



KARUNA FOUNDATION NEPAL

Quarterly Newsletter January-March 2026

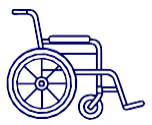
WHEN ACCESS CREATES PROSPECTS

The first quarter of 2026 reflects continued progress in strengthening disability-inclusive systems, building local capacity, and expanding essential services across communities. This edition of the newsletter highlights key activities, partnerships, and initiatives undertaken from January to March, demonstrating ongoing efforts toward inclusive development and improved access for persons with disabilities.



78,541

Number of Persons with Disabilities identified



13,466

Number of Persons with Disabilities supported with assistive device



26,522

Number of Persons with Disabilities and family members engaged in milijuli group

*Data as of Poush 2082

Enhancing Mobility and Independence for Children with Disabilities

A significant milestone in promoting inclusive mobility was achieved through the Wheelchair Assessment, Measurement, Fitment, and Distribution Program, organized by Karuna Foundation Nepal (Karuna Nepal) in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, Koshi Province Government, and with the support of Wheelchairs for Kids Australia.

The program was honored by the presence of Hon. Hikmat Kumar Karki, Chief Minister of Koshi Province, alongside Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and Vice Chairs from multiple municipalities, reflecting strong leadership and collective commitment toward inclusive service delivery.

With a strong focus on proper assessment, accurate measurement, and individualized fitment, the program ensured that each wheelchair matched the specific needs of each child. Through this effort, 65 wheelchairs were distributed in Jhapa, enabling children with disabilities to move more freely, participate in daily life, and engage more confidently within their communities. In a similar initiative, 37 children received wheelchairs in the presence of Hon. Ram Prasad Mahato, Minister for Social Development, Koshi Province. For many families, this moment marked more than the receipt of an assistive device; it brought a sense of relief, possibility, and renewed hope.

For these children, a wheelchair is not just about mobility; it opens pathways to education, social participation, and independence. The quiet smiles, growing confidence, and increased ease in movement reflect the deeper impact of such support, where every step forward, whether small or significant, becomes a step toward dignity and inclusion.



Autism Spectrum — Program Update

Autism Spectrum is emerging as one of the most significant challenges facing families, communities, and public health in Nepal. Karuna Nepal is increasingly being approached by municipalities for ideas, expertise, and support to address this growing concern. As Autism Spectrum becomes a primary issue within the disability and public health domain, the country must be well prepared to respond in a systemic and sustainable manner.

Significant progress has been made across municipalities in capacity building, infrastructure development, and system strengthening.

Biratnagar Metropolitan City

At Mahanagar Autism Sewa Kendra, Biratnagar-4, six special teachers are undergoing specialized autism training, including speech and behavioral therapy sessions, led by Dr. Katharine Asta and guided by Dr. Shane C. Quinonez. The centre is also planning autism software training in collaboration with RxPIN and Sunflower Spectrum, enabling digital assessments, IEP development, and improved parent communication.

Bhadrapur Municipality, Jhapa

Bhanu Prathamik Vidyalaya has been identified for an Autism Day Care Centre. Phase 1 will utilize existing infrastructure with minor modifications, while Phase 2 envisions expanded facilities including a kitchen, dining space, and shaded playground.

Damak Municipality, Jhapa

Saraswoti Autism Care Centre is being renovated to be more autism-friendly, and five special teachers will undergo specialized training to strengthen service quality.

Mechinagar Municipality, Jhapa

A competitive bidding process is underway to select a consultancy firm for a pre-feasibility study for an Autism Day Care Centre.





Extending Inclusive Services Beyond Koshi Province: Karnali Initiative

An assistive device distribution program was conducted in Bheriganga Municipality, Surkhet, where persons with disabilities received mobility aids tailored to their individual needs, supporting improved mobility, participation, and dignity in everyday life.

The program was honored by the presence of Hon. Ghanshyam Bhandari, Minister for Social Development, and Mayor Yagya Prasad Dhakal, reflecting strong provincial and local government commitment toward advancing disability-inclusive services.

This initiative was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, Karnali Province, National Federation of Disabled – Nepal (NFD-N), Karuna Nepal, and NMB Bank, demonstrating the strength of multi-stakeholder partnerships in reaching underserved communities. Beyond service delivery, the visit also created an opportunity for strategic engagement and relationship-building. The Karuna team held meetings with key provincial leaders, including Hon. Chief Minister Yam Lal Kandel, Social Development Minister Ghanshyam Bhandari, and Economic Affairs and Planning Minister Rajiv Bikram Shah, to explore pathways for strengthening collaboration and expanding disability-inclusive initiatives in Karnali Province.

These efforts mark an important step toward scaling inclusive development models beyond Koshi Province, ensuring that more communities benefit from accessible services and strengthened systems.



