

LIVING ON THE MARGINS

Context Analysis **REPORT** 2025



Community Context Mapping & Analysis
of Musahar Tole

FORUM-ASIA

CSIC
आत्मनिर्मर केन्द्र

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Figure 1: Map of Nepal highlighting Dhanusha District, the program site: Source: CSRC

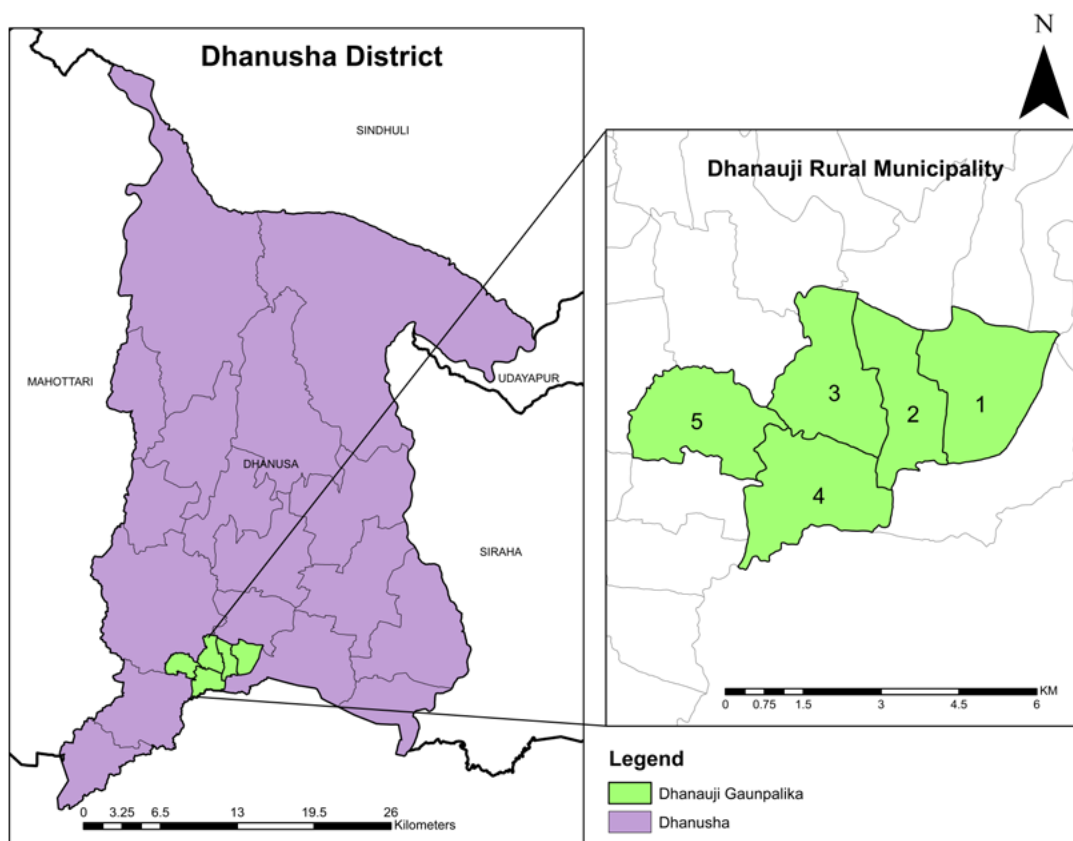


Figure 2: Ward-level Map of Dhanauji Rural Municipality, Dhanusha district: Source: CSRC

DHANAUJI RURAL MUNICIPALITY

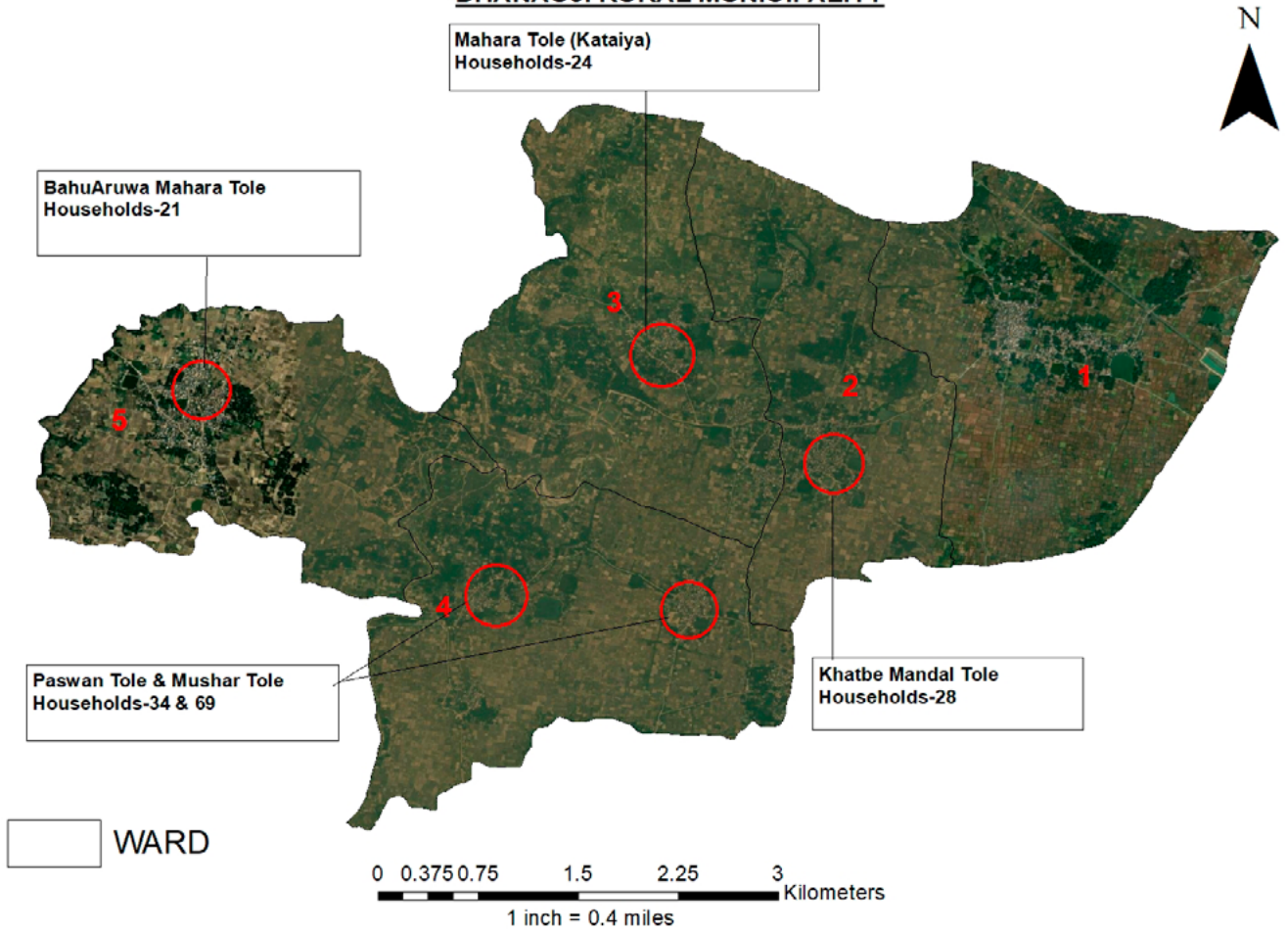


Figure 3: Satellite image showing total wards, households, and working communities: Source: CSRC

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1. Introduction

Dhanauji Rural Municipality is located in the south-eastern part of Dhanusha District in Madhesh Province. Situated approximately 10 kilometers from Janakpurdham Sub-metropolitan City, the municipality covers an area of 22 square kilometers. According to the 2021 National Census, it is home to 29,278 residents living in 5,907 households across five wards. Dhanauji is known for its fertile land, agriculture-based livelihoods, and rich ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

The municipality is also home to one of the most vulnerable population groups in Nepal -Terai Dalits, including landless tillers and the Harawa-Charawa community. Despite relying heavily on agriculture for survival, most households do not own cultivable land. They depend on informal arrangements such as sharecropping or daily agricultural labor, making their livelihoods insecure and exposing them to exploitation under the rules set by landowners. This structural inequality perpetuates chronic poverty and deepens socioeconomic vulnerability.

