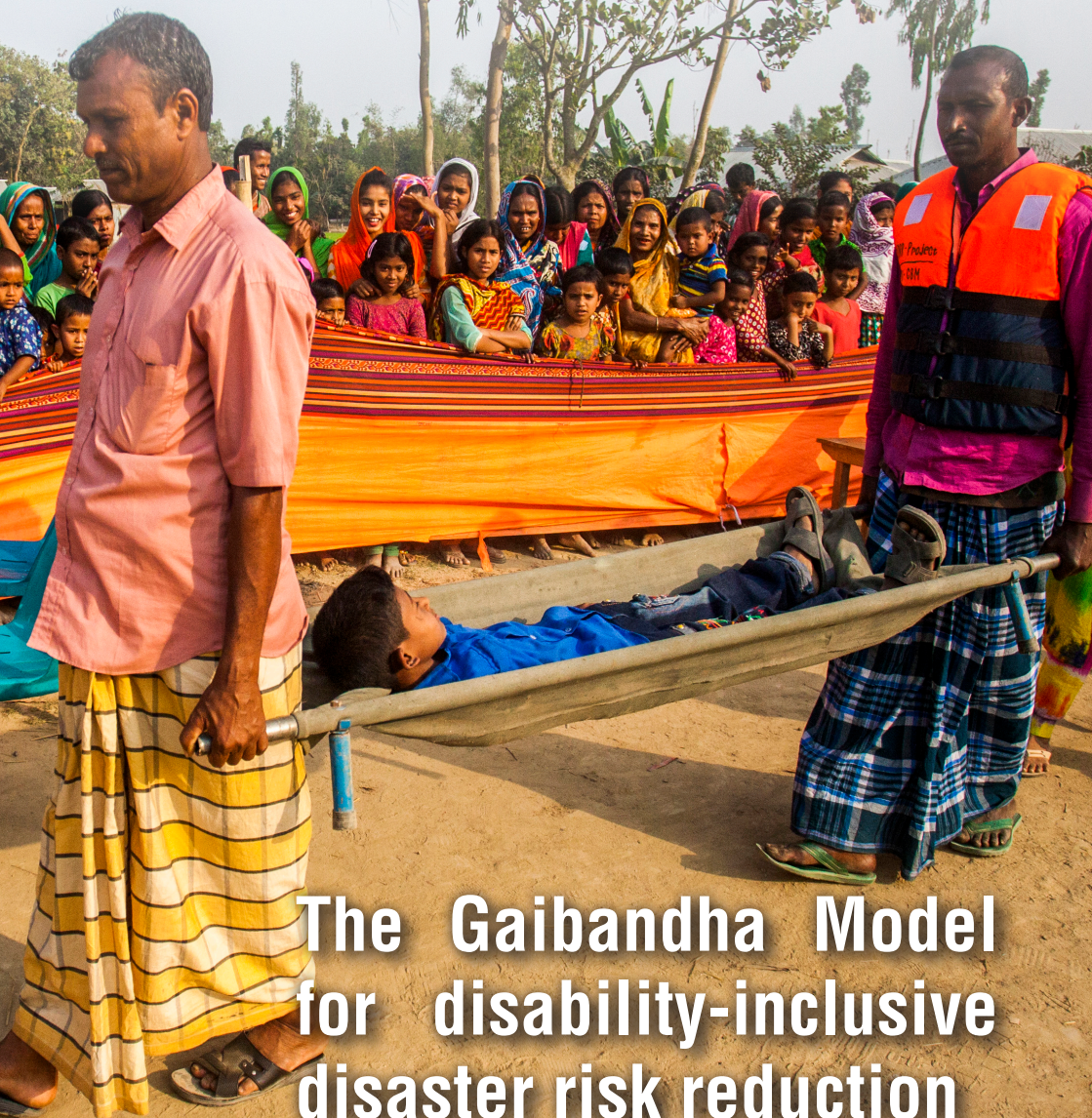


**SAVING LIVES AND  
LEAVING NO ONE  
BEHIND**



**The Gaibandha Model  
for disability-inclusive  
disaster risk reduction**

Published by CBM

CBM is an international development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, their families and their communities in the poorest countries of the world. CBM addresses poverty as both a cause and a consequence of disability and works in partnership to create an inclusive society for all. For more information, please visit: <http://www.cbm.org>

In collaboration with Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) and Disabled Rehabilitation & Research Association (DRRA)

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# BANGLADESH



\* Map provided courtesy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

\* The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations







## Foreword

Establishing resilient and inclusive communities is a core component of sustainable development. At CBM we strive to support the building of community resilience from the bottom up. We have seen time and again that those who are excluded and discriminated against in society suffer worst from disasters. They are less likely to benefit from preparedness measures and are more often invisible and forgotten when aid is delivered.

It is encouraging to see that inclusion is recognised as one of the great challenges of today's development agenda and that real commitments towards inclusion have been made on the international stage; for example, in the Sendai Framework for Action and in the Sustainable Development Goals. But our real work starts now. We must make sure that such commitments are translated into action.

This publication is based on the experience of CBM and its partners in implementing disability-inclusive, community-based disaster risk reduction programs in some of the most flood-affected communities in Bangladesh. It outlines a model for putting people with disabilities at the centre of disaster risk reduction. We hope that this model will inspire our staff, our partners and other organisations working in disaster risk reduction, to take the actions needed to support communities worldwide to be resilient and to leave no one behind.

