

Community Empowerment and Support Initiatives (CESI) - UK

Greenwich Nepalese/Gurkha Integration Project

Focus Group Discussion Report

**Beneficiaries' perceptions of the services and support provided by CESI
under the Greenwich Nepalese/Gurkha Integration Project**



7 March 2014

Plumstead, London

Introduction

Community Empowerment and Support Initiatives (CESI)-UK organised a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on 7 March 2014 involving 85 beneficiaries of the project of which 50 were male and 35 female.

The FGD was a part of the ongoing monitoring process to record the distance travelled by the beneficiaries compared to the baseline information.

The purpose of this FGD was to discuss with the beneficiaries and get their clear perceptions on the services and support provided in the following areas:

1. Increased access to the local services- housing and welfare benefits
2. Improved health conditions through increased access to health services
3. Reducing isolation of the elderly people

Therefore, this report contains analysis of the beneficiaries perceptions on the quality of the services and their level of confidence in accessing these services.

Methods

In the beginning, a review of the project activities completed during the last one year was conducted. This was done through visual presentation (video clips and photographs) and discussion.

The FGD participants were divided into 3 groups. Each group worked on different subjects. Group one worked on Housing and Welfare benefits where as group 2 and three worked on Health and Healthier living and Reducing isolation issues respectively. Each group was facilitated by a project staff. Scripted questions were used to facilitated the discussion and solicit information from the participants. The first couple of questions were engagement type questions followed by 6 exploratory questions and finally some exit questions. The engagement questions mainly focused on how the beneficiaries came to know about the project activities. The exploratory questions were qualitative in nature aiming at uncovering the range and level of the participants perceptions on the services and support provided by the project. The exit questions were for anything else they wanted to say.

Outcomes of the discussion

Group 1 Health and Healthier Living:

There were 28 participants in this group. In response to the question on how did they hear about the project, 17 participants said that they heard about this project in a meeting organised in their area by CESI staff. Another 7 said that they knew about this project from their friends. The remaining 4 said that it was through the project posters, pamphlets and leaflets.

Based on the following questions, following responses were recorded during the discussion:

Questions:



1. How health and healthier living consultation event has improved your knowledge on accessing local level health services provided by the statutory and voluntary organisations?
2. What difference have you realised in relation to your accessing the local health services?

Response:

Out of 28 participants, 23 said that they had attended all 3 health related interaction programmes whereas 5 had attended 2 programmes. All participants unanimously said that the consultation events were a great opportunity for them to be face to face with the right people from the right organisations and to get accurate and complete information regarding the health services available locally, including the GPs, Hospitals and other voluntary organisations. They said that it was the first time they met with the officers in person and had an opportunity to put their problems directly.

They further said that the knowledge and information they got from the events helped them a lot to access the health services. When asked how confident they were in accessing the health services, 11 participants expressed their full confidence while 14 people had partial confidence and the remaining 3 people were not quite sure.

Questions:

3. How has health and healthier living consultation event brought changes in your health condition? (food habit, health condition, self management).
4. How has the Yoga and Fitness classes helped you to keep fit? (Knee pain, back pain relieved, sleep well. eat well. physical fitness)
5. Has there been any improvement in your health condition due to the project support? If yes, how

Response:

Majority of the participants had attended general health awareness consultation such as drug awareness session, Cancer awareness session and healthy eating sessions. They expressed their satisfaction for the information and knowledge they got during such informative sessions in general. Of all the 3 sessions they had attended, they were most happy with the healthy eating workshop in which they got, as they said, very useful and practical information regarding the 'eat well plate'.

Participants' response to the Yoga / keep fit classes and the Expert Patient Programme (EPP) was very positive. They said that both the EPP and the Yoga/ keep fit classes were very useful to keep themselves fit and to manage their long-term health conditions.

Finally, when asked if they had a feeling of any improvement in their health condition, 5 participants clearly reported considerable improvement in their health condition. They felt relief from their knee pain, joint pain, back pain etc.

Questions:

6. What elements of health and healthier living consultations/trainings/ workshops do you think, have helped you the most to manage your health conditions?

Response:

In response to this question, all participants said that the information they got during the general consultation events have raised their level of awareness and knowledge regarding the local level health services. They further said that the Yoga/ keep fit classes and the EPP in particular were most beneficial in managing their health conditions.

Exit Questions:

7. What else you would like to say about this health and healthier living consultations and activities of the project?
8. What further support do you need to improve your access to the local health services?

In response to the above question, all participants said that the help and support they got from this project had been extremely useful and helpful to get accurate and complete information and to approach relevant agencies in case of any health issues. They said that CESI should continue its initiatives to reach other people who had not been covered so far.

Group 2: Housing and Welfare Benefits:

There were 28 participants in this group. In response to the question on how did they hear about the project, 20 participants said that they heard about this project in a meeting organised in their area by CESI staff. Another 5 said that they knew about this project from their friends. The remaining 3 said that it was through the project posters, pamphlets and leaflets.