In 2021, CSRC and FORUM-ASIA conducted a study in Dhanauji Rural Municipality to examine the intersection of poverty, debt, climate change, and human rights within the Harawa-Charawa community. The study revealed how landlessness, high-interest informal loans, caste-based discrimination, and low wages trap families in multidimensional poverty and systems of bondage. It also highlighted the clear link between climate change impacts and structural marginalization.

Building on the 2021 study, the current advocacy initiative seeks to extend research and convert key findings into practical actions jointly developed with local governments and communities. The five communities selected for this phase were identified as having a particularly high concentration of Harawa-Charawa and other highly vulnerable Dalit households.

1.1. Dalit Communities in Madhesh

Dalit communities in Nepal have faced systemic exclusion for centuries and continue to struggle for rights, dignity, and recognition. In the Madhesh region, Dalits - particularly Terai Dalits - are among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Their fragile status stems from entrenched caste-based discrimination, cultural practices, and limited access to land, resources, and state services.

Terai Dalits experience economic deprivation, social ostracization, and persistent discrimination in public spaces, education, employment, and political participation¹. Historically marginalized under Nepal's monarchy and subsequent political systems, they continue to face barriers in exercising fundamental rights guaranteed by the state.

Scholars have documented the restrictions imposed on Dalits, including denial of access to public amenities, limited economic opportunities, and state neglect². The challenges faced include:

- Caste-based discrimination and exclusion
- Dependence on exploitative traditional occupations
- Limited access to education and social mobility
- Exclusion from political processes
- High levels of landlessness
- Wage exploitation and forced labor practices

Madhesi Dalits face additional disadvantages due to a history of denial of citizenship, limited documentation, and significantly high landlessness³. These intersecting vulnerabilities contribute to chronic poverty and structural inequality.

1.2. Constitutional and Legal Provisions

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) grants all persons with the right against exploitation, and prohibits slavery, serfdom, and forced labour in any form⁴. Economic, Social and Cultural

1 Dol Raj Kafle, Dhakaram Sapkota, and Tej Bahadur KC, "Social Dynamics of Dalits in Nepal: Historical Development of Untouchability and Exploitation," *Social Science and Humanities Journal* 9, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.18535/sshj.v9i01.1587>.

2 Nandan Shrestha, "Discrimination and Inequality among Dalits in Nepal," *International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research* 7, no. 1 (2023): 38–43, <https://www.ijriar.com>.

3 Yash Ghai and Jill Cottrell, "Constitution-making in Nepal," *Asian Journal of Comparative Law* 3, no. 1 (2008): 1–45

4 Article 29, Constitution of Nepal (2015)

Rights (ESCR) enjoy special protection in the constitution. As guaranteed under the social justice clause in the 2015 Constitution of Nepal⁵, every peasant has the right to have access to land for agricultural activities. Article 40(5) and (6) of the Constitution specifically requires the state to provide land as well as housing to landless Dalits.

Linked to the stated fundamental rights, the “policies relating to social justice and inclusion” under Part 4 (Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the State) categorically directs the State “to identify the liberated bonded labour[er]s, Kamalari, Harawa, Charawa, tillers, landless, squatters” and rehabilitate them by providing “housing, housing plot for residence and cultivable land or employment for their livelihoods”⁶.

The Constitution also protects the right to food, freedom from hunger and right to food sovereignty more comprehensively. Guarantees under Article 36 include: (1) Every citizen shall have the right to food; (2) Every citizen shall have the right to be protected from the state of being in danger of life from the scarcity of food; (3) Every citizen shall have the right to food sovereignty in accordance with law. Other ESCR related guarantees relate to housing, health, sanitation, employment, social security and protection. Under Article 16(1) of the Constitution, every person is entitled to the right to live with dignity. Article 18 of the Constitution has recognized both Dalits and Madhesi - under which most of the Harawa-Charawa households are classified - as population groups eligible for affirmative actions for protection, empowerment and development of such groups.

Major Legal policy provisions

Land Reform Act (8th amendment) 2019	Land reform rules (18th and 19th amendment) 2020-2021	Land Use Act 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 8th amendment was published in the Gazette on 11th February 2020. Defined landless and informal settlers. Provide land to all landless for housing and agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 18th amendment was published in Gazette on 21 December 2020; and 19th amendment was published in Gazette on 24 May 2021. Land distribution and registration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Land Use Act was published in the Gazette on 23 August 2019. Formation of the land council at federal, provincial and local level.

5 Ibid, Article 43 (3)

6 Article 51 (J)(6), Constitution of Nepal (2015)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered land of informal settlers, those living or tilling at least for 10 years. For illustration, an informal settler who has been tilling government land for more than 10 years prior to the act being promulgated would be registered. Commission formation to resolve the land issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemption fees for vulnerable families in case of informal settlers. Data collection, validation and approval by the local government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use plan implementation committee at the local level. Land use planning based on the land use map and vision paper. Protection and best use of agricultural land.
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Land allocation for landless and informal settlers, area in hectares maximum, as per the laws (Land Act 1964, 8th Amendment)⁷:

Geographical Areas	Landless		Informal Settlers	
	Housing	Agriculture	Housing	Agriculture
Kathmandu Valley, Metropolitan and sub metropolitan city and urban area of Municipality	0.013	0	0.013	0
Other areas than described above	0.034	0.2 in Terai and inner Terai 0.3 in Hills and Mountains	0.1	1

⁷ UN-Habitat, “Celebrating accelerated land reforms in Nepal: Implementing new legislation to improve land rights for the landless and tenure security for all Nepali,” https://unhabitat.org.np/featured_news_detail/celebrating-accelerated-land-reforms-in-nepal-implementing-new-legislation-to-improve-land-rights-for-the-landless-and-tenure-security-for-all-nepali

2. Purpose of the Study

This Context Mapping and Analysis aims to:

- Strengthen community understanding of their local context through participatory engagement
- Generate evidence to support community-led advocacy
- Enable community members to present their issues, needs, and priorities to local governments
- Provide a foundation for developing practical community action plans
- Serve as a baseline for monitoring progress and measuring improvements over time

The study particularly focuses on highly vulnerable Dalit clusters within Dhanauji Rural Municipality to ensure that community voices directly inform development and policy processes.

3. Structure of the Report

The report is organized into three major sections:

1. Introduction and Background – General context, constitutional provisions, objectives, and purpose of the study.
2. Study Findings – Detailed analysis for each of the five selected communities, covering:
 - Land access and use, Employment and livelihoods, Education, Economic conditions, Access to media and markets, Crop production and climate impacts, Support from government and other institutions
3. Summary and Recommendations – Consolidated findings and strategic recommendations for community action and policy improvements.

4. Methodology

The study followed the Community Context Mapping and Analysis, a participatory tool that enables communities to identify hidden issues, analyze social and economic conditions, and generate locally grounded solutions.

4.1 Study Design and Community Selection

The research was designed as a household survey targeting vulnerable Dalit communities across Dhanauji Rural Municipality. Following initial discussions with local facilitators and stakeholders, five communities across different wards were selected based on their high concentration of Dalit households and historical vulnerability.

4.2 Participatory Data Collection Tools

Fieldwork included several participatory tools:

- **Community Orientation:** Meetings were held in each community to explain objectives and methods.
- **Process Facilitator Nomination:** One community member from each cluster was trained to guide the mapping process.
- **Social and Resource Mapping:** Inclusive sessions involving men, women, youth, and elders to map natural and physical resources.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Collective analysis of issues, challenges, and community priorities.
- **Household Surveys:** Structured questionnaires capturing themes such as land ownership, livelihoods, access to natural resources, education, financial status, and socio-political participation.

Valuation and visioning exercises helped communities reflect on their past and present realities and envision future goals.

4.3 Data Analysis and Reporting

Data from surveys and FGDs were compiled, digitized, and analyzed. Draft findings were reviewed by the CSRC team, community members, and stakeholders before final documentation. Each community received a copy of the final report for use in future planning and meetings.

5. Limitations of the Report

5.1. Geographical Specificity

The study focuses exclusively on Bahuarwa (Mahara Tole). Although the findings provide deep insight into this community, they may not fully represent the conditions of Dalit communities across other wards or municipalities.

5.2. Data Collection Constraints

The study relies on household surveys and FGDs, which may be influenced by:

- Recall bias
- Social desirability bias
- Incomplete or approximate responses

Some quantitative elements were inferred rather than fully enumerated due to limitations in respondent recall.

5.3. Time-Bound Snapshot

The findings reflect conditions at the time of data collection. Given dynamic socio-economic changes, certain aspects - such as climate vulnerability, job migration trends, or market prices - may evolve rapidly.

5.4. Limited Quantitative Depth

While the study provides several important statistics, some areas (e.g., household composition, land ownership patterns) include primarily qualitative interpretation rather than detailed numerical breakdowns. Precise metrics such as dependency ratios, average household sizes, or detailed landholding categories were not explicitly quantified.

5.5. External Factors Beyond Study Scope

Issues such as political instability, migration trends, market shocks, or evolving climate impacts fall outside the immediate scope but significantly influence household well-being.

6. Community Context Mapping and Analysis of Musahar Tole

6.1 Dhanauji Rural Municipality



Figure 4: Social and Resource Map drawn by the community members of Dhanauji rural municipality- 4, Musahar tole Dhanusha, Madhesh Province, Nepal

Dhanauji Rural Municipality is located in the south-eastern part of Dhanusha district in Madhesh Province. This rural municipality is about 10 kilometers from the center of Janakpurdham sub-metropolitan city. Its total area is 22 square kilometers. According to the 2021 (2078 BS)⁸ census, the rural municipality has a total population of 29,278 in 5,907 households. This rural municipality has 5

8 Bikram Sambat is the national calendar followed in Nepal. Nepal Sambat, available at: <https://www.nepalsambat.com/nepal-sambat/>

wards. Dhanauji Rural Municipality is considered to have the fertile land where natural environment, agriculture-based livelihood, and ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity are found.

This community context analysis covers various aspects of the Musahar community, which helps to uncover the underlying socio-economic status of the community. This includes its history, cultural context, social structure, access to services, and land ownership. The study puts forth existing livelihood issues affecting people residing in the community. The responsible stakeholders and concerned authorities can be identified through this study who can directly make a positive impact on the community in order to elevate the living standards of the community.

Community Self Reliance Center (CSRC) has been actively engaged in Madhesh Province with different studies including initiatives to understand and support Harawa-Charawa⁹ community, which was an opportunity for the organization to have a closer look at the challenges faced by Dalit communities in the province. Since Dhanauji Rural Municipality was the center of observation for previous initiatives undertaken by CSRC, the organization was more familiar with the environment and relevant issues of this Municipality. With this initiative, five different communities of the Municipality were selected as the base of this study.

6.2. Introduction of Musahar Tole

The name “Musahar Tole”¹⁰ itself carries a historical meaning, reflecting the reality of a marginalized community. The area is called Musahar Settlement not for its geographical identity, but because it is inhabited by people of the Musahar caste, who are still discriminated against and are forced to live a landless life; the majority of the community still reside on village block land. The Musahars are considered as one of the most marginalized within the Dalit community. Many of them are still deprived of citizenship cards, which further restricts their access to basic rights and entitlements which includes food, education, healthcare, and government allowances.

6.2.1 Household and Community Information

0-5 Years		6-18 Years		19-40 Years		41-60 Years		61-80 Years		Single		Disabled	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
30	18	49	49	69	59	25	24	3	4	0	2	0	1

The settlement has 69 households with a population of 333. Among them, 48 are children under

⁹ CSRC, ‘Harwa Charwa: The community waiting for Freedom,’ https://csrcnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/HarwaCharwa_brochure_Eng.pdf

¹⁰ Tole (a terminology commonly used in Nepal which refers to a neighborhood/community)

5 years, 7 are elderly above 60 years, 1 person is living with a disability, and 2 are single women.

The settlement is located in Ward No. 4 of Dhanauji Rural Municipality, Dhanusha District. Their key sources of livelihood include farming and agriculture, but natural calamities, drought and unseasonal rain have made it challenging for them every year. The only answer they have for these natural disasters is that “god is angry with us”. This is why they have two temples within their community, one at the entrance and the other at exit of the community, to make sure no single prayer remains unattended.

A small community building at the side of the settlement occasionally hosts weddings, baby weaning ceremonies, and other community events for which they mostly resort to loans, which puts them and their families under burden for several years. Behind this community building, a small pond stores rainwater which is for communal use for irrigation, fish farming and for cattle. A large old Pipal tree (Sacred fig) beside the pond offers shade and comfort to those community members seeking it.

6.2.2 Historical Analysis of Musahar Settlement

The Musahar community began settling in this area about three centuries ago. The community has been living here since generations. Initially, there were very few families who survived with great difficulty due to poverty and landlessness. Villages are demarcated by the caste of the people living in the communities- Musahar Tole, Yadav Tole, Paswan Tole. Yadavs live nearby on their own private land, while all Musahars are landless.

About 50 years ago, there were only 30 households here, but as of 2025, the number has increased to 69. In the past, the entire community worked as bonded laborers (“Harawa-Charawa”)¹¹ for landlords. This practice has now been abolished on paper, and they survive by working as daily laborers. Around nine families cultivate land nearby as sharecroppers or tenants, but most rely on wage labor. Their daily wages are usually not paid in cash. Instead, it is paid in paddy; about 11 kg of paddy or NPR 500-600 (3.5-4.5 USD) per day.

