

FROM SHADOWS TO SPOTLIGHT:

Stories of Rights and Recognition of Persons with Disabilities

SUCCESS CASE STORIES

■ A Collection in English

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Acknowledgment

The National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal (NFDN) extends its heartfelt gratitude to CBM Global and the Australian Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), for their invaluable support in implementing the Include Us project from 2019 to 2024. Through this initiative, we have worked in key areas such as accessibility, access to justice for individuals with disabilities, disability data, policy advocacy, and strengthening organizations of individuals with disabilities (OPDs).

This collection presents 15 inspiring stories in both English and Nepali, capturing real-life experiences, challenges, and triumphs of individuals impacted by the project. These stories highlight the importance of inclusion, accessibility, and collective action in building a just and equitable society. From the very beginning, the project has been about making a difference, and this collection showcases its impact.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the project coordinators, knowledge management officers, and advocacy officers from all seven provinces who were directly involved in the project for their dedication in collecting and compiling these stories throughout its execution. A special appreciation goes to Mr. Kushal Neupane for his meticulous documentation of the stories in Nepali and Ms. Jalasa Sapkota for her careful translation into English. We also deeply appreciate the CBM Country Team for their continuous support, with special thanks to Mr. Bimal Paudel, Disability Inclusion Adviser, for his invaluable guidance and encouragement from the very beginning.

This collection is just a glimpse of the impact of the Include Us project. We recognize that many more voices and experiences deserve to be heard, and as we move forward, we remain committed to amplifying these voices and advocating for a more inclusive future.

With heartfelt appreciation, we thank CBM Global and the entire NFDN team for their dedication, collaboration, and strong commitment to this initiative.

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A Step Towards Inclusive Digital Access

For individuals with visual impairments and intellectual disabilities in Nepal, accessing essential government services online has long been a challenge. Many government and institutional websites remain inaccessible, making it difficult for people with disabilities to obtain vital information. While the Accessible Physical Infrastructure and



Communication Services Directive, 2069 mandates that all new public infrastructure and government websites must be accessible, implementation has been slow.

Until recently, none of the ministries in Bagmati Province had taken steps to make their websites universally accessible. This meant that people with visual impairments struggled to navigate them, while those with intellectual disabilities faced difficulties due to the lack of simplified content, larger fonts, and visual aids.

Recognizing this gap, the National Federation of the Disabled, Nepal (NFDN) launched an initiative under its “Include Us” project in Bagmati Province. In 2022, NFDN conducted a three-day website accessibility testing training, bringing together architects, engineers, information officers, media personnel, and representatives from organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). The training raised awareness about the need for inclusive digital access and equipped participants with the skills to identify and address accessibility barriers.

“Before this training, we never realized how difficult it was for blind users to access information online. Simple changes can make a huge difference,” shared an information officer from Bagmati Province.

Following the training, NFDN submitted a formal proposal to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law, advocating for website testing

and updates. Through multiple follow-up meetings and advocacy efforts, the Federation successfully secured NPR 1 million (10 lakh) in funding for FY 2080/81 to improve website accessibility.



The Ministry took action, organizing discussions with NFDN representatives, government officials, and visually impaired website users to develop a Terms of Reference (TOR) for the testing and updating process. As a result, the Ministry's website was tested for accessibility and updated accordingly. Visually impaired users later provided feedback on the improvements, marking a significant milestone in the journey towards digital inclusivity.

The Road Ahead

While this achievement is promising, there is still much work to be done. NFDN remains committed to advocating for universal website accessibility across all ministries and local government bodies in Bagmati Province. It also plans to provide technical support to ensure sustained progress.

This is just the beginning. With continued advocacy and collaboration, the hope is that all government websites will eventually be fully accessible, ensuring equal digital access for everyone.

“This small change opens up a world of information for us.”
Visually impaired users in Bagmati Province now find it easier to navigate the Ministry's website.

A Woman with Disability Joins the Community Police Service Center Committee

For years, the executive committee of the Deukhuri Community Police Service Center in Lamahi Municipality, Dang district, has included representatives from various sectors. However, persons with disabilities have been largely absent from these decision-making bodies—until now.



Goma Gharti Magar, a woman with a physical disability, has made history by securing a position on the executive committee of the Deukhuri Community Police Service Center. As a resident of Ward No. 9 in Lamahi and an advocate for disability rights, Goma's appointment is a major step toward inclusion and representation in the community policing system.

For years, advocacy groups, including the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal and CBM Global, have been working to push for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in local decision-making. Through the "Include Us" project, Goma actively engaged in accessibility assessments and advocacy efforts, which led to her recommendation for lifetime membership in the committee.

"At first, the chairperson of the center hesitated, stating that inclusion in the committee was not feasible at that moment," Goma recalls. "But we kept pushing, and when a female member's position became vacant, we saw our opportunity."

To meet the requirement for lifetime membership—an essential criterion for committee inclusion—stakeholders came together to allocate funds from event refreshment expenses. This collective effort ensured Goma's official appointment, marking the first-ever representation of persons with disabilities in the executive committee.

"This is more than just my achievement. It is a win for the entire disabled community," says Goma. "Now, we have a voice at the table."

Since joining the committee, Goma has actively participated in various initiatives, including:

Attending six executive meetings and advocating for disability inclusion.

