



Project Experience

Disability inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) project



Bringing hope, dignity and meaning to life

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Preface

Natural disasters are a part of everyday life for the people of Bangladesh. Floods, river bank erosions, cyclones, tornadoes, drought are regularly striking Bangladesh. Influence of climate change is increasing the frequency, ferocity and geographical coverage of natural disasters in the country. The poor people are hit and endure most in disaster situations. Among the poor the persons with disabilities are the most vulnerable and suffer the most. Poverty and disability increase the vulnerability of persons with disabilities in a disaster.

Most agencies usually respond to the disasters with emergency relief and rehabilitation support. Emergency response and relief do not necessarily prepare and build the capacity of communities and persons with disabilities to face future disasters. Remaining unprepared they continue to lose their assets, stay poor & vulnerable and hence plunge deeper into poverty with every new disaster. It is like an inescapable cycle. On the contrary, if the vulnerabilities of the people to disaster risks could be reduced and their capacities built then the potential threats of damage could be minimized and assets saved allowing them to quickly recover and progress towards development.

In Bangladesh, Government and NGO sectors are emphasizing on disaster preparedness and risk reduction. However, the concerns of persons with disabilities are not always considered. If this issue is left unattended it will only increase the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities. It is hence imperative that the issue of disability is mainstreamed into the actions of all mainstream disaster management actors at state and non-state level.

CBM, Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), Gono Unnayan Kendra (GUK) and many others believe that this should and can change. A pilot project on Disability inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) was implemented by CDD from October 2009 to June 2011 in association with GUK with the support of CBM. This pilot project yielded many learning & good practices that can be adopted by mainstream actors on disaster management, not only in Bangladesh but in the region. If this is considered and acted upon, it can be expected that the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities to disasters will be reduced and they will be better prepared against disaster risks at an equal level as that of their community members.

This booklet attempts to portray some of the acquired learning and good practices through case stories and examples.

Finally, I express my gratitude to CBM, GUK, the local government representatives of Sreepur union, community people including persons with disabilities; without their support and contribution this project would not be successful.

A.H.M. Noman Khan
Executive Director

Activities of Disability inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) project

Disability inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) project was implemented by CDD in association with GUK with the support of CBM in 6 out of 9 wards of Sreepur Union of Sundarganj Upazila in Gaibandha from October 2009 to June 2011. At the onset a baseline study was conducted to understand the situation of the locality focusing on the situation of persons with disabilities in general and in different phases of disasters, the knowledge and practice of local community on disability issues and disaster risk reduction. The community and local stakeholders



Disaster Risk & Resource map installed in the Community

were informed on the project and their views were considered in different stages of the project implementation.

Among the interested members of the community Ward Disaster Management Committees were formed with 25 members. The members included persons with disabilities and women. Affirmative actions were taken to ensure that they are well represented in the committees. Five task forces were formed within each WDMCs on different focused responsibilities. Women and persons with disabilities were also part of these task forces. These WDMCs used to meet to discuss and plan on different activities on a regular basis. The WDMCs were also provided with Disaster Preparedness Kits such as Life jacket, stretcher, Megaphone, Torch Light, Rain coat, First aid box etc.

Different training and orientation were organized for WDMCs and Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) to increase their knowledge and capacity on DiDRR. The community people were informed on disaster preparedness activities. Localized and disability friendly early warning mechanism were developed and put into practice in the community; for example flag poles, colour pillars and announcement by megaphone. To aware the community people on Disability and DRR mock drills, court yard meetings, street theaters were performed, in which persons with disabilities also participated. Posters, bill-board and stand boards were installed in the community.

The family members, neighbours and task force members received orientation on rescuing and evacuating persons with disabilities. An accessible rescue boat was constructed to serve for emergency rescue and evacuation should there be any need for the community.

Members of WDMCs were engaged with the implementation of project activities like location selection for community tube-well, collect soil from the community for construction of flood shelters, supervision of construction work, organize and participate in mock drill etc. School teachers and students were orientated on DiDRR through training, arts, essay and quiz competitions.



Steel bodied rescue boat with accessibility features



Photo: Shumon Ahmed/CDD

Maidul (a person with physical disability) running his tea stall

Capacity and Risks of the community was identified with the participation of community people including persons with disabilities. Contingency plans were made for each of the project wards. Social maps were installed in the community.

Persons with disabilities are engaged with livelihood activities after getting orientation on different trades and startup money. Trades were selected in consultation with persons with disabilities and their previous experiences. Hazard risks were considered in trade selection process. The persons with disabilities were also provided with therapeutic services and assistive devices.

Houses were re-constructed above flood level and made accessible so that the families and neighbours can take shelter at the time of flood. Ground level of two local schools was raised with the support of the community as flood shelter. Accessible latrines, tube-wells, and pathways were constructed in the shelters. Flood shelter management committees were formed and trained. Special attention was given to the needs of persons with disabilities, old age people, children and pregnant & breast feeding mothers. These constructions also gave ideas to the community people, local government and development actors about accessibility issues.

Extensive networking was made with local government at Union, sub-district and district level. Advocacy and learning dissemination sessions were organized with the duty bearers, where WDMC members and persons with disabilities from the community facilitated. The media was informed and invited for project visits and news was covered in local and national media. ■



Accessible house including toilet and tube-well



Accessible toilet

Ward Disaster Management Committees and their readiness as a community

Six disaster management committees at ward (community) level were formed, one at each ward. Each committee comprises of 25 members. At least 30% members are women and 10% are persons with disabilities. Each committee has five task forces; these are on early warning sign; search, rescue and evacuation; first aid; damage assessment and water & sanitation. There are also shelter management committees. Persons with disabilities are members of these task forces. They received orientation on their specific roles within these task forces. They identified their vulnerabilities and capacities at the community level. Based on the information they made their contingency plans. They take initiatives if there is any disaster in the community. *"The WDMC is a critical structure at the ward level for many reasons: it provides local context disaster response, local representation, a structure for sustainability, a link to the government Union structure, the representation of women and disability inclusion, and provides volunteerism opportunities¹".* It is evident that if the community is informed and sensitized on disability and DRR issues, if they can realize the importance of considering disability in the whole spectrum of DRR, if their capacity is built, if a structure & opportunity is created for them to interact & work together with persons with disabilities; then they can as a collective force create positive changes within their own community. ■



Photo: Shumon Ahmed/CDD

Ward Disaster Management Committee members are holding a regular meeting

1. Robert Choy, Programmes Manager at cbm New Zealand



Kajal Rekha: Tale of a changed life

Photo: Shumon Ahmed/CDD

Kajal Rekha: Tale of a changed life

The village of '*Lahereer Khamar*' is located in the Union of Shreepur at Sundarganj Sub-district under Gaibandha district. This village is close to the mighty river Teesta. During the rainy season this village is always at high risk of flooding. It is difficult to reach the village. Anyone walking in the village will be able to tell about its poverty by observing the faces of the residents, ill-built houses and poor sanitation. During flood season, water from neighbouring villages flow over this village to the river Teesta, which sometimes lead to water logging. People of this village do not receive early flood warning and they don't have much knowledge on flood preparedness.

Kajal Rekha is one of the residents of Lahereer Khamar village. She is the youngest among 5 sisters and 4 brothers. Like everyone Kajal Rekha too had the same dream of acquiring education, get married and lead a peaceful family life. She was growing up with this dream.

