

Inclusive Education Nepal

Progress Report (January-March 2026)

System-Wide Transformation: Building a National Ecosystem for Inclusive Education

Executive Summary

From January to March 2026, Inclusive Education Nepal (IEN) advanced its core mission: treating inclusive education not as a standalone intervention, but as a system-wide transformation spanning policy, practice, infrastructure, and public understanding.

This quarter marked a meaningful shift from awareness to system-building. IEN's work focused on three interconnected pillars:

Building a National Movement	Convened two strategic workshops to establish the National Inclusive Education Network, bringing 31 OPD and partner representatives toward structured coordination.
Developing National Infrastructure	Initiated and expanded the National Directory of Inclusive and Special Education Services, now listing 88 service providers and ~75 institutions.
Transforming School Practice	Delivered safeguarding and child protection training to 89 educators and school leaders at Zenith and GEMS schools, surfacing critical system gaps in implementation.

In parallel, IEN strengthened its knowledge and influence work through 16 publications and a structured interview series with persons with disabilities, capturing lived realities that are rarely visible in formal reporting.

A central insight has emerged across all areas of engagement: Nepal does not lack commitments to inclusive education. It lacks the systems that consistently translate those commitments into practice. The question facing Nepal today is not whether inclusive education should happen. It is whether the system is designed to make it happen consistently, equitably, and at scale.

Key System Insights (Q1 2026)

- Nepal has strong policy commitments to inclusive education, but implementation gaps persist at every level.
- Inclusion is widely understood as placement or access, not as transformation of teaching and learning.
- Schools are increasingly willing to engage but lack the practical tools and system support to do so.
- Safeguarding policies exist on paper but are not yet embedded in everyday school culture and practice.
- Services are available across Nepal but remain fragmented, poorly mapped, and difficult to navigate.
- System-level coordination is emerging but requires sustained investment and structured governance.

Quarter at a Glance

<p>89</p> <p>Educators Trained</p> <p><i>Safeguarding & child protection</i></p>	<p>88</p> <p>Service Providers</p> <p><i>Listed in National Directory</i></p>	<p>13</p> <p>Interviews Completed</p> <p><i>Persons with disabilities</i></p>	<p>16</p> <p>Knowledge Resources</p> <p><i>Articles, brochures & visuals</i></p>
<p>2</p> <p>Schools Engaged</p> <p><i>Zenith School & GEMS School</i></p>	<p>31</p> <p>Network Members</p> <p><i>OPDs & partner institutions</i></p>	<p>59</p> <p>Social Media Posts</p> <p><i>Facebook + video platforms</i></p>	<p>75</p> <p>Institutions Mapped</p> <p><i>Inclusive & special ed. providers</i></p>

The Context: Policy Strength, Implementation Gap

Nepal stands on one of the strongest legal and policy foundations for inclusive education in the region. The Constitution guarantees education as a fundamental right, including free and compulsory basic education. The Act Relating to Children prohibits corporal punishment and mandates child protection. The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities affirms the right to inclusive education without discrimination.

At the international level, Nepal is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). National frameworks, including the School Education Sector Plan (SESP) further operationalize these commitments through planning and institutional structures.

Yet the central challenge remains: a persistent gap between policy and practice.

Where Nepal is strong	Where the gaps remain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to schooling has expanded significantly across Nepal ▪ Policy frameworks for inclusive education are comparatively progressive ▪ Growing awareness among educators and school leaders ▪ Increased stakeholder interest in coordination and collective action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaningful participation, learning, and safety remain uneven ▪ Many children with disabilities remain unidentified within the system ▪ Teachers expected to implement inclusion without adequate preparation ▪ Safeguarding treated as compliance rather than embedded practice

Nepal: Key Data

<p>~7 million students enrolled across ~35,000 schools in Nepal</p>	<p>2.2% of the population officially recorded as having a disability against global estimates of 5–10%, indicating significant under-identification</p>
<p>Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out; many face barriers to participation even when enrolled</p>	<p>Up to ~80% of children in Nepal experience physical or psychological violence in schools; globally, 1 in 3 experience bullying</p>
<p>Teachers have limited preparation for inclusive education, and implementation remains uneven across schools and districts</p>	<p>Services are fragmented and concentrated in urban areas, with limited coordination between education, health, and social protection systems</p>

Sources: CEHRD (2022/23), CBS (2021), UNICEF (2019, 2021, 2025), UNESCO (2019, 2020), World Bank (2018)

Part A: Building a National Movement

Establishing the National Inclusive Education Network

A persistent structural weakness in Nepal’s inclusive education landscape is the fragmentation of actors. Government ministries, OPDs, service providers, and development partners each work within their own mandates, with limited shared infrastructure for alignment. This quarter, IEN took deliberate steps to address this gap.