David Bainbridge,

International Director, CBM International



## Introduction

The purpose of this documentation of good practice is to help CBM Member Associations, Country Offices, Advisors and Partners in disaster-prone countries to develop and implement high-quality disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs which are integrated into larger community-based inclusive development work.

The document is based on an in-depth study of good practices in a longstanding and comprehensive DRR program implemented by CBM and two local partners, the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) and Gaya Unnayan Kendra (GUK), in Gaibandha District in northern Bangladesh. This is one of the most disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh, being affected by floods every year during monsoon season.

Our findings reflect this risk context and give the people of the community a voice. Some adaptation will be needed to translate the findings for replication in CBM's work in other risk contexts and further guidance on disability-inclusive development can help to clarify specific questions which come up when designing and implementing programs. A range of useful guidelines and tools can be found at [www.cbm.org/](http://www.cbm.org/) publications.

This document is intended to inspire. It aims to stimulate discussion and get our thinking going on how to support communities in the most at-risk countries around the world to become more resilient *and* more inclusive. Overcoming the challenges that disasters pose for human development means keeping everyone safe and leaving no one behind.

Manuel Rothe, David Brown, Oliver Neuschafer

# 1. Protecting lives and saving progress through disaster risk reduction







Chapter 1 introduces key concepts of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction (DiDRR) and outlines the Gaibandha Model for implementing DiDRR.

## **1.1 What is disaster risk reduction?**

Disasters, large and small, are on the rise and the exposure to them of persons and assets in developing countries has increased faster than development gains have reduced their vulnerability to disasters. Disasters not only cause tremendous loss but also reverse these gains and hold back progress.

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), disaster risk is the combination of the probability of a hazardous event, such as a storm or a flood, and the negative consequences it has for human life and assets. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) can be broadly understood as the implementation of strategies and practices to reduce the occurrence of hazards, decrease the exposure and vulnerability of people and their assets to them and strengthen the capacity of people to cope with their impact. Disaster risk management (DRM) is defined as the application of DRR policies, following the disaster management cycle. This starts with disaster mitigation and preparedness measures in anticipation of future disasters and response and recovery activities once disaster occurs. The terms DRR and DRM are sometimes used interchangeably.

## 1.2. Why inclusion matters

Not everyone faces the same risk from disasters. People with disabilities, older people, pregnant women, children and other at-risk groups are often forgotten in DRR and left behind when disaster happens. They are excluded from disaster preparedness measures, are invisible when it comes to community mapping or evacuation planning, find it harder to access shelters and safe spaces due to environmental barriers or protection risks, and receive inadequate or inappropriate relief and support when they suffer from disaster loss.

The international community recognises inclusion as a guiding principle of DRR. This is reflected in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-30), which was endorsed by the UN General Assembly. It acknowledges that DRR requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership, which promotes the empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation of all people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. Effective DRR thus requires a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices.

With this obligation to leave no one behind, it is now the responsibility of all actors in DRR to commit to inclusion and translate their commitment into action!

### **1.3. The Gaibandha Model for disaster risk reduction**

CBM envisions an inclusive world in which all people with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential. We recognise that DRR goes beyond disaster preparedness; it is about building inclusive and resilient communities which can cope with and adapt to the impact of natural hazards, conflict and other causes of insecurity to protect lives and assets and safeguard development gains. To reach this goal, CBM works with local Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs). Enabling people with disabilities and their representative groups to become active agents of change is both the starting point for realising equal access and participation and the guarantor for lasting change.

The Gaibandha model suggests five interlinked interventions, all of which are needed to build resilient and inclusive communities:

1. Strengthen people with disabilities and their representative groups,
2. Advocate with the local government for inclusive DRM,
3. Build accessible DRM infrastructure and capacity for inclusive DRM at community level,
4. Strengthen household level disaster risk awareness and preparedness, in collaboration with schools and
5. Promote and support sustainable, resilient livelihoods.



The interventions need to be adapted to the local context, which begins with an assessment of the local DRM system and of the situation of people with disabilities. In the case of Gaibandha, DRM committees existed at municipal (Union) level. They had been established not long before the program started. Some flood shelters were available, but they were limited in number and inaccessible for people with disabilities. There were no DPOs in Gaibandha and most people with disabilities lived in isolation and rarely participated in community life.

Within this context, the interventions were implemented at three levels: At the **household level**, people with disabilities were identified and supported individually with rehabilitation measures and livelihood support. Disaster awareness and preparedness of all households were strengthened. At the **community level**, Self-help Groups of people with disabilities and community-based Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMC) were established. Representatives of the Self-help Groups participate in these committees. The committees collaborate with the municipal-level governmental Union DRM committees to implement DRM in the communities. At **municipal level**, formal DPOs, the Apex Bodies, were established, consisting of representatives from all Self-help Groups. The Apex Bodies advocate for inclusion with the Union government.



**2. Strong Self-help Groups :  
The key to enable people  
with disabilities to become  
leaders for change**





Chapter 2 makes the case that good community-based, disability-inclusive DRR starts with the empowerment of people with disabilities and their representative groups and illustrates how members of strong Self-help Groups can go beyond self-help and advocacy to become leaders in their communities.

### **2.1. Ready for action – understanding the community and establishing Self-help Groups**

To establish the groups requires some planning ahead. In Gaibandha, the implementing partner, GUK, used existing networks to identify potential group members. Mr Sohel Rana, a field worker, said that they used government information and conducted an independent house-to-house survey which was the basis for identifying people with disabilities. Then a meeting was held of these persons in different communities and the attendees all proposed names for Self-help Groups of 15 people each.

Involving the wider community in the identification was useful, especially in this rural context, as people know their neighbours. The initial information gathering was later expanded into a mapping of all people with disabilities in the target area which also collected information on their specific needs.

Members of the Self-help Groups need to be motivated and to be able to motivate others. The local partner organisation made sure that the groups were diverse and reflected gender and age balance, but the emphasis was to find people with leadership qualities. One lesson voiced by involved field workers was that the formation of the Self-help Groups should not be rushed. It takes time to get gender-balanced representation and to find people with different disabilities,



who are motivated to participate and make a difference. Members need to get to know each other and find their reason for getting together. The Self-help Group is the basis for participation of people with disabilities in the activities to come – so it needs to be carefully built.

## **2.2 Breaking down those barriers!**

People with disabilities may face many obstacles in their lives – environmental and attitudinal. These obstacles can block their potential and their ability to be active in the Self-help Group.

People are different and not everyone starts with the same level of experience, skills and confidence. It is up to the group and to those who support the group to make sure that measures are taken to accommodate individual needs of group members and enable their equal and active participation. Some members needed assistance to gain access to a disability or education allowance payment. Mr Badshah Mia, the leader of one of the groups, said that members gained access to these payments by petitioning the sub-district administration. This was seen as a wonderful achievement!

Self-help Group meetings should be accessible and accommodating. This may mean covering costs of transportation, ensuring sign language interpreters and providing other assistive devices. Making some adjustments to ensure wide participation will sometimes come with a cost, but often it just means being aware and considerate of the requirements of those who wish to participate.

Breaking down barriers also means understanding that men and women with disabilities do not always face the same

barriers. Women and girls with disabilities face patterns of discrimination and exclusion which can put them at an even greater disadvantage in disaster situations.

Disasters usually result in an increase in women's and girl's unpaid household and childcare work. Clearing rubble, rebuilding houses or queuing for relief come on top of the usual workload. Keeping up with household maintenance, caring for children or older relatives and running domestically-based income generating activities become nearly impossible. Women in Gaibandha often run small shops at home, make handicrafts, sell vegetable or poultry or work outside the home as labourers to support the family income. These economic activities are disrupted in disaster situations.

Contraception can become unavailable and many women reported that unwanted pregnancy added to their stress during disaster. Disasters break the social fabric and increase the exposure of women and girls to violence, including sexual abuse. "As a blind woman" said Shantona Rani, an 18-year old member of one of the Self-help Groups, "the evacuation to the highlands always put me at a high risk. I asked my father to invest in raising the land around our house so we can stay at home during the floods."

CBM's work in community-based DRR needs to address these issues systematically. It must establish measures that guarantee the protection of women and girls in disaster situations. At the same time, we need to be mindful of the additional workload that disasters cause and provide targeted support to help women and girls participate. Let's clear the way so that all people with disabilities can join the work for a more resilient community!



### **2.3. Building confidence takes time**

Empowerment of Self-help Groups starts with trainings and awareness raising about disability rights to help the groups find their purpose. This process takes time and investment.

As part of group development, a series of courtyard meetings took place for about a year. The trainings addressed topics including: disability laws, the rights and entitlements of people with disabilities, the characteristics and impact of different disasters and how to prepare for them, and how to engage in advocacy. The DRR-specific training covered strategies for people with disabilities to cope with floods and other hazards, including knowing about potential risks, understanding early warning systems and systems of search and rescue, accessing shelters, how to safeguard assistive devices and legal documents, and how to manage essential dry foods.

All the groups in Gaibandha emphasised that this process takes time. People with disability did not understand their capacity at first, says Mr Badshah Mia. "Eventually we realised that we should have our own livelihoods as well as being prepared for disaster, but before that, even our family members did not recognise our work. People with disability were kept inside and couldn't go out."

Every member of the Self-help Groups received individual guidance counselling to find themselves an appropriate livelihood and get the necessary assistive devices. In many cases, the project could fall back on the governmental safety net. Most members were eligible for support but few were registered. In many cases, peer support in the group was a key driver for improvements in members' lives. In one case, the family of a group member was involved in a land ownership conflict. The group discussed the case, provided advice and supported the member throughout the process

until it was successfully resolved. In another case they supported a member to get an educational allowance. The whole group visited the Union Chairman together to speak on behalf of the member.

Mutual support and disability rights awareness were the two important drivers for confidence and capability of the groups. "The group is power!" said a member of one of the groups. "And behind all is the Disability Protection Act. It helps us to raise our voice with the government. We used to be ignored because everyone thought we do not know the rules. Then they realised that we do."

## **2.4. Finding power through community action**

The Self-help Groups in Gaibandha not only respond to their members' different individual needs and advocate for disability rights. They are also leaders and catalysts for the wider community in actions relating to community DRM. This builds bridges between people with disabilities and other community members. Discrimination drops. Natural leaders emerge. Empowerment grows and Self-help Groups find that they can more successfully lobby for disability rights.

The groups support their members, but they also support the wider community as it faces regular floods. Self-help Groups are involved in DRM activities, including mock drills, early warning or the distribution of food packages and they lobby for improvements to the embankments and roads. These are matters that bring everyone together.

