Reducing the risk of disasters in rural communities of Gaibandha, Bangladesh

Findings and lessons learned from an impact evaluation of long-term DiDRR interventions (2009-2021)

Evaluation Snapshot

In early 2022, CBM commissioned an impact evaluation of the disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction (DiDRR) initiative implemented in partnership with the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) and Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK). Activities under review took place from 2009 to 2021 in highly flood-prone areas across the Gaibandha district in northern Bangladesh.

The evaluation sought to identify the impact of the initiative on the target communities, particularly on persons with disabilities and their families, and provide recommendations to support the development of inclusive and replicable models in similar contexts.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

An in-depth needs assessment and context analysis are essential for addressing the community needs and leaving no one behind. This requires consideration of intersectional issues and the identification of persons with disabilities using the functioning approach.

Formation and capacity development of Self-help Groups (SHGs) of persons with disabilities and disaster management committees at village level are important steps for developing an inclusive community based DRR (CBDRR) model. These structures are effective in building confidence of persons with disabilities, including women, and encouraging community participation in DRR.

The Gaibandha model appears to place greater emphasis on “disability-specific” actions, rather than “mainstreaming” disability in DRR. Strengthening the implementation of a twin-track approach by balancing out both tracks is important for establishing more cohesive approaches to inclusive CBDRR. This could be done by increasing resources allocated for broad community engagement. Moreover, involving wider communities and persons with disabilities early in the intervention and design activities can help build closer links between the two components.

Inclusive consultations and meaningful engagement of the community and local government in the entire DRM cycle is essential. This should be combined with systematic training and tailored capacity enhancement of SHGs and local structures to help ensure the success of any intervention.

The Gaibandha Model focuses on interlinked interventions to build resilient and inclusive communities:

1. **Strengthen** groups of persons with disabilities and their representative groups.
2. **Advocate** with local government for inclusive disaster risk management (DRM).
3. **Build** accessible infrastructure and involve the community in disaster risk reduction.
4. **Work with schools** to strengthen household and community awareness and preparedness.
5. **Promote** and support sustainable, resilient livelihoods.

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1 A functioning approach to disability focuses on what a person is able to do in their lived environment. Understanding disability from a functioning perspective is directly relevant to DRR as it enables the disproportionate risk that persons with disabilities face being readily identified and directly acted upon (Robinson A., Kani S. Disability-inclusive DRR: Information, risk and practical action in Shaw R & Izumi (2014))
Key Findings and Lesson Learned

5 Provision of accessibility and reasonable accommodation, including accessible infrastructure, assistive devices, and rehabilitation support, increases participation of persons with disabilities and maximizes their resilience.

6 Effective advocacy for disability inclusion and DRR starts by empowering rights-holders, sensitizing duty-bearers, building mutual understanding, and solidifying relationships between government and representative groups of persons with disabilities.

7 Referral systems and networking with service providers can minimize gaps resulting from limitation in resources.

Engaging persons with disabilities in employment generating activities and provision of alternative livelihoods increases confidence and coping capacities. These measures should always be informed by disaster risk and disability-specific livelihoods assessment based on: (i) thorough market analysis to assess viability and demand of local business and products; (ii) local capacity assessment; and (iii) context-specific feasibility study that considers geographic location and resources.

8 Key Recommendations

1. Strengthen the twin-track approach for achieving equality of rights and opportunities for all persons with disabilities in DRR by focusing equally on both components: Track 1) removing barriers and facilitating access; Track 2) providing targeted solutions and individualized support.

2. Plan a bottom-up process to build local leadership. This should focus on developing technical capacities, providing financial resources, and facilitating technical assistance for representative groups of persons with disabilities to engage in DRR leadership beyond advocacy.

3. Advocate for expansion of the SHG model and allocation of resources from government, non-government, and private sectors.

4. Address underlying challenges pertaining to disability-inclusive development at individual and environmental level (e.g., health and rehabilitation, livelihood, infrastructure) for meaningful participation, effective engagement, and inclusion in DRR.

5. Ensure methodological consistency in disaggregated data collection in DRR using a functioning approach by adopting the Washington Group Questions together with appropriate tools and capacity development of key stakeholders, including government and representative groups of persons with disabilities.

6. Advocate for institutionalizing school-based DiDRR and involve children and youth, as well as parents, following the household empowerment approach. Establish stronger linkages between schools, representative groups of persons with disabilities, and disaster management committees to support this work.

7. Document lessons learned and good practices on disability-inclusive DRR throughout the project duration as evidence for real-time advocacy that supports sustainability and scaling up of the DiDRR model. Arrange exposure visits to enhance impact and replication, and ensure wide dissemination of learning, tools, and resources to broader stakeholders and platforms.