

MY RIGHTS MY VOICE

NEPAL PROJECT OVERVIEW



PHOTO: TOM PIETRASIK



OXFAM

MY RIGHTS, MY VOICE IN NEPAL

- Children and young people in Nepal have huge potential to transform their lives and communities. With the right skills and support, they can be a driving force to break the cycle of poverty so many are born into.
- To help them achieve their potential, their right to health must be fulfilled. That is why Oxfam is running a three-year project in Nepal as part of the international My Rights, My Voice programme, to empower children, young people and young mothers to claim their right to free health services that meet their needs.
- The project will train them so they can make their opinions heard and valued in their communities and by national-level decision-makers, increasing accountability within the health system and improving the services they receive.
- Working with children and young people, and those who influence their lives, My Rights, My Voice is empowering them to achieve lasting changes in policies, practices and beliefs, so their health and education needs are met – now and in the future.

THE CHALLENGE

Nepal's Free Health Service Policy guarantees good quality free health care to all. But low literacy levels and a lack of information mean many people in rural areas are unaware of their entitlements. The situation is worst for children, young people and young mothers. Cultural tradition requires that children are 'seen and not heard' and that men and boys are more valued than women and girls. This undermines young people's confidence to demand their health rights, preventing them from visiting health facilities and accessing the services they need.

Poor-quality treatment in rural areas discourages them further. A widespread lack of investment, along with weak accountability for service delivery, has opened a gap between rural and urban health services. Maternal and child health-care remain weak, with stark inequalities. Urban women are three times more likely than

rural women to give birth with support from a skilled attendant, and rich women are 12 times more likely to do so than the poorest. Under-five mortality is twice as high among poor rural children compared to wealthier urban ones. With 65 per cent of Nepalese people living below the poverty line (and inequality rising sharply), poor health is a major household burden and cause of poverty.

OUR SOLUTION

My Rights, My Voice aims to empower children, young people and young mothers to claim their right to free health-care services that meet their needs. Able to make their opinions heard and valued, they can increase accountability within the health system, improving the services they receive. Working with our local partners AYON, WEAFF, WAM and SAC, the project centres on three rural districts in the under-developed mid-western region. It reaches more than 8,500 children

and young people, at least 60 per cent of them young mothers and girls, taking a three-pronged approach:

Empowering children, young people and young mothers

At workshops for school children and young people, we facilitate discussion among them on their right to health services and their specific health needs. We recruit members for Children’s Health Committees (12-18 age group) and Youth Health Committees (16-35 age group). Committee members are trained in planning, management and leadership skills, so they can hold community discussions to identify issues and solutions, and campaign on their health needs and rights. These committees will develop into a health-rights advocacy network, building links with district and national health-rights

organisations so they can deliver community opinions to the authorities. We also train monitoring committees in social auditing and planning involving children and young people, so they can carry out quarterly evaluations of community health-services and lobby officials for specific improvements. This enables empowered children and young people to participate and actively exercise their citizenship.

Changing community opinions

With our support, children and young adults will launch a mass information campaign in the project districts to spread the message to families (including men) about women’s and children’s health rights and how to access health services. Young people will carry out door-to-door campaigning with every household in their communities and organise



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meetings and school competitions and quizzes. REFLECT method-based Community Discussion Classes will contribute to empowering young mothers by increasing their awareness about their rights and encouraging them to exercise their citizenship. Radio programmes and forum theatre (a form of interactive drama) will help build wider support and educate communities about young people's right to health. Issues raised will be distilled by Youth Health Committees into a memorandum, to be handed to the policy-makers including the Prime Minister and those implementing policy, raising awareness of local needs at the highest level.

Building a collaborative national environment

We are working with civil society groups to improve their ability to influence decisions, generate media support and advocate for health-policy planning that addresses young people's needs. These groups are developing a joint advocacy strategy, briefing papers for policymakers and a charter of community

demands for use in lobbying. By creating opportunities for collaboration between community representatives, health service providers and the authorities at district and national levels, we are building the environment of cooperation and improved accountability needed for better health-service delivery.

A LASTING LEGACY

Children, young people and young mothers will understand their right to basic free health care and – with strong community support – have the confidence to identify their needs and claim this right. Using newly-gained skills in organising, building support and alliances, and engaging decision-makers, they will also be able to influence decisions for practical improvements in service delivery. The longer-term impact will be improved health services for children, young people and young mothers – which will have a tangible impact on Nepal's progress out of poverty.

FIND OUT MORE

My Rights, My Voice is a three-year programme which aims to engage marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. It is being jointly implemented by Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib, and involves Oxfam Quebec in Niger. Working through our local partners in eight countries, My Rights, My Voice has significant funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

To find out more about the programme please mail us at: mrmv@oxfam.org.uk or visit us at www.oxfam.org.uk/myrightsmyvoice

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