Impact of Covid 19 in smallholder in Nepal

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*PART 1 – Practice, Adaptations, Innovations*

The Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC) has been facilitating land and agrarian issues in Nepal and working with landless and smallholder peasants since 1994. To generate the people power through participation, just governance, and accountability, CSRC established a people's organisation called National Land Rights Forum (Federal Level), Province Land Rights Forum, District Land Rights Forum and Village Land Rights Forums (read full case study [here](https://participedia.net/case/5659)).

The Land Rights Forums (LRFs) have been generating grassroots power for policy formulation, amendments and implementation on behalf of landless and smallholder peasants, while CSRC has been facilitating macro-level policy dialogue and discussions with policymakers and the Ministry of Land Management and Agriculture Development. Without these micro and macro linkages, it is not possible to address the issue of participation, governance and accountability of all stakeholders.

LRFs are now mobilized to make the government more accountable for the COVID-19 response by informing local governments and policymakers through phone calls, messages and social media. Local governments, CSOs, and LRFs are supporting local people affected and other issues related to selling and buying agricultural products by food shortages.

Since it has been working with LRFs from the community to national levels, CSRC is able to generate information on the effects of COVID 19 in the field by engaging with LRF leaders and community members on Facebook Live. Based on the field context, CSRC published an article on the effects of COVID-19 on agriculture and on landless and smallholder groups.

CSRC prepared a memorandum letter addressed to the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development, based on inputs from leaders of the National Federation of Farmers' Group (NFGF) and the NLRF, as well as community members and land rights activists. CSRC submitted the letter to advocate for a programme to support landless and smallholder peasants especially affected communities by COVID-19. Similarly, members of CSRC and NLRF spoke with different policymakers on behalf of landless and smallholder peasants focusing on COVID-19. The main demand was to address their challenges relating to food and agricultural production resulting from COVID-19. Based on this, the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock requested, in writing, that local governments address these issues at their level.

The main methods for engaging citizens included:

* Generating real-time data on the COVID-19 situation in the field through Facebook Live;
* Connecting people with each other to exchange on the idea of supporting local people who are directly affected by COVID-19;
* Broad consultation and input on a memorandum letter and a shared submission to the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development;
* Generating modest resources in support for agricultural labourers in central part of Terai;
* Facilitating connections between local people and local government in support of landless and smallholder peasants; and,
* Local leaders working with local government to support of local communities.

The main results from this engagement include:

* increased direct connection between local communities and local government;
* the memorandum increased the Minister’s level of attention to landless and smallholder peasants’ issues;
* increased communication and exchange among local people around the idea of supporting other groups through the lock-down, in particular through Facebook Live;
* food (rice, pulses, oil, spices) distributed in over 20 communities and 10 districts with the coordination of NLRF and CSRC;
* support for those affected by lockdowns besides districts;
* due to the mobilization of local leaders, local government have felt proud to support local communities.

Finally, as landless and smallholder peasants are organized, the government has been compelled to invite them for policy discussions and collaboration both before and during the pandemic. This also shows the importance of strong, multi-level poor people’s organizations in ensuring poor people’s voices are heard, and that the government and policymakers work in their interest – even in times of crisis.