainly talked about infection control and managing emergency cares in hospitals. They did not address the issues around inclusive and accessible preparedness and recovery processes." (R 4)

"For Armed Police Force the financial and resource focus has always been around peace building and response to disasters; inclusive preparedness is discussed more during seminars, trainings and in policies but less in actual implementation." (R 15)

The only stakeholders reported to have some elements of DiDRM programmes and some accessible resources were DPOs. Despite awareness, none of the stakeholders reported of having a disability-inclusive emergency action plan for earthquake or any other natural disaster. The lack of planning is reported to have led to making emergency short-term decisions and an inability to provide appropriate and accessible services to persons with disabilities.

## **DURING EARTHQUAKE AND AFTERSHOCKS**

This theme emerged from discussions around execution and effectiveness of inclusive SAR. Emergency responders reported that numerous aftershocks made SAR challenging and risky and those persons with disabilities 'were not prioritised'.

## **IMMEDIATE EVACUATION**

Most emergency responders reported 'not' to have assisted in evacuation of persons with disabilities due to the sudden and unpredictable nature of the earthquake.

"Everybody needed help at that time. We did not have special provision to look for people with disabilities. We did not have any record of where they lived, so how could we look for them?" (R 12)

Only stakeholders who provided living accommodation for persons with disabilities pre-earthquake were involved in evacuation.

"We evacuated all our residents. However, aftershocks made evacuating people extremely hard; there was no safe space to take persons with disabilities from our shelter to." (R 5)

Those who evacuated persons with disabilities reported of the lack of emergency evacuation mechanism/equipment and lack of accessible emergency shelters.

## **SEARCH, RESCUE AND RECOVERY**

Several emergency responders reported of struggle in search, rescue and recovery of persons with disabilities because to inadequacy of data on where they lived and lack of accessible equipment. Many had to wait for the international team to arrive with their equipment before being able to conduct proper SAR and recovery.

"There was this paralyzed man in my ward, their house was completely destroyed. His family members managed to get out but we could not dig him out from the ruins. Chinese team recovered his body on the fifth day." (R 3)

"We were notified of a trapped disabled 5 year old child under a badly damaged building on the second day of the first earthquake. We could hear a faint cry but could not locate where it was coming from. The cry got weaker. It took us two days to find the body of the child." (R 11)

DPOs reported that they did not reach out for persons with disabilities who were not in their contact list and acknowledged that persons with disabilities who lived alone or relied on family support or those who begged for living were not provided with any emergency accessible relief supplies. Stakeholders also reported deaths of many persons with disabilities however; no official records have been located.

## **POST DISASTER**

This theme emerged from stakeholder discussions about their experiences of providing immediate and long-term accessible relief support, rehabilitation and reconstruction aid, and lessons learnt.

## **RELIEF AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE**

Many stakeholders reported a severe lack of coordination between the government, INGOs and DPOs initially, which resulted in a wide variation and duplication in distribution of relief materials and services. Eventually, when coordinated cluster's relief distribution started, it only covered PWDs affiliated with DPOs or who made formal requests.

Psychological impacts caused by the lack of accessible facilities in temporary shelters noted were obvious.

"PWDs who stayed in our camp were so scared by the earthquake and stressed by the lack of accessible facilities that they struggled to sleep at night. Continuous aftershocks made their stress worse; they were in total panic." (R 7)

Some facilitated counseling within the camps whilst others reported using group activities like singing and quizzes to help manage trauma. "Because our tents were on bare grounds, there was no access to water and sanitation. Toilets for wheelchair users were the biggest

problems as the makeshift toilets were just a hole in the ground and some plastic sheets wrapped around some bamboo sticks." (R 4)

All reported problems with providing and managing accessible toilets and washing facilities in temporary shelters especially for wheelchair users and women with disabilities.

## **ONGOING REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION**

Many DPOs reported to have continued with inclusive and accessible recovery and rehabilitation programmes including financial aid as well as psychological counselling. Despite this experience of earthquake, none of the stakeholders reported to have designed any action plan for future natural disaster/earthquakes.

