

# YAMUNA HAS HER RIGHT TO SAFETY IN SCHOOL



Janak Secondary School in Barahachhetra Municipality of East Nepal has a story of a girl, fulfilling her right to safety. There studies Yamuna, a young girl with hearing impairment. In her fluent sign language, she communicates her thoughts and ideas. That day, she shared us that rainy season was always a bad time for her and her school. As she entered her classroom, holes were in the roof and she also had to move different beds and change utensils, clothes and books in the school residential facility. All became wet.

SCRSSI project works with the most-at-risk children with disability to develop their capacity in preparing the evacuation map and route, designating an assembly point and participating in mock drills, for emergencies like earthquake, fire and flood. She told that she and her friends now know what an assembly point is, how to count number of and search for the missing persons and confidently showed the evacuation map displayed around the school premise. Her finger pointing out, she was able to explain to us how evacuation happens and how the route is used. With focal teachers assigned, early warning is indicated to guide her and her friends with hearing impairment. An early warning system specific for them is yet to be developed. Things have slowly changed since.

**“I am not worried anymore about my safety. I am happy now that the old roof was replaced and I can own that sense of safety in the school. The training taught us about the importance of**

**evacuation route and assembly point in times of disasters”,**

her expressing her happiness about the progress in school while mesmerised by a new colour paint in her classroom. At home, she often discusses what she learned about school safety with her family.

She is a keen learner and now has enough courage to take a part in regular drills, regardless of her disability. Her school is a regular school – so the hearing-impaired students study together with others without disability. Like Yamuna, there are 15 girls who were oriented about saving lives during disasters. Owing to the inclusive approach, the project includes, empowers and enhances the capacity of children living with disabilities, with a focus on girls. A resource teacher for these students, Ghanshayam Nepal, gratefully admitted a big change after his participation in training:

**“I am sharing my learning by drawing and role playing with students who can’t hear. Students with hearing impairment are now included in the child club committee. It was not a practice only until recently. A big change that I’ve seen”**

The head teacher concurred with his co-teacher. Satendra Kumar Yadav shared that the school improvement plan has incorporated disaster preparedness for children with hearing

impairment. In light of this, the municipality is determined to organise a sign language training in the near future. Child-friendly hand washing station also further triggered a handwashing practice for younger students, of lower grades.

It is rewarding to realise that with the safe school capacity building, school has increased the level of confidence of deaf girls and the coping capacity of the whole school community. Some years ago, it never occurred to the school to prioritise learning and manage disaster risks in school. Now, situation shifted. Teachers and management committee have trained to listen to the voices of children with disabilities. With gender awareness approach introduced, the school showed more female representation in its different school organisations. Of nine

members in school disaster management committee, 33 percent are female members. In the child club, for example, girl representation makes up 55 percent, Dalit 18 per cent and 9 percent children with disability; while in search and rescue task force, female accounts for 55 percent. 7 girls participated in a child-led monitoring on construction work.

Today, Yamuna leads in sharing the learning at various committees or to school visitors on how they are making their school a safe place for everyone. The school has 257 students including 15 students with hearing impairment. This life-saving skill that Yamuna gained from the project will subsequently empower other 'Yamunas' to be prepared towards earthquake risk in school.

**Contacts:**

Bhumika Shrestha  
Grants and Compliance Manager, Business Development  
Plan International Nepal  
[Bhumika.Shrestha@plan-international.org](mailto:Bhumika.Shrestha@plan-international.org)  
Lingling Liu  
Regional DRM Project Coordinator  
Plan International Asia Pacific  
[lingling.liu@plan-international.org](mailto:lingling.liu@plan-international.org)