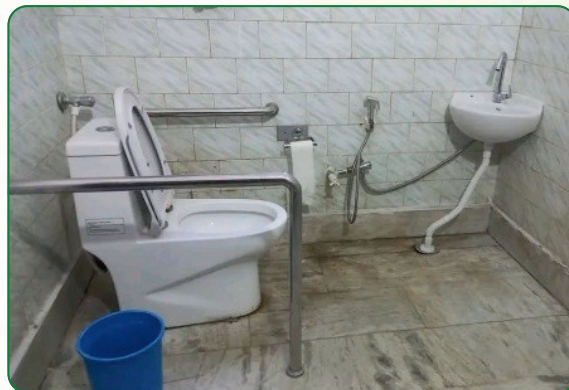
Goma's inclusion represents a broader effort to make Nepal's community policing system more inclusive and accountable. The Deukhuri Community Police Service Center, under Nepal's Ministry of Home Affairs, plays a crucial role in crime prevention, security maintenance, and fostering strong police-community relations. Now, with disability representation in its leadership, the center is taking a vital step toward inclusivity.

This achievement highlights the power of advocacy and collective effort in creating more inclusive systems. Moving forward, disability advocates hope that similar appointments will become common practice, ensuring that persons with disabilities have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

“Now, we have a voice at the table.” Goma Gharti Magar's appointment marks a significant step towards disability inclusion in community policing.

Advocacy Leads to Improved Accessibility at UNDP Office in Sudurpaschim

For many years, non-governmental organizations in Nepal have played a vital role in promoting inclusivity and accessibility. Among them is UNDP Nepal, which has been actively contributing to the development of the Sudurpaschim Province by establishing an office in the region.



Despite UNDP's commitment to social inclusion and accessibility, its own office in Sudurpaschim lacked proper accessibility features. This issue was identified when a team from the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) Sudurpaschim Province Office visited the site.

As part of the "Include Us" project, the NFDN team conducted a field visit in October 2023 to the UNDP office in Dhangadhi, Kailali. They observed that the office was not fully accessible to persons with disabilities and provided recommendations for necessary improvements.

"The office was in a rented building, which posed limitations in making structural modifications," explained Baijayanti Giri, the head of the UNDP office. "We had plans to renovate and improve accessibility, but budget constraints were a major hurdle."

Recognizing the urgency, Giri assured the team that she would request additional funding from UNDP's central office. Keeping her commitment, she submitted the budget request, and by the second week of January 2024, accessibility improvements were successfully completed.



Thanks to the joint efforts and advocacy of the NFDN Sudurpaschim Province Office and the "Include Us" project, the UNDP Sudurpaschim office now meets international accessibility standards. The office now features a well-constructed ramp, accessible restrooms, dedicated parking spaces for individuals with disabilities, and an emergency assembly area.



“This change means a lot for people like me.” The newly accessible office ensures that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in UNDP initiatives.

The progress at UNDP’s Sudurpaschim office is just one step in a larger movement. The advocacy efforts are not only focused on office spaces but also on ensuring that accessibility is embedded in all public and private infrastructures. The NFDN and its partners continue to work towards making government and non-government buildings fully accessible, pushing for systematic changes in policies and regulations.

Breaking Barriers: Kala's Journey to Self-Advocacy

Kala, a 21-year-old woman from Birendranagar Municipality in Surkhet District, has faced more hardship than most. Living with an intellectual disability, she struggled against societal prejudices that dismissed her potential. But Kala's story is one of resilience.



Her transformation began after she endured a traumatic incident—one that could have silenced her forever. Instead, it fueled her fight for justice. With the support of the "Include Us" project, Kala found her voice.

"When my family sought help, people tried to silence us. They said I wouldn't understand my own case," Kala recalls. "But I knew I deserved justice."

With legal assistance from the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, her case moved forward. Despite community pressure, Kala persevered, refusing to be dismissed.

As part of the project, she joined a local advocacy group, receiving training in leadership and peer education. She emerged as a powerful self-advocate, educating others on disability rights, sexual and reproductive health, and the importance of official documentation such as citizenship certificates and disability identity cards.

Kala now plays an active role in disability advocacy programs across Surkhet. Her work, recognized by the Blind Youth Association in partnership with CBM Global, has provided her with opportunities to support others in her community. She even earns income as a peer educator, helping her family financially.

“When I’m not included in a program, I feel like I’m missing out,”
Kala shares. “Advocacy gives me purpose.”

Though the “Include Us” project is ending, Kala’s journey is far from over. She has been welcomed into another initiative—the Political and Civil Empowerment Project for Women with Disabilities—ensuring that her voice continues to be heard.

Dinesh Wins Three Cases After Two Years of Struggle

Dinesh Mandal, a person with a disability, faced discrimination from his own family for years. However, after a long legal battle, he finally won three cases—property partition, fraud, and revocation of a gift deed—at the District Court of Dhanusha. He fought these cases against his father, elder brother, and niece.



A 38-year-old resident of Ward No. 6, Aurahi Rural Municipality, Dhanusha District, Madhesh Province, Dinesh has a physical disability categorized as "G" class. He has limited functional ability in his left hand and right leg.

Through interactions, discussions, and awareness campaigns under the "Include Us" project, implemented by NFDN Madhesh, including the distribution of IEC materials and community outreach via FM radio, Dinesh became aware of his rights. One day, around 11 a.m., he visited the Madhesh Province office of the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN). Introducing himself, he shared his concerns:

"My name is Dinesh Kumar Mandal. I am a person with a disability. I read some pamphlets on disability rights, listened to radio programs, and heard from people about legal support. I have faced injustice myself, so I came here hoping for help with my problems."

Exhausted and distressed, Dinesh was given some time to rest before sharing his struggles. He recounted his painful journey:

"Since childhood, I have endured discrimination, neglect, and humiliation from my own family. Unable to bear the mistreatment, I left home at the age of 7 or 8 and worked as a cattle herder in another household. Despite these ..."

... hardships, I managed to complete my education up to SLC (School Leaving Certificate). As I grew older, I developed the courage to stand up for myself. After returning home, I lived separately in cattle shed, got married, and have since been sustaining my family through livestock farming and agriculture."

Dinesh revealed that he had never received his rightful share of his father's property. Whenever he brought up the matter, his father and elder brother ignored his concerns. Later, he discovered that his brother had already transferred the property to his niece, Nibha, through a gift deed.

"When I questioned my brother about why he gifted the land to his daughter while denying me my rightful share, my brother, sister-in-law, and niece physically assaulted me and my family. I have endured both physical and mental abuse for years."

After listening to Dinesh's grievances, the organization assured him of their support. Before taking any action, they decided to verify his claims by consulting people from his village, social activists in the disability sector, and conducting inquiries via phone and in-person meetings. The investigation confirmed that Dinesh had indeed suffered injustice. Despite efforts from the local community and judicial committees, his brother's arrogance and unwillingness to compromise had rendered social mediation ineffective.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, the organization's leadership and staff deliberated and decided to involve legal experts. A lawyer was identified, and a coordinated consultation was arranged. During the meeting, the lawyer advised Dinesh on the legal procedures he needed to follow to seek justice.

Determined not to endure oppression any longer, Dinesh made a firm decision:

"No matter the difficulties, I will fight my case through the legal system."

Following this decision, three cases were filed against his family:

1. **Partition claim** against his father for not granting him his share of the ancestral property.
2. **Fraud case** against his brother for unlawfully transferring family property.
3. **Revocation of the gift deed** against his niece.

On **Mangsir 4, 2079 (November 20, 2022)**, with the help of the lawyer, the cases were officially registered at the District Court of Dhanusha.

Although his brother contested the fraud case, no counterclaims were filed within the legal timeframe for the other two cases. Meanwhile, Dinesh faced constant pressure to withdraw the cases, but he stood firm. With no response from the opposing party, it became almost certain that he would win by default.

Despite his determination, the legal battle was not easy. Over two years, Dinesh had to attend court **27 times**, incurring costs for travel, legal fees, and other expenses. Being a person with a disability and from an economically disadvantaged background, securing loans was extremely difficult. While his community expressed sympathy, lenders saw him as a financial risk. Recognizing his financial struggles, NFDN Madhesh under “Include Us” project provided him with financial assistance to cover his legal expenses.

After two years of perseverance, **Dinesh finally won all three cases**. The District Court of Dhanusha has scheduled the final verdict to be issued on **Asoj 5, 2081 (September 21, 2024)**. Once the full decision is released, law enforcement officials will ensure that the ruling is implemented, granting Dinesh his rightful share of the property.

This **success story** is just one of many examples of how the “Include Us” project has helped persons with disabilities access justice. Through legal aid, community coordination, and unwavering determination, Dinesh’s case serves as an inspiration for others facing similar struggles.

From Silence to Strength: Nirmala's Inspiring Journey of Advocacy and Leadership

Once confined to the role of a housewife, Nirmala Bista from Kailali now leads an organization. She shares that participating in various programs has significantly enhanced her knowledge and awareness.

There was a time when Nirmala feared speaking to strangers, but today, she actively advocates for the rights of her son and other individuals with intellectual disabilities, engaging with local and provincial governments. She has become an inspiration for women in her community and currently serves as the Deputy Secretary of the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, Sudurpashchim Province, fulfilling her responsibilities with remarkable efficiency.



Her journey from being a simple housewife to holding a leadership position in the federation has been filled with struggles and inspiration. The life of her son, Prashant, who has received her unwavering love and support, has also undergone a significant transformation.

There was a time when Prashant was unaware of whether he was even wearing clothes. If someone approached him, he would react aggressively. But today, he lives a normal life. Having completed his basic education, he is now ahead of his peers in using information technology. His socialization and development are primarily credited to his mother's immense dedication and effort.

Nirmala Bista, a resident of Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City-3,

gave birth to Prashant, her eldest son, around 19 years ago in 2062 B.S. (2005 A.D.). As the firstborn, he was showered with love and affection by all family members, making Nirmala naturally joyous. Her marital and family life was progressing happily.

However, as time passed, Nirmala discovered that her son had an intellectual disability. Initially, she had no knowledge about such conditions, so his behavior puzzled her. Even as he grew older, Prashant remained unaware of his clothing and often exhibited aggressive tendencies, frustrating his parents.

Concerned about her son's condition, Nirmala and her husband sought treatment in various places. Eventually, they learned that Prashant had an intellectual disability that could not be cured. The family had no choice but to accept this harsh reality.

The once-adored mother soon became a subject of disdain due to her son's condition. Not only did she face societal and familial rejection, but even her husband resorted to physical abuse and mistreatment. Already burdened by worry for her son, Nirmala found the behavior of her family and society deeply painful.

Over time, she crossed paths with Priya Khadka, the Provincial Manager of the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, Sudurpashchim Province. Khadka encouraged Nirmala to participate in federation programs. Initially, she hesitated due to fear and embarrassment, so she sent her younger sister instead. But after hearing about the program's impact, she decided to attend herself, marking a turning point in her life.

