

UNDP Nepal Community Based Disaster Management Practices, 2006-2008



# Acronyms

BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CBDMGs	Community Based Disaster Management Groups
CBDMP	Community Based Disaster Management Project
DDC	District Development Committee
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
HIV/ AIDS	Human Immuno deficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
REDP	Rural Energy Development Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee

#### Foreword

Nepal is one of the countries in the world most vulnerable to natural disasters, including earthquakes. Increasing climate change impacts on fragile geo-physical settings, recurrent and new patterns of natural hazards like floods and landslides and degradation of the eco-systems by human activities have in the recent years taken an increasing toll on human lives, losses of properties and economic gains and investments. Recent flooding with associated loss of significant number of lives and damage to livelihood assets in the Koshi area in the east and Kanchanpur, Kailali in west Nepal in 2008 alone illustrate the severity of the problem. While there are well established immediate disaster response mechanisms at national and local levels, capacity to prepare for, mitigate risks and adapt needs to be built up. The newly approved national Strategy Disaster Risk Management in Nepal will be a key driver of this effort.

Economically marginalized poor communities, who tend occupy marginalized lands such as flood plains and higher slopes that are most prone to disasters are thereby most vulnerable to disaster risks and have usually very limited, if no, coping mechanisms. While looking at disaster management planning and preparedness, it is thus essential to involve these communities in risk assessment and implementation of risk reduction activities.

Recognizing the imperative need to assist communities at the local level prepare and protect themselves to the extent possible from these disasters, UNDP decided to pilot a locally based, community focused Disaster Risk Management Programme. This 2 year community mitigation and preparedness work in pilot districts under the Community Based Disaster Management Programme, carried out in collaboration with MOHA and the District Disaster Relief Committees, has contributed

to developing approaches and methodologies, training and community engagement packages, which have clearly contributed to enhanced disaster and disaster preparedness awareness, risk reduction and increased community resilience towards disaster. Target communities have been very receptive to and engaged in the implementation of these community based disaster management initiatives, and in the process community members have learnt how to cope with disaster, better prepare for a response and mitigate impacts of recurring disasters.

This publication is an anthology of some of the successful stories and best practices of community focused disaster management initiatives undertaken by the communities themselves. It highlights the elements of success, whether it be a model of community mobilization or a simple technology which communities can use and adapt or a process which ensures ownership.

I would like to thank all those who were the part of design and implementation of the programme, particularly the local communities who trusted us, put their efforts and actively participated in the programme. This combination of community trust and support intertwined with technical guidance has been key to the success of the programme.

I hope the readers of this success stories book will find these experiences gained in managing community based disaster management activities in pilot districts of Nepal, useful and can use some of these best practices for replication in other areas.

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Country Director UNDP Nepal

## Acknowledgements

This success stories book is dedicated to the local communities of the six districts of Nepal (Chitwan, Makawanpur, Sarlahi, Sindhuli, Tanahu, Syangja) who put their efforts together with the Disaster Risk Management team of UNDP Nepal to identify potential disaster risks and find ways to mitigate them.

Local communities have gained adequate knowledge through their direct involvement in disaster management initiatives, which will be helpful to cope with future disaster risks.

Staff of the Disaster Risk Management Unit of UNDP are highly acknowledged for their hard work in providing technical support to the local community in design and construction of Community Based Mitigation Structures.

Thanks are due to the Forum for Sustainable Development Nepal for collecting the case studies for Community Based Disaster Risk Management activities implemented by UNDP, Nepal. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Krishna Adhikari, a Nepalese Journalist, who was involved in collecting stories about community involvement in DRM activities.





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## Millennium Development Goals and Disaster Reduction



United Nations Development Programme/ Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery's study in 2004 ranked Nepal as the 11<sup>th</sup> most at risk country to earthquakes and the 30<sup>th</sup> to flood risk. Similarly, the World Bank's study conducted in 2005 portrayed Nepal as highly vulnerable to disaster due to the geographical structure of the country and intensified monsoon. Though landslide is a natural hazard, different studies show that 40 percent of landslides occurring in Nepal are due to human activities. In last few years, climate change has emerged as one of the reasons behind the increased incidents of disaster in Nepal. Lives and property loss can be reduced if national policies are amended to fulfill the commitments made by the United Nations World Conference of 1994 and United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005. If this happens, a significant contribution would have been made towards achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. To achieve this, however, there is great need to integrate disaster risk reduction into development policies and planning.

