

# Equal Citizens, Equality in Disasters:

## Ensuring Inclusive Disaster Recovery and Rebuilding in Nepal

### Key principles:

- Equity, equality, social inclusion and the right to non-discrimination on the basis of caste, ethnicity, religion, age or disability.
- No one should be left behind in rebuilding the country. All actors involved in humanitarian work must take into account the underlying factors that drive inequality in Nepal and actively work to transform unequal social dynamics that foster exclusion, discrimination and deprivation for certain social groups.

### Why talk about Inclusive Disaster Recovery?

Disasters are not neutral events. They disproportionately affect excluded social groups (i.e. those excluded based on identities such as caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability and age) who generally comprise the greatest proportion of the poor, widening existing inequalities in access to resources, services and opportunities.

Women are especially vulnerable both during and after disasters due to physical security risks, their hygiene and maternal health needs, and loss of income or livelihood resources on which they depend to carry out their economic, provisioning and caring roles within households. Where multiple identities intersect (e.g. gender and disability), the negative outcome is multiplied. Excluded groups, and particularly women among them, are hindered in their recovery post-disaster due to inequalities in economic opportunity and ownership and access to productive resources. For example, people who do not own land cannot access housing recovery programmes. This is exacerbated by unequal power relationships and limited influence in public and community decision-making processes to ensure their needs and concerns are heard and addressed during disaster recovery and reconstruction. Without institutionalising spaces for excluded groups and women to represent their specific needs and have a say in decisions on humanitarian work, they are often excluded from access to entitlements and services that support their resilience to such shocks in the long term.

### Enhanced Vulnerabilities in Nepal

The Government of Nepal must be acknowledged for its work towards inclusive disaster response under difficult circumstances. The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and other reports evidence that the April 2015 earthquake caused the largest damage and loss to excluded groups such as Dalits, Janajatis (indigenous peoples) and women in the poorer districts. Their sub-standard housing collapsed during the earthquake and their already poor access to basic services such as water, sanitation and education was devastated, thereby increasing their vulnerability. For women in particular, disrupted access to sexual and reproductive health services has raised serious health concerns. Key livelihoods for excluded groups including agricultural labour, informal home-based labour and tourism-based porter work (for Dalits) were destroyed. For many women, the destruction of their homes and assets has constrained their ability to engage in home-based income generation. Loss of income has contributed to multiple protection concerns, including increased risk of child marriage and trafficking.

Amnesty International reported that 'longstanding patterns of discrimination against members of groups such as Dalits and some disadvantaged Janajati groups had also resulted in their unequal access to relief. Others such as people with disabilities, the elderly and women headed households, may not have been the focus of deliberate discrimination, but were denied crucial assistance because of the way it was being distributed. Moreover, competition for humanitarian resources could further increase discrimination against excluded groups and women.'

### What is Inclusive Disaster Recovery?

Total coverage of an area for disaster recovery work does not lead to everyone automatically benefiting equally from the intervention. Inclusive disaster recovery builds upon an analysis of power and risk to ensure that interventions are adapted according to the specific needs and capacities of excluded social groups; it aims to prevent or mitigate associated risks arising from the context or the action itself. Measures are designed to ensure that everyone is enabled to participate and be heard, and is ensured non-discriminatory access to the most appropriate relief and recovery resources to meet specific needs and rebuild lives.

### Guidance for Inclusive and Accountable Humanitarian Assistance

Christian Aid adheres to and advocates the use of the **Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)**, a set of commitments related to inclusive disaster response based on the rights to life with dignity and to protection and security for all. The elements of this **inclusive programming approach** as outlined below, in consonance with the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**, aim to ensure equitable and fair access to earthquake affected communities in Nepal.

