



HIGHLIGHTS THIS MONTH

Policy Advocacy and Land Movement

- Policy dialogue on Agriculture Development Strategy
- Interaction with National Planning Commission
- Farmers' Assembly, Guthi Conference
- Demonstration and Street Drama against Gender based Violence

Earthquake Rehabilitation

- Primary Child Development Centre, Temporary Learning and Women Protection Shelter
- Cash for Work, construction materials, solar lamps and blanket distribution

Policy Advocacy and Land Movement

Policy Dialogue on Agriculture Development Strategy



Community Self-Reliance Centre organized a policy dialogue to discuss the recently passed Agriculture Development Strategy. Despite being a strong document overall, stakeholders have criticized the Strategy for not being able to protect the interests of landless, smallholder and marginalized farmers and for promoting corporatization of agriculture. The policy meet was organized to discuss ways through which the Strategy can address these concerns before it goes for implementation.

The event, organized with support from Oxfam-Nepal, was attended by distinguished guests including Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Haribol Gajurel, representatives from the government, policymaking bodies, farmers' organization and the media. Analyst Hari Roka had presented a Working Paper discussing the various aspects of the Agriculture Development Strategy and Dr Prem Dangal of National Farmers Network had commented on the Paper.

Hari Roka stressed on overall structural transformation and the need to prioritize land distribution and management in the Agriculture Development Strategy. He also pointed that the Strategy must include clear provisions on the role and responsibilities of government bodies at provincial and central level as the country adopts federal governance framework.

Chairperson of National Land Rights Forum, Lyam Bahadur Darji said that the Strategy would not be able to achieve its goals as long as farmers are deprived of land rights. Rakshya Nepal of Oxfam-Nepal pointed out that by prioritizing farmers who own more than 20 Ropanis of land for investment, the Strategy had overlooked smallholder and women

farmers. She also noted that the Strategy had not adequately addressed the issue of food sovereignty.

Minister Haribol Gajurel informed that the Strategy could not be developed on the basis of federalism as it would have taken significant time and delayed the planning process. He admitted that the Strategy had failed to incorporate post-earthquake context and expressed commitment to make the document stronger by including suggestions and feedbacks from the meeting. Minister Gajurel also committed to classify and provide identification cards to farmers at the earliest and develop further programs and plans on the basis of the classification.

Interaction with National Planning Commission



National Land Rights Forum organized an interaction on Land Issues in Post-Earthquake Reconstruction. The interaction was held in National Planning Commission with Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Dr Youba Raj Khatiwada. Members of farmers' organizations, civil society representatives, land rights activists and Member of Parliament, Kashinath Adhikari participated in the interaction.

Executive Director of Community Self-Reliance Centre, Jagat Deuja emphasized that the reconstruction process will be incomplete without first resolving land issues as many earthquake victims are also landless. Securing landless and displaced communities, protection of agricultural land, identification and mapping of safe area for resettlement and resolving issues of landlessness is central to making reconstruction efforts work, Deuja said. Dr Youba Raj Khatiwada said that the Commission will immediately start working on Land Use Act and Safe Area Mapping.

***Guthi* Conference Organized**



National *Guthi* Conference was organized in Dang to demand land rights of *Guthi* and Tenant farmers. The hugely successful event was participated by 82 representatives from 13 districts, from Mahottari in the east to Baitadi in the west. The Conference also brought out an eight-point manifesto on resolving the *Guthi* land issue.

More than 1200 *Guthi* and Tenant farmers took part in a massive demonstration carrying plough, axe and farming tools demanding rights to the land that they have tilled for generations. *Guthi* Farmers demanded the government to handover the ownership of *Guthi* land to farmers and declared that they will no longer allow *Guthis* to exploit them. The program was chaired by National Land Rights Forum Chairperson Lyam Bahadur Darji and farmer of Swargadwari *Guthi*, Prabhu Chaudhari was the chief guest. Chiefs of government bodies and representatives of all major political parties had attended the event.

Sahadev Tharu of Swargadwari *Guthi* Struggle Committee, District Land Rights Forum Palpa president, Rom Bahadur Rana, *Guthi* farmer of Ratnakar *Guthi*, Buddiram Tharu, and *Guthi* farmer from Rasuwa, Nima Tamang demanded political parties and government bodies to make laws for handing ownership of *Guthi* land to farmers.

Laxman Gyawali of *Guthi Sansthan* provided training to farmers during the event. He also promised to work towards protecting *Guthi* land and in ensuring that *Guthi* farmers are given ownership of the land they cultivate.

Women Farmers' Assembly and Leadership Development Training



A district level assembly was organized in Makwanpur and Chitwan to discuss the issues of women farmers. 75 women farmers participated in the assemblies with 41 from Chitwan and 34 from Makwanpur.

During the program, women farmers highlighted several problems they are facing such as: agricultural produce not fetching good price in the market, difficulty of finding quality seeds, lack of technical knowledge, unavailability of women-friendly farming tools and lack of social recognition for the work women farmers do. During the meeting women farmers also discussed about issues such as lack of land-ownership amongst women, unequitable gender relations at home that bars women farmers from decisionmaking process and deciding on simple things such as which crops to cultivate and pressure to manage both family duties and agricultural responsibilities as men emigrate abroad for work. The assembly concluded that these disparities should be eliminated foremost if women farmers are to be empowered.

A leadership training program was organized with members and officials of National Land Rights Forum and National Women Farmers Forum in Bhumi Adhyan Ghar of Thimura. A total of 22 people participated in the training. Participants learnt about women rights in the constitution, effects of gender discrimination, women and land rights and Agriculture Development Strategy during the program. Women farmer activists were also trained on leadership tools and practices during the program. National Women Farmers Forum also passed and implemented their Code of Conduct and Regulation during the program.

Demonstration and Street Drama against Gender Based Violence



A rally and street drama was organized in Melamchi municipality to mark 16 Days Activism against gender based violence. More than 100 women from Helambu, Kiul, Ichok, Mahankal, Talamarang, Nawalpur and Bhimtar participated in the rally that converged into a meeting at Melamchi Bajar.

The programs expanded on the theme of this year's slogan: From Peace at Home to Peace at World. The program was participated by representatives of all political parties at the district level who expressed commitment to fight gender based violence. Renowned national and local artists performed street drama to raise awareness against gender-based violence and expressed solidarity.



Help brings hope



Sirmaya Tamang from Melamchi suffered massive injuries on her back, head and legs when her house collapsed in the April earthquake. She was brought to the hospital four days later in critical condition. She had lost everything. Her house was gone and with it all her belongings and even the food her family had stored for winter. "I had no hope to survive. My husband used to say he would dig maize from the debris and feed me," Sirmaya remembers.

Sirmaya's family was able to build a shed from dented tin and plastic they recovered from the ruins but it was not enough to protect them from cold and water. Struggling to put food in the plate, they were not in a condition to rebuild their house. Just at that time Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC) with Actionaid Nepal started distributing construction materials for temporary shelter construction. They also provided food and other essentials to earthquake affected families in the village and started helping with reconstruction. Now Sirmaya has a house of her own. Sirmaya lost sensation in her fingers during the accident and cannot work in the fields anymore but she has not lost hope. She has decided to raise goats with help from CSRC as part of its Livelihood Support program. She regularly attends Makhmaki Village Meeting in Chapabot, Talamarang and actively takes parts in discussions on women rights, local development and rebuilding. "I am learning new things, these meetings have given me a sense of purpose and helped me to forget my pains," she says.

Primary Child Development, Temporary Learning and Women Protection Shelter built



Likewise Women Protection Shelters have been built in Chapabot of Talamarang, Maramchi of Mahankal, Mandanda of Ichok and Timbu of Helambu. Built with community cooperation, women from 233 families are benefitting from the Shelters. The Shelters have been built with a purpose to organize women, conduct discussions on gender issues and act as evacuation centres during disasters.



Sindhupalchok- 426 earthquake affected families in Ward No. 1 and 2 of Melamchi municipality have been provided Rs 15000 each as part of CSRC's Cash for Work program. Rs 63,90000 was distributed to the families in total. 296 women and 130 men received the cheques for their families after the monitoring of households who received support for temporary shelter construction.

Also, construction materials and 1536 CGI sheets were distributed (two each) to 768 earthquake affected families in Ichok and Helambu VDC with support from Actionaid Nepal.