Attending her first program and seeing many individuals like her son gave her a sense of relief and positivity. As she continued participating, she gained in-depth knowledge about disability-friendly behavior and caregiving, especially for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

According to Nirmala, Prashant's mental state is different from other children, and he also has limited vision, which she has come to understand over time. She chose not to enroll him in a special school for children with disabilities, believing that he wouldn't receive proper care there.

Nirmala has two sons, with Prashant being the eldest. He studied up to Grade 8 at the nearby Shree Kedar Boarding School. His parents had to request the principal to promote him to Grade 8, ensuring he did not feel inferior as his peers advanced while he remained in the same class.

Even getting him admitted to school was a challenge, as the institution was initially reluctant. They accepted him only under the condition that full fees would be paid. Despite this, Prashant insisted on attending the same school as his younger brother.

Within the family, Prashant never faced discrimination. No one in the family saw him as disabled. In fact, they did not even obtain a disability identification card for him until the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal intervened.

Nirmala recalls questioning why her son was different from others, which deeply saddened her. However, over time, she has learned to accept it as a part of life.

As the family created a supportive environment for Prashant, he gradually learned various life skills. He became more social and now interacts comfortably with people. Today, he can easily engage in conversations with anyone and assists with household tasks like cutting vegetables, kneading dough, fetching water, and cleaning his room.

Currently, Prashant is actively involved with the Self-Advocates' Group formed by the Intellectual Disability Parents' Association, Kailali. He visits various offices for advocacy and even creates vlogs of program events, uploading them on YouTube.

His activism does not stop there. He is also a member of the Provincial Project Task Force, formed under the "Include Us" project, implemented by the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal in partnership with CBM Global. He regularly attends task force meetings and actively participates in advocacy initiatives.

Nirmala's journey has been one of relentless struggle. Her work is not limited to her son's development—she has also coordinated with the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal to conduct surveys and establish the Intellectual Disability Parents' Association, Kailali,

incorporating other families facing similar challenges. This initiative has helped advocate for capacity-building and rights for individuals with intellectual disabilities like her son.

Through its partnership with CBM Global, the federation received grant funding under the "Include Us" project. This enabled them to establish an office, procure essential materials, and even hire staff, allowing for the smooth operation of regular activities.

The Intellectual Disability Parents' Association, Kailali, is continuously conducting capacity-building programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their parents. Additionally, it collaborates with local governments to organize various programs. Under Nirmala's leadership, the organization now aims to coordinate with the provincial government to expand its activities.

Thanks to her initiative, similar associations have been established in other districts of Sudurpashchim Province. She actively participates in various programs, raising awareness about intellectual disabilities. For the fiscal year 2081/82 (2024/25), she has even submitted budget and program proposals to local and provincial governments.



Once ridiculed for giving birth to a child with an intellectual disability, Nirmala's life has undergone a remarkable transformation due to the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal and the "Include Us" project. Today, she is not just an influential leader in her community but also a source of inspiration for other parents facing similar challenges. Her husband, who once mistreated her, now fully supports her endeavors.

Nirmala expresses her commitment to dedicating her life to this cause. Her son, too, is now living happily, engaging in creative and daily life activities, and moving forward with a fulfilling lifestyle.

How a Small Grant Sparked Big Change

The Disabled Unity Society, an organization founded by Dalit individuals with disabilities, was on the brink of closure. Located in Gurvakot Municipality, Surkhet District, the organization struggled to stay active due to a lack of resources. Without proper facilities or financial support, their ability to advocate for disability rights was limited.



But that changed when they received support from the "Include Us" project, a collaboration between the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) and CBM Global. This initiative provided crucial institutional capacity-building, enabling the society to reorganize and resume its mission.

"Before, we had no proper workspace, no access to technology. Now, we can actually work for the change we want to see," says a society representative.

With a grant of NPR 298,000, the organization procured computer tables, chairs, and internet access. However, challenges remained, such as the lack of a printer and storage cabinets. Recognizing this need, the municipality stepped in, providing the missing equipment in November 2022.

This grant didn't just equip an office; it revived a movement. The Disabled Unity Society began actively advocating for better education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. They also facilitated the issuance of disability identification cards, a key step toward securing government support.

In April 2023, their advocacy reached new heights when they secured a permanent office space in Ward No. 4, after months of negotiation with local authorities. With a dedicated space and internal resources, they even hired a person with a disability to support operations. Their perseverance paid off again when Gurvakot Municipality allocated NPR 1.025 million for disability-related programs in the fiscal year 2080/81.

This progress highlights the power of grassroots advocacy. The society continues to work towards greater inclusion, proving that a small grant and sustained effort can drive lasting change.

"A little support can create a big impact." The Disabled Unity Society now has an office and resources to push for disability rights.

Maya's Journey to Identity and Rights

At 27, Maya finally secured her official identity documents.

Maya Rumba, a resident of Padampokhari, Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City-12 in Makwanpur district, was born with a hearing disability. Despite her condition, she only obtained her birth certificate, citizenship, and disability identity card at the age of 27. As a mother of one, it was only after acquiring these documents that she became eligible for the social security allowance provided by the Government of Nepal.



Born into a modest family, Maya faced challenges in accessing education due to her hearing impairment. Her family neither prioritized her schooling nor recognized the importance of education, leaving her deprived of basic learning opportunities. Their financial struggles only exacerbated the situation.



