



Monthly Communique

Community Self- Reliance Centre

OCTOBER IN BRIEF:

This month, we saw significant developments across various initiatives, marking a step forward in our campaign. The formation of the Land Commission this month is a positive step towards achieving land related justice in Nepal.

The land rights campaign saw active participation from the Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation to the adoption of climate-resilient farming practices, to owning land certificates and the implementation of disaster-resilient forecasting methods, there have been numerous positive outcomes. These efforts have collectively contributed to good progress in our current programs.

Similarly, the ministerial visit has brought increased attention and resources to the campaign, facilitating better support for landless and marginalized communities. Similarly, our program on climate-resilient farming practices has empowered local farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural techniques. Additionally, by integrating advanced forecasting technologies, we can now predict and respond to potential hazards more effectively, safeguarding lives and livelihoods.

Here are some of the major highlights and results of October in detail.

FORMATION OF LAND COMMISSION

The Government of Nepal has formed a new Land Commission under the leadership of Hari Prasad Rijal as Chief. Consisting of a nine-member team, Jagat Basnet, founder of CSRC has been appointed as an expert member in the committee. The formation of the Land Commission in Nepal is a significant step towards addressing land-related issues and ensuring equitable land distribution. CSRC has lobbied and advocated constantly for the formation of the commission.

EXCELLING IN CLIMATE RESILIENT FARMING METHODS

Farmers in Panchpokhari Thangpal RM, Ward No. 1, Puzaritole, have shown significant progress in adopting Climate- friendly Agriculture practices. They use biofertilizers, pheromone traps, and biopesticides. Biofertilizers, made from local materials, are becoming popular because they help reduce pesticide costs. “Using biofertilizers has been beneficial. It repels pests and saves money on pesticides,” said Saraswati Shrestha.



Kamala Shrestha added, “I’ve noticed that when I use biofertilizer (Jaibik Jhol Mal), the plants grow faster, increasing both yield and soil fertility. This has been very effective, and we can sell surplus vegetables after meeting our family’s needs.”

Similarly, more than nine households have also begun selling their surplus vegetables, creating a new source of income. This encourages them to expand their farming activities. This shift towards climate-friendly practices is building resilience in the community, helping local farmers improve sustainability of productivity and enhance their economic well-being.



UNDERSTANDING IMPACT BASED FORECAST



CDMC meeting in Naukunda

This month saw a change in the attitude of community members' perception on impact-based forecast, as they have now realized the importance of being aware through the forecast and taking early action to prevent the human and economic losses once disaster occurs.

This was possible due to the three meetings held at the Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMC) in Naukunda Rural Municipality: Ward No. 1 Syangul, Ward No. 4 Danusara, and Ward No. 6 Ghormu. A total of 57 participants attended the meetings, consisting of 35 men and 22 women.

The main discussions focused on the importance of continuing CDMC meetings, without financial support from the program resulting increasing community-led initiatives for disaster risk mitigation, actively listening to information shared by local government, and engaging in a Viber group. On September 17, 2024, the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology issued an impact-based forecast; however, many community members initially ignored this information. They have now recognized the importance of following these warnings to reduce potential damage and loss within their community.

IMPACTFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A total of twenty-seven Community Interaction Events was organized under Grassroots Resilient Organizations Empowering Women, Youth, and Marginalized (GROW) program. The program covering eight districts, Rautahat, Sarlahi, Dhanusha and Saptari in Madhesh and Banke, Dang, Rolpa and Kapilvastu in Lumbini provinces aims to promote the network and collaboration among human rights organizations to ensure their long-term engagement in advancing human rights, civic space, and democracy. The events resulted in identifying main issues and problems of community people and generated ideas from among themselves resulting in determining possible solutions to resolve the prevailing issues. Through the event, the participants generated a common 'Work plan' based on their priorities and articulated their commitment and enthusiasm to implement the action plan.

AN EXEMPLARY LEADERS' CAMP



Participants in the Camp |Photo: Gopal BK, CSRC

On October 27, 2024, a land rights camp was successfully organized in Masanghat Tole, Ward No. 3 of Lamahi Municipality. Representing 18 VLRFs from all 9 wards of Lamahi Municipality, a total of 36 participants ward members, community forest representatives, representatives from local organizations, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Lamahi Municipality, ward chairpersons, the heads of land and agriculture departments, and journalists were present at the event.

This camp was organized with the objective of fostering deeper connections among the VLRFs from all 9 wards, exchanging and discussing land-related issues at the ward level, and positively presenting the challenging experiences of the landless to the local government.

The camp program was a vibrant celebration of Tharu culture as it showcased the community's rich socio-cultural traditions. From the warm welcome with traditional songs to the communal dining experience featuring locally sourced food served on biodegradable leaves, the event highlighted the importance of preserving local heritage and resources.



