

Hamro Coffee: Disability Inclusion in Nepal

Project timeline: December 2019 – March 2023

Project budget: £252k

Capturing the power of collaboration: Light for the World, Cordaid (previously ICCO Cooperation), National Federation of the Disabled Nepal.

Most of the 1.3 billion people with disabilities around the world¹ are of working age, however only a third are in employment². Employment opportunities for people with disabilities are frequently limited by discrimination and environmental barriers. **That is why Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is working to create more employment opportunities for people with disabilities in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - and to drive commitments from employers, business leaders and governments to make this happen.**



The situation in Nepal

Across Nepal, deeply rooted stereotypes about disability are held among many communities. Discrimination and exclusion of the thousands of people with disabilities³ is widespread, **creating significant barriers to employment. It is estimated only 36 per cent of people with disabilities are employed⁴.** Further barriers people with disabilities face include unequal access to education, lack of accessible infrastructure to get to work and inaccessible workplaces. Nepal's 2017 Labour Act and 2015 National

Employment Policy make little mention of people with disabilities and whilst the 2017 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act references non-discrimination at work, this legislation is not being put into practice⁵. **There is an urgent need to improve inclusive employment practices in Nepal and empower people with disabilities to reach their economic potential.**

Opening up the coffee value chain

Coffee is an important cash crop in Nepal, where 70% of the population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods⁶. With a recent boom in domestic and international demand, it represents a strong market. Importantly, coffee is also a less labour-intensive crop to farm after its first year, compared to other seasonal or cash crops, making it more accessible. New plants take up to five years to come to full fruition, however they then bear fruit for up to 50 years.

For maximum impact, this project took a successful coffee livelihoods programme run by the non-governmental organisation Cordaid⁷ in Nepal called Hamro Coffee (meaning “Our Coffee” in Nepali) and, through partnership, adapted activity in two districts to be disability inclusive.

Targeting two municipalities in the two largest coffee producing districts - Melamchi in Sindhupalchok district and Mandandepur in Kavrepalanchok district - the project **supported and incentivised coffee value chain actors to engage and open formal and informal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.**

We brought together a consortium of experts including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), local and national government, international and national non-governmental organisations, research institutes and social enterprises to deliver key pillars of activity:

- **At community level** we engaged people with disabilities with livelihoods opportunities in the coffee value chain; within farming (seed production and orchard management), coffee bean grading, roasting and barista services at coffee shops, and coffee waste recycling (specifically cascara and fuel). Participants received apprenticeship training and ongoing mentorship from local experts and business owners. Five OPDs managed project coordination and were trained on rights, livelihoods, and advocacy, as well as how to deliver workplace accessibility audits and advise local government and businesses on accessibility.

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Suman, pictured, who has an intellectual disability, and his dad Tika, received training, resources, and technical supervision to establish a coffee nursery. With technical support and input, they have each planted 200 coffee saplings in their field.

“My son is capable of working for a living. He just needs a bit more guidance and supervision” said Tika.

- **At system strengthening level** we engaged the coffee value chain to be more inclusive. Extension Service Providers (experts in different areas of the coffee value chain) were hired to train employers, from café owners to coffee farmers, on the rights of people with disabilities to own and benefit from coffee production resources. They also provided technical support for participants. In partnership with the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, training was delivered to 11 local farming cooperatives on disability inclusion.
- **At governance and policy level** our goal was to influence government and the coffee sector to be more disability inclusive. We advised local government on their legal responsibilities for local Disability Coordination Committees, supported the CEO of the National Coffee Academy to attend the World Coffee Expo to engage potential buyers and created inclusion awareness through radio broadcasts, printed materials and a website.

Project impact



By the end of the project, 132 people with disabilities had been trained and secured jobs in the coffee value chain, including 88 farmers, four nursery owners, 11 green graders, one pulper and 28 baristas. Although coffee plants do not tend to reach a full yield for five years, the income of farmers had increased by 14% by the end of the project, with over an eighth of their income already coming from coffee harvesting.



Advocacy efforts resulted in municipal governments releasing NPR 850,000 (£5,200) for farmers with disabilities in at least seven municipalities. Companies, including Royal Himalayan Coffee, also made commitments to make their processing and training spaces accessible for staff with disabilities.

Discovering what works

The project generated rigorous evidence of what works to deliver positive outcomes for people with disabilities in the coffee value chain in Nepal. A manual for inclusive barista training was produced for employers and a **lessons learned document** was published. Read more on our [project page on inclusive coffee value chain](#) and visit the project [website](#) to read stories of farmers, baristas, and traders who participated.

Breaking barriers for people with disabilities

Disability inclusion is critical for reaching the Global Goals and we are producing the evidence on what works in a range of different areas. We now need the allocation of resources for disability inclusion in employment to turn evidence into action.

To find out more visit

inclusivefutures.org/employment or contact Claire Walsh at cwalsh@sightsavers.org.

Endnotes

- 1 World Health Organization (2023) Factsheet: Disability. Available online at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health#:~:text=Key%20facts,1%20in%206%20of%20us>
- 2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities. Accessed 26.09.23. Available online at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html>
- 3 There is no agreed estimate of the number of people with disability in Nepal. It has been suggested by OPDs that official figures such as the 1.94% in the 2011 census and the 3.6% in the 2011 National Living Standards Survey, under-represent the number of people who have a disability in the country. A 2014-15 household survey found a prevalence rate of 14.5% (see reference 2. in this list, p.76).
- 4 Eide, A.H., Neupane, S., & Hem, K-G. (2016) Living conditions among people with disability in Nepal. SINTEF, p.13. Available online at: <https://www.sintef.no/globalassets/sintef-teknologi-og-samfunn/rapporter-sintef-ts/sintef-a27656-nepalwebversion.pdf> As referenced in Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Nepal Situational Analysis - June 2020 update, p.19.
- 5 Prasai, S., & Pant, A. (2018) Monitoring Employment Rights of People with Disabilities in Kathmandu, Nepal - Asian Workplace Approach That Respects Equality. Disability Rights Promotion International (DRPI) & National Federation of Disabled-Nepal. p. 1, 36-37. As referenced in Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Nepal Situational Analysis - June 2020 update, p.20.
- 6 UN Data Nepal – As referenced in Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Nepal Situational Analysis - June 2020 update, p.7.
- 7 In 2021, Cordaid merged with the project's original partner Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO).