

Map of Movement Coverage District Network

Land and Agrarian Rights Campaign



Land and Agrarian Rights Movement

Life with dignity and self-reliance

Strategic Plan

July 2014 - June 2019

(Abridged Version)

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1. Introduction

A group of energetic youth established Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC) in 1991 with an aim of inspiring and mobilising people, especially youth, and taking the lead in overcoming deprivation, exploitation and marginalization. CSRC, a social development organization, has been working for the cause of community self-reliance overcoming poverty through empowering processes. CSRC members come from diverse backgrounds such as grassroots social activists, academicians, development experts and human rights defenders. CSRC has maintained inclusive membership and leadership structure comprising 40% women, 20% ethnic groups, and 15% Dalits¹.

2. Guiding Philosophy

CSRC envisions a society where people live with self-reliance and dignity. CSRC's mission is to enhance the power of land-poor farmers leading land and agrarian reforms. CSRC has set a goal to have land for land-poor farmers and to promote their secure livelihoods.

CSRC is being inspired and mobilized by a set of core values. It believes in simple lifestyle, mutual respect and valuing each individual. It strongly believes that every problem has a great solution and strives for advancing alternatives. It further believes that non-violent method is fundamental in people's struggle for winning their battles, including fighting against poverty and the denial of people's rights.

CSRC is inspired spirituality of empathy with the people whose fundamental human rights have been denied and thus they are not being able to live a dignified live. CSRC takes the side of these people firmly to support their cause and mission of being prosperous and dignified citizens. CSRC believes that self-reliance is fundamental for an individual, family, society, and country to lead the sustainable development process. Thus, CSRC strives to become self reliant in its all behaviours and actions. CSRC further believes that people love the land and environment; they have knowledge and wisdom and are therefore the best architects to conserve and protect natural resources.

3. Perspective on Denial of Human Rights and Poverty

Human rights are the fundamental entitlements of individuals or groups that interface with freedom and human dignity. These freedoms and dignity are universally guaranteed through laws and enforced at the national level. Human rights are multifaceted— civil, political, economic, social and cultural. CSRC feels that the State has a primary duty to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights of all people and groups. CSRC understands that poverty is the consequence of unjust power relations, exclusion from empowerment and deprivation from opportunities. Poverty transcends the lack of material goods and services also involving, among others, lack of voice in decision-making processes, access to and control over life-saving services, self-respect and dignity. Poverty is a consequence of and root cause of human rights violations.

¹ Dalits are so called untouchables in traditional Nepali caste hierarchy. They are highly discriminated and excluded in economic, social, cultural and political spheres.

In CSRC's view, good governance is the key to enabling land-poor farmers to realize and enjoy their human rights. Governance means being accountable, responsive, and transparent; additionally respecting, protecting and fulfilling all rights for all people. Only accountable governance will be able to abide by human rights obligations enshrined by international human rights laws and the eventual Constitution of the country, through ratification and implementation of laws, developing appropriate protection mechanisms at national and local levels, systematic monitoring of the fulfilment of rights, and taking immediate corrective measures and allocating resources for the progressive realization of human rights.

In Nepal, land is a major productive asset and a traditional source of power, prestige and social status. Historically, land was seized from indigenous communities and distributed to people close to the rulers in return for services rendered. Ultimately, this group of people became landlords and practiced feudalism. The poor and the powerless had little choice but to work for these landlords in various tenure arrangements. The situation was further aggravated by the practice of private money-lending with exorbitant interest rates, making it extremely difficult for poor farmers to meet their debt obligations. Consequently, defaulted interest was capitalized into the original loan amount compounding the interest rate and forcing the families of poor farmers (mostly *Dalits* and marginalized ethnic communities) to sell their small piece of land and house to the landlords and became homeless and landless. This situation further forced these people into various forms of bonded labourers.

