

Training to actively engage in civic rights

Nepal - International Foundation for Electoral Systems

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The project advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities to actively participate in the electoral and political process through training and awareness-raising campaigns. Persons with disabilities are empowered to participate in community groups, such as women's groups, school management committees, youth clubs, cooperatives, etc.

“Reaching out to grassroots communities not only provides persons with disabilities with new opportunities but it creates a spirit of engagement and compassion among all involved.”

—Elizabeth COTE, Country Director, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

FACTS & FIGURES

- 1 national and 6 district-level disabled people's organizations as well as 120 disability-inclusive groups received training, and are now actively promoting civic, political, and electoral rights.
- Approximately 1,200 persons with disabilities are members of ward citizen forums, and thus participate in local decision-making processes.
- More than 1,050 persons with various disabilities are now registered through the regular voter registration process.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Persons with disabilities are isolated and excluded from mainstream civic, political, and electoral activities in rural areas of Nepal, where disability is taken as a health issue. Consequently, the political participation of those with disabilities is seldom considered at the decision-making level. In addition, there are still legal restrictions preventing “persons of unsound mind” from voting.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

In this project the civic, political, and electoral participation of persons with disabilities is not just the responsibility of self-help groups but includes other community groups as well. Working together,

persons with disabilities and community groups jointly identify issues, create advocacy plans, and execute them. This has boosted the confidence of persons with disabilities and has encouraged community members to take on disability issues as their own.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The project can be easily and inexpensively replicated since it is based on advocacy and awareness-raising. If self-help groups lead the advocacy process in collaboration with other community groups, it empowers everyone involved.

Photo

“A women with a physical disability casts her mock ballot in an accessible environment.”

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