Nepal is rich in terms of nature and bio-diversity but it is equally vulnerable to the adverse effect of natural hazards like flood, landslides, earthquakes etc. due to its fragile geological and geo physical conditions, steep topography and extreme weather conditions. According to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, nearly 100,000 Nepalese are being internally displaced every year due to natural disasters.

The breach of Koshi embankment on 18 August 2008 destroyed property worth billions of rupees in Eastern Nepal. It resulted in casualty of people

Gabion Boxes weaving

and the displacement of around 50,000 locals. Road connectivity between Eastern Nepal and other parts of the country was also disrupted. Floods and landslides in various places of Western Nepal including Kailali and Kanchanpur rendered similar calamity in 2008. Every year, floods and landslides claim hundreds of lives and make thousands homeless. Such disasters destroy physical infrastructures and cause negative impact in each and every sector including the environmental, economic and social sectors. People in the hills are compelled on a daily basis to live with hazards including landslides, soil erosion and flooding while the people of Tarai have to endure floods, soil erosion and inundation every year.

Floods and landslides are natural phenomenon that occur every year in the country and much work remainst to be done as far as mitigation and preparedness for these hazards are concerned. Although some relief measures are undertaken after natural disasters strike, people often have no way out until some concrete measures for disaster reduction and risk mitigation are implemented. The problem of soil erosion, flood and landslide is increasing every year, mainly because of non-scientific agricultural cultivation systems and haphazard development works undertaken without considering the negative effects exerted on the environment. It is ironic that the most vulnerable group to suffer the wrath of natural disasters are the poor. Of them women and children are typically the most susceptible.

Realizing the gravity of the situation reflected by alarming mortality and economic loss statistics generated by disasters, UNDP piloted the Community Based Disaster Management Project. This Project commenced operation at the community level from April 2006. It encouraged and supported the local communities and people from 42 wards of Syangja, Tanahu, Chitwan, Makawanpur, Sarlahi and Sindhuli districts which were worst hit and constantly facing problems of flood, landslide and river cut each year with the onset of monsoon to start activities for minimizing the impact of these disasters.

The project, which was started as a model, has enhanced knowledge of disaster preparedness and disaster coping skills at the local level. Local people were trained to enhance their capacity to reduce their risk from natural hazards. The project also works with the central and local government levels. It is worthy of note that the government is soon expected to approve a separate disaster management act and policy.





Training for CBDMGs on Disaster Risk Reduction

Implementation of the project has contributed indirectly towards the achievement of the Millenium Development Goal targets. It has also helped to minimize the loss of lives and properties from flood, landslide and river erosion in the selected wards. Moreover, there has been significant participation of women in all the activities of the project. Women have been involved in decision making for the mitigation work, training, planning, implementation and information sharing. This has helped raise income of the poorest families selected in different project wards.

The main goal of CBDMP is to "enhance the security of women and men vulnerable to natural disasters and protect common property and community resources in select disaster prone districts; by implementing appropriate capacity building measures at community, district and central levels while supporting and replicating community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives that preferably enhance livelihood opportunities".

The Project has given emphasis to capacity building and leadership development of the local community along with disaster reduction measures by providing various trainings in all six districts where the Project worked. These training have helped people affected by disaster to develop skills and empower themselves. It has taught them valuable lessons to reduce risks through the application of indigenous knowledge and through use of local available resources.

Sapana Shrestha of Hetauda-4 Makawanpur feels that women play a vital role in preparedness as well as during rescue, relief and rehabilitation activities. She says, "my leadership capacity has increased after taking disaster reduction training." Awareness raising programs about HIV/AIDS, women trafficking and disaster risk reduction has also been conducted in project implementation districts. Sharmila Karki of Ranigunj-4 Sarlahi is active in the campaign to remove irregularities and superstition prevalence in the society. She has been able to inform the society about measures to control women trafficking and how to be safe from HIV/AIDS. after she received training on these subjects. Similarly, Tulasa Bhattarai of Ranigunj-4 is busy informing people about disaster reduction and its importance after she received training in disaster management, which motivates the local people to work together for the mitigation activities. She notes "now they have raised their voice to the local government for the funds to allocate in their VDC for landslide mitigation activities."

Wide spread rural poverty is a challenge for development of the

country. Various programs and schemes have been designed and implemented to alleviate poverty. improvement However the in livelihood of many people from the mobilization of seed grants provided by the project has proved that small assistance can bring big changes. Locals receive assistance directly from this grant through Disaster Management Committees formed at the local level for the purpose of operating enterprises like cattle farming, sewing, vegetable farming and small business. Though the Program is for everyone, especially women, dalits and indigenous people have benefitted from this grant. One example is Mana Maya Gurung of Putalibazar Municipality, Syangja, who took a loan of Rs. 5,000 to start goat farming. She said it has become easy for her to meet the expenses of her family after starting this enterprise. Likewise a local of Jagatradevi of the Syangja district says she has

earned some income from the sewing machine that she bought with a seed grant of 5,000 rupees from the CBDMP committee.

The project has developed leadership qualities of women and given them a platform to voice their opinion in decision making processes. The Project ensures women's active participation in all activities. Similarly, it has also demonstrated a good example of inclusiveness as people belonging to various communities like Dalits and Janajatis participate in the programs. Assistant Resident Representative of UNDP, Vijaya P. Singh, believes that the lessons learned from this project, which was started with the objective of minimizing poverty and meeting the target of Millennium Development Goals will be a guideline for disaster reduction and management in the days to come.

### Floods are a Chronic Problem in the Tarai



Flood Mitigation by communities in Riyo River, Gardi VDC, Chitwan Ramu Ghimire of Ranigunj VDC in Sarlahi district has tears in his eyes as he surveys the Phooljor river. This is the river that swept away all his dreams and desires. "What to do, we became helpless in front of nature. Fifteen years ago the Phooljor River swept away all the properties which had been used from the period of my forefathers." Ramu just watched helplessly and could do nothing to protect his land.

Many others like him share the similar stories. Ramji Mahato also faced a similar problem. Their stories are more heart rending because these people are ordinary people who have very simple lives. They live a hand to mouth existence and when nature takes away the very thing that sustains them, they have nowhere to turn on. This used to be the most productive land in the district, now it is barren. Each year the flood in Phooljhor river converts more than hundred hectares of land into desert. The river starts from Chure hills and enters India through Sonbarsha. It has been eroding 20 to 25 kms of Nepali land every year. Besides Ranigunj, Parwanipur, Kalinjor, Ishworpur and Rampur are also affected by the river.

Black clouds in the sky increases the heartbeat of the residents of Gardi VDC in Chitwan. The local Riyu river floods every monsoon resulting in loss of land and property. The floods displaced almost seven to eight hundred households forcing them to migrate to other areas.

The Narayani river also creates havoc in the lives of people who live on its banks every year. The river has washed away hundreds of bighas of land and made many people landless.

Every year this scenario is repeated in many districts of the country. Disaster preparedness and risk mitigation is vital to reduce the fear of these communities and help protect their lives and properties. Since the Community Based Disaster Management Project (CBDMP) has started working in the village, the villagers have found reasons to hope again. The Project helps reduce hazard vulnerability of the communities living in the districts through community based disaster risk mitigation measures. The Project forms and capacitates Community Based Disaster Management Groups (CBDMG) in each community, who in turn reduce the geo physical vulnerability by designing and executing at least one risk mitigation work such as the construction of dykes, spurs, and embankements in the wards. From their participation in the CBDMP, Ramu Ghimire and

his fellow residents of Ranigunj VDC constructed stone spurs at the bank of the Phooljhor river. The villagers of Madi made bamboo spurs to check the flow of water, while those living on the banks of Narayani also built stone spurs to fight the flooding.

Central and local government as well as vulnerable communities were also helped with the financial and technical assistance of CBDMP. The Project conducted various trainings and awareness classes for the villagers to educate them on disaster risk management. They were taught to use locally available materials like bamboo, to control the flooding. The villagers also planted trees on the banks to find a more permanent solution to the problem.

Besides helping to control flooding and soil erosion, CBDMP has encouraged the residents of ward



Construction of drain to control inundation in ward no 11, Bharatpur Municipality

no 11 of Bharatpur Municipality to construct a drain to control inundation. The water was harming farms, agricultural plots and transportation infrastructure. In response the locals constructed a three km long drainage channel, which has helped the wards significantly, in reducing their flooding.



Residents from all affected areas report a marked difference this year during the monsoons. They want to continue with the construction of bamboo spurs and stone spurs even after the Project is phased out. Now they are empowered enough to recognize ways to prepare and minimize the risks of the natural calamities to which they are exposed. This can be seen from the disaster mitigation methods taken by the residents of Chitwan, Sarlahi and other communities in the Project districts.

Gabion spur in Ambhanganj VDC, Hetauda

#### Better Safe than Sorry

No one knows when natural disaster will strike. The only way to be safe is generating sufficient awareness in people in order that they are selfmotivated to be both prepared when such situations arise and to work practically to reduce their levels of risk exposure. There are many organizations working in the area of disaster awareness and preparedness.



Model of Earthquake Resistant Community Center in Sarlahi

As Nepal is a disaster prone country, it is imperative to educate the Nepali populace about safety measures, especially in the villages, where the prevalent idea about disasters is that the Gods must be angry.

The Community Based Disaster Management Project (CBDMP), a UNDP funded project, has been doing just that. The main goal of the Project is to enhance the safety of women and men vulnerable to natural disasters and to protect common property as well as community resources in select disaster prone areas. The Project has helped build a model earthquake resistant school in Hetauda and Community Centers in Sarlahi, two districts that are prone to disasters. The people were fully involved in building the school, which was built at a total cost of Rs. 750,000.

CBDMP. along with Hetauda Municipality and DDC Makawanpur constructed a model earthquake resistant building with three rooms in Shramik Secondary School in Kara of Hetauda. They were unable to construct the whole building this way due to resource crunch. The students and teachers of the school are very happy with the way things have turned out. The Principle of the school, Tej Bahadur Lama says, "we wanted to be safe after viewing footage of school buildings collapsing and children perishing in the 2005

earthquake in Pakistan". The children also feel safe. "It is a relief to know that we study in a safe school", says Sangita Dhakal, a student of grade 10. Another student, Bijaya Lama feels that the whole school should be earthquake resistant and not only three rooms. The Principle has plans to do just that if he can manage to raise adequate resources.

Inspired from the program, the CBDMGs of the municipality planned and constructed earthquake resistant community buildings at ward no's 2,



3 and 10 in Malangawa Municipality in Sarlahi district. The Municipality was interested enough to join hands with the Project and construct the earthquake resistant model buildings. Besides the construction, the Project also conducts awareness and education programs on earthquake safety measures. The objective of constructing these buildings was to provide a safe place for the locals who feel more happy and secure now.

Such measures have helped assure Ram Preet Shah, a resident of ward no 2 who has heard about the big earthquake of 1934 and is anxious about the next big one. He fears being buried under the debris. There are many like him in the district with the same fear.

Acting Executive Officer of Malangawa Municipality, Raj Kapoor Mahato says, "in the past we used to assist in rescue operations only, but now we want to reduce the effects of disaster and focus on safety measures." He added that the Municipality would encourage people to construct new structures keeping these measures in mind. To give continuity to this program, the Municipality has emphasized disaster and earthquake safety measures in the construction of new buildings.

Disaster Management Committees have been formed in three wards and employees of the Municipality have been trained in disaster management. Staff have also been taken on exposure visits to other districts with similar programs like Chitwan and Hetauda to gain more perspective. These visits and trainings are expected to give sustainability to the program even after the Project is phased out. This also promotes a bottom up approach to development and helps provide greater ownership within the Municipality. The Municipal authorities are confident that they will be a huge success in their endeavor of being a safe district, as far as earthquake resistant construction is concerned.

The school has become a model to raise awareness among city dwellers about construction of earthquake resistant houses and safety measures necessary to overcome it. Dhruba Bhujel, Officer of Hetauda Municipality said that the school has piqued the community's interest. He said the Municipality would give special emphasis to effective implementation of the Nepal Building Code and construction of earthquake resistant buildings. People from neighboring villages have been coming to observe the school and see if they can replicate it.



School Building of Shramik Secondary School in Kara, Hetauda

## Landslide Mitigation and Preparedness Practices



Series of wooden check dams to control debris flow in Nepane VDC, Sindhuli

Development is a sure sign of success, but it can also bring with it countless problems if disaster risks are not considered in the planning and implementation phase of development interventions. CBDMP has been helping people cope with disaster in an effective and sustainable manner. It works with the goal of enhancing the safety of citizens vulnerable to natural disaster. The Project also helps protect common property and community resources in select disaster prone districts. They do this by involving the people in the affected area through the establishment of Community Based Disaster Management Groups (CBDMG), which are trained in different issues of disaster management like hazard and vulnerability analysis planning and execution of disaster risk mitigation works. This has been

very helpful in the districts that are prone to flooding and soil erosion.

An access road had to be built to the site of Kaligandaki Hydropower Project, situated in Jagatradevi VDC in Syangja district. But in this case, development came with its share of problems. There was a landslide at the Khahare stream. A drain had to be constructed while the road was being built. This construction triggered the problem of landslides. The landslides displaced 35 families and threatened the Jagatradevi Primary School. Landslide mitigation measures are being taken to save the village and the school that lies in its way.

Residents of Chimkeshwori in Tanahu district were happy to have electricity courtesy of the Rural Energy Development Programme (REDP) a UNDP funded program. However due to a lack of proper protection measures, landslides occurring during each monsoon disrupted electricity production. As mitigation, the communities implemented protection works with the support from the Project ensuring electricity supply to the village throughout the year.

On the other side of the district in Alaiche, Katuwatol and Tampidanda of Byas Municipality, residents have a similar problem. They have difficulty sleeping at night during the monsoon season for fear of being swept away along with their houses. This has happened many times in the past. Many from their village like Til Bahadur Thapa and Jhak Bahadur Thapa were forced to migrate to other places after losing their property to landslides. The residents of Nepane VDC in Sindhuli also were fed up with floods and debris flow. They wanted a permanent solution to these problems. The people living in these VDCs were fortunate that CBDMP was working in those areas.

The Project supported local residents of these districts to implement successful disaster management interventions. It helped enhance community stakeholder capacities in different aspects of disaster management planning and execution. Locals were helped technically and financially to combat landslides, soil erosion, flooding in a sustainable manner and in raising their overall awareness of earthquake risk reduction.

The residents of Jagatradevi formed a CBDMP and constructed stone



Communities working for landslide mitigation in Nibuwakharka VDC, Syangja

walls in different parts of the village which were at risk of landslide. The villagers also planted trees for a more permanent solution. Everyone pitched in. As Tikisara Basyal, Chair person of the Committee says, "we worked continuously in spite of bad weather, because we had to find a solution."



Stone masonry wall for landslide mitigation in Vyas Municipality, Tanahu

Villagers in Chimakeshwori got together to construct a stone wall around the source of the landslide. It is heartening to note that the entire village comes together in times of disasters. This is another boon from CBDMP. The awareness that the Project has brought into the villagers has united them, keeping aside caste and gender for a common cause.

The resident of various wards in Vyas Municipality also took advantage of the training, awareness programs and funds provided by the Project to build a 31 meter long and two meter tall stone masonry wall. They also planted various species of plants as a stabilization measure. The Project encourages residents to use local materials as much as they can. The people of Nepane in Sindhuli have been using logs from the Sal tree, which are very sturdy, to build check dams. They have created a sense of awareness in people about planting trees. Now, locals are advised to stop the open grazing of cattle and not to cut grass and firewood randomly.

All the villagers in the Project areas are excited with their good work. They have pledged to continue with it in the years to come. The Government has to take ownership of the project and take the lead in supporting the people to continue their good work. The villagers have to be encouraged not to lose interest in the disaster risk management and development works being carried out in their villages and municipalities. The six districts in which CBDMP works at currently can definitely take the lead in setting an example of dealing with natural disasters in an effective and sustainable manner.

#### Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Stories



Januka Rai in her earthworm fertilizer farm

Tilu Tamang of Hetauda, Makawanpur district has begun to dream.....