Beyond education, Maya faced significant challenges in obtaining her fundamental rights. As a person with a disability, she lacked essential documentation from birth, including a birth certificate, citizenship, and disability identification card. Even when she understood their necessity, her family continued to delay the process with various excuses. No one took the initiative to help her. She was even married without possessing a birth certificate.

Maya's struggle came to light when she attempted to enroll in a vocational training program organized by the Bagmati Provincial Government. The program required identity documents, which she lacked. The overseeing federation initially hesitated to admit her. However, after discussions with the ministry, they allowed her to participate on the condition that she would later obtain the necessary documents.



Determined to assist her, the national federation of the disabled Nepal Bagmati province arranged multiple discussions with Maya's maternal family, the ward secretary, and local representatives. However, her father continuously avoided engagement. When he did participate, he made excuses and distanced himself from the matter. Reports suggested that he feared acknowledging his deaf daughter's identity, as it might obligate him to provide her with inheritance rights. Due to this, he remained reluctant to cooperate. Despite repeated requests from the ward chairperson and secretary for a recommendation to issue her documents, no progress was made for two years.

The situation worsened in 2022 when Maya's father passed away. Her brothers also neglected her rights. On March 30, 2023, Maya formally submitted a handwritten appeal to the National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal, Bagmati Provincial Office. In her letter, she stated that despite numerous requests, her family continuously ignored her appeals for identity documents. With her parents deceased and no official birth records at her maternal home, she had been unable to register her marriage or obtain a disability identity card. As a result, she was deprived of social security benefits and other essential services.

Upon receiving her request, the federation submitted her appeal, along with a copy of her application, to the Bagmati Provincial Office of the National Human Rights Commission. The federation formally notified the Commission via letter, prompting intervention.

Consequently, a meeting was held at the ward office in the presence of the ward chairperson, secretary, and Maya's maternal relatives. During this discussion, her family and ward representatives finally agreed to cooperate.

Considering her situation—she had recently given birth and was hospitalized—it was agreed that her birth registration and other official documents would be processed at her convenience. With the relentless efforts of the federation under Include Us project and coordination from the National Human Rights Commission, Maya finally obtained her birth certificate, citizenship, marriage registration, and disability identity card. This also enabled her to access social security benefits.



Maya now receives a monthly social security allowance of NPR 2,128. Her husband, who also has a hearing disability, works as a daily wage laborer. Despite their hardships, Maya and her family are now living a secure and happy life, empowered by the recognition of her rights and identity.

Prem's Initiative Brings Change and Hope

Prem Bahadur Gurung, a 30-year-old man from Kaski District, was born with a physical disability. He lives with his parents, wife, and two children. Despite completing his higher secondary education, he was unable to continue his university studies due to a lack of information about support systems such as assistance for writing exams.



Five months ago, Prem's life took a turn when he became part of the "Include Us Too" project, supported by the National Federation of Disabled Nepal (NFDN) Gandaki Province in collaboration with CBM Global. Through this initiative, he was selected to participate in a training program aimed at empowering people with disabilities.

"I had never been part of any organization before. I didn't even know about institutions working for people with disabilities," Prem recalls. "One day, I received a phone call from NFDN Gandaki Province. They invited me to a five-day capacity-building training. That was my first experience attending such a program, and I learned about different types of disabilities, legal rights, policies, and the importance of groups and organizations."

Taking Action for His Community

Following the training, Prem, with support from NFDN, visited the local municipality office to meet with the Vice Chairperson and Social Welfare Officer. He inquired about the official records of people with disabilities in the area and discovered that the municipality lacked complete data. However, they shared plans to organize a disability identification camp in all wards to collect accurate information.

Determined to make a difference, Prem helped establish a Disability Coordination Committee in his ward. He also became the Vice Chairperson of a newly formed Disability Network in Madi. With continued advocacy efforts, NFDN successfully ensured

the representation of people with disabilities in the local coordination committees. Today, each ward in Madi Municipality has an active Disability Coordination Committee, managing budget allocations and implementing programs for disability inclusion.

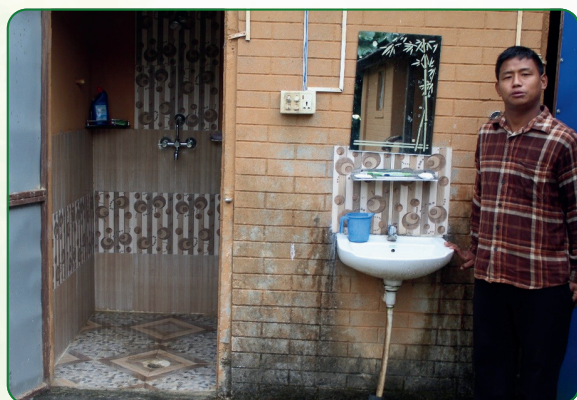
Creating Inclusive Spaces

Through further training in accessibility and universal design, Prem took on a leadership role in the Local Accessibility Advocacy Team (LAAT). He and his team met with the municipality's leadership to push for accessible public infrastructure. Their advocacy led to commitments for more inclusive facilities in municipal buildings and other institutions.



“My dream is to run an accessible homestay business,” says Prem. “That’s why I built a wheelchair-friendly toilet in my home and removed the stairs leading to my courtyard, replacing them with a ramp.”

With NFDN’s support, Prem attended a three-month homestay management training organized by the Gandaki Provincial Government. He has now started a small business and is gaining financial independence. His homestay is also being recognized by the municipality, which has begun hiring him to provide meals and accommodation for local events.



