

# Brief Proceeding Report On National Level Policy Advocacy on the issues of Agriculture Bonded Labours



## Ending Agriculture Bonded Labours in Nepal



## 1. Project Overview:

Rastriya Dalit Network (RDN) Nepal and Action Aid Nepal (AAN) have been implementing the project entitled as *“Ending Agriculture Bonded Labours in Nepal”* for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2023 with the financial support of the Freedom Fund in close coordination with Forced Labours elimination Advocacy Group (FLeAG) and Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya (HCHaK) networks. The project has directly covered 8 districts in south east terai districts, namely: Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rauthat, Bara and Parsa) of province 2 in Nepal, one district-Bardiya in Lumbini province and 2 districts-Doti and Bajura in Sudurpaschi, province also covered the Kathmandu for national level policy advocacy.

## 2. Operational Context:

On the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the declaration of Kamaiya emancipation, existing Harwa Charwa practice in Nepal has been emancipated by the Honorable Prime Minister Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba through a special message on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2022. On this instance, the 4 point messages were delivered through organizing special program which has been sent as special letter by the Government of Nepal for the implementation of that historic declaration. Similarly, the election commission of Nepal has recently declared the election date of provincial state assembly and house of representative on upcoming 20 November, 2022. During the same course of time, political parties at central level have formed their own manifesto drafting committee.

## 3. Objectives

- To address the agricultural bonded labours issues in the manifesto of different political parties initiated by their central committees as commitment
- To explore possible area of collaboration and support in the implementation of government plan and policies focusing the issues of agriculture bonded labours; freed Harawa-Charawa, Haliyas and Kamaiyas at federal level.

## 4. Participants:

- ❖ Out of 11 participants, 6 from national agriculture bonded labours struggle committee (Freed Haliya network=2, Freed Kamaiya network=2 and freed Harawa-Charawa network=2) rest 5 from supporting partners (FF-1, FLeAG-1, AAN-1 and RDN-2) and actively took part in the federal level advocacy activities as mentioned above.

## 5. Duration, venue and Activity Schedule:

The policy advocacy activities were conducted for the period from 24-27 September, 2022 at Kathmandu as mentioned below;

Date	Activity
24 September, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrive at Kathmandu</li></ul>
25 September, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delegation to central committee political parties; CPN (UML), Nepali congress, CPN (moist-centre), CPN (Unified Socialist) and Janata Samajbadi</li></ul>
26 September, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review meeting on the response of central committee political parties and preparation for face-face meeting with ministry with land management, cooperative and poverty alleviation</li></ul>
27 September, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct face to face meeting with ministry of land management, cooperative and poverty alleviation.</li></ul>

## 6. Details of the national level policy advocacy Activities Carried-out as mentioned below:

### 1. Delegation to Central Committee of Political Parties at Kathmandu: On the dated 25



*Figure 1: Handed-over the letter of Attention to Mr. Upendra Yadav-chairperson of Janata Samajbadi Party*

September, 2022, targeting the upcoming provincial and House of Representatives elections, taking it as a golden opportunity, the letter of attention was submitted to the central office of parties to address the issues of agriculture-based forced labourers: freed Harwacharwa, Haliya, Kamaiya and Kamalari in the election manifesto of various political parties. The letter signed by Ganesh Bishwakarma, the National Coordinator of Forced Labor elimination Advocacy Group (FLeAG), member Mr. Bala Ram Bhattarai and Dashanlal Mandal, the Central Chairman of the National Harawa-Charawa Rights Forum and also a Coordinator of the National Agricultural Bonded Labor struggle committee was submitted to different political parties as; Nepali Congress, CPN (UML), CPN (Maoist-Center), CPN (United Socialist) and Janata Samajbadi Party (JASAPA) respectively.

The following were the major concerns of subject matters submitted to central committee of political parties as outlined below:

1. Within the next 5 years, the entire rehabilitation of freed Harawa-Charawa will be completed with a systematic action plan, with the slogan of respect for labor, dignity of labor. As the Constitution of Nepal has guided towards a socialist-oriented system with progressive socio-economic transformation, an integrated package will be developed and effectively implemented to solve the political, economic, social and cultural problems
2. An Integrated Forced Labor (Prohibition and Punishment) Act will be promulgated to end all forms of forced labor and powerful **National Labor Commission** will be formed to monitor and evaluate its effective implementation.
3. The provision that workers do not have to pay any fee for employment will be strictly enforced in the recruitment process of workers for jobs in the country and abroad for making foreign employment safe and dignified.
4. One working family: One employment slogan will be implemented in practice. A labor bank will be established for this. Also, a labor welfare fund will be established for the sustainability of agricultural laborers. Also, equal wages will be ensured for men and women for the same work and labor inspectors will be arranged at the local level for labor audit every year.
5. All types of unfair loans, including false tamsuk, maximum interest, and meter interest, which exist