Interviewees reported that Self-help Groups are playing an important role in the flood season in early warning, for example by informing communities about acute flood risks through the use of megaphones. They assist in teaching the

community about disaster preparedness –how to prepare food stocks, use portable ovens or protect firewood. When disaster strikes they help in identifying people in need of rescue and in caring for those who take refuge in shelters. When the floods hit a neighbouring Union particularly hard, the members of one Self-help Group pooled some savings they had put aside for disasters, bought food and distributed it themselves in one of the shelters.

The project established a clear role for Self-help Groups in the DRR activities of the government and of the local partner organisations. The involvement of people with disabilities in food distributions or work to raise the land around schools was visible to the whole community. It shows that they can 'do' things and not just inform, advocate and talk.

The Chairman of the local municipality, the Union Parishad, commented that the project had influenced him to include people with disabilities in his work. While he is an elected leader, several members of Self-help Groups have become so empowered by their action that they are now recognised as leaders well beyond their groups. People from the community come to ask for the Self-help Groups' support when they face problems with the government.





### **3. The ABC of advocacy for DiDRR at local level**





Chapter 3 shows how Self-help Groups of people with disabilities and their umbrella groups (the Apex Bodies) can successfully lobby with local governments for more disability inclusion in DRR policies and practices.

### **3.1 Learning the rules of the game: advocating effectively**

The Self-help Groups received trainings on disability rights, relevant legislation, government structures and how to lobby and advocate. Confidence of the Groups has grown with practice. The Group in Sreepur noted that their thorough understanding of the Bangladesh Disability Protection Act stands behind all their work. Ms Tahara Begum said that they can use the Act as a tool. This is very effective, after all, it was approved by the Prime Minister – a fact which government officials know very well but which community members may not.

Apart from using national legislation, the Self-help Groups are not afraid to challenge the government to pressure for change. One member of an Apex Body told of how stranded families were initially abandoned by local government without food or resources during a high flood. He called the local official and threatened to bring everyone from all Self-help Groups to the official's house, if no help was forthcoming. This tactic was successful and food distributions were initiated. Similar tactics were previously used by different groups to resolve problems their members faced, such as a case of family violence or the refusal of a local school to enrol a girl with disability.

As government officials come and go from their postings it has been important for the Self-help Groups to track their movements – and to meet new officials and develop



relationships. Mr Abubakhar Siddiqui, a local journalist, said that newly elected officials usually are totally unaware of issues relating to disaster risk and to disability – but that the community needs to make them aware! This has been a key role for the Self-help Groups in Gaibandha.

### **3.2. Advocacy for the whole community!**

Self-help Groups are part of the community in which they live. They need to find their voice, not only for themselves but for the betterment of the whole community. Successful advocacy combines disability issues with community development issues. The Self-help Groups in Gaibandha are extremely active in awareness raising related to disasters. Their members serve on the community-based Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMCs) and they direct community evacuation drills. In disaster response they collaborate with local authorities to distribute relief items and operate accessible warning systems such as flags and loudspeakers.

Mr Robidul Hassan, from the implementing partner organisation, recalled an incident when an embankment was leaking during a flood. One Self-help Group contacted the Union Chairman and he paid a visit to the site. Group members were present and made specific recommendations for government action which impressed the Chairman and influenced him to be more engaged. At another time, according to the members of the Sreepur Self-help Group, the WDMC and the Self-help Group were requested to jointly draw up a list of those most at need after the flooding, including women, older persons and people with disabilities. The Group then supported the distribution of relief items as part of the response – visible to everyone in the community.

The Self-help Groups also join with others to lobby for better disaster management efforts. They regularly invite government officials and journalists to witness their disaster management activities. These approaches have increased legitimacy in the eyes of government and strengthened the Self-help Groups' position to lobby effectively for disability rights. Government officials are now paying attention to Self-help Groups and their requests.

The government has at times also looked for input from specific Self-help Group members when training and engaging with its own staff. Ms Sohel Rana, a field worker, noted that the government had specifically invited Self-help Group members to speak at separate training events on development issues and leadership. On Poverty Reduction Day, the Deputy Commissioner invited Ms Kazol Rekha, a Self-help Group member, to speak, as she was seen as a successful woman and had built great know-how about DRR and inclusion.

Ms Rekha said that the relations with the Union Chairman were not good at the start, but now they were sufficiently positive for the Self-help Group to successfully advocate for a special fund for people with disabilities. Persistence and patience are needed to change minds.

So what have we learned? By promoting the cause of the community and not just disability rights, the groups have gained greater credibility with the community and with the government. Their own engagement for the community puts them in an advantageous position to hold the government to account when it comes to keeping the whole community safe and making sure no one is left behind.

### **3.3 Making government offices accessible: catching two fish on one line**

When Self-help Group members began to talk with government officials, they discovered that in some cases there was no access for wheelchair-users. In one of the districts, says Ms. Rekha, the Social Welfare office was placed on the second floor, with only stairs as access. Through dialogue and lobbying, the government was persuaded to relocate the office to a ground level location.

This has enabled two 'wins' – greater access to the government office and visibility for people with disability which allows for further advocacy by Self-help Group members. The 'wins' are even more important, according to Ms Rekha, given that the local government, the Union Parishad, is a key influencer within the community – along with the activities of the community-based WDMC.