Workshop 1: Initiating the Network (27 January 2026)

IEN convened 16 representatives from Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and allied institutions. Building on momentum from the Inclusive Education Nepal Summit (December 2025), this workshop moved from dialogue to structured planning.

Three core areas were addressed:

- The need for a national coordination mechanism for inclusive education
- Identification of priority thematic areas for joint action
- Review and refinement of a proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Network

Participants consistently identified coordination failures, limited institutional capacity, and the absence of a shared alignment platform as the most critical systemic barriers. IEN’s ecosystem approach (connecting existing actors rather than duplicating effort) received strong endorsement.

Workshop 2: Defining Structure and Governance (31 March 2026)

A second workshop brought together 15 representatives from OPDs and partner institutions. Key governance decisions were made:

Decision	Rationale
Steering Forum model adopted	Replaces a traditional steering committee; reflects commitment to participatory, non-hierarchical governance
Organizational membership as core	Ensures institutional commitment and accountability within the Network
Individual advisory roles	Allows diverse expertise to contribute without overcentralizing authority

What This Means

The formation of the Network is not itself a program outcome. It is the infrastructure through which outcomes become possible. IEN recognizes this process remains at an early stage. The priority for Q2 2026 is to operationalize the Network's governance and convene its first structured working session.



We have many organizations working on inclusion, but not yet a system that connects us. This Network is the beginning of that system.

Prof. Dr. Rabindra Shiwakoti, Director, Graduate School of Education, Tribhuvan University

Part B: Building National Infrastructures

The National Directory of Inclusive and Special Education Services

One of the most persistent but least-discussed barriers to inclusive education in Nepal is the invisibility of existing support. Parents, caregivers, and schools frequently cannot identify where to access appropriate services for children with diverse learning needs, not because those services do not exist, but because they are fragmented, poorly documented, and hard to navigate.

The National Directory is IEN's direct response to this structural gap.

Current Status

88 Service Providers <i>Across diverse areas of expertise</i>	~75 Schools & Organizations <i>Engaged in inclusive/special education</i>	8+ Fields Represented <i>From ECD to assistive technology</i>
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Fields currently represented include special education, early childhood inclusion, family support, assistive technology, mobility training, autism support, policy and advocacy, and teacher training.

Planned Development: From Directory to Platform

The Directory is being developed as an evolving national resource. Planned features for the next phase include:

- Geographic mapping of service providers across Nepal
- Categorized and searchable services based on the type of need and context
- Clear information on the availability and suitability of services
- Integration with referral pathways used by schools and hospitals

Why This Matters

A functional, publicly accessible service directory has never existed for inclusive education in Nepal. This initiative has the potential to meaningfully reduce the distance between need and access, particularly for families in areas with limited professional guidance. The directory is foundational infrastructure, not a standalone tool.

Part C: Transforming School Practice

Advancing Inclusive Safeguarding in Schools

During Q1 2026, IEN conducted safeguarding and child protection training at two schools, Zenith School and GEMS School, engaging 89 participants including teachers, administrative staff, and school leadership.

These trainings were not designed as isolated capacity-building events. They were structured as entry points for institutional change: shifting safeguarding from a policy compliance exercise to an embedded, functional system.

What the Trainings Revealed

Across both schools, a consistent pattern emerged. Participants demonstrated general awareness of safeguarding policies and concepts. However, this awareness did not translate into practice.

Gaps identified across both schools

- Limited clarity on how to respond when a child discloses a concern
- Weak or non-functional Complaint Response Mechanisms (CRM)
- Undefined roles and responsibilities for safeguarding within schools
- Safeguarding treated as a documentation task, not a lived system

School-specific challenges

- Normalization of certain harmful disciplinary practices (Zenith School)
- Misalignment between written policies and day-to-day procedure (GEMS School)
- Low awareness of the distinction between investigation and listening/believing
- Institutional accountability for child protection remains informal

Shifts and Commitments

Encouragingly, both schools made concrete commitments following the training:

- Steps toward establishing or strengthening Complaint Response Mechanisms
- Identification of designated safeguarding focal persons
- Commitment to review and align existing policies with practical procedures
- Recognition of safeguarding as a shared institutional — not individual — responsibility

“We had policies, but we didn’t know what to actually do when a child spoke. This training helped us understand our responsibility.”

— Teacher, Safeguarding Training Participant

System Insight: Inclusive Safeguarding is Not Optional

Inclusive education cannot be achieved without inclusive safeguarding. Ensuring access to classrooms is necessary but insufficient. Schools must also become environments where every child is safe, heard, and protected through systems that are informed, functional, and accountable. Safeguarding, when embedded effectively, is not separate from inclusion — it is its foundation.