### Appropriate and Relevant Response

- **Consult multiple sources, including excluded groups**, to first understand and impartially assess the needs, risks, capacities, context and vulnerabilities of different social groups. Risk indicators should factor in social identities and the resource and power inequalities that result.
- **Build a database with disaggregated data** for continual monitoring and assessments of the changing context and needs of different social groups, including cross-cutting data on women, older people and people with disabilities.
- **Tailor different types of assistance and/or protection for different social groups** by developing diverse and targeted recovery interventions including:
  - situating new facilities (e.g. WASH facilities) in the neighbourhoods where excluded groups live and building community assets for excluded groups (e.g. meeting halls or toilets for females)
  - designing facilities with safety, accessibility and dignity in mind (e.g. appropriate lighting, ramps or porter services for older people and people with disabilities)
  - targeting excluded groups, especially women, for livelihood, alternative livelihoods interventions
  - ensuring equal wages for all in cash for work programmes, as well as unconditional cash transfers

for those unable to work but needing assistance such as pregnant women, older people and people with disabilities

- creating training sessions with excluded groups to build their knowledge and confidence to engage with humanitarian actors and institutions
- giving excluded groups skills and opportunities to take on responsibilities for development projects
- keeping a contingency amount in programmes for displaced or otherwise vulnerable people who may be initially excluded from needs assessments
- where limited resources are available, developing transparent selection criteria based on vulnerabilities in order to enable prioritisation of the most affected and excluded groups
- Build resilience and inspire confidence that excluded groups and women can survive future risks (e.g. by enhancing knowledge of disaster risk reduction through training; capacity building and promoting measures to support attainment of ownership and tenure rights, including certification and registration of women).

### Strengthen Local Capacities and Avoid Negative Effects

**Create equal opportunities for representation, participation and leadership of excluded groups and women** to raise their concerns and needs. This includes actively supporting their participation in the district disaster relief committees and building their capacities to monitor and deliver disaster recovery interventions. Where existing institutions of the excluded and women exist (e.g. self-help groups), work through them.

- **Identify and act upon potential or actual negative effects of a disaster recovery programme in a timely and systematic manner** focusing on the affected people's rights, dignity, security and relationships, including discrimination. Every organisation must check that their support for excluded groups and women does not result in any negative reprisals against them especially from those holding social and political power in the area.

### Response based on Communication, Participation and Feedback

- Ensure that excluded groups and women have access to information on disaster recovery interventions in a manner that is understood by them, by creating appropriate IEC materials and means of communication.
- Find appropriate ways to involve and consult excluded groups and women (e.g. via separate group discussions), to guide programme design and implementation in terms of priorities and risks, as well as to provide feedback on the quality and effectiveness of assistance received in all phases of the programme.

### Sources:

- Amnesty International, 2015. *Nepal Earthquake Recovery must Safeguard Rights*. Index ASA 31/1753/2015
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- Core Humanitarian Standards: <http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/Core%20Humanitarian%20Standard%20-%20English.pdf>
- International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2013. *Equality in Aid: Addressing Caste Discrimination in Humanitarian Response*
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- UNISDR Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030

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**Social Equity Audit** is a tool to facilitate inclusion planning by helping to identify excluded groups and the barriers that prevent them from participating or equally benefitting from disaster recovery interventions, and also aiding an organisation to take inclusive steps within its own set-up and in designing and implementing programmes.

### Welcome and Address Complaints

- **Consult excluded groups about appropriate, user-friendly and confidential complaints mechanisms** by which individuals can share instances of discrimination, abuse or non-receipt of disaster recovery materials from any person.
- **Investigate immediately and transparently any complaints of abuse and discrimination.** Where found to be true, bring these complaints to the notice of the village development committees and district disaster relief committees, and actively follow up to ensure protection and access by the concerned person/s.

### Promote an enabling policy environment:

- Support the implementation of inclusive disaster management laws, policies and strategies, including inclusive disaster risk reduction plans, and accordingly, allocate adequate resources for recovery and reconstruction that targets and reaches excluded social groups and women.
- Support the creation of government monitoring mechanisms with representation of excluded social groups and women to ensure key issues, including those of social exclusion and discrimination, are addressed and progress tracked in order to facilitate accountability and ensure inclusion.
- Support formal commitments on inclusion from all actors engaged in humanitarian interventions, and highlight and promote the effective implementation of inclusive provisions within existing laws and policies.

### Support Staff to Do their Job Effectively

- Set in place a **code of conduct** that establishes the obligation of staff not to exploit, abuse or otherwise discriminate against people on any basis. Ensure that the affected communities understand what the behaviour of staff should be.
- Organise **trainings for staff and senior management** on how to build equity and inclusion into programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluations.
- **Share data, needs assessments and other information among all actors engaged in humanitarian response including civil society, private sector and government agencies** in order to build greater awareness about issues of social exclusion and discrimination, and a common understanding of the specific needs of different vulnerable social groups with respect to disaster recovery.

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