Government office accessibility can be the starting point for further advocacy on other issues. It is a visible result of lobbying. A ramp to a government building or the introduction of more accessible signage serves as a marker of attitudinal change and opens doors to further promote opportunities for even greater accessibility. In the case of Gaibandha, this has led to more wins relating to access to loans, educational allowances, entry to school for children with disabilities, distribution of assistive devices and being welcomed to give advice on key government initiatives.



### 3.4 Building credibility or why status matters

People who are seen to be important can work the levers of change. This does not happen overnight but there is evidence from this project that credibility leads to opportunities which in turn leads to increasing status.

How do people with disabilities who have had tough experiences and little hope end up with high status?

At the individual level, the Self-help Group membership has allowed people with disabilities to understand their rights and meet many of their needs, particularly those related to income. The Self-help Groups have supplied their leaders as representatives to an Apex Body, which is formalised and registered. Mr Sohel Rana said that this body takes decisions which may include advocating to save an embankment, protect exposed families or reconstruct roads. Membership of the body brings status within the community as it seeks to do good things for the benefit of all.

At the same time, Self-help Group members may act as representatives on one of the community-based WDMCs. Their active and confident participation in these committees makes them visible in the community and increases their importance.

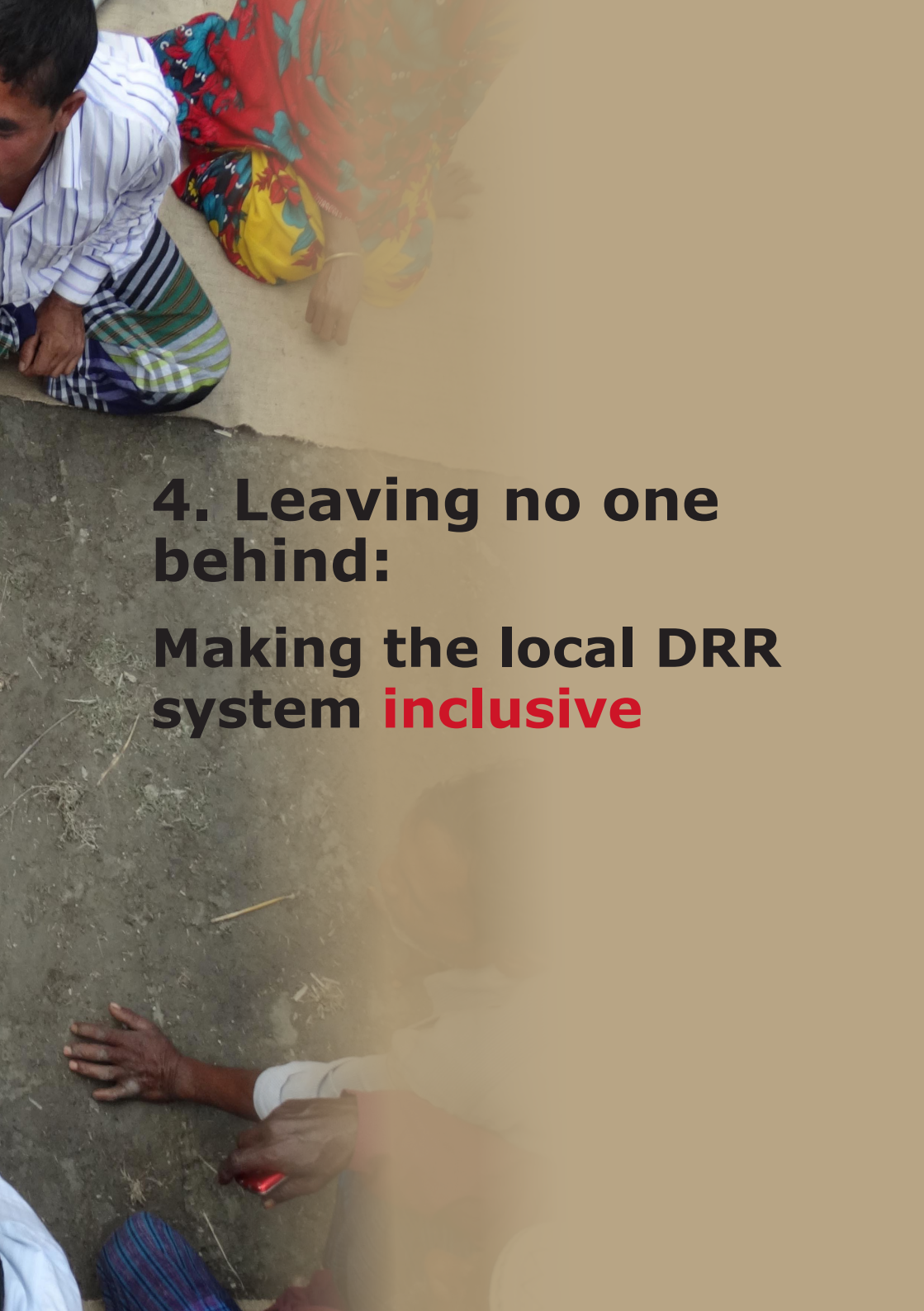
Over time, individual Apex Body and WDMC members in Gaibandha have gained status as they have demonstrated leadership within the community and beyond. CDD invested in these individual leaders by inviting them for trainings in Dhaka. Ms Kazol Rekha commented that initially she was not treated with respect by rickshaw and van-pullers. Through several years of working with the government, developing her own work in tailoring and speaking in national and international forums with CDD, she is now known and respected by all her community.