Children have to walk for 30–40 minutes to reach school. Due to the absence of forests, managing fodder and firewood is difficult; they collect wood from landlords’ orchards or riversides. Many have no citizenship because of lack of parental documents and inaccurate age records, which often occurs due to child marriage. Marriage certificates are often registered many years after marriage because of child marriage practices. During this time, couples already have children. As a result, the children grow up before the parents become eligible to register their marriage. This creates a mismatch between the date of the marriage certificate and the birth certificates of the children. Because of this difference in timelines, families face difficulties in obtaining official documents. This hinders them from applying for the registration process to secure land ownership certificates

11 Definition of Harawa-Charawa: Harawa is a person who ploughs the field or simply a ‘ploughman’. And Charawa is defined as a person who grazes cattle or simply a ‘Cattle Herder’. Although the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has officially abolished the bonded labour system in the country, Harawa -Charawa still prevails as a pure form of bondage labour in many communities. Available at: https://csrncnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/HarwaCharwa_brochure_Eng.pdf

as their marriage certificates, including all legal documents, are inevitable for accessing social security. Traditional natural sources such as wood, water, berries, and fodder are important for the survival of the community. However, climate change has caused floods, excessive rains, droughts, and heat, drying up water sources and reducing agricultural productivity, which severely impacts the community's right to livelihood.

The road was expanded in 2011, and roofs of houses were changed from thatched to tin around 10 years ago. Harmful traditional practices like child marriages still persist. Girls are married at the age of 16-17 years. This causes physical and mental health issues, educational problems, legal complications, and birth registration issues for their children born before they reach adulthood. Although, there has been an increase in households and gradual infrastructural improvements such as roads, wells, community buildings and temples, the overall conditions and livelihoods remain underdeveloped.

6.3. Social and Political Access

6.3.1. Relationship with the Local Government

There is limited access to ward offices and rural municipality offices near the settlement. They usually experience discrimination even when going to the office for basic government services. The community does not receive information about whether or not programs targeted at the Musahar community are being run by the ward or rural municipality. The community does not have access to any basic information from the local bodies, and many people shared similar experiences connected to the health post, where they get denied for simple access to medicines.

6.3.2 The Role of Political Parties

People from the Musahar community are often excluded from the political process. Due to this, they are always deprived of political benefits. During the election period, party representatives come to ask for votes and promise support. However, they do not return until the next election, which is one of the main reasons for their exclusion from political processes.

6.3.3 Relationship with Social Organizations

Three women from the settlement are organized in a savings and credit cooperative. Apart from that, they are not affiliated with any organization or group. As a result of this, the collective voice of the community is weak.

6.3.4. Relationship with other Communities

People from this community are often looked down on by other communities because of their caste identity. This community has been socially excluded for years. As a result of this, there is a lack of confidence among the people of the settlement, and they are unable to integrate into mainstream society.

6.4. Analysis of Livelihoods and Access to Basic Services

The study reveals that out of the 69 households, most of the people live in temporary houses (62 households), while only 7 households live in semi-permanent housing. None of the individuals from the community live in a permanent house, which puts them at high risk of eviction and further marginalisation. Almost every household has access to drinking water. 53 households have their own tube well, 15 households share with neighbors and 1 household uses the community tube-well. None of the houses have access to temporary toilets. They use open spaces and crop fields as their substitute for toilets. The elderly people and women have expressed their insecurities regarding using open spaces for toilets; however, they are compelled to do so as they have no immediate alternatives.

People of this community are often looked at with contempt by other communities. For many years, they have faced social exclusion by those classified as upper caste people. The exclusion of Dalit communities is rooted in the resistance of affluent landlords and upper-caste groups to Dalits' upward mobility, as such progress would disrupt caste hierarchies and undermine their social dominance. As a result, members of the community lack the confidence to integrate into mainstream society.

6.4.1. Condition of Houses and Available Facilities

Type of Houses

Permanent	Semi-permanent	Temporary	Others
0	7	62	0

Sources of Drinking Water

Own Tubewell	Neighbor's Tubewell	Community Tubewell/Tap	Well	Others
53	15	1	0	0

Source of cooking energy

Firewood	Cow Dung Cakes	Kerosene	Gas	Biogas	Electricity
69	0	0	0	0	0

Source of light

Kerosene	Electricity	Biogas	Solar Energy	Others
0	69	0	0	0

Toilets

Available	Not Available
0	69

6.5. Land Ownership Status

The study shows that 61 families here live on village block land¹² whereas 7 families own a small plot of land and 1 family uses public land for housing. Among the 7 land owners, 2 of the household land are registered under men and 5 households were registered under women's name. The majority of the land are registered under women's names because they receive some tax benefits (25-50%)¹³, and mostly because the men of the families are abroad and cannot be present for the land ownership certificate. The dataset represents a variety of land ownership types among the community, but a minimum number of people have access to their own land. The land owned is also not ancestral property of the people of the settlement but was purchased later. The total area occupied by this settlement is about 1.5 bighas (1.1 hectares)¹⁴. On an average, a family uses about 0.003 Hectares of area for housing.

12 Village-block land refers to a considerably large tract of land mainly used for residential purposes, by a group of people, that is mapped under one single plot, given the limited technical expertise, time or human/financial resource during the last land survey or mapping process. Since it has not been sub-divided into individual plots legally through the remapping process- poor, landless, agricultural workers and marginalized people residing in such areas have been facing economic, social, political, and legal problems

Available at: <https://csrcnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Reflections-2020.pdf>

13 International Organisation for Migration, 'Securing Women's Land and Property Rights in Nepal' (2016), available at: <https://www.iom.int/news/securing-womens-land-and-prto-to-operty-rights-nepal>

14 Nepali Land Area Unit Converter, available at: <https://geonity.astroshah.com.np/tools/area-unit-conversion>

6.5.1. Status and Ownership of Residential Land

The following tables represent the households' areas of the community which are primarily divided on the basis of their land ownership details. Registered land area means the total households with land ownership certificate. Village block land refers to a defined cluster or unit of land within a village area used for planning, settlement, or development purposes. Other's land refers to the households residing in land registered under someone else's name. Informal land is defined as land occupied and used by landless squatters without any formal documents. Government land refers to any land which is registered in the name of the Government of Nepal. Similarly, public land refers to the land allocated for public use like roads, schools, forests, temples, and other public infrastructure. Guthi/Trust land refers to land donated for religious purposes, cultural or social gatherings, which is registered under an institution/Guthi.

Type of Land	Registered in own/Family's name	Land in women's name	Joint Land Ownership	Village block	Land Owned by Others	Public land
House-holds	7	5	2	61	2	1
Area	0.0466 Hectares	0.0313 Hectares	0.0152 Hectares	0.3945 Hectares	10.5 dhur (0.017 Hectares)	0.0085 Hectares

6.5.2. Status and Ownership of Agricultural Land

Mode of Tenure / Type	Bataiya (Sharecropping)	Contract
Families	8	1
Years of Tenure	2-5 Years	4 Years
Area	1.5238 Hectares	0.1016 Hectares

The people here who earn their living through agriculture do not have land of their own. Only 9 families of the settlement have access to limited land for agriculture, whereas 8 families are engaged in sharecropping and 1 family is engaged in contract farming (an agreement between a farmer and buyer for production and sale of crops within a fixed time frame and price). One of the main problems is to procure food for the family. None of the families here have enough food to feed their entire family. The situation is becoming more difficult for those who are engaged in sharecropping or contract farming, as their production has declined compared to previous years due to drought. This community has had to bear losses in crops and livestock due to drought, floods and other natural disasters in recent years.

