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“Freed Haliya activists say they will continue their movement till the government ensures just rehabilitation to them. They also warn they will organize protest programs if the government does not pay heed to their demands.”

After freedom RHMSF advocating for just rehabilitation of former bonded laborers

It was just like a dream for freed Haliyas, freed bonded laborers who worked as bonded laborers for years for a small credit they had taken in the past, to have their organization advocating for their rights but the dream turned into reality with support from LWF Nepal.

After working for decades as bonded laborers, the Haliyas realized discrimination faced by them and organized liberation movement. They became united and formed Rastriya Mukta Haliya Samaj Federation (RMHSF) in 2007. The organization launched liberation movement in different parts of Mid and Far Western Nepal, where the system was in practice. As a result the government announced Haliya liberation on September 6, 2008. Some Haliya rights activists recall that it was very difficult for them to get organized in the initial days as they used to suffer various punishments including expulsion from their master's houses if they notice that they were involved in the movement.

Even after they were announced free, they faced numerous challenges as they did not have any employment opportunity and their masters were very bitter and aggressive to them. The masters used to employ people from other community rather than giving employment to them to increase their hardships as Haliyas did not have any skills nor they have resource for their

livelihoods. The Haliyas also faced discrimination for being so called lower caste people.

RMHSF is an umbrella organization of former Haliyas with 6,821 (3,842 male and 2,979) members. LWF Nepal with generous support from Finn Church Aid, has been supporting former Haliyas since their freedom. The organization, which was formed to free themselves from bonded labor system, has been advocating for just rehabilitation of freed Haliyas as the government's commitment to rehabilitate them is yet to be materialized. LWF Nepal has been supporting them to raise their issues at the district and national level and empower them to claim and enjoy their rights apart from providing opportunities for livelihoods. Of the total 11,360 verified Haliyas 90 % are Dalits, so called lower caste people.

The organization, which emerged from the movement is serving as a professional NGO and has been carrying out its activities in close coordination with government agencies and other organizations. RMHSF took lead in verification process of freed Haliyas conducted by the government. RMHSF is following participatory planning process since beginning as per the guidance from LWF Nepal. It has been able to make freed Haliyas' women, men, children and people with disability actively participate



in different programs. As the masters used to employ other people rather than Haliyas in their agricultural works, Haliyas were forced to visit different parts of Nepal and India for seasonal work but LWF Nepal has been supporting them to get engaged in different income generating activities. Many Haliya youths have become self employed and some got employment in different organizations following the training provided as part of the project and small support extended by the project.

The Federation has been challenging various

discriminatory practices against them like debt emancipation campaign among others. As an evidence of empowerment, freed Haliyas filed a writ at the Supreme Court on June 25, 2014 demanding judicious rehabilitation as promised by the government while declaring end of Haliya system.

Freed Haliya Rights activists say that they will continue their movement till the government ensures just rehabilitation to them. They also warn that they will organize protest programs if the

government does not pay heed to their demands. Although the government is yet to fully rehabilitate the freed Haliyas they were happy that they have been able to live their lives for themselves and not for their masters. The government has also recognized the good work RMHSF has been doing and ensuring their representation in Haliya related issues. "Psychological satisfaction is far better than materialistic satisfaction, so, we are very happy to be free even though we are living in huts," says a freed Haliya of Dadehdhura.

Economic transformation through Co-operative in Jhapa

LWF Nepal has been supporting for the establishment and operation of cooperatives in its working areas as these institutions have been supporting poor and oppressed people to have their access to capital. Poor and oppressed people have been maintaining regular monthly savings and taking loan to meet their emergency

from 24 groups (women led -9, mix group-10 and men led-5) including 224 women and 146 men. The co-operative is led by muslim and indigenous women. At present, the co-operative has NPR 3,998,346 (Euro 31,990) and mobilized NPR 3,837,000 (Euro 30,700) in different areas of income generation like agriculture (paddy,

in very high interest rate like 36 % to 60 % per annum from local money lenders. LWF Nepal has been running Empowerment Education before organizing people into groups so they know their issues and work to find solution. After attending empowerment education people of poor and oppressed groups even uneducated people have

been able to raise their voice in different forums and demand their rights.