Mr Badshah Mia, the Chairman of another Self-help Group, described how even local politicians have commented on his success and status. He has been able to attend conferences in Dhaka on disability and has met the Prime Minister's daughter. People with influence in the community see his life as very successful. Among people with disabilities he is known as a role model. Knowing that a person who uses a wheelchair can be a leader of the community opens up new perspectives.

Building credibility requires small steps such as fighting for Self-help Group representation on different official committees and formally registered Apex bodies. Status goes up when people with disabilities are listened to by government. Having status in Gaibandha means being able to change minds about disability!





A background photograph showing several people sitting on the ground. In the top left, a man in a white and blue striped shirt and a woman in a red and yellow patterned sari are visible. In the bottom left, another person's hand and arm are seen. The ground is a mix of light-colored earth and dark, damp soil. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

## 4. Leaving no one behind:

**Making the local DRR system **inclusive****

Chapter 4 outlines concrete measures that can be introduced to make the local DRR system more inclusive.

## **4.1 Inclusive Community Risk Assessments**

To understand the disaster risk a community faces requires talking to those who are most at risk. In Gaibandha, people with disabilities actively participated in the process to assess the vulnerabilities and capacities across the community. These types of assessments, known as Vulnerability Capacity Assessments, are crucial to understand how different parts of the community are exposed to disaster but also how resilient people are. Mr Sohel Rana, a field worker, said that the risk mapping in this project started with the identification of people with disabilities based on government data and on house-to-house visits.

The problem is that sometimes it's difficult to accurately identify people with disabilities in the assessment area. How can we do this best to ensure a disability perspective?

One option is to ask Self-help Group members to run the mapping. This ensures that people with disabilities are in the driving seat – and are more likely to produce a mapping which has greater visibility of people with disabilities. The project developed its own questionnaire as part of the household survey.

Self-help Groups were invited to join the community meetings where the risk mapping took place and an action plan for DRR was developed together with the local government and other representatives from the community. Having at hand relevant data gave the Groups opportunities to contribute a disaster risk perspective from people with different types of impairments.

For example, Ms Shantona Rani commented that as a blind person the current of the water surrounding her during the floods posed an immense risk. Falling into the water would be fatal.

It is important that Self-help Groups understand the process, be given a role and a platform in community meetings and act as resource persons for those carrying out the mapping. After all, it makes no sense to develop a DRR without talking to those most at risk – people with disabilities!

#### **4.2. Where all threads come together: Ward Disaster Management Committees**

To embed DRR successfully and sustainably in at-risk communities, it is necessary to form a body that coordinates, oversees and supports activities close to the community and which can continue its work independently after project (and funding) has ended. In Gaibandha, government DRM committees at the municipal level (the Union Parishad) were already in place, some more active, some less. What the project did was go one level closer to the communities and establish community-based Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMCs), each consisting of around 15 volunteers from the community. All WDMCs in Gaibandha include people with disabilities who are mostly members of Self-help Groups. Through the close exchange between WDMCs and the Self-help Groups and the high involvement of people with disabilities, it can be ensured that all activities of the WDMCs are disability-inclusive.

WDMCs are a resource hub at community level when it comes to DRM, before, during and after disaster. At the same time, they build the link between the community and local authorities as well as with other important stakeholders



involved in DRM. Mr Shahana Akter, Secretary at Sreepur Union, one of the local municipalities, was highly impressed by the work of these community-based coordination bodies and mentioned that the government is now communicating with WDMCs regarding needs assessments, relief distribution and post-disaster reconstruction work. In his opinion, this is not only helping the affected population but also increases the efficiency of his team. Once established, the WDMCs conduct community risk assessments in their communities and develop and implement their own DRR action plans.

Of course, all this requires that WDMC members are trained individually and as a group on the different aspects of their tasks. Also, they were equipped by the local NGO partner (in the Gaibandha case, with key material such as torches, life vests and rain jackets) to enable them to fulfil their duties.

Once fully functional, the WDMCs take up their duties in preparedness but also in the humanitarian response after a disaster strikes. During flood seasons, the WDMCs together with the Self-help Groups have conducted Rapid Needs Assessments and organised and implemented emergency food distributions for the affected population with the support of the local partner organisations.

Helping WDMCs to take a role in advocating for inclusive DRR at Union level (for example, lobbying for more budget for inclusive DRR activities) and fostering exchange between different WDMCs are key activities which can be taken up outside of the annual flooding season.

Making sure WDMCs are inclusive is key. In the Gaibandha case there was a lot of push for gender equality within the WDMCs. This was key to ensure consideration of the needs of women during disaster preparedness and especially in times of crisis. At least two people with disabilities are part of every WDMC. An important lesson was that the Self-help Groups

had to give these representatives the necessary support and back them up so they could find a strong voice in the committees and make sure inclusion is never forgotten.

### **4.3 Being warned: lessons in evacuation and staying safe**

Accessible early warning systems are essential to keeping all community members safe. Many options exist to alert people to coming threats. The key question is making sure that timely alerts are provided and that these are accessible for everyone.

The visual system that was introduced in Gaibandha is based on the installation of flood markers which indicate rising water levels. The WDMC takes responsibility to monitor the flood markers and collects other information from the government and the media to forecast floods and other disasters. If a hazardous event occurs, the members inform the community through loudspeaker announcements and through coloured flags in visible places to alert people who are deaf or hard of hearing. People who are identified as particularly vulnerable or likely not to receive the early warning are alerted through individual house visits. The combination of different channels, complementing the official warnings by the government through radio, TV and phone text messages, ensures that no one is left behind.