Her father passed away long time ago. Unfortunately her mother also died in 2001 when she was a candidate of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination. After her mother's death Kajal moved in with her brother's family. Her education had stopped due to poverty. Soon, her brother arranged her marriage in the neighboring Digari union. After one and half years of marriage an accident changed her life! She was collecting beans standing on a chair when she lost her balance, she fell down. She severely injured her back. She was treated locally without any improvement. She was mainly restricted to bed. After 3 months of continuous lying in bed, pressure sores occurred in different places of her body and she also started losing hair. Later she was taken to the Rangpur Medical College Hospital for better treatment but her condition didn't improve much. At one stage she lost her ability to move. She became dependant on others for her daily living activities. In this situation Kajal Rekha's husband married another woman and started living separately.

Kajal Rekha became a burden in her brother's family. Her brother built a separate room for her in the corner of the verandah with a few pieces of tin. Gana Unnyan Kendra (GUK) provided her a wheelchair in 2008. But due to inaccessible house and environment the wheelchair did not help her much to increase her mobility.

She suffered most during the time of floods. Their house was built much below the flood level. As such, flood water got into their house submerging their floors and toilet. As a result Kajal Rekha had to take support from others for all most every task. Others went to the dam, but she could not, due to inaccessible and unhygienic environment, lack of personal security, proper sanitation and access to clean water in the shelter. She had to stay in the house by taking shelter on the makeshift platform made of bamboo. She was always left out from the relief distribution activities, because of her mobility limitation as well as lack of information about persons with disabilities available to the agencies who are engaged with relief and rehabilitation activities.

Kajal Rekha was informed about the project in 2010, after which she started to participate with different activities. She was selected as the Vice-Chairperson of the Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC) formed under the project. At the beginning, she was not that active, but gradually with the support of other members she became an active member of the group. She was given training on disaster management to develop her capacity on disaster. At

present her concept on flood preparedness is has become unambiguous. Now she even talks about flood preparedness with her neighbours during their friendly discussions. Her homestead has been raised and proper sanitation and source of safe drinking water have been arranged, so that she does not suffer like she did in the past. Accessibility for everyone has been ensured in her house. Kajal Rekha hopes that, her neighbours will take shelter in her house during the time of floods. Training on animal husbandry, poultry, homestead gardening, cage fish culture and tailoring has been provided to her to make self-dependant. She received a small grant to start livelihood activities. She bought a tailoring machine with that support. Now the neighbours are coming to her to make their dresses. In addition, she is rearing 3 lambs and 10 chickens, which is contributing to increase her monthly income. This year Kajal Rekha has cultivated different kinds of winter vegetable. Though she was not able to sell the vegetables in the market, but she was able to meet her family's daily requirement of vegetables.



Still the village infra-structure are not accessible for her, but Kajal Rekha can move around at her house easily using her wheelchair. At present she requires very less support from others for her daily living activities.

All the training she had received, enriched her enormously and contributed to increase her confidence in terms of flood preparedness and supporting others before, during and after floods. Now she is able to advice others about pre flood preparedness. She has been actively involved with the activities of the WDMC. She has already raised the vulnerability issues of the persons with disabilities during floods in the ward, sub-district and district disaster management committee meetings. Her involvement in the income generating activities has given her an increased opportunity to interact with community people. Ultimately all these have helped to increase her acceptance in the family and community. Kajal Rekha is now 24 years old and is continuously trying hard to make her long cherished dream a reality. ■

WDMC members are participating in a training on Disability & Disaster issues

Importance of meaningful participation of local Govt. representatives in a DiDRR Project.

I am S. M. Ruhul Amin (Manju), Chairman of the 13 No. Sreepur union of Sundarganj sub-district of Gaibandha district. The Sreepur union is a flood prone area, as it is situated beside the bank of the Teesta river. The population of the union is 44,749. Each year, we face different types of natural disasters including the floods. Persons with disabilities are more at risk and are affected by these disasters.

A few organizations in the past took sporadic development initiatives in my area but none of it considered the issues and concerns of persons with disabilities. Not a single organization came forward with disaster preparedness programme. As a result, everybody, including persons with disabilities has remained vulnerable to the risks of floods. Whenever we had floods the local people had to take shelter under the open sky on the river dam as there was no flood-shelter in the union.