The following questions were asked to the FG participants:

1. How has housing and welfare consultation events improved your knowledge on accessing local level services provided by the statutory and voluntary organisations?
2. How has housing consultation events helped you to benefit from the services provided by the statutory and voluntary organisations? (Prompts- housing benefit, council house, tenancy).
3. How has welfare consultation events helped you to benefit from the services provided by the statutory and voluntary organisations? (Prompts- pension credits, tax credits, other welfare benefits).

Responses:

Based on the above questions followed by some probing questions the following responses were recorded:

All participants said that they had attended all 4 events where they got complete information regarding housing and welfare benefits. They said that this was the first time to attend such consultations that helped them to improve their knowledge on housing and welfare services.

All participants said that the very clear presentations made by the resource persons followed by question and answer sessions helped them to understand the various benefit provisions, the process to apply for the benefits, eligibility criteria, documentation required etc.

All participants said that they had been benefitting by the arrangement made by the council to see them personally on every Monday afternoon to solve their problems regarding housing and welfare benefits. Thus, the consultation and the support provided by the project had helped them to access the services.

4. What elements of housing and welfare consultations organised by the project have helped you the most to solve your problems and issues?

All consultation meetings were very useful to get information on the provisions and the process to claim housing and welfare benefits. However, the support provided by the project to have Monday afternoon meeting with the council officer was found most helpful by the participants to solve their problems.

5. How confident are you now in accessing local level services?

Out of 28 participants, 19 people said that they were fully confident in accessing the housing and welfare services. 7 participants had partial confidence and the remaining 2 people were not quite sure.

6. What else you would like to say about these consultations?
7. What further support do you need to improve your access to the housing and the welfare benefits?

All participants said:

- CESI should continue providing support and services to cover more population.
- CESI should continuously provide translation and interpretation service
- CESI should work with the council to convince them to have their on-line version of the many forms and formats and other information also in Nepali language similar to the provisions they have for other languages.

Group 3: Reducing Isolation

In this group there were 29 participants. Like in other groups, participants were asked how did they come to know about the project and its activities. Their responses were as follows:

- 18 people said that they knew about the project through the meeting organised in their area by CESI staff.
- 9 people said that it was through their friends



- 2 people said that they knew about the project leaflets, pamphlets posted on the walls of the local high street shops.

The following questions were used to initiate discussion and solicit their perceptions on the activities organised for them to be able to mix up with other people and hence reduce their isolation.

1. How has excursion visits helped you to reduce your isolation?
2. How have the project activities (consultation events, excursion visit, yoga and fitness classes, computer classes, cookery workshops etc.) helped you to mix up with other communities and hence reduce your isolation ?

The discussion was guided by the above questions and participants responses were recorded as follows:

All 29 people had participated in the excursion visit organised by the project last year in the month of August. All of them said that the excursion was not only enjoyable and memorable but also an opportunity to mix up with so many people and make friends. Apart from the excursion, the various consultation meetings, Yoga and keep fit classes had also given them an opportunity to meet with so many other people from their community whom they had not seen before even though they were living in the same borough.

Out of 29 participants, 16 people said that, in addition to other activities, they had also been attending the computer classes which was not only a fun but an opportunity to learn basic skills such as writing e-mails, using face book, listening to the music, reading Nepali news etc. This, they said, was again another forum for them to mix up with other people and share their feelings. They reported that the regular computer class had been very useful not only to learn the skills but also to pass time by chatting with other friends.

The following questions were used to get information on the participants level of involvement in community activities and their feelings.

3. How have the project activities helped you to play a catalyst role in your community? (Prompts- participation in community events, yoga and fitness classes, excursions etc)
4. How easy or difficult do you find now to mix with other people in your community? Why? Please explain

The outcome of the discussion was as follows:

Out of the 29 participants, 11 people said that they were already busy in helping the community people in various ways including helping people to take people to and from the airport, to take people to the hospital and GP, to guide people to go to the local council, to help people in getting their freedom pass, to guide people to the Nepalese Embassy as and when needed, to take elderly people around London for sightseeing etc. They said that this was mainly due to the support and encouragement provided by CESI.

Finally, participants were asked the following questions aiming at getting their feedback regarding future activities that would help reduce their isolation and play a catalyst role in the community.

5. What else you would like to say about the project activities?

6. What further support do you need to reduce isolation of the Nepalese/ Gurkha elderly people?

In this regard, the following were the responses:

All participants said that all the project activities were very good particularly for the elderly people who were either single or only a couple without their other family members with them.

All participants unanimously suggested to organise at least 2 excursion in a year and regular computer classes to accommodate more people.

At the end of the Focus Group Discussion refreshment was served.



Participant taking refreshment at the end of the programme