

'Linking **2** Learn'

Linking-to-Learn meeting

Disability Day

Dec 2010

Sixty participants from over thirty programs of the Uttarakhand Cluster came together for the three day Uttarakhand Cluster linking2learn meeting. It was a time of realising our power in unity as we discussed a number of programs and opportunities that the cluster has presented.

We celebrated the success of registering the Uttarakhand Cluster as a society. This was a time of celebration. Thanks must go to the board and the coordinator.

Opportunities

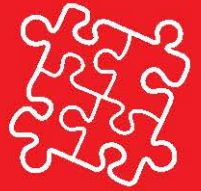
Other ideas and programs that were developed at the meeting included:

- **Training a Cluster Disability Liaison Officer/RAD tool:**

On the back of the DVD launch a number of other discussions were had around the cluster's future involvement in disability. Prior to the launch, Cluster members had been asked for expressions of interest in nominating for the ALA program in Australia. Three members programs nominated the following staff members Robert Kumar, Jubin Varghese and Pratima. If successful these three people will go to Australia to develop policies, trainings and modules in disability so as to help cluster members. On their return they will teach the 34 cluster members. If successful the cluster will explore sending one person from each program for training in how to implement a Rapid Assessment in Disability tool (an action research approach developed internationally).



- **Free wheelchair mission:** the potential to access free quality wheelchairs was presented. Such wheelchair distribution should contribute to awareness raising strategy and not be simply wheelchair provision. Programs not present are asked to inform us how many wheelchairs you might need (The only cost will be transport from Mumbai).
- **CMC Community Lay Leaders Training Program:** this new one year distance education course (for 10+2 education level) matches the cluster objectives for low cost contextually appropriate health training. The Uttarakhand Cluster is exploring becoming the local node for Uttarakhand and seeks expressions of interest for the position of "master trainer". The master trainer will be sent to CMC Vellore for six months training and then be responsible locally, with a team of two others, for delivering the course locally. The cluster hopes to fund this position, at least part time.



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- **Barefoot solar:** Lawrence Singh demonstrated these cheap and reliable solar panels that are being made available at wholesale prices from a philanthropist. The idea is that cluster NGOs (or their CHVs, SHGs etc) then on-sell them. It is a social enterprise: it is both providing a social good and helping strengthen cluster programs. There was interest from programs and the cluster decided to appoint a lead NGO and called for nominations by Friday 10th. The lead NGO will open a bank account, receive orders for further lights and coordinate shipments. Cluster NGOs should let the lead NGO know if they want a demonstration solar panel for market research.
- **Cluster tobacco control initiative:** this joint tobacco initiative continues to take shape. At the meeting we determined, for each NGO present: How many Tobacco Control Agents (such as CHWs, Volunteers etc) each cluster NGO wants to train. How many villages and schools in which to undertake the program. This will be used to decide on the allocation of funds. This CTCI project is still not funded but there are a number of promising leads.
- **The People's University-** an opportunity to undertake, by correspondence, a Public Health Certificate course (with possible upgrade to MPH) has been made available to the cluster. It requires eight modules at \$50 each over two years. The cluster agreed to sponsor one candidate through their first year of studies.
- **Flood relief:** on behalf of some generous friends of the cluster flood relief was made available to the cluster and each program which applied was given financial support (SASA, FOG and Mission of Peacemaking).
- **Diarrhoea update:** Dr Kaaren Mathias gave us an update on management. One important message was that Zinc supplements for two weeks after an acute episode of diarrhoea decrease morbidity and mortality by up to 42%. That is, you could prevent one out of every two deaths from this huge killer!
- **The PMs 15 Point plan for minorities:** Sisters Madhu and Rajkumari shared how Rev Satish John offered to help cluster programs to avail themselves of the benefits associated with registering schools, projects and other activities as "Minority status". As a member of the committee he is able to advise and write referral letters.

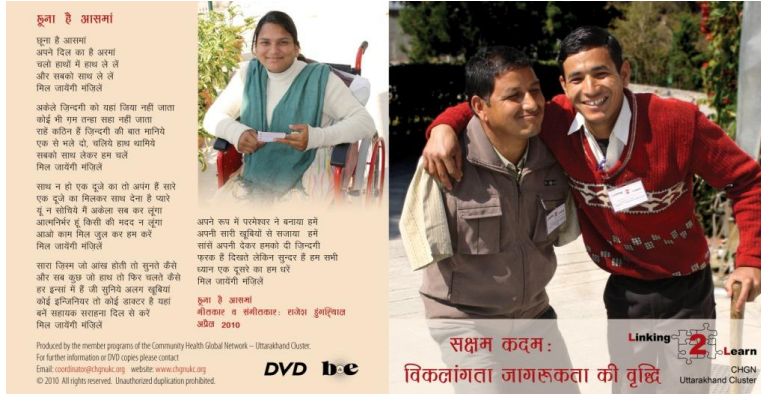
AGM

The final day was spent completing the AGM and finalising some operational guidelines. Torch Bearers served us lovingly and allowed the program to go off without a hitch.

Thanks must go to each of the programs who make up the cluster and made this a tremendous success! The opportunities and the success is only a result of the corporate capacity of linking to together.

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DVD launch



This DVD, produced collaboratively by program members, was launched on the middle day of the meeting. The Nossal Institute of Global Health (University of Melbourne) and CBM Australia helped supported the collaborative activity and Dr Nathan Grills of the Nossal Institute provided technical assistance. Many of the cluster programs were involved in preparing the DVD and organising the launch. The DVD is an excellent resource tool for the cluster programs and is complete with a purpose written song, Bollywood dancing, stories and teaching. A number of Uttarakhand Cluster programs have already used the DVD in the villages to promote awareness and mainstreaming of disability.



Over 120 people attended the launch and it was a privilege to have a number of people with disability involved in the program. We learnt much from each other. Each of the programs was presented with DVDs as was the national library for visually handicapped and other special guests. The idea of being 'differently abled' was reinforced by all speakers (a term used frequently as an alternative definition for disability). Our chief guest, Rev Dr George Kurvella, gave a powerful message on disability and challenged all people, including people of faith and faith communities, to

look at how to welcome those with different abilities and gifts into their communities.

We must thank the team who used their gifts and spent significant time in presenting preparing the program and serve the other cluster members (Hira Lal, Sister Madhu, Robert, Rajesh, Joseph and Surrender who spent much time preparing this event). We also must thank Evy and Bhagat for directing the DVD and each of the cluster member programs who contributed to the production of this excellent resource.