"We are focused on rehabilitations and reconstructions. We do not know how to design inclusive action plan for future disasters." (R 7)

Since the earthquake, there has been accelerated advocacy efforts from DPOs calling state to construct accessible infrastructures.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study identifies that the Nepal government with the aid of UN agencies, bilateral agencies and international organisations have worked on improving DiDRM policies, programmes and practices to strengthen inclusive disaster preparedness. However, a serious gap lies between policies, preparedness and the execution of it at the time of disaster, especially for persons with disabilities. These gaps include a dire lack of inclusive and accessible equipment and resources; lack of and failure to implement and utilize knowledge and resources available; lack of data and guidelines on DIER and SAR to emergency responders; and lack of communication and coordination between emergency responders and DPOs. It was evident that Nepal had progressed notably in relation to policy formation to include the rights, needs, and dignity of PWDs in line with CRPD, Hyogo Framework for Action and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. However, it was equally evident that the participation of persons with disabilities in policy drafting and phases of disaster preparedness and management process was minimal, leading to gaps in policy implementation and inadequate inclusive and accessible emergency service design and delivery. Many DiDRM activities treated persons with disabilities as mere recipients of the services resulting in segregation from mainstream policies and programmes.

The government has recently developed a Post Disaster Recovery Framework [11], which includes the needs of persons with disabilities. Many DPOs and INGOs have accelerated their efforts in needs assessment, situation analysis and DiDRM to bridge knowledge and resources gaps since the earthquake. It is clear that without channeling local, national, multilateral, and bilateral implementation in shaping Nepal's ability to prevent, mitigate, and prepare to respond to disasters, Nepal will have a major challenge ahead in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Nationwide disability inclusive and accessible emergency preparedness, response and SAR toolkit that will serve as a resource for emergency responders, humanitarian assistance providers and DPOs to prepare comprehensive SAR, evacuation and recovery plans

Including persons with disabilities in planning, designing and building disability inclusive and accessible emergency shelters.

Building a bank of desegregated data, skilled volunteers and accessible equipment to meet the emergency needs of persons with disabilities at every level of state and community.

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# THE DISABILITY RIGHTS PROMOTION INTERNATIONAL – ASIAN WORKPLACE APPROACH THAT RESPECTS EQUALITY: A FOCUS ON ACCESSIBLE WORKPLACES IN NEPAL

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Sagar Prasai<sup>16</sup> | Alexis Buettgen  
Emily McIntyre

## ABSTRACT

This article outlines a model of employment for women and men with disabilities that encompasses a diverse yet particular approach. Through a disability rights lens, employment outcomes are achieved through addressing disabling barriers created by society rather than changing the individual to fit within society's norms. The Disability Rights Promotion International – Asian Workplace Approach that Respects Equality (DRPI-AWARE) model shifts the focus on training job seekers with disabilities according to their perceived deficits, toward a focus on employers and the workplace. This article presents the results and outcomes of this employment model for men and women with disabilities in various sectors of the labour market in Kathmandu, Nepal. To date, the DRPI- AWARE project has successfully matched 89 people with disabilities (40 women and 49 men) with paid jobs in their communities. We provide examples of employers who demonstrate the ease and benefits of creating inclusive and accessible workplaces.

Through exploring the systemic reasons for their unemployment or underemployment, the DRPI-AWARE project team has been working with employers, employment agencies, disabled people's organizations, government officials, human resources personnel and other stakeholders to increase employment opportunities for men and women with disabilities. Over the past four years, the DRPI-AWARE project team has shifted the focus from supply to demand in the labour market by focusing on job skill identification and identification of jobs, rather than training individuals with disabilities. Key strategies include building employer knowledge through education, bridging gaps between training and job placements for people with disabilities, and bolstering success stories of employers and employed people with disabilities to celebrate leaders and role models. This approach promotes effective job matches between employers and job seekers, and

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supports workplace adaptations which lead to secure jobs and sustainability over time as employers learn the economic and social advantage of hiring people with disabilities.

**Key words:** Nepal; employment; disability; rights; disability rights

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Disability Rights Promotion International - Asian Workplace Approach that Respects Equality (DRPI-AWARE) project has put in place a model that enables employers to re-think and re-envision more inclusive workplaces for current and potential employees with disabilities, and for their general workforce. This article presents the DRPI-AWARE model by describing and demonstrating how research, monitoring and inclusive employment practices are creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Kathmandu, Nepal.

This article presents: the background of the DRPI-AWARE project and DRPI methodology; how the project is re-contextualizing training people with disabilities for employment; recognition of employment outcomes for people with disabilities; a discussion for quality employment in the workplace for job seekers and employers giving examples of how to incorporate accessibility into the workplace.

## **DRPI AWARE MODEL OF ACCESSIBILITY**

DRPI is a collaborative project that establishes a comprehensive, sustainable international system to monitor human rights of people with disabilities. Monitoring is a tool for empowerment, giving a voice to people who have been marginalized by society, and aims to achieve social justice in the workplace. The AWARE project builds on the work of DRPI to address barriers for people with disabilities in the labour force in Dhaka (Bangladesh), Hyderabad (India), and Kathmandu (Nepal). This article will explore the particular barriers and opportunities to employment for people with disabilities in Nepal. The project team has formed partnerships with employers and disabled people's organizations, including members of the National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal (NFDN), to mobilize opportunities and strengthen employment prospects for people with disabilities in Nepal. Through these partnerships, much of the work is undertaken by a local country coordinator and Work Placement coordinator in Kathmandu, who support job placements, research, and data collection. International consultants also provide subject matter expertise and experience with

disability and employment issues and opportunities for accommodations. Barriers to workplace accessibility and challenges faced by job seekers with disabilities in the labour force have been assessed and addressed through ongoing dialogue among employers, job seekers, local staff, and through the support of project team members from Canada.

## DRPI Methodology

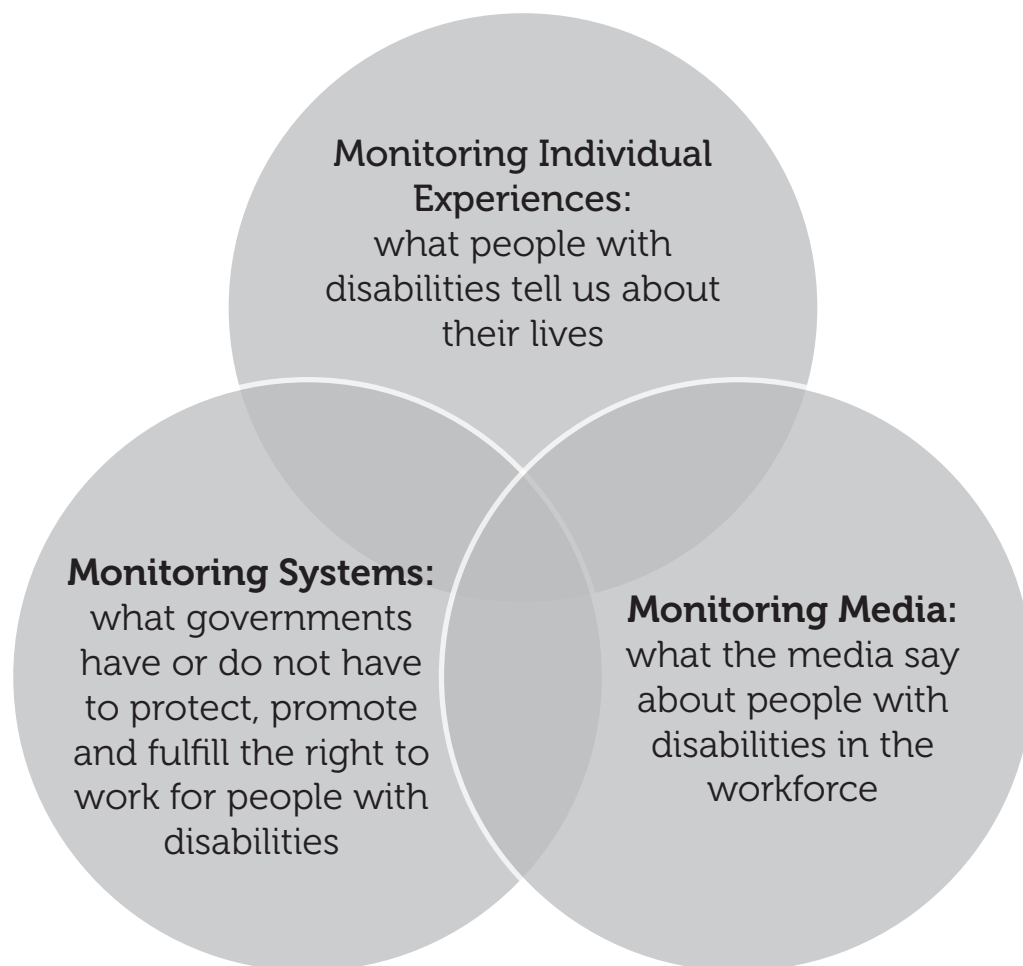
The DRPI methodology emphasizes that people with disabilities are holders of rights, and shatters previous models that consider people with disabilities to be objects of charity. People with disabilities are entitled to enjoy the same rights and freedoms as all other people. The methodology has been developed to monitor implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). As of December 2017, the CRPD has been ratified by more than 150 countries, including Nepal ([www.un.org/disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities)). Ratification of the CRPD implies that states accept their legal obligation under the Convention and enact the necessary legislation. The CRPD explicitly addresses employment in Article 27 such that:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia. (United Nations, 2017)