4. Theory of Change

CSRC strongly believes in people's ability and power to drive positive change. The present unjust and skewed power relations are the key obstacle to the development of land-poor farmers. Therefore, CSRC sees a great need to empowering land-poor farmers to assert their agenda effectively, negotiate with policy makers, and hold politicians accountable in their role and commitment. Hence, CSRC promotes and strengthens "People's Organizations" as agents of change.

CSRC believes that strong non-violent social movements led by land-poor farmers following non-violent methods and democratic and human rights principles, is essential to hold politicians and policy actors accountable towards pro land-poor farmers land and agrarian reforms. CSRC will put all possible efforts and energy in strengthening the land and agrarian rights movement.

CSRC further believes that there is another important dimension of elites and allies who are instrumental in setting public opinion and policy change and setting the pace for land and agrarian reforms. CSRC aims to have deliberate and strategic engagement with these actors to move towards land and agrarian reform for justice and dignity for the land-poor farmers and durable peace for all.

Likewise, CSRC is convinced that knowledge is a pre-requisite to design and win the struggle. There is a long history of people's struggles in society. CSRC feels important to build knowledge from indigenous practices, draw lessons for present and potential future context and learn from other experiences so that meaningful actions on the part of land-poor farmers and civil society can be pursued towards prosperity, justice, and peace.

5. Context Overview

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihoods for the majority of Nepal's population where 26.1% of agricultural households do not have land to farm on. There is an uneven distribution of agricultural land in the country. Class and caste inequality is further aggravated by gender inequality where men predominantly own most productive resources, especially land. Only 19.71% women have ownership of land. About 44% of the Terai *Dalits* are landless and the remaining own only small plots.² Political instability and transition has had major ramifications on the land and agrarian rights movement. The land reform agenda is not accorded priority in the current political milieu. However, even with this accomplished, settling contentious constitutional issues and promulgation of the new constitution is likely to take more precedence over other issues. Major political parties have been paying lip service to this issue mainly because they either: i) have influential landlords in their party; ii) have divergent positions on land reform; and/or iii) prefer not to take up the political risk of building up a political consensus as land reform can be a thorny issue that takes a long time to materialize. Thus the political will and commitment to take the final plunge on this issue is lacking.

Large bi-lateral and corporate donors have a strong influence on policy formulation in Nepal as their aid is primarily attached to compliance with conditions that promote market-led economic models. Such market-led models perceive land as a commodity whose production and productivity is determined by the market donor-led economic model is not supporting pro land-poor farmer land reform that is largely benefitted to companies at the expense of poor Nepalese farmers.

6. Strategic Framework

The Land and Agrarian Rights Movement will strive to enable land-poor farmers (agriculture labourers, tenants, and marginalized farmers) to: effectively use existing assets; maximise their potential; expand their opportunities to participate in decision-making that affects them; overcome isolating, discriminating, or marginalising; and work together to secure their land and agrarian rights with following key commitments.

Commitment 1: Organize and mobilize land-poor farmers enabling them in claiming and exercising land and agrarian rights with improved livelihoods.

Key strategies to achieve this strategy include; i) Strengthening organizational capacity of NLRF and its local bodies/partners/units; ii) Enhance food security and livelihood needs of land-poor farmers; and iii) Promote non-violence movement and people-led campaigns

Commitment 2: Advance pro land-poor farmers land and agrarian rights policies and governance.

Key strategies to achieve this strategy include; i) Focused and coordinated movements complemented by concerted advocacy efforts; ii) Strengthening collaborative alliances with civil society organizations promoting human rights and facilitating movements for social justice; and iii) Working with policy think tanks and academicians

Commitment 3: Reduce gender inequalities strengthening women's right to land

Key strategies to achieve this strategy include; i) Enhancing women's leadership; ii) Developing women-led cooperatives and enterprises; and iii) Expanding women's land ownership campaigns with different stakeholders.

Commitment 4: Strengthen CSRC as a well-governed civil society organization and leading knowledge and resource base for social movements.