In the mock drill exercises in the communities, evacuation plans are discussed. This is based on a mapping of households identifying where people with disabilities are living. An accessible evacuation boat is used in some cases and community members are trained to assist in the evacuation of more at-risk persons – the aged, the very young and those living with disabilities.

Finally, the evacuation process is not inclusive if shelters are inaccessible. Access to, entry into and mobility within a shelter should be possible for everyone independently. Nobody wants to be dependent on the good will of others when it comes to staying in the shelter in an extreme situation. Shelters need to be functional for everyone once they are inside. Safe access to water and toilets, ramps and rails to move around, as well as the necessary equipment and provisions, is essential.

For shelters to be fully safe there is an area of work related to gender-based violence and harassment which needs further discussion. It's not much good having accessible latrines if they are not located in safe and well-lit areas.

From Gaibandha we know that many Self-help Group members feel safer now that shelters have been upgraded. There is need for more work on accessibility to reduce dependency of people with disabilities on others. Regardless, being warned of impending disaster and having plans to get to safety means that people with disabilities are finally included with the rest of the community as it faces floods.



## 5. Engaging **schools** to build community DRR awareness



Chapter 5 explains how collaboration with local schools and with children and youth can be used to spread awareness for disaster preparedness in the community.

### **5.1 The safest place to be – schools as shelters and hubs for emergency response**

In Gaibandha there is not enough shelter space for everyone. The project started to work with schools, given their role as places where people take shelter when the water rises. The goal was to relieve the schools of the pressures they face during disaster times, which make it difficult to keep classes running, and to help them to provide a safer and more accessible space for those in need.

The land around the schools was raised, in order to provide a safe space for evacuated people from the surrounding community. These grounds are now also used by the government for distribution of emergency food and relief items.

Teachers at one of the schools commented that they were happy that the school grounds could now be used as an evacuation zone by affected families and their cattle, often their most valuable asset! In the first days after a crisis, teachers act as volunteers to support the evacuated, sometimes pooling their own money to buy additional food aid. The schools have also developed their own disaster management plans to keep children safe. One student, Asadul Islam, a 17 year old high school student at Haripur, said that he and about 20 other students were actively involved in developing the plan.

Engaging the schools on DiDRR also opened doors for discussions around making schools more disability-inclusive and ensuring that schooling continues despite disasters.

Schools used to close for weeks or months in the past. The contingency plan now encourages students to come by boat during the floods and, with the establishment of a safe space outside the main school building, classes are able to continue. Local community clinic health workers come to the schools to provide immunisation to the children, so they may be safe during and after the floods. The involved schools have also made an effort to enrol more children with disabilities and to make sure that they too can access classes even during times of disaster. Having an accessible boat available for some of the schools went a long way to reach this goal.

Schools in Gaibandha are now safe places to stay when disaster occurs. Working with schools can protect and educate for a safer and more inclusive community!

## **5.2 How students teach their families to be disaster-ready**

Students often surprise their parents and family members by the learning that they display. In Gaibandha, students are key in transmitting much of the knowledge about reducing disaster risk to their families and the broader community.

By integrating disaster risk reduction theory and practice into the school curriculum and discussing different types of disasters (for example, floods, earthquakes), teachers assist students to understand how to behave before and after a crisis. The teachers also invite people with disabilities to make presentations on this topic. The students become important communicators not only about disaster risk but also about disability.

The project has supported schools in the targeted region in setting up School Disaster Management Committees.



Committee members receive training and basic tools such as life vests, first aid kits and torches. Evacuation drills are carried out. Students are part of the committees and are actively engaged in setting up school contingency plans – putting into practice and reinforcing their learning about DRR and disaster preparedness.

The teacher at Bouljan school reported that the students have passed on their learning to their families. An example of this came from student Asadul Islam. He explained how the students had placed a bamboo pole in the river bed, with different colours set at different heights to indicate water levels. The teachers had introduced this technique and Mr Islam shared this with his parents. The parents suggested it to others, they conferred and then it was done. His parents then began to work with other parents to ensure that there was community contribution towards hiring a boat during floods for students to attend school. Mr Islam felt very positive at his role in these innovations!

The close work on DRR with teachers and students was also a good entry point for learning about disability inclusion in education. With Self-help Group members visiting the school, awareness of disability issues increased and teachers started demanding capacity-building for inclusive education. More children with disabilities were welcomed into schools as a result of these links.

“When I was younger I was afraid of the floods, but now not anymore”, says Mr Islam. “I know very well how to swim. I know how to protect myself. The situation of people with disabilities is different. Their risk is much higher, so we need to take care of them when the floods come. We take them to a safe place. It is important to reach it in time.” Students carry their knowledge to the wider community – whether this is about disaster or disability.

They can be leaders in changing minds and breaking down barriers!

### **5.3 Taking it to the streets – raising awareness about disasters and disability**

Public events offer an opportunity to get an entire community involved in a project. In the work on DRR in Gaibandha, mock drills have been very successful. In these drills, usually held in school grounds, there is evacuation planning relating to a simulated disaster. Self-help Group members have actively participated in these activities, raising awareness of their needs in a flood scenario. The mock drills have also been an important tool to teach that “everyone has a capacity”, according to the Director of the local partner organization, Ms Anjum Nahid Chowdhury. Folk songs and posters are other public awareness-raising methods which are used.