Article 27 explicitly addresses employment and prohibits discrimination in the workplace, promotes self - employment, encourages entrepreneurship, as well as employment for people with disabilities in the public sector and in the private sector.

The DRPI methodology was applied in the DRPI AWARE project to explicitly monitor the implementation of Article 27 in relation to work and employment. This monitoring methodology has three broad areas to assess the rights of people with disabilities which includes: monitoring systems, monitoring individual experiences and monitoring media which is highlight in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: DRPI Methodology and broad areas of monitoring



The monitoring methodology, shown in Figure 1, has been adapted in this project to look specifically at employment outcomes and general trends in the workforce for people with disabilities. This monitoring takes into account other characteristics that impact the experiences of disability in society including gender, ethnicity and race. DRPI monitoring recognizes that equal access to employment is a human right that respects human diversity and inclusion. Monitoring activities of the labour market in Nepal has shown that people with disabilities are underemployed, and that job outcomes could be improved. Through understanding the systemic reasons for their under

and unemployment, the project team is working with employers, employment agencies, disabled people's organizations, government officials, human resources personnel and other stakeholders to increase employment opportunities for men and women with disabilities. When an individual with a disability gains access to paid employment, it also benefits indirect beneficiaries such as family members as they are contributing to the household income. Moreover, the community and labour market gains valuable insights from individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences. Greater diversity can lead to innovation and inclusion in society.

## Going beyond Training to Job Placement

Employment programming for people with disabilities has tended to focus primarily on skill-based training and job readiness in many countries, including Nepal. The DRPI-AWARE approach recognizes that this focus emphasizes the deficits and limitations of individuals with disabilities. The DRPI-AWARE team has found little evidence that training individuals with disabilities leads to non-precarious and long-term, secure employment. Indeed, some training programs mis-diagnose barriers to employment. We have found that the barriers are not the limitations of the individual, rather that the barriers are found in physically, systemically, and attitudinally inaccessible workplaces. Using the CRPD as a guideline, DRPI-AWARE is moving a trend towards identifying the skills that people already have and finding jobs that require those skills. This avoids the potential for a mismatch of individual skills and the skills required for job placements. This means that training is no longer based on individuals' deficiencies (the supply side of the labour market), but focused on the needs for skills in the local labour market (the demand side).

We have learned that it is crucial to avoid disincentives that prevent sustainable employment. Concentrating on the supply side (job seekers) rather than the demand side (employers) has not proved very effective or sustainable. We have found that jobs are more likely to materialize if we change

our emphasis. For example, we have learned that working with employers in collaboration with people with disabilities has led to employment. Employers have provided us with key information that we have been able to build into our methodology. They have told us that they want to do their own on-the-job training; Curricula Vitae are important but not necessarily a deciding factor; and job fairs have a down-side. As such, a sustainable and viable hiring model has been developed and ongoing relationships are key to meeting challenges as they arise. We are listening carefully and avoiding activities that employers have told us are not effective or that they do not find helpful. Instead, we are developing strategies that meet the needs of employers and the demands of the labour market.

Once we have a detailed understanding of a job, then we can match the job seeker's skills with that job. Making that match, is the core of our program. This matching process involves a careful analysis of job seeker skills. This analysis process is organic in practice but meticulously focused on skills. Workplace coordinators develop a professional relationship with job seekers to identify relevant skill information, take transferable skills into account, and determine which jobs people want and which jobs people have the skills to do. The matching process also involves job task analysis. This process involves

understanding the employer's needs and requirements, as well as an understanding of the skills required to do the work.