A number of saving and credit groups, CBOs and cooperatives are also able to access local resources for various community development initiatives. "I purchased 0.05 hectare land and a pair of oxen in NPR 40,000 (Euro 250) after taking loan from the cooperative. After this we started working at our field and my husband left hard work of rickshaw pulling. We are also in the process of taking more land in crop sharing basis to manage food and expense for our family," says Samiyala Khatun a Muslim woman from Phulbari woman's group.

After identification of poverty pockets, execution of empowerment

education program started in the communities which inspired them to form groups and involve in saving and credit activities as these are very effective mechanism. After empowerment education process many uneducated women became literate and taking leadership role in various forums at the local level.



A cooperative member depositing money during monthly meeting of cooperative.

needs and also to start some income generating activities. These cooperatives are not limited to the activities of savings and credit but also running social movements as well.

Chinari Milan Saving and Credit Organization Limited of Jhapa district has 370 membership

vegetable farming and manure), livestock (cow, goat, buffalo) and retail shop. 351 members including 204 women members have been benefitting from these schemes.

Members themselves have been deciding interest rate for credit. In the past they used to take loan

Joint Land Ownership: a step for empowering women

With the view of empowering women LWF Nepal and its implementing partners have been supporting initiatives for joint land ownership certificate. As land is considered productive resource in Nepal, women's access to land ownership helps to empower women, so, LWF Nepal and its implementing partners have been supporting to make joint land ownership certificate both in the name of men and women. According to Population Census of 2011, women contribute a total of 60 Percent of agricultural work but only 19.71 percent of women have land ownership.

LWF Nepal has been supporting a local NGO CSRC to continuously facilitate women's access and control over land as an important agenda in the land and agrarian rights movement. Each District Land Rights Forum (DLRF) and Village Land Rights Forum (VLRf) has now formulated a campaign plan for raising awareness among local people on women's rights to land ensuring greater empowerment and livelihood security. Further, the issue of joint land ownership has also been included in the ToR of the Landless Problem Solving Commission with the objective of getting it implemented on a wider scale.

As a result of these initiatives 2,658 couples acquired Joint Land Ownership Certificates

covering an area of 913.58 hector of land. Many couple are also in the process of acquiring joint land ownership certificate as it helps to strengthen family bond. Similarly, women's land entitlement built up women's confidence ultimately enhancing women's power, security, dignity and political participation.

CSRC, one of the Implementing partners of LWF Nepal, has been facilitating land and agrarian rights movement since 1995 and is recognized by the government of Nepal as national resource organization on land and agrarian reform. CSRC and the NLRf have been mobilizing rural women and men for over 20 years in order to provide comprehensive land reform. The joint ownership campaign started from five districts has now reached to 28 districts with plans to reach 60 districts and then all 75 districts of Nepal. Since the campaign contributed joint land entitlements, there has been an increase in women's mobility, dignity and participation at community and VDC level. As a result, women's organizations are also working with CSRC and the NLRf at the community level. The demand of orientation and process of joint ownership has been increasing. The government started to send teams to the community level to strengthen women's access to land. Within short span of its movement, this is now a recognized campaign in Nepal.

Joint land ownership certificate brings happiness to elderly couple

Kanchhi Maya and Toyaman Jimba of Lalitpur married 35 years ago. They have 2 sons and one daughter. They worked hard to rear their children and later sold their paddy field for arranging money for their elder son's marriage. But, unfortunately, after 5 years of his marriage, her son blamed her to be a witch and abandoned from his house. The incident strained her a lot and she felt insecure as she got shocked from the behavior of her own son.

Kanchi's husband Toyaman felt that if he died earlier his wife will face problem as there is no one to take care of her. Amid this situation, he attended an interaction program organized by district land rights forum, Lalitpur. During the program he became aware about importance of joint land ownership certificate and registered his name to make the title. "With joint land ownership certificate, I can take my last breath in tranquility since my wife will be cared at her old age at least for the land title kept in her name," said Toyaman. Now, the couple is so happy for making the title. "There would be someone to look after us in future for the land, even if our sons do not care," Kanchhi shares with joy adding, "Now I also hold the right on the land that I always worked hard. I am so happy."