In 2009, representatives from Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) and Gono Unnayan Kendra (GUK) came to visit me and expressed their interest to pilot a "Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction" project in my union with the support of CBM. I was very happy that for the first time, a project on disaster issues will be implemented in Sreepur union, and top of this, the project will be disability friendly. I assured them of all possible cooperation from my side and that of my union parishad.

The project started with CDD and GUK holding a stakeholders' meeting to explain the objectives and activities of the project and to listen to our opinions and suggestions. All of us, including the members of the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC), persons with disabilities, elite persons of the area, journalists, teachers, and different government officers participated in the meeting and gave feedback and recommendations. These inputs from us were considered with adequate importance during the planning and implementation of the project activities.

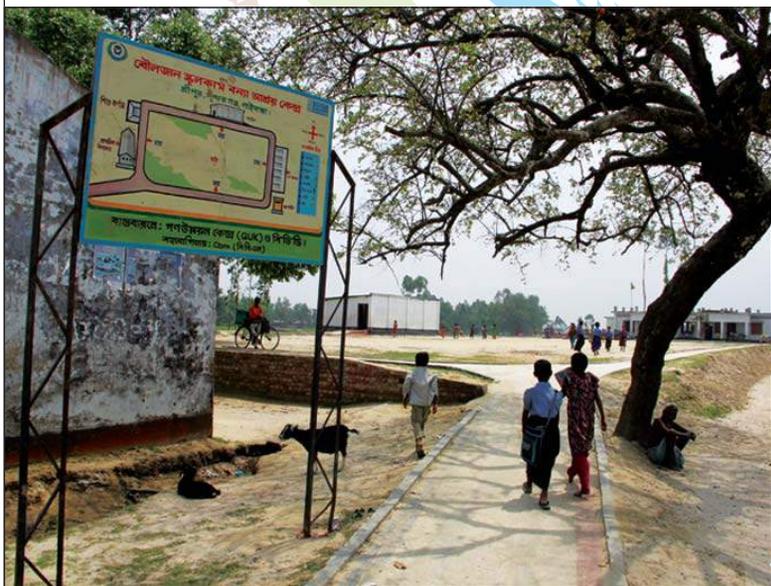


Chairman of Sreepur Union (in all white dress) observing accessible tube-well installation

Days passed and our project progressed according to schedule. Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMC) were formed. Persons with disabilities were members of these committees. The members received training to develop their skill and knowledge on the disaster and disability related issues. Members of our Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMC) were also trained on these issues. We participated in the training with lot of interest and enthusiasm as the issue was very new to us.

Though personally I am supportive towards persons with disability, but it was only after the training that the needs of persons with disabilities during disaster and ways to include them in the disaster preparedness activities started to become clear to us. Now we understand the significance of considering the opinions of the persons with disabilities in planning and implementing any initiative for persons with disabilities. This should be the same for all developmental planning and implementation.

As the elected Chairman of the Union and as the the president of the UDMC I had the opportunity to participate directly in the project. . This allowed me to understand disability inclusive initiatives. Plinth of 18 houses of persons with disabilities has been raised, so that they are not required to leave their houses during floods. Accessible tube-wells and toilets have been built in these houses. In the community 48 tube-wells have been installed on higher grounds so that community people can access safe drinking water during floods. Two flood shelters have been built by raising the ground of 2 schools for local people to take shelter during flood times. Specific features have been installed and provisions made in the shelters to meet basic needs of women, men, children and persons with disabilities. These actions and demonstrations have enriched my knowledge about disability inclusive disaster risk reduction programme.



Accessible flood shelter at school compound

A number of persons with disabilities from my area have received training on disaster risk considered Income Generating Activities (IGA). They also received onetime grant to start IGA so that they are continuously engaged in livelihood activities throughout the year, even during the floods. The mobility of persons with disabilities has significantly increased with the use of assistive devices that they received from the project. This has resulted to more

interactions and communication among persons with disabilities, community people and local government. The persons with disabilities are moving around, participating in different social events, visiting friends, and are even going to the markets.

