

Sixteenth Social Audit of CSRC Concluded



16th Annual Social Audit of CSRC

Jamin lal bhaisakyo tara lal purja aayena (the land has been turned red but there is no sign of landownership)- A participant of Social Audit

Decades have passed since Nepal's first land reform initiative, yet a substantial portion of the population remains landless or functionally landless. For the past 30 years, the Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC) has tirelessly worked towards securing land rights and advancing land reform initiatives.

In a demonstration of its commitment to transparency and accountability, the 16th Annual Social Audit of CSRC took place on Friday, October 13, 2023, in Dhapasi, Kathmandu. This event served as a vibrant gathering of grassroots land rights activists, beneficiaries, supporters, duty bearers, partners, and collaborators. Executive Director Jagat Deuja warmly welcomed the attendees and expressed his gratitude for their unwavering support. Mr. Deuja emphasized that equitable land distribution and land rights are fundamental to all, and CSRC remains resolutely dedicated to advocating and campaigning for land rights. The organization continues to act as a facilitator between landless individuals, small farmers, and the government. Furthermore, CSRC is committed to addressing issues related to land utilization and agricultural preservation. Mr. Deuja stressed that although substantial challenges persist, small victories have been crucial in sustaining the movement. He recounted the joy of 23 earthquake affected Dalit families composed a song to express their gratitude to the organization those were supported food and temporary shelter item by the CSRC. Moments like these, Mr. Deuja noted, reinvigorate CSRC and drive its ongoing efforts.

The Movement and Campaign Coordinator, Kalpana Karki, then shared the highlights of CSRC's journey during the year 2079/80. Notable achievements included the distribution of land ownership certificates to 851 families across five local levels, encompassing a total land area of 116.17 hectares. These certificates were granted by the National Land Commission (NLC). CSRC also played a pivotal role in assisting 17 local levels in formulating land use plans. To date, CSRC has supported 81,712 landless people in acquiring 7998 hectares of land.

Geeta Pandit, the Operation Coordinator, presented a financial summary for the year 2022/23 and reported that the organization utilized 89.7 million rupees for the same fiscal year. Chartered Accountant Kiran Dangol praised CSRC for its meticulous approach to financial transparency, highlighting its role in building trust and contributing to its success.

A lively discussion on CSRC's work followed, with participants critically assessing achievements, shortcomings, and expectations. Various speakers shared their insights, including Lakpa Tamang, Chairperson of the Indigenous People's Plan (IPP) board, who commended CSRC's support for indigenous issues and organizational strengthening. Nawaraj Guragain, Chairperson of the District Land Rights Forum in Sindhupalchok, emphasized the need for a renewed land rights campaign with renewed vigor. Bhawani Prasad Neupane, Chairperson of the District Land Rights Forum in Rasuwa, cited CSRC's good governance and transparency practices as exemplary even for local governments. Som Prasad Bhandari, the former Chairperson of the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF), reiterated the importance of renewing the land rights campaign. Ram Harijan Mochi highlighted the plight of Dalit landless individuals who have repeatedly been promised assistance by stakeholders, yet nothing substantial has been done. He called upon CSRC to facilitate solutions. Media person Toya Gautam expressed his appreciation for CSRC's work and suggested that such social audit be conducted periodically within local communities.

Following the remarks from the participants Dichen Sherpa, Vice Chairperson of Bhotekhosi Rural Municipality in Sindhupalchok, highlighted CSRC's contribution towards land rights and disaster management, emphasizing its role in policy-making in her Rural Municipality. Chandra Bahadur Thing, Chairperson of the DLRF in Rautahat, drew attention to the dire conditions faced by Dalit landless communities in Rautahat and stressed the importance of a robust land rights campaign in addressing these issues. Arjun Prasad Harijan, Chairperson of the DLRF in Rupandehi, shed light on the government's discriminatory practices in land distribution and appealed to CSRC to increase pressure on relevant stakeholders.

In a video message, Laura Hendy, Climate and Resilience Programmes Manager at World Jewish Relief (WJR), discussed the remarkable 8-year partnership between CSRC and WJR in disaster management, temporary settlements, and livelihood improvement of marginalized population in Nepal. She praised CSRC's policies and practices and its strong stance on land rights.

Megh Bahadur B.C., Acting Chairperson of NLRF, Nepal, noted CSRC's instrumental role in the forum's progress and reiterated the need for a strong and sustained land rights campaign. Chameli Gurung, Vice Chairperson of Uttargaya Rural Municipality in Rasuwa, commended CSRC's collaboration in earthquake restructure and rehabilitation programs and expressed a desire to continue working with CSRC.

The Chief Guest, Keshab Niraula, Chairperson of NLC, emphasized that it is necessary to have strong collaboration between the government and civil society organizations to resolve the pertinent issues of land rights. He appreciated CSRC's numerous initiatives in the land rights struggle and highlighted its significant contribution to policy formulation. He expressed a commitment to future collaboration with CSRC on land rights issues and equitable land distribution.

Gopal Thapa Magar, Chairperson of CSRC, closed the session by thanking all the participants and outlining CSRC's strategy for the future. He assured that CSRC remains dedicated to addressing the issues of landlessness among former Kamiaya-Kamlari, Haliya, Dalits, Haruwa Charuwa, Mohi, and small farmers.

The 16th Annual Social Audit concluded with a dinner for participants, where informal conversations continued late into the evening.