Ms Kazol Rekha highlighted the use of flash cards, street theatre and other community educational approaches. She stressed interactive methodologies to promote discussion on disasters. According to her, there has also been a visible change. Now, before disasters, people prepare dry food with moveable ovens, fire roots, candles and their clothes/assets, medicines, oral salines and water purifying tablets, as well as a list of emergency phone numbers, which is maintained by the women in the family.

By including people with disabilities in mock drills and other events, people learn twice over – about disasters and about disability. When asked where they had learnt so much about measures for people with disabilities, even the students who talked about inclusion in their classes, replied that it was during the mock drills. Everyone got together to learn and all benefitted!







## 6. Inclusive livelihoods for **resilience**





Chapter 6 makes the case for integrating livelihood support into community-based DRR programming and enabling people with disabilities to engage in economically promising and resilient livelihoods.

### **6.1 Disaster-proofing livelihoods – protection against disaster loss**

Having a regular income has changed the lives of Self-help Group members. If livelihoods are improved then the community is improved. Ms Kazol Rekha commented that if individuals have income, then they can buy materials and raise the level of their house as well as concreting their tube well and improving the safety of drinking water. Livelihoods, however, also need to be resilient enough to withstand disasters and substantial enough to generate sufficient income to cover disaster losses.

For some people with disabilities in the project, floods have wiped out their income stream – their livestock have drowned and their small shops have been destroyed. Mr Raju Ahmed said that during the last flood his family's chickens died but their cow survived because of its location on a raised platform. After the floods, however, there was not sufficient feed at a reasonable price. At least in this case, the family had enough surplus income to make the cow safe!

An income-generating activity which could be disaster-proof is fish farming – though even in this case fish can escape. Safe flood-proof locations for assets and small enterprises can also assist in disaster-proofing.

According to the Chairman of one of the local municipalities, Mr Shahidul Islam, income generation is the greatest challenge for everyone. Making enough money to invest in safe housing for people and animals is crucial.

We can see that in a disaster-prone environment, such income needs to come from sources and assets that can be flood-proofed.

Saving lives and protecting livelihoods go together.

## **6.2 When developing income sources, focus on abilities – not disabilities!**

People with disabilities in Gaibandha are getting income through different jobs. Some do tailoring, mixed-goods retail, livestock rearing and small-scale agricultural work such as maize production. There was no proof that these activities could better withstand another flood. Anything related to farming is in danger of being affected by seasonal floods. Non-agricultural work can potentially be protected from some of the effects of flooding though it was not possible to verify this during this case study.

There are, however, several ideas generated by those interviewed. Mr Mohammed Islam, a field worker, recommended that there be a shift to group-based income generating activities. This is because the group will benefit from the abilities and knowledge of the members and the group can potentially reduce the risk. This view was supported by a local journalist, Mr Abubakha Siddiqui, who saw group activities as protecting against disaster risk. Furthermore, when involving people with disabilities in group-based activities, tasks can be shared between the members according to their abilities – a wheelchair-user may not do hard labour but can do administration.

With a changing climate it is possible that traditional livelihoods such as cropping may suffer decreasing profits. Conducting a market analysis will lead towards identifying new potential areas and promising value chains.

Rather than regarding certain activities as off-limits to persons with certain impairments, how can we make these accessible for people with disabilities?

Collaborating with experts who have expertise in a field of work can assist with thinking about new options. At the same time, let's not force people with disabilities into certain livelihoods – the target group needs to support the approach.

In most cases, people with disabilities have more than one source of income and all contribute to their revenue stream. So when introducing new forms of livelihood it is important to leave space for some of the existing activities.

By focusing on abilities, we can overcome many of the income barriers of disability!

## **Annex – The field documentation process**

The findings of this good practice document are based on field research conducted between 7 and 10 February 2017 by a group of eight international and local program staff of CBM and CDD and one independent researcher and consultant from Dhaka. We conducted a total of four focus group discussions and 30 in-depth interviews with selected persons from Gaibandha, including people involved in the project, (such as members of Self-help Groups, students and teachers from participating schools, recipients of livelihood grants and project field staff), and people who were not directly involved in the project (including local government representatives, a local journalist and people living in the disaster-affected communities). Eleven of the interview partners were women and nineteen were men. Eight were people with disabilities. The ages of interview partners ranged from eight to sixty-five. The focus group discussions were conducted with two Self-help Groups of people with disabilities, the members of a community-based WDMC and one women's group.

Before the field research, we conducted a workshop to introduce the interviewers to good practices and methods of qualitative interviewing and developed an interview guide together. The interviews were between 30 and 90 minutes in duration and were each conducted by two interviewers, with one taking detailed notes. Most interviews were conducted in local language, with one of the two interviewers translating to English if necessary. Every evening, after finishing the last interviews, we met for a one to two hour debriefing session to share impressions and lessons learned from the interviewing process.

We started reviewing the interview transcripts shortly after completing the field research phase by coding relevant statements and pieces of information.



We grouped the information from the different interviews and focus group discussions to identify patterns and key aspects which repeatedly appeared in the data. Based on this analysis we jointly decided on the programming components which we believe are essential for successful DiDRR programming. We then reviewed several monitoring and evaluation reports from the project to see if they validated our findings. The good practices which are presented in this document are the result of this iterative process.

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