*Figure 2: Handed-over the letter to Mr. Jagannath Khatiwada-spokesperson of UPN (Unified Socialist)*



*Figure 3: Handed-over the letter to CPN (UML) General Secretary Mr. Shankar Pokhrel*

under various pretexts, will be abolished. An awareness campaign will be conducted for employers, workers, local government and people from concerned offices including labor standards, appropriate labor practices and binding laws to end forced labor.

6. All types of forced laborers will be organized into trade unions according to their nature and interest and their leadership development and inclusion as well as education, health, employment and social security will be ensured.
7. It will be developed as an industry by modernizing the traditional and professional skills of agricultural workers. In addition, by increasing the scope of direct taxes, social security programs will be developed and a social security scheme will be implemented for workers in the informal sector.
8. Informal workers (domestic workers, porters, agricultural workers, construction workers, etc.) who have skills and are involved in various professions will be registered at all local levels.
9. Nepal has ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 29 for the end of forced labor, but since the convention does not have provisions for public awareness including compensation and rehabilitation, the document of ILO Convention 29 will be approved to establish rights including legal action, protection and rehabilitation of the victims.



**Figure 4: Handed-over the letter to Mr. Narayankaji Shrestha-vice chairperson of CPN (Maoist-Center)**

The letter of attention was handed-over to Mr. Jeewan Pariyar, leader of Nepali Congress and also spokesperson of manifesto Drafting Committee, Mr. Narayan Kaji Shrestha-senior vice chairperson of Nepal Communist Party (Maoist Center), Mr. Shankar Pokhrel-secretary general of CPN-UML, Mr. Jaganath Khatiwada- spokesperson of Nepal Communist Party (Unified



**Figure 5: Handed-over the letter to Mr. Jeewan Pariyar, leader of Nepali Congress**

Socialist) and Mr. Upendra Yadav, chairperson of Janata Samajbadi Party. Taking this letter, the leaders of various political parties said that they are committed to address the issues of forced laborers based on agriculture: freed Harwacharwa, Haliya, Kamaiya and Kamalari in their election manifestos.

**During the same course of time, the following personnel belongs to agriculture bonded labours organizations and supporting partners had taken part in letter hand-over process.**

SN	Name	Organization	Position
1	Mr. Dasan Mandal	National Harawa-Charawa Network	Chairperson
2	Mr. Raju Ram Bhul	Rastriya Mukta Haliya Samaj Federation	Former-Chairperson
3	Mr. Hari C. Chaudhary	Freed Kamaiya Society (FKS)	Treasurer

4	Mr. Shyam Sunar	Dalit Land Rights Union	General Secretary
5	Ms. Sumitra Khang	National Harawa-Charawa Network	Member
6	Ms. Kasturiya Chaudhary	Kamaiya Mahila Jagaran Samaj	Vice-Chairperson
7	Mr. Tula Ram Sarki	Rastriya Mukta Haliya Samaj Federation	Advisor
8	Mr. Jiyam Shrestha	The Freedom Fund	Program Advisor
9	Mr. Bala Ram Bhattarai	Force Labour elimination Advocacy Group	Member
10	Mr. Sujat Shramnera	Action Aid Nepal	Project Coordinator
11	Mr. Hukum Bdr. Sarki	Rastriya Dalit Network	Executive Director

**2: Facilitate the meeting of National Agriculture Bonded Labour Struggle Committee:** RDN and AAN jointly facilitated the third regular meeting of National Agriculture Bonded Labour Struggle Committee on 26 September, 2022 at Hotel Pokhara Palace Sundhara Kathmandu. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Dasan Mandal-chairperson of national Harawa-Charawa network and also a coordinator of that Struggle Committee in the special presence of Mr. Ganesh BK-central chairperson of Rastriya Dalit Network and also coordinator of Forced Labour elimination Advocacy Group (FLeAG). The meeting discussed the following agenda in details;