Community Awareness and Preventive Actions

Birth Defects Day

Across multiple palikas, 'Best Wishes Cards' were distributed to newly married couples, sharing key messages on:

- Healthy pregnancy
- Nutrition
- Family planning
- Marriage registration
- Folic acid (Vitamin B9) for birth defect prevention

This initiative supports informed decision-making at the beginning of family life



के तपाईं सन्तानको योजना बनाउँदै हुनुहुन्छ?

स्वास्थ्यकर्मीसँग परामर्श लिनुहोस्।

गर्भयोजना बनाई कम्तीमा तीन महिना अघि देखि नै र गर्भ चलेपछि पहिलो तीन महिना फोलिक एसिड (भिटामिन वि ९) चर्ची सेवन गर्नुहोस्।

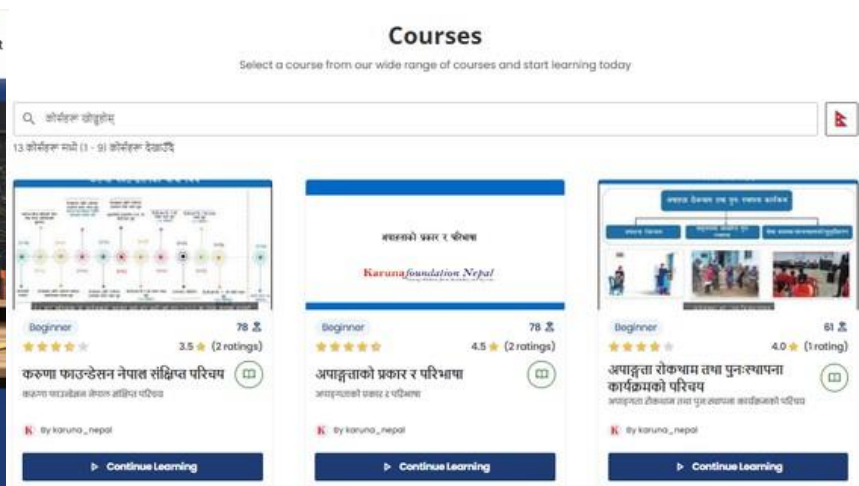
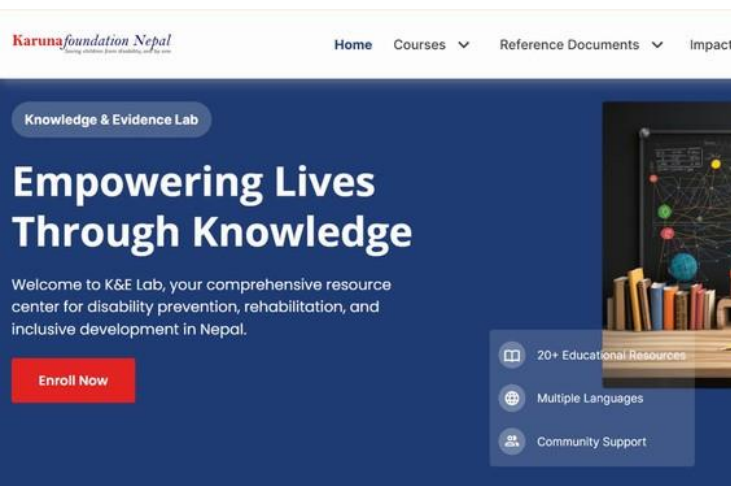
फोलिक एसिड (भिटामिन वि ९) किन महत्वपूर्ण छ?

फोलिक एसिड (भिटामिन वि ९) चर्चीको सेवले निम्नलाई

- मलिनक र मेरुदण्डसँग सम्बन्धित जन्मदोष (Neural Tube Defects) हुनुबाट बचाउँदछ। साथै, फोलिक एसिडले गर्भचरी मलिसा तथा गर्भमा रहेको त्रिभुजाई स्वस्थ रहन मद्दत गर्दछ।
- एन्सेफालोसेल (Encephalocele)
- पुण्ड्रिकेराती (Anencephaly)
- सङ्घन पाठीका (Spina bifida)

सरकारी स्वास्थ्य संस्थाहरूमा फोलिक एसिड (भिटामिन वि ९) चर्ची नि:शुल्क उपलब्ध छ।

Growing Reach of the K & E Portal



The Knowledge & Evidence (K&E) Lab e-learning portal of Karuna Nepal continues to grow as a digital platform supporting capacity building and knowledge sharing for the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Program (DPRP). The portal currently hosts 22 course modules (13 in Nepali and 9 in English), along with 12 directives and guidelines, 4 policy documents, 22 forms and formats, 2 IEC materials, 60 impact stories, and several DPRP-related videos.

The platform has shown encouraging engagement, with 410 registered users and 746 course enrollments recorded so far. The courses cover key DPRP topics such as disability concepts, inclusive education, assistive devices, disability assessment camps, government provisions for persons with disabilities, and Management Information Systems (MIS).

With features such as quizzes, rating and comment sections, and automatically generated completion certificates, the portal is increasingly serving as a centralized knowledge hub for stakeholders.