Key strategies to achieve this strategy include; i) Diversifying funds mobilization and partnerships; ii) Standardizing policies, systems and compliance; and iii) Generating, documenting and disseminating lessons.

7. Organizational Design and Resources Projection

CSRC acquires skills and knowledge in the field of policy analysis and advocacy, designing and supporting issue-based campaigns and movements, capacity building and organizational strengthening, knowledge management, resource mobilization, financial management and human resources and organizational development. CSRC will emphasise strengthening its vertical and horizontal accountability and transparency. Organizational policies, systems and human resources will be streamlined to improve CSRC's accountability and transparency to its members, target groups, and key stakeholders. CSRC will prioritize expanding the membership base and promoting the active and meaningful participation of members in organizational and programmatic affairs. CSRC is a member of most national level alliances and networks related to land, natural resources and development. CSRC will continue networking with these alliances and networks, and will also identify other relevant networks and alliances and join them. CSRC will maintain its organizational structures inclusive, including 50% women. CSRC has a projection of funds NPR 447,149,689 to deliver expressed commitments during the strategy period. It is expected that the NLRF mechanism will generate 10% of the required resources. Further, CSRC will generate approximately 2% of the total requirements from resource centres, organizational membership, and overhead. CSRC will raise 88% of the remaining resources from external sources.

8. Partnerships

The National Land Rights Forum (NLRF) is CSRC's major partner. CSRC will collaborate with NLRF and its branches at national, district and community level. The collaboration will include strategic consultation, movement planning, resources mobilization, knowledge generation and application, among others. Emphasis will also be accorded to establishing clarity of structural roles and responsibilities and upward and downward accountability and coordination mechanisms within various structures of the NLRF. This transition will be completed within the strategic period. CSRC will have partnerships and allies with other Civil Society Organization (CSOs), academic institutions, government authorities, farmers associations, political parties and community institutions based on specific actions, events, results or delivery in terms of change or benefit.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

CSRC, which has an institutionalized M&E system as an integral component of organizational function, will give continuity to strengthening this system and processes. Emphasis will be given to formulation of a results-based M&E framework covering the entire strategic period with further revision and refinement of the prevailing framework practised by CSRC. Monitoring will primarily focus on assessing and capturing results against baseline figures. The monitoring system will focus on assessing the progress made towards targets and milestones, drawing up learning and good practices and identifying risks and challenges as well as collecting ground-level feedback. Clear and well-defined outcome and impact-level indicators will also be incorporated in the monitoring framework.

10. Assumptions and Risk

CSRC assumes that there is political consensus on pro-poor land and agrarian reform and a stable government. The government will demonstrate commitment to effectively implement land and agrarian policy reforms and that implemented policies are supportive towards the promotion of women rights on land and property. It is further assumed that CSRC and NLRF are able to sustain the land and agrarian rights movement without major political and social interruption, and that there is adequate support to the NLRF and its local chapters for the development of their institutional capacity and mobilization.

CSRC anticipates that land-poor farmers do not face obstruction from any quarter in their bid to become organized and participate in the movement and that the organization is able to solicit adequate donor support and required resources. CSRC has a risk mitigating plan.

11. Sustainability

The term "sustainability" is understood by CSRC as the continuation of land and agrarian rights initiatives for the wellbeing of land-poor farmers over time. CSRC will strive to ensure that the gains of the land and agrarian rights movement are sustained in the future in spite of a changing environment. Key activists and frontline leaders involved in all initiatives and activities of the movement share the same understanding on fundamental issues, e.g. what is being sustained, for how long, and at what level of activity. The entire focus of the interventions will be in producing the desired results including i) developing the organizational structure and capacity of the NLRF and its local structures and enabling them to independently manage the movement by the end of the strategic period; ii) ushering pro-poor land reform and promoting effective implementation; iii) promoting replicable community-based land reform models and agriculture cooperatives for transformative change; and iv) strengthening the knowledge resource base. This results-oriented strategic approach will sustain the ensuing results beyond the strategic period.