Small Scale Mitigation for building Safer Community

As Nepal is prone to disaster risk, LWF Nepal has been prioritizing Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness as one major theme since its establishment in 1984. LWF Nepal is one of the front runners in disaster risk reduction, response and preparedness. LWF Nepal has been working to enhance the capacity of local institutions and local people to reduce disaster risks and for preparedness.

The organization has been supporting for establishing small scale mitigation and safety measures in five VDCs of Lalitpur District. The organization conducted non structural measures like awareness raising activities and structural measures like retro fitting, roof replacement



A couple posing for photograph after receiving joint land ownership certificate.

among others in Chhampi, Lele, Bhattedanda, Asrang, Gimdi VDCs of the district, which are most vulnerable in terms of Disaster Risk.

Although these VDCs are very close to the capital, they lack even basic infrastructures like road, health facilities and education and are prone to disaster risks. Similarly, the organization supported Satkanya Primary School to adopt risk mitigation measures and 36 students have been benefitting from the scheme. Students of the school were also oriented about disaster and preparedness. LWF Nepal has been supporting to form and strengthen Disaster Management Committees and Disaster Management Teams, which are people's organizations at the local level formed for disaster preparedness and response. These people's organizations have been instrumental in case of disaster. These

organizations have been establishing various safety nets like food and grain banks to provide immediate relief to victims in case of emergency. These grass-root people's organizations are linked at the national level and playing active role to support the government forming necessary policies in this regard.

LWF Nepal has also been supporting for the development of District Disaster Response Plans and Local Disaster Risk Management Plan, among others. As a member of the DRR National Platform, LWF Nepal contributed to formulate various policy documents and guidelines.

The Climate Change Risk Atlas 2010 ranks Nepal as the 4th most vulnerable country worldwide. Landslides, floods, forest fire, thunderstorms and cold waves have dominated disaster events in the past.



Bio-engineering work supported by LWF Nepal to control flood risk.

Hukum's journey from Haliya family to Development Specialist



We were 20 members in our joint family and my father served as Haliya (bonded labor) for 24 years to earn bread and butter for my family. We migrated to Urma VDC of Kailali district from Nirauli VDC of Doti in search of better life but the problem remained same. Currently I feel proud to serve as Social Development Officer at LWF Nepal, the organization which has been providing support to freed Haliyas for a long time to claim and demand their rights.

My journey to my current position from a child of Haliya was not very smooth. I have been able to meet my dream of being educated and involve in a social sector due to support from my family members. My elder brother, Gagan Singh Sarki, who attended 3 months' carpentry training of

LWF Nepal, contributed a lot for completion of my study as he made good income as a professional carpenter after attending the training. I have been able to complete Bachelor's degree with support of my brother and currently I am in the process of completing my master's degree.

I worked with different organizations before joining LWF Nepal but I always advocated for the rights of poor and oppressed people of the community. While working as a team leader in Rastriya Dalit Network (RDN), I worked for empowerment of Dalits, specifically through a rights-based approach. Similarly, I was part of the Doti Poverty Reduction Project and played a pivotal role to uplift the lives of Dalit, women and land poor through social and economic empowerment initiatives.

While at school, I wholeheartedly felt and observantly realized that Dalits in the community were being suppressed and oppressed due to the surmounting discriminatory nature of the society. Since the time, I decided to raise my voice, in whatever way I could, against caste based

discrimination and untouchability and it also motivated me to join the social sector.

I feel lucky to be the part of the organization which supported my family in very crucial days, which ultimately helped me materialize my dream of raising voice against discriminatory practices of the society. My sister-in-law was an active participant of the Empowerment Education Program (EEP) run by LWF Nepal in Kailali district. Participation in those classes enabled her to read and write and acquainted with rights issues. As I have gained various skills and knowledge working with LWF Nepal, alongside the prior experiences gathered from other development agencies, I foresee a good development specialist in me. Through this, I seek to contribute promoting the socio-economic status of poor and oppressed groups through structural transformation of community.

I express my gratitude to LWF Nepal that spurred the empowerment of my family members, which led to the shaping of the present-me. LWF has an indescribable role to uplift the socio-economic condition of my family members through its Kailali Development Project.

For more information



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