A Growing Impact

The Local Accessibility Advocacy Team in Madi continues to monitor new infrastructure projects to ensure they follow accessibility standards. Additionally, municipal authorities are increasingly committed to making public spaces more inclusive.

Prem was also selected as an enumerator for the 2021 National Census, giving him the opportunity to interact directly with people with disabilities in remote areas. This experience strengthened his vision to expand disability-focused initiatives in his community.

“NFDN taught me how to advocate for disability rights, build networks, and even start my own business,” says Prem. “Now, I have employment opportunities and a voice in the community. If I had not joined this initiative, I would still be relying on my parents for support. I am grateful to NFDN for changing my life.”

“I never thought I could achieve this much.”
Prem Bahadur Gurung has not only transformed his own life but is also creating opportunities for others with disabilities in his community.

Ramila's Fight for Recognition: A Work in Progress

Ramila Ojha has spent years battling to be recognized. Living with a psychosocial disability, she faces daily challenges but remains determined to secure her rightful disability identity card. Without it, she is denied access to essential government services.



For eight years, Ramila has been managing depression. “I never expected this to be my life,” she shares. “My husband also has depression, and I only discovered this after our marriage. A few years later, I started experiencing the same issues. If I forget to take my medication, I feel lost and overwhelmed.”

Despite clear laws on disability identity cards, Byas Municipality in Gandaki Province has yet to provide them to people with psychosocial disabilities, citing legal ambiguities. “They tell us that if we take medicine, we get better, so we don’t need the card,” Ramila explains. “But they have no idea how difficult it is to function without it.”

“They don’t understand what we go through. But we will keep fighting.”

Through a CBM-supported project, Include Us, Ramila attended a training organized by the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN). “I learned so much,” she says. “Before, I only knew about physical and visual disabilities, but I discovered there are ten types. This training gave me the confidence to push for my rights.”

With renewed determination, Ramila and her peers went to the Western Regional Hospital in Pokhara to get the required medical recommendation. However, the hospital refused to provide it. Frustrated but not defeated, she contacted NFDN, who coordinated with hospital administrators. After persistent advocacy, they finally received their recommendations and submitted them to Byas Municipality.

But the struggle was far from over. “We kept going to the municipal office, but they kept turning us away,” Ramila says. “They said our condition wasn’t permanent.”

Determined not to give up, NFDN escalated the issue, meeting with local disability committees and municipal officials. Eventually, Byas Municipality agreed to issue identity cards to a few individuals with severe psychosocial disabilities. However, Ramila is still waiting.



She remains hopeful; “We will keep advocating. One day, we too will have our identity cards.”

‘We will not stop fighting.’
Ramila Ojha is determined to claim her rights.

This is part of a broader effort led by NFDN to ensure people with disabilities can access the services they need. The work continues to push for policy amendments so that all individuals with disabilities are recognized and supported.

Simla's Fight for Safety and Stability

Simla was born with an intellectual disability. She lived with her mother in a fragile thatched-roof home, struggling to stay safe. Two years ago, when her mother left for daily wage work, Simla was raped by a neighbor. The incident shattered her family's already vulnerable life.

Since then, her mother has been fighting for justice while also trying to protect her daughter. The legal process took time, but in March 2024, the Sunsari District Court ruled in Simla's favor. However, safety remains a huge concern. Simla still does not have a permanent place where she can live securely.

"I have to work in other people's homes just to afford daily meals. Our house is already fragile, and a fire broke out just before my daughter's testimony. I asked for help because my daughter is not safe at home," Simla's mother shares.

Simla has been placed in a temporary rehabilitation home, but there is no long-term plan in place for her safety. Local government officials are discussing possible solutions—either making her home more secure with proper doors and fencing or placing her in a permanent rehabilitation center. But as of now, she remains in limbo, waiting for a stable future.

This is all part of a collaborative effort between NFDN Koshi Province, OREC Nepal, and CBM Global. They have provided legal assistance, financial support, and temporary shelter for Simla. However, long-term rehabilitation for girls with intellectual disabilities remains a major challenge in Nepal. Without systemic changes, many vulnerable girls like Simla will continue to face similar risks.

Ensuring safety for girls with disabilities goes beyond one case. Advocates are pushing for stronger policies and resources at the municipal and national levels so that every child, regardless of ability, has the right to a safe and secure future.

“She needs a safe place to live.” Simla’s mother hopes for a long-term solution so her daughter can be protected.

The Fight for Accessibility in Sudurpashchim Province

For years, persons with disabilities in Sudurpashchim Province, Nepal, struggled to access government services due to the absence of inclusive infrastructure. The Ministry of Social Development, despite being a crucial institution, lacked a standard-accessible ramp, making it difficult for people with mobility impairments to receive services independently. However, through persistent advocacy, protests, and negotiations led by the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) – Sudurpashchim Province, the government finally constructed an accessible ramp, marking a significant victory in the fight for disability rights.

A Long Struggle for Accessibility

The movement for accessibility did not happen overnight. For years, the voices of persons with disabilities remained unheard despite repeated demands. Nepal's *Accessibility Guidelines for Physical Structures and Communication Services for Persons with Disabilities (2069 BS)* had set clear standards, yet the government failed to implement them.



NFDN Sudurpashchim Province continued to advocate for disability-friendly infrastructure, engaging in discussions with local and provincial governments. Despite numerous appeals, the Ministry of Social Development failed to make the necessary changes, forcing disability rights activists to take a more direct approach.