During the camp, one of the organizing committees, the Digo Village Land Rights Forum, demonstrated traditional Tharu dances like the '*Badka Nach*' and '*Jhumra Nach*'. Local members of the forum performed songs expressing the plight of the landless, with lyrics like "*When will the landless get land ownership certificates and how long will the landless be sitting without land?*" The local government representatives, officials, and stakeholders expressed their support and promised to work towards providing them with land ownership certificates. At the conclusion of the program, an 11-member municipality-level land rights forum was formed under the chairmanship of Samsun Giri.

PLIGHT OF BIRTA ISSUES ADDRESSED

On October 19, 2024, in Nuwakot, and on October 20, 2024, in Rasuwa, discussions were held on resolving the Birta land issue in the presence of the Honorable Balaram Adhikari, Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation. A total of 118 participants attended the discussion in Rasuwa, while 25 attended in Nuwakot. Farmers representatives stated that , 'We cannot sell or buy this land. It cannot be used as collateral, nor can we legalize it by paying taxes. We cultivate the land and have a home, but without ownership, we do not feel secure.'

A joint team comprising the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives, and Poverty Alleviation, the Community Self-Reliance Center, and the District Land Rights Forum of Nuwakot and Rasuwa visited various villages in Rasuwa and Nuwakot to understand the Birta issues and conduct a study.



Separate meetings were held with the chiefs of the Land Revenue and Survey Offices in Nuwakot and their respective teams to discuss the obstacles hindering the resolution of the Birta issue.

Discussions were held with Birta farmers in Tarkeshwar Rural Municipality-6, Chhapadan and Belkotgadhi Municipality-7, Ratamate of Nuwakot district. Likewise, discussions were held in

Uttergaya Rural Municipality-5, Banuwa and at Bhumighar, Ward No. 2 of Kalika Rural Municipality in Rasuwa district. The evidence and documents related to Birta that farmers possessed were also studied. The opinions of the farmers were heard on the alternatives to solve the problem.

A REASON TO CELEBRATE

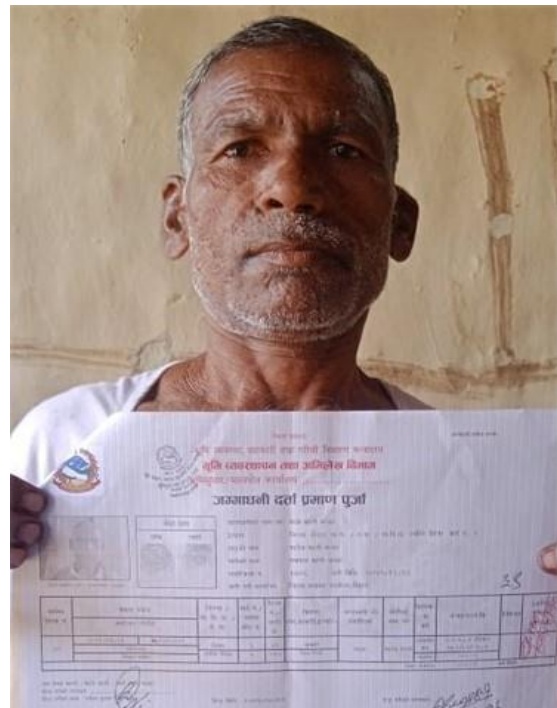
"Madho Became a Landowner"

Madho Sahani Mallah, a resident of Brindaban Municipality-1, Ramauli Bairiya in Rautahat district, had long been a sharecropper, cultivating land that wasn't his own. His family's struggle with land ownership dates to 1959 when a devastating flood washed away their property, leaving them destitute.

Madho's father, Sahadev Sahani Mallah, managed to purchase 0.57 hectares of land on credit. However, the landowner broke his word on the agreement to transfer ownership. When the land was surveyed, the landowner had the land surveyed in his own name. Sahadev was made a tenant and was forced to pay rent for the land he cultivated. When he asked the landowner to transfer the land to his name, the landowner repeatedly threatened to evict his family from the land. Sahadev passed away with his dream of having the land transferred to his name remaining unfulfilled.

Sahadev's son, Madho, was facing a similar fate as his father. However, he was unable to secure his rights to the land. In 2006, the Land Rights Forum, as a peoples' organization, was formed in Rautahat focusing on land rights campaign. In 2016, a village land rights forum (VLRf) was formed in Madho's village. With fellow villagers, Madho also joined the Forum. He expressed his issues at the forum's meeting. Then after, with the help of the forum, Madho filed an application for tenant land ownership in the same year.

After a team consisting of district land rights forum activists and officials facilitated separate and joint meetings with the land revenue office, the tenants, and the landowners. After a consensus between the landowner and Madho, he paid the landowner for half of the 0.57 hectares of land and had the entire land registered in his name.



Madho Sahani |Photo: CSRC

With the help of the organization, I have become a landowner. Now my home and land are secure. I will help others in the organization to secure their land rights and will continue to be involved in the organization."