- i. The meeting reviewed the overall national level policy advocacy that was recently conducted at Kathmandu focusing the issues of agriculture bonded labours; freed Harawa-Charawa, Haliyas and Kamaiyas. The meeting concluded that the leaders of different political parties positively responded the voice and concerns of agriculture bonded labours which were mentioned in letter of attention. It was also suggested that there should be good planning and documentation during the advocacy interventions at local, provincial and federal level.
- ii. The meeting highly appreciated and acknowledged the commitment of central committee of different political parties; Nepali Congress, CPN (UML), CPN (Maoist-Center), CPN (United Socialist) and Janata Samajbadi Party (JASAPA) that they delivered during handing-over the letter of attention.
- iii. The meeting nominated 2 additional members in National Agriculture Bonded Labour Struggle Committee representing from Dalit land rights union and Kamhlari organization. Mr. Shyam Sunar-secretary general of Dalit land rights union and Ms. Bishnu Chaudhary-Executive Chairperson of Freed Kamhlari Development Forum (FKDF) have been nominated in that committee respectively
- iv. It was discussed that the activities related to upcoming provincial and federal level election would be planned such as election commitment program to the candidates of different political parties at Sudurpachim, Lumbini and Madesh province led by struggle committee as well as follow-up activities with the technical support of RDN and FF/AAN implementing partners.
- v. Finally, the meeting concluded that coordination and partnership among relevant stakeholders would be crucial for the further effectiveness, sustainability and synergic impact.

**3. Face to Face meeting with Concerned Ministries:** A total of 2 events of face to face meetings



were organized on 27 September, 2022. The meetings were organized with ministry of labour, employment and social security as well as ministry of land management, cooperative and poverty alleviation. The meeting with ministry of labour, employment and social security was concentrated on the integrated bonded labour Act. During the same course of time, the memorandum highlighting the demands of agriculture bonded labours was submitted to Hon. Sher Bdr. Kunwar- labour, employment and social security minister.

Similarly, the meeting with ministry of land management, cooperative and poverty alleviation

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was focused on rehabilitation plan of agriculture bonded labours; freed Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya. Mr. Chandra Sibakoti-undersecretary of the ministry of land management shared [details plan regarding the data collection, verification and rehabilitation of freed Harawa-Charawa, missed Haliyas and Kamaiyas](#). Mr. Ganesh BK- central chairperson of Rastriya Dalit Network and also coordinator of Forced Labour elimination Advocacy Group (FLeAG) facilitated the meetings. The meeting concluded that the collective evidence based advocacy would be fruitful to pressurize the local and provincial government for their freed Harawa-Charawa friendly policy, program and budget.

#### **7. Results of Advocacy Campaign:**

- ❖ Central committee of different political parties positively responded the demands of agriculture bonded labours and incorporated in their manifestos.
- ❖ Ministry of land management, cooperative and poverty alleviation shared its details plan regarding the data collection, verification and rehabilitation of freed Harawa-Charawa, missed Haliyas and Kamaiyas.
- ❖ Mr. Ganesh BK-central chairperson of Rastriya Dalit Network and also coordinator of Forced Labour elimination Advocacy Group (FLeAG) has been nominated as expert member in integrated bonded labor act drafting committee initiated by ministry of labour, employment and social security.

#### **8. Lesson Learned:**

- Participatory discussion created common understanding among team members to ensure the effectiveness for final product.
- Selection of right holders/project beneficiaries ensuring GESI further generates the effectiveness and ownership on the project activities
- Regular Coordination and collaboration with relevant stakeholders contributes to achieve the anticipated results of the project

#### **9. Issues/Challenges:**

- ❖ It was very difficult to get return ticket for the agriculture bonded labour network members from Kathmandu to their departure venue due to the dashain festival.

#### **10. Way Forward:**

- ✚ Candidate commitment program on the issues of agriculture bonded labours
- ✚ Harawa-Charawa Rights Caravan
- ✚ Follow-up on the provincial and federal level advocacy campaign
- ✚ Development of Harawa-Charawa rehabilitation package
- ✚ Advocate on identification, verification and distribution of ID cards to agriculture bonded labours
- ✚ Message Assemblies on declaration of emancipation of Harawa-Charawa

#### **Annex: I (Media Coverage)**

<https://rastrasandesh.com/2022/09/13006/?swcfpc=1&fbclid=IwAR3w58n8zXctmq7yxH1BbEn5Ki52qBO9xIcmTIwxhryUdUbvpGJOYaU5C4>