7. Root causes of extreme poverty among the Musahar community

The extreme poverty in Musahar Tole is not the result of a single cause. It is a complex and interconnected structure of discrimination, social structures, historical injustices, deprivation, vulnerability, and marginalization which traps the community in a chronic cycle of poverty. These causes reinforce each other and entrench poverty within the community.

7.1. Landlessness

The most important reason for poverty in the Musahar community is landlessness. The people of the settlement are unable to engage in income generating activities due to landlessness. They lack the resources and capacity to invest in other professions, businesses or education.

When analyzing various problems such as poverty, illiteracy, food insecurity, homelessness, inequality, etc., they are found to be linked with landlessness. Due to landlessness, various shortages, problems, and deprivation of opportunities have occurred which has closed the doors of other progress and development. Due to landlessness, they are deprived of resources, opportunities, and basic needs, which automatically closes the doors to other forms of progress and development. Adding to that, the lack of agricultural land prevents them from producing their own crops which further push them towards poverty.

7.2. Low Educational Level

Educational Status

There are only 5 people in the settlement who have passed tenth standard (referred to as Secondary Education Examination or SEE level in Nepal), while the number of people who have completed graduation and post-graduation is zero. Even now, most children of school age are deprived of school education. Most of the families cannot afford to pay for school expenses. Some of the children are compelled to help their parents with household work and agricultural labor. The table below illustrates variations in the ratio of male and female school attendance, highlighting that girls are often expected to perform household work and support their families. Many girls are also affected by child marriage, which prevents them from continuing their education at the school and college levels.

Education Level	Up to Grade 5	Up to Grade 8	SEE Passed	Up to Grade 12 (+2)	Bachelor's
Female	22	3	0	0	0
Male	22	11	5	0	0

Lack of education is one of the main reasons for the lack of skill-based jobs in the community. This is keeping the community confined to low-paid, risky and unstable employment.

7.3. Unsecured Agriculture and Livelihoods

There are few families in this community who have access to some portion of land as a lease or contract for cultivation. However, they still continue to face many problems. There is no irrigation facility for farming. Farming here is completely dependent on rain. Furthermore, due to their caste identity, some landowners refuse to lend them land for agriculture or even let them work as laborers.

Due to the effects of climate change, there is no rain during the monsoon. Additionally, with unseasonal rain and rising temperatures, agricultural production is at high risk. The people who are completely dependent on farming as laborers to earn a living find it difficult to maintain the earnings due to low income and high market expenses.

7.4. Food Security and Nutrition

The study suggests limited access to land for agricultural production among the Musahar community. Among the farmers, 5 families produce food for a maximum of 6 months. The production of 2 families barely lasts for 3 months or less. Families who do not even have the opportunity to farm are completely dependent on wages. This poses nutritional risks to families without their own food production. As there are not enough income generating opportunities available for people, they often cut off their food consumption and rely on borrowing from neighbors and household loans taken from moneylenders with high interest rates.

The lack of own production causes more nutritional threat to children, women and elderly people. Women during pregnancy are often under-fed, which creates health risks to both mother and unborn child.

Food Sufficiency

The study indicates a high reliance on external food sources such as markets. All households manage food shortages by purchasing from the market, highlighting limited self-sufficiency and potential vulnerability to price fluctuations.

Production Status	No Production	Less than 3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	Surplus (12+ Months)
Number of Families	60	4	5	0	0	0

Food Management

Source of Food	Families
Market Purchase	69
Borrowing from neighbors	0
Others	0

Cost Per Month to Buy Food

No cost	Up to NPR 1,500 (10.69 USD)	Up to NPR 3,000 (21.37 USD)	Up to NPR 5,000 (35.62 USD)	Above NPR 5,000 (35.62 USD)
0	0	0	0	69

The average monthly food expenditure of households here is more than NPR 5,000 (35.62 USD), suggesting significant financial pressure on households for basic food needs. In special circumstances, they are forced to go into high-interest loans to fill their stomachs. Pregnant, postpartum and sick women, children and senior citizens also lack the necessary nutritious food and balanced diet.

7.5. Status of occupation, labor, employment and foreign employment of the community

In this community, most households are dependent on daily wage labor working on roads, crop fields, building houses, driving taxis and working on construction sites (if available). They do not rely on any particular labor for their livelihood. Seven households are engaged in agriculture, but even those households cannot sustain their livelihood solely from agriculture.

The study has revealed that the community is solely dependent on agricultural labor as their source of income, with some exceptions of foreign employment. They only get to work 2 harvesting seasons per year, with each season lasting for 3 months. With their daily wage of around 11 kg of paddy or NPR 500–600 (3.5-4.5 USD), they struggle to sustain their food supplement every year, as they hardly get 3-6 months of seasonal agricultural labor.

Employment Details

Employment Type	Farmers		Foreign Employment		Wage Labor	
Number of People	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
	4	3	0	26	59	68

The study reveals that 26 households are involved in foreign employment and among those in foreign employment, 20 are working in India and 6 are working in Gulf countries and Malaysia. Male employment is notably higher than female, both in total and in overseas opportunities.

7.6. Exploitative and informal sources of loans and high interest rates

There are only 3 women who are members of the cooperative or microfinance institution from the entire settlement. Most families have taken loans from landowners (locally referred to as ‘Sahu’) or private individuals for household expenses such as for rituals and ceremonies, education, health food and nutrition, and bear expenses incurred in the process of applying for foreign employment. The interest rate is usually around 36% per year, which is much higher than that of banks. The loan amount ranges from NPR. 1 lakh to 8 lakh (712.35-5,698.82 USD).

Loan Purpose	Families Taking Loan	Loan Amount (NPR)	Interest Rate	Source
Foreign Employment	4	NPR 17,00,000 (12,110 USD)	36%	Person/Money Lender
Household Expenses	56	NPR 1,48,00,000 (105,428.26 USD)	36%	Person/Money Lender

Although loans from banks and financial institutions are cheap, they are not accessible due to lack of legal documents, especially land ownership documents. There is also a big problem of lack of financial access. Since they spend a majority of the small amount they earn from foreign labor or wage labor on paying the interest amounts, it becomes difficult for them to save and spend on food, education, and health. The situation in this settlement has also exposed the lack of financial access in rural and disadvantaged areas of Nepal and the socio-economic problems it has created.

7.7. Child labor and the Pressure of Dependent Population

Five children in the settlement are engaged in agricultural work and 11 children are engaged in wage labor where they mostly work in crop fields, watch over cattle, and do household work in other people's houses within the locality. Many children are engaged in other household chores and temporary jobs. The presence of child labor is a negative indicator for the overall welfare of the community, which suggests vulnerable economic conditions.

7.8. Unequal Impact During Disasters

The study reveals women, pregnant women, children, people with disabilities, and senior citizens are particularly affected by natural calamities like flood, heavy rain, droughts and cold temperatures. Poor and marginalized communities are more vulnerable due to their lack of access to information and resources, unsafe housing, weak infrastructure, and awareness to deal with disasters. Those who lose their lives or are injured in disasters are often members of these vulnerable communities.