To access the platform, visit karunanepal.org, navigate to the K&E Lab portal, or directly visit elab.karunanepal.org and register to explore the available resources.

Organizational Reflection and Team Strengthening

Karuna Nepal conducted its Annual Retreat in Sikkim, creating a valuable space for reflection, connection, and renewed alignment as a team. The retreat provided an opportunity to step back from routine program responsibilities and reflect on the achievements, challenges, and learning from the past months.

Through a mix of structured sessions and informal interactions, team members engaged in open discussions, experience sharing, and collaborative reflections, strengthening internal communication and fostering a deeper sense of unity across teams. The retreat also served as a platform to revisit organizational values, reinforce collective goals, and align priorities for the coming months.

Beyond professional reflection, the retreat created space for team bonding, well-being, and rejuvenation, recognizing that a motivated and connected team is essential for sustaining impactful work.

Such moments of pause and reflection are vital in strengthening not only organizational performance but also the shared commitment to advancing inclusive development, dignity, and meaningful change in communities.



Building Capacity for Care, Inclusion, and Everyday Support



A series of capacity-building initiatives were conducted to strengthen caregiving skills and promote inclusive practices at the household and community levels.

Caretaker Training (2 Days)

The training engaged 30 participants, focusing on care for individuals with stroke, spinal cord injury, and cerebral palsy. Sessions included hygiene, positioning, wheelchair use, and simple home-based exercises, empowering caregivers to provide better support in daily life.

Autism Training in Panchkhal (2 Days)

Conducted for 14 parents and caregivers, the training focused on practical, home-based techniques and emphasized the importance of consistent care and family involvement in supporting children with autism.

These trainings highlighted the vital role of caregivers in ensuring long-term well-being and inclusion.

Promoting Women's Health through Awareness and Early Detection



A Cervical Cancer Screening Camp was conducted in Inaruwa, bringing women together in a supportive environment to learn, ask questions, and prioritize their health.

Focused on awareness, early detection, and prevention, the camp encouraged open conversations around cervical health while promoting timely screening and informed decision-making. The initiative reinforced that small steps toward awareness can lead to life-saving outcomes.

Strengthening Disability-Inclusive Governance at the Local Level



The Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Training for Palika Focal Persons under the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Program (DPRP) was successfully conducted on 6-7 January, 2026. The training brought together Women and Children Section Chiefs from Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, and Udayapur, creating a valuable platform for knowledge exchange, shared experiences, and practical reflections on strengthening disability-inclusive planning and implementation at the local level.

The program was honored by the presence of Mr. Uddhab Prasad Rijal, Secretary, Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), as the Chief Guest. Participation from Deputy Secretary Mr. Yadab Prasad Dulal and Section Officers Ms. Ronusha Koirala and Ms. Nirmla Chaulagain reflected strong institutional commitment and ownership.

Through interactive discussions and contextual learning, the training reinforced the critical role of local governments in ensuring equity, dignity, and access to services for persons with disabilities, while promoting the integration of inclusive approaches into planning, budgeting, and implementation processes.

Strengthening Coordination through District-Level Review Meetings



The Semi-Annual Review Meetings were successfully conducted across Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Udayapur, Terhathum, Taplejung, and Jhapa districts under DPRP.

These meetings brought together focal persons and local leadership including Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Vice Chairpersons, and Chairpersons to review progress, discuss challenges, and share learning. The discussions strengthened coordination and renewed collective commitment toward inclusive disability services.

Following this, Karuna Nepal's internal semi-annual review was also conducted, supporting reflection, learning, and continuous improvement.



Strengthening Health Systems through Skill-Based Training

From 17–19 March, a VIA (Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid) training was conducted for 12 nursing staff from Dharan, Inaruwa, and Duhabi Municipalities. Organized by the Health Training Center, Koshi Province, facilitated by Koshi Hospital, and supported by Karuna Nepal, the training focused on building practical skills in early detection and prevention of cervical cancer.

Participants gained hands-on experience in screening procedures, patient counseling, and referral pathways, equipping frontline health workers to deliver quality screening services confidently at the local level. The initiative strengthens local health systems and improves women's access to life-saving early detection and care within their own communities.



Challenges

This period reflects continued progress in strengthening systems, building capacity, and expanding inclusive services across communities. At the same time, implementation was influenced by contextual challenges, including the election period and instances of governmental instability, which affected coordination, decision-making timelines, and program continuity in some areas. In addition, varying levels of local capacity required ongoing adjustments in implementation. Despite these challenges, Karuna Nepal continues to adapt and work closely with government, partners, and communities to advance inclusive development, dignity, and equal opportunities for all.

Looking Ahead with Purpose

The first quarter marks continued progress in strengthening systems, enhancing capacity, and expanding inclusive services. With ongoing collaboration across government, partners, and communities, Karuna Nepal remains committed to advancing inclusive development, dignity, and equal opportunities for all.

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- Province Office: Itahari
- Joint District Office: Okhaldhunga
- District Support Unit: Jhapa, Panchthar

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