We have found there is a need for an ongoing relationship with employers and their associations. We are meeting employers where they are at, and understanding their hiring needs. A key component is building strong Employer Councils that are guiding sustainable initiatives for engaging other employers, and presenting inclusive employers with an award recognition. This builds confidence in our process and ensures that if issues arise we can support the employer and find ways to work through the barriers. It also ensures a smooth transition to inclusive employment.

### **Outcomes – A Model that Works**

To date, the DRPI-AWARE project has supported over 300 people with disabilities to obtain full-time employment. This includes 97 women and 202 men<sup>17</sup>. An additional 45 people with disabilities have been hired part-time since the beginning of the project.

In Nepal, local project coordinators have connected with 250 job seekers with disabilities across Kathmandu. These connections have assisted job seekers to identify job opportunities that match their skills and work interests and facilitate a successful

17 In India - 48 Women and 121 Men; in Nepal - 40 Women, 49 Men; in Bangladesh - 9 Women and 32 Men

transition into employment when possible. In addition, more than 150 employers and employers' associations have been engaged in the project, with at least half of these contacts demonstrating interest on the part of the employer, taking tangible steps to create an inclusive workplace, and or hiring candidates with disabilities. Employers who have hired people with disabilities with the support of DRPI- AWARE have returned to local Work Placement coordinators and country coordinators to seek more candidates with disabilities when employment openings arise. Employers recognize that this precise job matching and workplace accommodation model is solving their human resource problem by providing them with quality, skilled employees, and support in designing accessible work environments.

Figure 2 illustrates the employment outcomes of the 89 people with disabilities employed in Kathmandu from April 2015 to September 2017. Employment for men and women with disabilities is quite similar overall, the exception being in the Information Technology industry (IT) which has 2.8 times as many males in the industry. This suggests, that the DRPI AWARE has had success in its implementation, as the grey literature states that women with disabilities in Nepal face double discrimination (Dhungana, 2006; Dhungana & Kusakabe, 2010; Lamichhane, 2012). According to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (2014), about 4 out of 5 or 80 percent of the

employees in the tourism industry were male. Despite this general industry pattern, the DRPI methodology has been successful in advocating and finding employment for women with disabilities both in the tourism industry and service industry more generally. The DRPI AWARE project in Nepal has employed 89 people with disabilities in the workplace (40 of whom are women and 49 are male). The graph highlights those industries where people with disabilities have been hired including the pharmaceutical industry, IT, hospitality, service, finance, retail, customer service, non-government, and government. Specifically, 49 people (24 women and 25 men) have gained employment in the hospitality, service and finance sector and 19 people (5 women and 14 men) have gained employment in the IT sector. Further, at current 76.4 percent of people with disabilities that have been employed through the DRPI AWARE project have been in the IT, hospitality, service and finance sector, which suggests that further work needs to be done with other industries.