Rising Action: Mobilizing for Change

Frustrated with the lack of response, NFDN Sudurpashchim Province, under “Include Us” project, provided accessibility training to ministry engineers on September 8, 2022. However, even after these training sessions, no action was taken to build a standard-accessible ramp.

As a result, on June 19, 2023 (Asar 5, 2080 BS), under the leadership of former NFDN Sudurpashchim Province President Bhim Bahadur Shah, disability rights activists formed the Disability Rights

Promotion Committee. They issued a seven-point demand, warning of protests if their demands were ignored within a week.

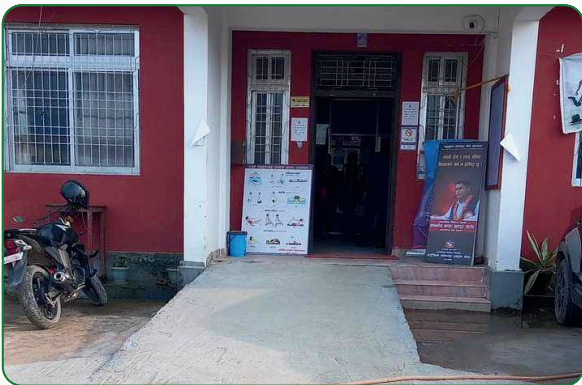
When the government remained silent, over 120 persons with disabilities took to the streets on June 27, 2023 (Asar 12, 2080 BS). The protest included rallies, sit-ins, symbolic demolitions of non-compliant structures, and even a relay hunger strike.



Turning Point: Government Forced to Act

On June 30, 2023 (Asar 18, 2080 BS), after seven days of intense protests, Chief Minister Kamal Bahadur Shah personally addressed the demonstrators and acknowledged their demands. Later that day, the Ministry of Social Development called for negotiations.

An 11-member negotiation team, including representatives from NFDN participated in the discussions. The government agreed to fulfill all the demands and pledged NPR 50 million for accessibility-related infrastructure. Additionally, NPR 160 million was allocated for disability-focused programs in the fiscal year 2080/81 BS.



A Landmark Achievement

Within two days of the agreement, a new, standard-accessible ramp was constructed at the Ministry of Social Development, allowing persons with disabilities to access services independently. This marked the successful culmination of over a year-long struggle.

Impact and Future Prospects

This victory extends beyond just one building. Other government offices in Sudurpashchim Province have taken notice, increasing their focus on accessibility. The movement has also played a crucial role in shifting societal attitudes toward persons with disabilities.

While there were delays in budget allocation, the disability rights

movement remains optimistic. The protests have ensured that disability-inclusive development remains a priority in the province, paving the way for future advocacy efforts.

The Power of Collective Action

The success of this campaign proves that organized advocacy and persistent pressure can bring about real change. Persons with disabilities in Sudurpashchim Province have not only secured better infrastructure but have also set a powerful precedent for future disability rights movements across Nepal.

This victory is a testament to resilience, solidarity, and the strong fight for inclusion. The journey does not end here—there is still much work to be done, but the foundation for a more accessible future has been laid.

The Story of Manmaya

Manmaya BK, a 27-year-old resident of Bhandara, Rapti Municipality-5, Chitwan District, has had a visual impairment since birth. Born into a modest family, she was unable to pursue education beyond the 9th grade due to her disability. Her family's weak financial situation and her disability prevented her from studying elsewhere, depriving her of even secondary-level education.



Being deprived of the light of education was painful, and navigating life with a disability was no easy task. Although she was aware of her disability, she had very little knowledge about it. She was also unaware of the services and facilities provided by the state for persons with disabilities. She did not know what to do, where to go, how to access these services, or whom to approach. Due to this lack of awareness, she remained confined to her home, unable to claim her legal rights as a citizen.

When Rapti Municipality was selected as one of the two target municipalities for the "Include Us" project, implemented by the National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal (NFDN) Bagmati Province, various groups and committees were formed to implement the project. As part of this initiative, Manmaya was included as a member of the Accessibility Advocacy Committee.



Eager to learn and always interested in matters concerning disability, she actively participated in advocacy and orientation programs conducted by the federation in Rapti Municipality. She was also entrusted with the responsibility of distributing informational materials. Gradually, she became

involved in provincial-level capacity-building training and other programs organized by the federation.

Through these programs, she established strong connections with other organizations, leading to increased participation in training sessions conducted by various Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). Over a span of two years, she gained extensive knowledge about disability-related policies, laws, and government provisions through various training, capacity-building programs, and orientations.

Manmaya sees not only challenges but also opportunities and possibilities in the field of disability advocacy. She believes in enhancing her capabilities and participates in every program related to disability that she can.



From Learning to Leadership

The belief that a lack of formal education limits a person's ability to succeed does not apply to everyone. Manmaya, who could not complete her schooling, has found a path to gaining essential life skills and education.

By making full use of the opportunities provided by the federation, she has honed her skills and is now leading as the Chairperson of a registered local OPD, the Municipal Disability Coordination Committee. Recently, her organization received a budget allocation of NPR 100,000 from the Ministry of Social Development of Bagmati Province.

Under her leadership, the organization has conducted one-day orientation programs in two locations within Rapti Municipality, benefiting over 100 persons with disabilities. Additionally, she has successfully implemented a Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program funded with NPR 300,000 from the provincial government.