In such cases, women and children are forced to cut back on food, as during calamities and disasters, there is no source of income and access to markets for food, which negatively impacts their nutrition and health. This puts them at greater risk and creates long-term problems. Cutting back on food is not just a matter of nutrition and health, but also severely impacts public health.

7.9. Health and Nutrition Problems

Women and children are at increased risk of malnutrition due to nutrient deficiencies. Malnutrition in children stunts physical and mental development and reduces immunity. Malnutrition in pregnant and lactating women negatively affects the health of the child and can lead to long-term problems in reproductive health. Health problems can be more serious due to lack of hygiene and treatment, risk of infection, and unhealthy foods.

Landlessness and poverty are also one of the main reasons for health and nutrition problems. The community has been struggling just for basic nutrition, which is also hard to manage due to lack of employment opportunities.

7.10. Caste-based Untouchability and Discrimination

Although the Constitution of Nepal through Article 24¹⁵ has declared caste untouchability a crime, in reality, Dalits and marginalized communities like the Musahar community continue to experience this. The Musahar community is viewed as a lower caste in society and discriminated against on that basis. Such discrimination has a profound impact on the daily lives of the people of the settlement. Even now, the people of the Musahar community are often denied access to places like temples, public water taps, or tea shops. Inequality in inter-community relations persists. The people of this settlement are denied the opportunity to marry people from other communities or participate in social programs.

15 The Constitution of Nepal. Available at: https://ag.gov.np/files/Constitution-of-Nepal_2072_Eng_www.moljpa.gov_.npDate-72_11_16.pdf

8. Power Analysis

During the power analysis exercise, stakeholders were particularly identified for resolving land-related issues. Specifically, the community identified the following as their stakeholders:

- CSOs: Harawa Charawa Forum, Dalit Society Upliftment, CSRC
- Government Departments: Police Station, Federal Member of Parliament, District Administration Office, Land Survey Office, Land Commission, Provincial Members of Parliament, Health Post, Ward Chairperson Municipality and Ward
- Private Institutions: Media/Journalists, Banks and Financial Institutions, Landlords
- Political Parties: Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist Leninist, Nepali Congress, People's Socialist Party (Ja.Sa.Pa).

The table below represents the power level and relationships of the stakeholders with the community. High, medium and low indicates the level of decision-making power the stakeholders have, and their ability to influence (both positively or negatively) the lives of the community. The scale of 'fully negative' to 'fully positive' indicates the type of relationship that the stakeholder has with the community. For example, while the District Administration Office has high power to influence decisions, they are viewed by the community very negatively, since they are not allies.

Among the stakeholders, the closest relationships of the community are with the Harawa Charawa Forum and Dalit Society Upliftment. However, these closely related stakeholders hold only low levels of power. Similarly, the distance from other stakeholders increases progressively. CIC, Schools, CSRC, and the Federal MP (Juli Kumari Mahato) have a positive relationship with the community. Most of these stakeholders are also considered to hold medium power. In particular, the community feels that the Federal MP is powerful and still maintains a close relationship with them.

Mainly, the more powerful stakeholders such as the Police Station, District Administration Office, Land Survey Office, Land Commission, Provincial MPs (Lakhan Lal Das, Saroj Yadav), Health Post, Municipality and Ward, Media/Journalists, Banks and Financial Institutions, Landlords, and Political Parties are found to have neutral to negative relationships with the community. Thus, the table indicates that the stakeholders with greater power have less positive relationships with the community, while those closer to the community have weaker power.

8.1. Power Ranking of Stakeholders

High	District Administration Office Municipality and Ward Banks and Financial Institutions Landlords	Political Parties Police Station Land Survey Office Land Commission		Federal MP	
Medium			Health Post Media/ Journalists	Provincial MPs (Lakhan Lal Das, Saroj Yadav)	School
Low				CSRC	Harawa-Charawa Forum Dalit Society Upliftment
Power Scale:	Fully Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Fully Positive

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9. Tree Analysis (Causes and Effects of Landlessness)

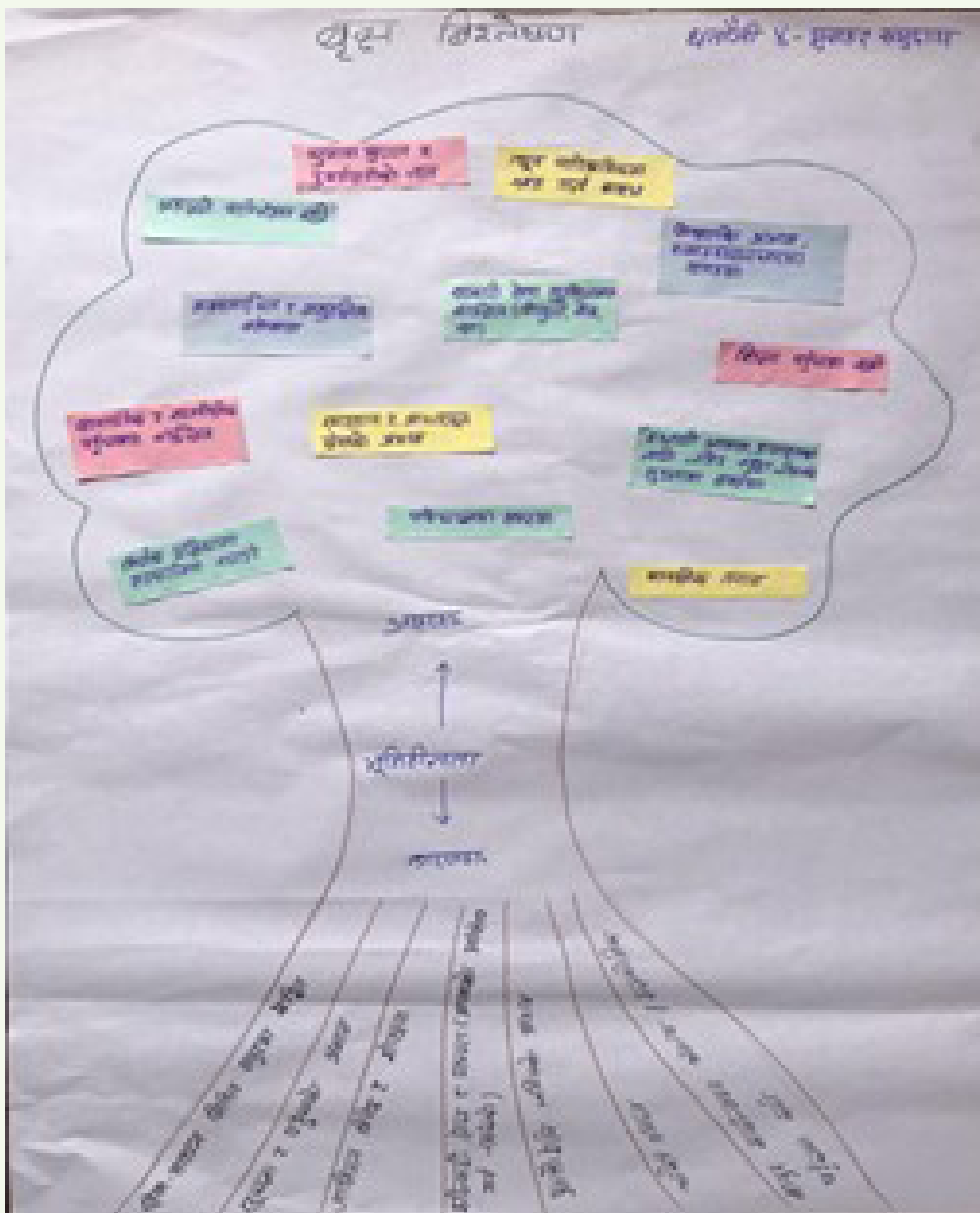


Figure 5 A drawing of tree analysis to explore the cause-and-effect relationship of landlessness