Part D: Knowledge and Influence

Centering Lived Experience: Structured Interview Series

IEN initiated a structured interview series with leaders, practitioners, and persons with disabilities to build grounded evidence base for inclusive education in Nepal.

This initiative responds to a critical gap: discussions on inclusive education are frequently shaped by institutional and policy perspectives, while the lived experiences of persons with disabilities remain underrepresented. System design risks being disconnected from the realities it is meant to address.

What the Series Documents

- Pathways to accessing education
- Barriers experienced within schools and systems
- Experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and safety
- Recommendations for making education more responsive and equitable



Phase One (Current)	Phase Two (Upcoming)
Interviews with persons with disabilities across sectors, centring lived experience. 13 interviews completed, with ongoing work to ensure representation across disability types.	Interviews with educators, service providers, and policy actors to capture system-level perspectives and cross-reference with lived experience findings.

Knowledge Products and Publications

IEN developed 16 knowledge resources during Q1 2026 — including articles, brochures, and visual materials — disseminated across digital and print formats. Key areas covered:

- Foundational concepts of inclusive education
- Inclusive safeguarding and child protection
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Respectful language and communication related to disability
- Restorative practices and belonging in schools

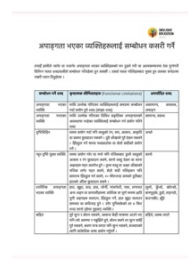
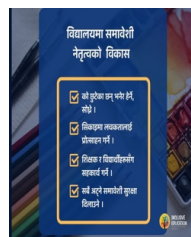
Selected Resources

Resource	Description
Restorative Practices and Belonging in Schools	Introduces restorative approaches as tools for strengthening relationships, reducing harm, and promoting inclusive school environments.
Promoting Inclusive Education through Language (Nepali & English)	Practical guide on using language as a tool for inclusion; available in both languages to maximize accessibility.
अपाङ्गता भएका व्यक्तिहरूलाई मर्यादित सम्बोधन कसरी गर्ने	Nepali-language resource developed with persons with disabilities on respectful and appropriate terminology, acknowledging that language continues to evolve.
Exclusion, Segregation, Integration, and Inclusion (Visual Poster)	Visual tool illustrating key approaches to education, helping audiences understand that inclusion is fundamentally different from placement.

Digital Reach

59	8	8	2
Facebook Posts	Instagram Videos	TikTok Videos	YouTube Videos
<i>Events, information sharing</i>	<i>Short-form inclusive education content</i>	<i>Accessible, practical messages</i>	<i>In-depth educational content</i>

Emerging audience data suggests that short, practical, problem-solving content — particularly content addressing real classroom challenges or common misconceptions about inclusion — generates the strongest engagement. This will inform Q2 content strategy.



Part E: Looking Ahead: April-June 2026

Building on the foundations established this quarter, IEN's Q2 work will focus on moving from pilot efforts to system-level influence across three priority areas.

Priority Area	Planned Activities	Intended Outcome
Strengthening the Ecosystem	Stakeholder analysis of inclusive education actors; strategic engagement with Government of Nepal ministries; development of a Position Paper on Inclusive Education	Clearer role mapping; aligned priorities with national frameworks; evidence-based policy input
Transforming Practice in Schools	UDL and Early Childhood Development (ECD) trainings for teachers; scaling safeguarding interventions; National Conference on Safe Schools	Teachers equipped with practical tools; stronger school-level safeguarding systems; national dialogue on child protection
Expanding Inclusion Beyond Education	Development of an Inclusive Employment Reference Guide to support organizations and employers in creating inclusive workplaces	Connections between education and livelihood outcomes for persons with disabilities

Lessons from This Quarter

IEN enters Q2 with three clear learnings that will shape the next phase of work:

1. Schools need follow-through, not just training. Commitments made at Zenith and GEMS need structured follow-up to ensure the safeguarding systems they intended to build are actually functional.
2. The Directory needs users, not just entries. The next phase must prioritize accessibility and active promotion to schools, hospitals, and families.
3. The Network needs its first test. Moving from governance design to collective action will be the defining challenge of Q2.

Closing Note

Inclusive education in Nepal is no longer a question of commitment. The policy foundations are in place. The international obligations are acknowledged. The will among educators, OPDs, and communities is growing.

The question now is one of system design: whether the structures, practices, and coordination mechanisms exist to translate commitments into consistent, equitable outcomes for every child.

This quarter's work -- a National Network, a National Directory, safer schools, and a growing body of evidence grounded in lived experiences -- represents early but significant progress toward that goal.

Inclusive Education Nepal

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