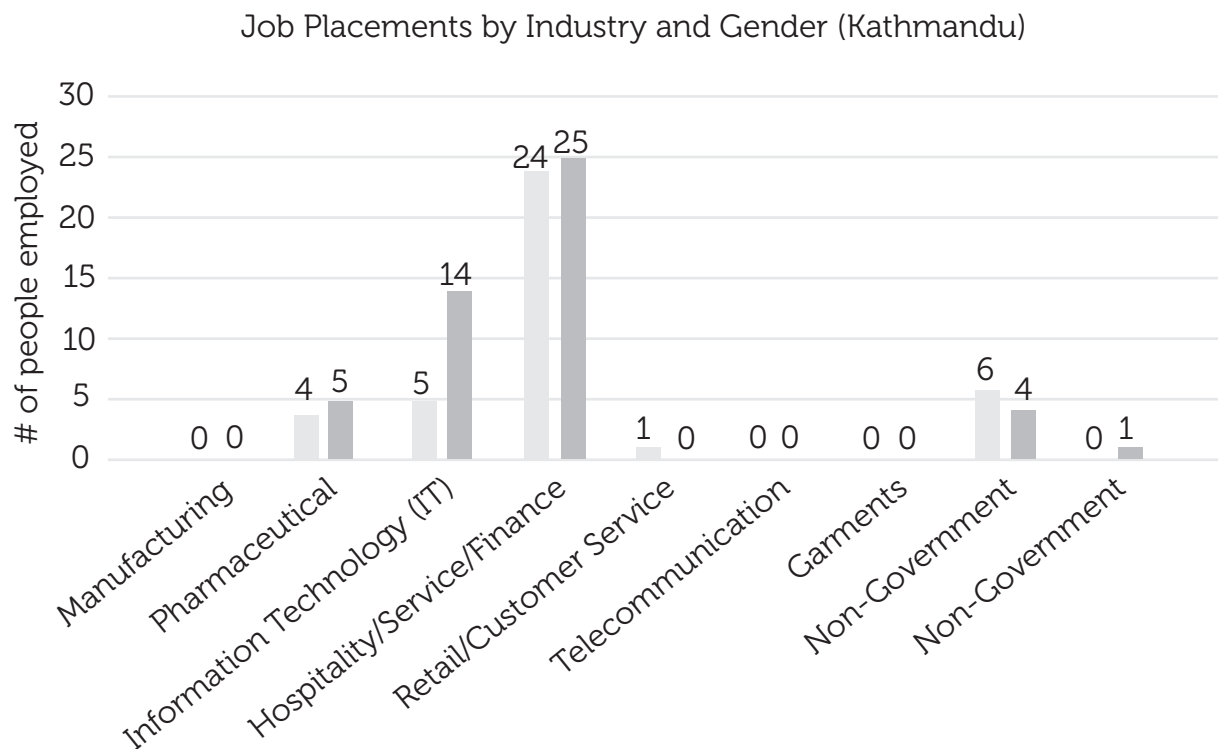


Figure 2: The graph above includes employment outcomes from DRPI-AWARE in Kathmandu from May 2015 to April 2017. The graph highlights those industries where the most people have been hired. Specifically, 49 people (24 women and 25 men) have gained employment in the hospitality, service and finance sector; another 19 people (5 women and 14 men) have gained employment in the IT sector. Overall, 89 people with disabilities, including 40 women and 49 men have gained employment in 10 different industries across the city.

## QUALITY EMPLOYMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Quality employment in the workplace means obtaining regular, salaried and formal jobs. The DRPI-AWARE team also defines quality employment as that which understands and matches job seekers' and employer's needs, as well as ensuring accessibility in all stages of employment.

### Job Seekers and Employees

In the absence of quality employment, people with disabilities may turn to precarious work that is unpredictable, irregular, lacks worker protection and benefits, and promotes a sense of economic insecurity. People with disabilities employed in precarious work are at risk of being underpaid and undervalued for their work. The working conditions for people with disabilities are central to the work within the DRPI AWARE project. Working conditions are carefully evaluated to ensure workplace policies, procedures, supports and adaptations are available for employees with disabilities. Working conditions are monitored to ensure that there is no risk of exposure to physical, biological, chemical, radioactive, or other hazards. Work Placement coordinators conduct skill identification assessments with job seekers to clearly understand their specific skills and requirements in terms of workplace adaptations. This skill mapping provides the coordinator with guidance when identifying potential employment opportunities, narrowing in on skill matching depending on a company's requirements, and accessing adaptation requirements to ensure success throughout the hiring and

employment process. For example, it is important to ensure that no barriers exist during the interview process, including communication or discriminatory attitudes.

The DRPI-AWARE model promotes sustainable hiring and employment based on considerations of health and safety, income adequacy, and the availability of peer support in the workplace. Training and advancement opportunities are also considered for potential employment opportunities. Ultimately, quality employment safeguards economic empowerment and increased quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

### From the Employer's Perspective

In addition to understanding job seekers skills and abilities, it is also important to understand employer's needs. By identifying job qualifications and requirements, Work Placement coordinators can carefully match the employer's needs with a job seeker with a disability. If additional skills are required, many employers have indicated their preference to conduct their own on-the-job training which is tailored to their company and specific operations.