Cause	Effect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources concentrated in the hands of the privileged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forced to work for low wages Lack of food and basic resources Unorganized and insecure settlement Malnutrition, health treatment problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to free education and government services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caste-based discrimination and exploitation Conservative mindset and traditions (inability to resist injustice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excluded from social and political access Caste based identification of community Acceptance of traditional thinking and discrimination as fate and no confidence to resist injustice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generational landlessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High dependency on others Without permanent housing and land for production, life security is threatened
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High interest rates Lack of political access (no representation in political front) Lack of law enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compelled to take loans from private money lenders Excluded from decision-making processes Mental stress

10. Mobility and Access Analysis of Musahar Settlement

10.1 Employment and Economic Dynamics

- **Local employment/occupation:** Most individuals are engaged in agricultural labor, market, and daily wage labor within their own village/settlement and nearby areas such as Bharhariya (3km), Bahuarwa (3km), and Janakpur (10km).
- **Employment in neighboring countries:** In recent years, it has become a common practice to migrate to different states of India for work in construction sites, hotels and as cleaners.
- **Foreign employment:** A limited number of people have also started migrating for work to gulf countries. The main stream of work they are engaged in are in production factories, construction and warehouse.

10.2 Market Access

- **Nearest market:** For local food and daily essentials, people go to Bharhariya (3km), Bahuarwa (3km), and Janakpur (10km) markets.
- **Access to Cheaper Goods at the Border:** Goods are cheaper in Harne, a border area in India which is 4.5 km from the community. People from this community go there to shop on a monthly basis.
- **Impact:** Although the local and border markets are relatively near, there are disparities in prices and accessibility. Especially for food and consumable goods, people are compelled to travel long distances where it is available at affordable prices.

10.3 Access to Health Services

- **Local health post:** Although Bharhariya (3km) has a health post, medicines and services are inadequate. Members of the Musahar community often share experiences of being turned away because medicines were unavailable, which discourages them from visiting. Due to lack of resources to travel farther, their treatment still largely remains reliant on faith and hope.

- **Distant health centers:** For treatment and specialized services, people have to go to Janakpur (10km), Lalgadh (44km), Dharan (192 km), or Kathmandu (228 km). Because of financial constraints, only very few can reach Kathmandu or Dharan for treatment.
- **Impact:** Inequality Inequality exists in access to health services as local health posts refuse to treat the Dalits, causing delays in treatment, and worsening health conditions.

10.4 Access to Government Services and Administration

- **Local administration:** The ward office and police station are located at Bahuarwa Chowk. Dhanauji Rural Municipality is also relatively close.
- **Other administrative services:** The district court, land survey office, land revenue office, electricity office, and other government offices are all in Janakpur, which is around 15 kms away.
- **Impact:** For administrative work, people must go to Janakpur (10-15 km). Although geographically not very far, the distance in relationship with these offices means that very few people from the community actually visit them.

10.5 Access to Education

- **Primary/secondary education:** There is a school in another village, Thulo Pokhari up to grade 8, which can be reached in less than an hour from the village.
- **Government and Private Schools:** In this community, there is one government school and two private schools. However, people from the settlement cannot afford to send their children to private schools. A majority of school-aged children still do not attend school.
- **Limitations:** For higher and quality education, one must go to Janakpur or other towns, but access remains extremely low-only about one or two individuals have gone so far.
- **Impact:** There is limited access to education as the people from this community cannot afford to travel back and forth from Janakpur or rent a room to stay and study there.

11. Visioning Exercise

(Past, Present, and Future)

The visioning exercise was conducted through the community-led approach, ensuring that the insights gathered are rooted in the lived experiences and collective voice of the people. This report analyzes the state of the community over the past 20 years, their current situation, and future projections. It examines the community's social, economic, cultural, health, education, infrastructure, and rights status based on historical development trends.

11.1 Past Scenario (Around 20 Years Ago)

About 20 years ago, the condition of the Musahar community was extremely poor and insecure. No family had ownership of land. Their houses were makeshift-some with thatched roofs supported by bamboo poles, while others had no proper walls at all, just small and open shelters. When a fire broke out in one house, the entire village was destroyed.

In terms of daily work, each family would earn only about 2 kilograms of rice per day. Entire families were engaged in bonded labor as Harawa-Charawa. Men worked in the fields, while women managed household and cattle-related responsibilities. Children looked after the landlord's children or grazed livestock.

At that time, there was severe food scarcity. Due to a shortage of food, parents often fed their children first and ate only what was left. Since the rice they received from landlords was not enough to cook proper meals, they would add extra water to a small amount of rice to make porridge-like meals (locally termed as jaulo or khole). They even collected leftover rice husks discarded by others, ground them, and made bread or broth from it. They also ate rats caught in the fields. On days when they had cooked rice with just salt water, it was considered a special meal. During the fruiting season, they filled their stomachs with natural fruits like mangoes and jamun (black plums). They also gathered leftover crops (paddy, potatoes, wheat) from other people's fields by sifting through the soil, which contributed a little to their food supply.

Community infrastructure was extremely limited. There was only one well near the village, located inside the forest. People feared snakes while fetching water, and due to superstitions, they also believed they would be haunted by ghosts, which was linked to frequent illnesses. There was no road access and no electricity. For energy, kerosene had to be brought from India.

There was a severe shortage of clothes. They wore patched-up old clothes given by landlords and their families. Most of them could not remember ever wearing new clothes. Children often wore half-torn clothes or went naked. During winter, households had only a few mats. Lack of warm clothing even led to deaths from the cold.

From a health perspective, diseases such as tuberculosis, diarrhea, leprosy, and elephantiasis were common. Most people had no citizenship, yet somehow were still compelled to vote in elections. No one had attained higher education, formal employment, or gone abroad. Only a very few had just begun sending their children to school.

11.2 Present Scenario

Compared to the past, some improvements have been observed in the community. Seven families in the settlement now have land ownership, among which five families have sole ownership of women, and two families have joint ownership in the name of women. The Harawa-Charawa has ended on paper. They have also been able to look for work in places other than moneylenders. The daily wage rate has increased and reached the equivalent of about 11 kilograms of paddy per day. They now earn between NPR 500-600 per day.

Although there is a legal provision to provide land to landless Dalits for housing and agriculture, they have been deprived of this opportunity. All households in the settlement have submitted applications to the ward office to obtain land.