Manmaya is also a member of the municipality's Disability Identity Card Distribution Committee, actively participating in meetings and

offering valuable suggestions. She is involved in women's groups, cooperatives, and other local organizations, and she plays an active role in committees and institutions working for the upliftment of the Dalit community.

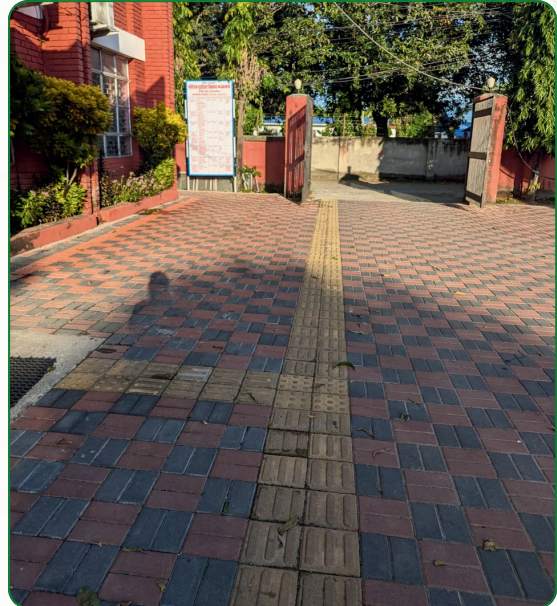


A Journey of Determination and Success

For a visually impaired Dalit woman who did not even complete secondary education, leading an OPD, securing provincial government funding, and successfully executing programs within just two years is no small feat. Manmaya's success is a testament to her unwavering determination and dedication. At the same time, the role of the National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal, Bagmati Province, has been instrumental in her journey.

A Model Practice of Accessibility – Ministry of Urban Development in Koshi Province

The building and premises of the Ministry of Road Infrastructure and Urban Development in Koshi Province have been transformed into a model of accessibility, ensuring that all citizens can access services independently. Constructed and upgraded following universally accepted accessibility standards, the premises now provide a more inclusive environment where everyone, including people with disabilities, can receive and offer services efficiently.



Over the past year, significant improvements have been made to roads leading to the ministry. Previously, rough and uneven paths made access difficult—especially for individuals using assistive devices. Now, with paved and obstruction-free roads, movement is smoother for everyone, including children, pregnant women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

“The changes have been life-changing,” says a local advocate for disability rights. “Before, getting to the ministry was a struggle. Now, I can enter without assistance and independently reach any office.”



The transformation was made possible through the “Include Us” project, implemented by the National Federation of the Disabled - Nepal, in collaboration with CBM Global. The project focused on training engineers in accessible design, conducting accessibility audits, and advocating for policy changes. Through these efforts,

Beyond physical improvements, the initiative represents a shift towards a more inclusive government approach. The Federation's Koshi Province office worked closely with government officials, conducted training sessions, and engaged in advocacy efforts. Through request letters, media campaigns, public discussions, and ongoing monitoring, the project successfully demonstrated how accessibility can be integrated into public infrastructure.



Moving forward, the Federation aims to expand accessibility improvements to other government offices. An accessibility audit of 22 public offices across four districts has already been conducted, with findings submitted for further action. By ensuring universal design in government buildings, this initiative is paving the way for a more inclusive future.

"Before, I needed help just to enter. Now, I can access everything on my own." The new accessible premises empower citizens with disabilities to navigate independently.

A Step Towards Accessibility in Lakshminiya

For years, people with disabilities in Lakshminiya Municipality faced daily struggles accessing public offices. Without ramps, accessible complaint boxes, or information boards, basic services felt out of reach. Many felt unheard, and local representatives had little awareness of their needs. But over the past two years, things have started to change.



Thanks to the "Include Us" project, accessibility is now on the agenda. In partnership with the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) Madhesh Province, the project identified Lakshminiya Municipality as a priority for intervention. Initial visits revealed just how inaccessible public buildings were, highlighting the urgent need for change.

"We had no proper access to the office, and even submitting a complaint was a challenge. It felt like our voices didn't matter," explains a local advocate with a disability.

A crucial step forward was a three-day technical training on global accessibility standards, bringing together engineers, IT officers, and local advocacy groups. Following this, an accessibility audit was carried out in municipal buildings. The results were compiled into a report and presented to the Chief Administrative Officer, setting the stage for an intensive advocacy push.



Local advocacy groups took ownership of the process, organizing bi-monthly follow-up meetings and engaging directly with municipal representatives. Through persistent discussions and awareness sessions, a shift in mindset began to take shape. The municipal authorities

acknowledged the barriers and committed to addressing them.

As a result, Lakshminiya Municipality has made significant progress. Ramps have been installed at municipal offices, an accessible complaint box has been introduced, and an information board now provides clear guidance for all visitors. The municipal chief has also directed engineers to integrate accessibility features into upcoming building expansions.

However, challenges remain. Plans for an accessible parking space and toilets have yet to be realized due to administrative delays. But the advocacy group remains vigilant, ensuring that commitments translate into action.



“Before, we never imagined these changes could happen. Now, we see progress, and we will continue pushing for full accessibility,” says a local disability rights advocate.

This work is part of the “Include Us” project, which focuses on making public services inclusive for people with disabilities across Nepal. The project is also engaging with the provincial government to influence policies that ensure accessibility is a priority in future infrastructure planning. The long-term goal is to embed accessibility standards in municipal development plans and expand these efforts to other regions.

While progress has been made, full accessibility is still a work in progress. But the momentum is building, and local advocates are determined to see it through.