The DRPI team provides transitional support and advice during the hiring and training process to ensure any accessibility requirements are addressed upfront and the worker with the disability is not disadvantaged or excluded due to a lack of accessibility. For example, if an individual with a hearing impairment requires a sign language interpreter, he or she will need this accommodation to allow equal access during the interview process, allowing clear communication between the employer and the job seeker. Employers can anticipate that people with disabilities may be applying for their job opening and can identify needed accommodations during the interview. By offering all job candidates the opportunity to request disability-related accommodations during the interview process, this will minimize miscommunication and address barriers from the beginning. Through this open dialogue, it makes the future employee more likely to gain trust, be successful in their position, and increase employee retention. In the DRPI experience, there are few if any accommodations if the job matching is accurate and well carried out.

The DRPI-AWARE team has worked closely and built trust with employers to dispel some of the stereotypes and assumptions held about people with disabilities. Workshops have been conducted with senior managers and human resources professionals about how to gain business advantage through inclusion. These educational workshops facilitate dialogue among

employers and the disability sector. This dialogue provides education for management and operational staff, to overcome discrimination and negative myths about the skills and abilities of people with disabilities. A focus on the demand-side approach (that is the employer) has been found to increase the likelihood of employment, reduce the stigma towards people with disabilities and create lasting change and employment outcomes.

The DRPI-AWARE team in Nepal has developed a locally relevant employment model for employing people with disabilities. In collaboration with NFDN, there is an increased understanding of the gaps in services and supports for employers and job seekers in Nepal. For instance, Nepal has market shortages that lead to challenges for employers to balance supply and demand. Through innovative thinking and inclusion of employees with disabilities, employers in Nepal can work toward a better balance that meets their supply needs and demands for goods or services produced. Employment opportunities have been created through onboarding employers, particularly in the tourism, service, finance and telecom industry thus far. For example, Hotel Hardik has been an inclusive employer and have made their workplace accessible to an employee who uses a wheelchair. By becoming accessible, Hotel Hardik can attract customers with disabilities as well. Another employer who created an accessible



workplace, Nepalaya Publication, built a ramp in place of stairs at the entrance to accommodate a newly-hired employee who uses a wheelchair. The ramp installation allowed Nepalaya Publication to take full advantage of this employee's skills and assets for their business. These are examples of employers who are committed to accessibility and equality in the workplace, and hiring individuals based on their skills. These adaptations could be extended to other potential employees with various physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, invisible or co-occurring disabilities. The removal of simple barriers allows employers to gain access to an under-employed labour force ready to work.

The DRPI-AWARE recognizes those employers who have made positive social change to enhance their business. Through collaborative partnerships with engaged employers, the project team is working to build local sustainable Employer Councils that promote inclusive employment by celebrating champion leading employers. The Inclusive Employer Awards have been presented to employers in Nepal as a way to recognize their commitment and celebrate employers who are accelerating inclusion and accessibility in their workplace.

In addition to employer recognition, the DRPI-AWARE project has developed a full public relations campaign. We have created videos, pamphlets, billboards, and radio clips. The purpose of this campaign

is to raise awareness of the skills and abilities of persons with disabilities, facilitate role models and promote sustainability. There is also a need to shift the emphasis from training to employer-driven approaches to help move toward a focus on the demand side rather than the supply side of labour. This campaign highlights persons with disabilities as equal citizens with the rights and abilities to work productively in the local labour market.

## **CONCLUSION**

The DRPI AWARE model challenges traditional employment models by addressing the society built barriers that exist within workplaces. Progressive employers at the forefront of innovation are recognizing the value of inclusive and accessible workplaces for both their existing workforce, their customers, and the ability to hire talented and skilled jobseekers with disabilities.

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## About NFDN:

NFDN, A national umbrella body of more than 335 Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), works for promoting, protecting and ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities through its working strategies: Advocacy, Awareness raising, Capacity building, Networking & Collaboration throughout the country.

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## About CBM:

CBM is an international development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the poorest communities of the world irrespective of race, gender or religious belief. CBM envisions an inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential.

Based on its core values and over 100 years of professional expertise, CBM addresses poverty both as a cause and as a consequence of disability, and works in partnership with local and national civil society organisations to create an inclusive society for all.

CBM's approach to development is Disability-Inclusive Development since it believes that this is the most effective way to bring positive change to the lives of persons with disabilities living in poverty and their communities. CBM has been working in Nepal since 1982 and supporting a diverse mix of partners engaged in eye health, ear and hearing care, community based inclusive development, community mental health, inclusive livelihood, physical rehabilitation services, inclusive education and accessibility for inclusion in Nepal.

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