

# Amplifying voices of women on the nexus of climate change and SRHR in Asia - Nepal

Experiences of indigenous women with disabilities in Nepal

## OVERVIEW

National Indigenous Disabled Women Association- Nepal works for the groups having multiple and intersecting identities and builds synergy both at the grassroots and global levels collectively with various organizations and relevant stakeholders by cross-movement collaboration; with support from Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) commissioned a scoping study in 2023 that produced the following findings and recommendations on the plight of indigenous women with disabilities in Nepal.

## NEPAL CONTEXT

The climate crisis has supercharged the fallout from the annual rains, which are triggering an increasing number of floods and landslides, disasters that are especially devastating in a nation defined by its vertigo-inducing slopes.

Nepal is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts and recent studies by the Asian Development Bank suggested Nepal faces losing 2.2% of annual GDP due to climate change by 2050.

Despite contributing just 0.02 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world when it comes to impacts from the climate crisis.



Climate change is expected to negatively affect water quality by altering the ratio of sediments and nutrients, thereby, affecting agricultural yield and the maintenance costs and lifespans of hydroelectric power plants. Changes to river flow due to glacial melt further increase this risk.

Due to the warming temperatures, there has been an increase in previously unknown diseases like Dengue in Nepal.

90% of crop loss in Nepal can be attributed to weather or meteorological events, increased temperature, and climatic hazards such as erratic rainfall, droughts, and floods triggered by them.

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Among the 28 million indigenous women with disabilities globally, more than 700,000 are from Nepal.

Indigenous women and girls with disabilities have a distinct identity as 'women', 'indigenous women', 'women with disabilities' and 'indigenous woman with disability' with multiple marginalized identities that overlap, intersect, aggravate,

and generate compounding layers of challenges, discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization in different layers. Indigenous women and girls with disabilities have remained invisible within the women rights, disability rights, indigenous rights related discussions and within state mechanisms, and thus continue to be voiceless in all spheres of lives.

## FINDINGS

Most of the organizations working on climate change or on SRHR in Nepal have worked on these issues with standalone themes not within the nexus. Looking at the nexus of climate change and SRHR was new for them and most of them were focused on raising awareness and building capacity at community level to young people.

This study focused on indigenous women and girls with disabilities who had different types of disabilities such as physical, visually impaired, voice and speech impairment, deaf, and multiple disabilities. These groups 64% had only heard about climate change whereas 18.7% had not heard and completely do not know about climate change impacts.

Increased floods, landslides including developmental projects like hydroelectricity, hydropower, dams, road expansion have led to displacement for indigenous communities and have lost their culture, language, traditional customary practices, institutions including health related medicines from the forest.

In the situation of forced displacement and emergency, indigenous women with disability are compelled to live in open space or slum areas which are unsafe, sexual health measures and relation like use of family planning services like contraceptives, remain limited and sterilization or forced sterilization primarily to women and girls with disabilities and abortion remain heightened.

Climate change magnified adversities like low productive land, increased use of pesticides, increasing new types of weeds, insects, pesticides and causing to skin related issues; like communicable and non-communicable skin allergies, rashes, mental health issues; anxiety, depression, stress and health related changes like vomiting, headache, pain, abnormal behavior and others new symptoms that added care burden, work pressure among family members.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Provide safe, conducive environment to indigenous women with disabilities to express and assert their rights and universal health coverage should be precondition to access SRHR services both at private and public sphere and hold open discussion at private sphere.
- 2 Ensure access, availability, affordability, quality SRHR health services with reasonable accommodation to all women, indigenous women, and indigenous women and girls with disabilities.
- 3 Ensure Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is provided and all the information are in accessible formats, sign and mother tongue language, braille and Easy to read version to all age groups including indigenous women and girls with disabilities.
- 4 Adopt multi-sectoral approach with disaggregated data system to climate change and SRHR to address vulnerability, mitigation and challenges to access or uptake SRHR services.
- 5 Ensure free, prior and informed consent with reasonable accommodation for effective participation of person with disabilities including indigenous women with disabilities in climate and SRHR policy-making and decision-making processes.
- 6 Ensure that the rights of indigenous women with disabilities are respected, protected, and fulfilled in the design, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all climate and SRHR policies.
- 7 Adopt an intersectional perspective that recognizes and addresses the multiple barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities, children, marginalized individuals, persons with disabilities living in poverty and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, such as persons with intellectual, psychosocial, deaf blindness, profound and severe disabilities including indigenous people with disabilities.
- 8 Adopt disability, gender and cultural inclusive awareness raising program at community level, different groups of peoples, Government officials, UN agencies and multi-stakeholders, international cooperation on climate change impacts, adaptive skills and SRHR.
- 9 Ensure proper implementation of existing laws that Nepal has ratified and form new policies integrating/mainstreaming intersectional identity groups and focusing on multiple marginalization in all policies and program.
- 10 Support measures to ensure the meaningful inclusion of indigenous persons/women and girls with disabilities and their human rights under the UNFCCC framework, and accelerate climate just initiatives and SRHR related education, capacity-building, training, participation through a comprehensive set of measures to ensure that States adopt inclusive solutions to the climate crisis and uptake SRHR services.

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