She dreams of sending her children to good schools, having enough to eat, buying a house and maybe opening a lodge someday. Why not? After all, she has come this far from a shy and introverted circus girl. She owns a small business and is doing quite well for herself considering the hardships she has undergone through her life. She has recently expanded her tea stall and is also now now selling savory snacks to go along with the hot tea.

The villagers cannot believe it is the same Tilu, who went to India when she was seven after her father passed away. She worked in a circus there. She still shudders to recount her life in the circus. But she had no choice as she had to send money home to feed her family. She came back home after spending 16 years there. However she had nothing to show for her efforts in India.

Tilu heard about Community Based Disaster Management Project (CBDMP) that was working in her town. One of the Project activities was giving grants to the poorest families in the community and Tilu's family also gualified. From the Rs. 5,000 she got, she opened the teashop. "It is amazing," she wonders aloud, "no one was willing to loan me even Rs. 2.000 and now look at me. Thanks to CBDMP, I am an entrepreneur." She earns an average of Rs. 200 daily and saves around Rs. 350 per month.

CBDMP has come like a breath of fresh air into the lives of underprivileged locals. Though the Project primarily works to enhance the safety of women and men vulnerable to natural disasters and helps protect common property and community resources in disaster prone districts, it also helps build capacity of communities so that their livelihoods are enhanced.

There are many others like Tilu who have benefitted from the seed grant provided by CBDMP. Januka Rai took the Rs. 5000 provided by the Project and started producing fertilizer from the earthworm she bought from the money. She is into mushroom farming using the fertilizer. She sells the mushroom for Rs.150 per kg in



Teashop opened by micro capital grant support

the market and also sells the surplus fertilizer to the Agricultural Office.

Januka who has studied upto grade 10 is turning out to be a smart entrepreneur. She was involved in the campaign, "Reduce the use of chemical fertilizer, and increase the productivity of soil." She is a vociferous advocate of this slogan and does not hesitate to promote it to others in her community.

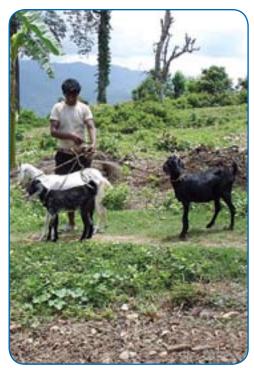
Her family which migrated from Khotang due to extreme poverty now has a comparatively comfortable lifestyle thanks to the help from the Project. Januka sends her two daughters to a private school while her son goes to a government school. The Project has increased her confidence to such an extent she now aims to be an independent entrepreneur in the city. More power to her. CBDMP helped Sita Pariyar find a niche in her community of Jagatradevi VDC in Syangja district. She sews and mends clothes from a sewing machine the Project bought for her. She earns up to Rs. 200 per day. This was under the program initiated by the Project to provide seed grant for starting alternative income generation activities. The awareness that the Project helped create in Jagatradevi has helped people like Sita who belong to a disadvantaged class, very much. Her family of nine, which includes seven children, do not have to live a life of humiliation any longer. The money that Sita earns from sewing has ensured that her family has enough to eat. The children go to school and Sita hopes to see her eldest daughter graduate soon and help her with her business so that she can expand it. Some of the things she wishes for at present are training

in modern sewing and enough money to buy a piece of land.

It is not just the women folk who have benefited from the various income generating schemes funded by CBDMP. Men have also felt a marked change in their livelihood. One such person is Shiva Bahadur Rana of Rangkhola in Syangja district. He took advantage of the loan provided by the Project to buy two pregnant goats. He made a profit by selling the kids. He has already refunded the loans to CBDMG for circulation and is doing well for himself. He sends his children to a private school. Others in his community have been inspired by him to try the same profession. Dil Kumari Aryal is thriving in this profession. However, she feels that the community could

be more productive if they received some kind of technical training and had access to high quality goats for breeding purposes.

There are hundreds of others with equally interesting stories, whose lives have turned around for the better with intervention from CBDMP. There is clear evidence that the locals have been empowered. They can hope to provide a better life for their children. They can hope to own a piece of land, they can hope to have a say in issues that matter and contribute to disaster risk reduction in their community because the Project has helped them find a voice and become aware of what is right for them.



Goats raising by micro capital grant support





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