I want to give an example to describe how much the WDMC is conscious about disability issues now. In 2010, we experienced severe cold wave, the community people, especially persons with disabilities were suffering. At that time some of the WDMC members submitted a written application to the union council seeking support for warm clothes. I could not respond immediately as the union council had limited capacity. I communicated with CDD and GUK to inform about the suffering of the people of my area and also about the initiative of the WDMC. With support of CBM, CDD and GUK provided us warm clothes. We distributed the warm clothes ensuring that most vulnerable and persons with disabilities are not left out. What I liked best about this whole effort is that, a committee including persons with disabilities has been formed at the local level and that they are giving their best of efforts to address their problems together. I believe that, these people would not have given so much importance to this issue, if this project was not implemented here.

I gave my commitment to the people of the union, that we will allocate a portion of the union council budget to repair the flood shelters and to continue activities related to disability inclusive disaster risk reduction. Hence I will consider disability issues with due importance during planning and implementation of Union Council's activities. I will take necessary steps to ensure that persons with disabilities are included as members of the UDMC. I will also continue to support the activities of WDMCs. I will also take active role to ensure that persons with disabilities are not deprived from the government allowances, schemes and facilities. I will be vigilant to ensure that all the livelihood activities, which are being carried out by persons with disabilities are not stopped or destroyed.

Prior to this project, I have never seen any other project comprehensively take efforts to make all initiatives disability inclusive. I firmly believe that many people of the community are now much more sensitized and informed about disaster risk reduction and on disability issues. They will now be able to undertake flood preparedness activities for all, including persons with disabilities. This will significantly reduce their risks to potential loss of lives and assets during floods.

I thank CDD, GUK and CBM for piloting this project in my area. I hope that many more projects like this one will be implemented in other disaster prone areas of Bangladesh, which will contribute in reducing risks for everyone. ■



Rashedul's Dream

Photo: Shumon Ahmed/CDD

Rashedul's Dream

Rashedul (22) was born in Boali Village, situated in the Shreepur Union of Sundargonj sub district of Gaibandha district. This is an area frequently affected by floods and river erosion

Rashedul is second among five siblings. When Rashedul was born, it was a joyful occasion for the family. The family had to survive with the meager income of the father, which was not enough to purchase sufficient food to feed the whole family. Other than their small house, they did not have any property that could help them economically. Starvation was a frequent event for the family. Rashedul would often become sick due to malnutrition. When he was two, he had high fever and remained unconscious for two days. Since then Rashedul have had lost the ability to extend his legs, and to sit with balance. Arranging money for Rashedul's treatment became almost impossible for the day laborer father, as he was already struggling with his meager income to ensure enough food for the family. The family did not have money required for the medical treatment Rashedul needed. His mother had to support Rashedul with all of his daily activities as he was not able to do anything without support like moving from one place to another, using the toilet, bathing. The poor economic condition of the family influenced Rashedul to consider begging as a source of income.

Rashedul recalls his bitter experience of 2007 flood. His life became an ordeal, as using the toilet and moving around became too difficult for him. He became covered with clay and the area surrounding him was so filthy with human wastes, that even the aid workers didn't come near him to distribute relief. Rashedul consoled himself by thinking that 'maybe it is usual for a disabled beggar to have this standard of living'. However he did dream about choosing a profession other than begging.

As Rashedul was unable to make much money by begging in his local area, he moved to Dhaka. One day he learned that a local NGO named Gono Unnayan Kendra (GUK) was conducting a survey, collecting information about persons with disabilities in their locality. At first he was apprehensive about this information, thinking 'if I get enlisted, will this be of any benefit?' Many people had collected information about him in the past, but no one have had provided him with any support. However, Rashedul chose to return to his village and enlisted himself in the survey.

Along with others, he was invited to attend a meeting in a local school. He discovered that a large number of women, men, persons with disabilities and some elite persons are also present in the meeting. He felt good as this is the first time he is attending this kind of meeting along with other people from the society. At the same time he felt shy to speak up in front of others. It was informed in the meeting that a Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC) will be formed taking everyone's opinion and active participation of women and persons with disabilities in the committee will be ensured. This committee will work for the well-being of the community people in pre, during and post disaster situation. Initially he was bit frustrated as no one was talking about financial support, and he thought without financial support, how will he make a living?" But he decided to keep his patience thinking that "at least I will be able to do something for others". To understand better, he talked with the representative of GUK and Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) about the plan separately. He was happy to learn that there are some



Photo: Shumon Ahmed/CDD

activities to increase the capacity of the community and persons with disabilities, which will allow everyone to benefit. Capacity of persons with disabilities and others will be enhanced through this project which will reduce the risks of damages and losses from floods.. Rashedul regained his confidence.

Rashedul received a training on disability inclusive disaster management through the DiDRR project, implemented by CDD and GUK jointly, with the support of CBM. Plinth of his home was raised above the flood level, so that he will not need to move to a different location during flood. Accessible tube-well and latrine was also installed in his house. This is the first time he saw an accessible house where persons with disabilities can move around on their own.

He also received training on income generating activities like tailoring, animal husbandry, and homestead gardening. After completion of the training courses, he received BDT 15,000.00 (fifteen thousand) as a grant and bought a sewing machine, 4 lambs, 5 chickens, and 5 ducks. He is also doing homestead gardening to meet the nutritional requirements of his family. He received a tricycle to increase his mobility. Now he is not crawling or sitting idle in the house. Now he visits many people in his community with his tricycle and talks with others about flood preparedness.

Acquisition of an accessible house, and inclusion in income generating activities, has enriched Rashedul's standard of living, and has also brought him dignity and respect. Members of his family give a lot more importance to his needs and requirements. When asked- what is the reason behind this? He

answered - "because I am involved in productive activities now, I have a regular income, I have a house where neighbors can take shelter during flood, I have a vehicle (tri-cycle), I have knowledge on flood preparedness and as a result I have the ability to help others."

In the mean time Rashedul is earning BDT 500.00 to 700.00 per month from his tailoring business. His chickens and ducks are laying eggs, and he is allowing these to hatch to increase the number of poultry he has. Within a few months his lambs will give birth and that will increase the number of lambs he has. His income will increase from selling lambs. Rashedul now has many friends. The village court also asks him to participate in their proceeding and they seek his opinion on different matters. For the first time in his 22 years of life, he has attended a marriage ceremony, driving his own tricycle.

Now Rashedul spend his days by doing his activities of daily living, helping family members with their daily chores, working, giving information about the flood preparation to the neighbours.

Rashedul dreams of a life of dignity and respect, of having a family of his own and helping others at difficult times, especially during disasters. Rashedul's parents and neighbours believe that his dreams will come true and he will progress further in his life. ■

Participation and role of persons with disabilities

The persons with disabilities living in the community were first contacted. They and their family members were informed and consulted about the project, the role they can play and importance of their participation. The challenges that they faced and may encounter were considered in the planning. They were counseled, provided with information, training, therapeutic services and assistive devices. Some of the persons with disabilities received training on livelihood and assets were transferred, with which they are now economically active.

At the same time the community, local government representatives were sensitized on disability issues, and informed on the way persons with disabilities can contribute in DRR. It was discussed and agreed to create dignified opportunities for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the total process. The persons with disabilities are now members of different community level committees on DRR. They are active in local awareness raising, advocacy with local government, and in DiDRR activities.

Persons with disabilities have clearly demonstrated that if opportunities and services are there, if their capacity is built, if the community is willing to change, if there are appropriate policies and these are implemented and finally if there is respect & dignity, they too can contribute as other citizens of the country. ■



Hasu, a student with disability narrating his own flood experience