The condition of housing has also changed. At present, all houses have tin roofs with walls made of bamboo lattice and mud plaster. The Harawa-Charawa practice has transformed, giving them some level of independence, but modern forms of exploitation and discrimination against this community still persist. Even now, their labor is exploited under conditions such as being given two katthas of land for use once a year in exchange for 11 kilograms of paddy per day. Although less strict than before, invisible restrictions remain, such as not being allowed to easily leave the landlord's work to go abroad or engage in other employment. In terms of infrastructure, almost all households now have access to drinking water. Roads and electricity have also reached the settlement, but electricity is being used illegally, as no one has an official meter box.

Connections with various organizations and political parties have increased. Food consumption has slightly improved. The practice of eating rats has completely disappeared. Most families now have access to basic meals such as rice or bread with lentils or vegetables. Clothing conditions have also become easier; everyone wears clothes that fully cover the body. The issue of citizenship has not yet been fully resolved. Some individuals in the community still do not have citizenship. The reasons for not obtaining it include lack of proper documents, inconsistencies in birth and marriage registration records, and mismatched timelines.

Employment opportunities have increased to some extent. Farming activities, planting, harvesting, short-term wage labor, and some individuals going abroad for work are observed. However, there

have also been cases of people being cheated when they went abroad. Whether working inside or outside the country, they still have not been able to receive fair wages or salaries. When going for foreign employment or even to cover household expenses, they are forced to borrow money at very high interest rates. As a result, much of their earnings are consumed by loan repayments. Health issues, including tuberculosis (TB), still persist.

Natural disasters are causing damage to wealth and property and reducing production. Due to the impacts of climate change, the community is suffering from extreme heat, extreme cold, untimely rainfall, and drought. Although significant progress in education has not been achieved, there has been some improvement. Currently, about 30–40% of children are attending school.

11.3 Future Scenario

The community envisions a future where basic rights are ensured. They aspire to have safe housing with homes of their own and at least some land for farming. They hope to obtain official land ownership certificates (lalpurja), and for the haruwa–charuwa system to end not just in policy but also in practice, so they can sustain their livelihoods by producing on their own land.

They expect all school-age children to receive education, skilled human resources to be developed, and easy access to education, health services, employment, and markets. The community dreams that, twenty years from now, at least someone from their village will hold a government job or have gone abroad to a good country. In terms of political rights, the community aims to actively participate in elections and even have representatives elected from their own community.

They imagine every household will have a toilet. They foresee access to clean drinking water, and that their settlement will also be clean and healthy. Their vision for employment is primarily through their own farming and production, along with the creation of local-level factories or job opportunities, receiving fair wages, and an end to unjust practices against children and women.

From the perspective of social rights, the community has a long-term desire that no citizen should face obstacles in obtaining citizenship upon reaching the eligible age, that child marriage will be eliminated, and that there will be awareness and training regarding climate change and disaster management.

Looking at this journey, the life of the Musahar community has moved from extreme poverty and insecurity twenty years ago to some basic improvements at present. However, structural inequality, access to and ownership of land for housing and farming, citizenship, employment, education, health, and rights still remain as challenges. To ensure a dignified and empowered life for the community in the future, there is a need for long-term strategic planning and responsible implementation by the state, local bodies, and concerned stakeholders.

12. Conclusion and Recommendations

12.1. Analytical Review of Conclusions and Suggestions

The Musahar community faces deep poverty and exclusion that come from many different problems happening at once. These issues include poor schooling, health struggles, lack of jobs, and unfair treatment because of their caste. All of these difficulties are tied together in a way that makes life hard.

Because these challenges are linked, a single fix in one area will not solve the overall problem. Lasting change requires a strategic plan that works across many different sectors at the same time. This section outlines how to move forward with a broad approach that addresses all these areas together.

12.2. Immediate and long-term Actions for the Musahar Tole

12.2.1. Ensuring the Rights of the Landless

- Provide land for housing and agriculture to landless Musahar families as per the constitutional provisions. For this, coordination must be undertaken with the Land Problem Resolution Commission and the local government to expedite and ensure transparency in the process of distributing land ownership certificates.
- Although settlement data has been collected, the process has not moved forward. Therefore, procedures such as issuing nissa (land record documents) should be carried out as soon as possible so that land ownership certificates can be provided. When providing land to landless Dalits for agriculture and housing, the maximum available land within the limits should be allocated.

12.2.2. Resolution of citizenship-related issues

- For people without citizenship, the identity of being a Nepali citizen should be confirmed based on ward recommendation (muchulka) and a temporary certificate should be provided for receiving government services.
- The process of obtaining citizenship for Dalits and people from extremely marginalized communities should be facilitated promptly and respectfully.

12.2.3. Access to social security

- Skill-based training, grant programs, livelihood assistance, and employment creation for the Musahar population should be provided.

12.2.4. Participation in planning and budget assurance

- The meaningful participation of the Musahar community in local level (community and ward) budget and plan formulation should be made mandatory.
- Mandatory budget allocation should be made for capacity development, skill development, livelihood support, and necessary infrastructure development for women in the community.

12.2.5. Simplicity in access to information

- Arrangements should be made to ensure that information about government services, programs, and plans reaches the community (through notice boards, mobile services, local radio) in an accessible and timely manner.
- While providing services and facilities from government offices, arrangements should be made to treat service recipients with respect and to provide services in a simple and easy manner.

12.2.6. Awareness and punishment to prevent discrimination and prejudice

- Awareness campaigns should be conducted to end child marriage, untouchability, violence against women, and discrimination. Strict punishment should be enforced for those who engage in such activities.

12.2.7. Free and quality education

- Incentive programs should be implemented to provide quality and free education to children from this community.
- Various programs should be implemented to increase school enrollment rates by providing free educational materials, uniforms, and scholarships to school-age children and to ensure that those enrolled continue their education.

12.2.8. Transparency and Accountability

- Plans, expenditures, and public service delivery conducted through local levels should be made transparent and accountable towards the citizens.

12.2.9. Ensuring the right to food

- To ensure the right of every citizen to food, ration cards should be provided until livelihood arrangements are made. Families at risk of food insecurity should be identified and nutritious food should be provided. In addition, food items should be distributed immediately as relief in times of disaster.
- Private, government and institutional barren cultivable land should be identified and provided to the Musahar community at a low rental rate for a period of at least 5 years.

12.2.10. Health care

- Compulsory health insurance should be provided targeting the Musahar community, particularly those vulnerable such as women, girls, children, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.
- Conduct health camps in the community and run nutrition programs targeting women and children.
- Mobile health services should be arranged for those who do not have access to health posts.

12.2.11. Debt Relief Program

- Families trapped in high interest rates should be identified and debt relief and financial counseling should be provided.
- Initiatives should be taken to waive interest rates for families who have been trapped in the cycle of debt and interest for more than 10 years. Arrangements should also be made to provide loans at affordable interest rates for any enterprise or business activity.

12.2.12. Livelihood Strengthening

- Women should be encouraged to start small businesses by providing skill development training (e.g. sewing, cutting, handicrafts etc).

12.2.13. Financial literacy and access

- Savings and loan groups should be formed and organized in collaboration with microfinance institutions. Also, affordable loans should be provided with low/no interest rates to create micro businesses and employment opportunities.

12.2.14. Infrastructure Development

- Clean drinking water, sanitation, and safe and disaster-resistant housing and toilets should be provided in the community.
- Community buildings and open spaces should be constructed and managed by the community. Schools and health institutions should be easily accessible.



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