



South-Eastern Nepal Hotspot Annual Report

2020

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REPORT DATE: MAY 2021

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1. Operating Context

The covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Nepal in 2020, disrupting the normal way of life for everyone and heightening the challenges faced by those in the most vulnerable communities. Daily wage earners, such as Harawa-Charawa agricultural labourers, struggled to make ends meet and put food on the table during the prolonged lockdown.

The Nepal government was quick to react to the outbreak of the pandemic and stem the spread of the virus by introducing a national lockdown on the 24th March 2020. This continued for 120 days and was finally released on 20th July. Following the lockdown, the country has largely returned to business as usual and the country has opened up to both domestic and international travel. To date, there have been approximately 3,000 recorded deaths and reports of new cases of the disease remain low.¹

During the initial stages of the pandemic, the Terai region, including Province 2, was one of the most vulnerable areas of Nepal to the spread of the virus. This is due to the open border it shares with the Indian state of Bihar where many Nepalis go to seek work. There are an estimated two million Nepalis living and working in India.² When India introduced a national lockdown, places of work closed with little warning and migrant workers were forced to leave the major urban centres and return to their villages across the border in Nepal to survive. Migrant workers returned in their thousands to our target districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari.

The prolonged lockdown created significant challenges for our hotspot program and the communities we work with. During the lockdown we had to cease the normal program activities and our partners shifted their focus and resources to supporting the communities through the crisis. Many Harawa-Charawa were forced to stay at home and unable to work. This left their households with little or no income and consequently without any food to sustain themselves. Other labourers continued to work and earn but risked exposure to the virus with no PPE available to workers.

The Nepal government tried to provide relief support to vulnerable communities, particularly during the early days of the lockdown. However, the government did not make enough relief support available and those who most needed it, including the Harawa-Charawa, struggled to access it. To support the communities in our program, we implemented three rounds of an emergency relief fund and provided essential food, sanitary and household supplies as well as cash grants to cover daily expenses. This was a lifeline to the communities during this difficult period.

Now that the restrictions have been lifted, the long-term social and economic effects of the pandemic and the mass return of migrants have yet to be fully understood. We will monitor the situation over the coming months and support our communities as they recover from the crisis.

This year has also been turbulent for politics in Nepal. In December 2020, the Prime Minister KP Oli called on the President to dissolve parliament, following months of in-fighting within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP). The PM said he made the decision to try and resolve disputes within the party. He had been experiencing disapproval from colleagues over policy decisions and political appointments, which had led to non-cooperation and a state of government inaction.³ When the President declared the dissolution of parliament, he also announced that fresh elections would be held in April or May 2021.

¹ <https://covid19.mohp.gov.np/>

² Aljazeera April 2020; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/01/hundreds-of-nepalese-stuck-at-india-border-amid-covid-19-lockdown/>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/nepal-parliament-idINKBN28V1HM>

The decision to dissolve parliament led to large scale protests and numerous appeals being submitted to the Supreme Court claiming that the action was unconstitutional. After months of deliberation, the Supreme Court ruled in February 2021 that the dissolution of parliament was illegal under the constitution and the parliament should be reinstated.⁴ Following this decision there has been a stalemate between the opposing factions in government and both sides are not cooperating with each other's attempts to end the political impasse.⁵ It seems likely that the political situation at the federal government level will remain unsettled for the coming months and as a result the government is unlikely to function normally.

For now, the provincial and municipal governments in Province 2 seem to be unaffected by the federal level political disruption. The government in Province 2 is led by the Janata Samajwadi Party and municipal governments are independent and have their own autonomous budgets. We will continue to work with the government in Province 2 and demand more recognition and support for Harawa-Charawa communities.

Recently the Province 2 government formulated its first periodic plan for 2020 to 2025, which seeks to address some of the key development issues in the province, including reducing poverty and increasing economic growth. The periodic plan has set the target of 11 per cent economic growth over the next five years and reducing the overall poverty rate from 27.7 per cent to 21 per cent.⁶ We will be engaging the provincial government on this plan and demanding that it benefits the Harawa-Charawa and does not leave them behind.

⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/23/nepal-supreme-court-parliament>

⁵ <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2021/03/19/conflict-continues-to-escalate-in-uml-with-both-factions-upping-the-ante>

⁶ <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/province-2s-first-periodic-plan-aims-at-improving-living-standard.html>

2. Progress Towards Systems Change

Over the past year we have increased our advocacy work targeting government ministries, policies and programs at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Our NGO partners, the Harawa-Charawa Network (a survivor-led advocacy group supported by the Freedom Fund) and other allies have been leading this work and it is starting to produce positive results. This strategic advocacy is unlocking opportunities and services that meet some of the key needs of the Harawa-Charawa communities.

Federal Land Commission

In April 2020, the government of Nepal formed a national land commission with the mandate to distribute land to landless people, squatters and unorganised settlers across the country as stipulated in the recently amended Land Act. Overall, 26.1% of agricultural households in Nepal do not have land to farm on, this rises to 41.4% among Madhesi Dalit,⁷ the ethnic group which the majority of Harawa-Charawa belong to.⁸

The Land Commission has far reaching powers that enable it to investigate and address landlessness issues in all 77 districts across the country. The commission has the ability to collect details about land management from local government, summon individuals to provide information, develop a plan of action to address landlessness and ultimately decide on land distribution.

The Freedom Fund has been actively engaging with the commission since it was formed to highlight landlessness issues faced by Harawa-Charawa communities. Many Harawa-Charawa families do not own land for their home or for their livelihood. They squat on unmanaged government land without access to electricity, water and proper roads and sometimes live on the land of local landlords.

The Freedom Fund together with the Forced Labour Elimination Advocacy Group (FLEAG), a national platform of NGOs, activists and survivor groups, met with the Chair of the Land Commission in July 2020 and outlined the challenges faced by the Harawa-Charawa and what the commission could do to address the issues. The Freedom Fund stressed to the commission that providing land for housing was not enough. The Harawa-Charawa also need land to support their livelihoods and reduce their dependence on landlords. The commission agreed that the issues faced by the Harawa-Charawa should be investigated and addressed.

The Land Commission is now undertaking data collection in all districts across the country in coordination with local government. We are working with the Land Commission in our program districts to ensure coordination between local government, the survey teams and our local partners, the Harawa-Charawa Network and communities. We will be working to ensure that the communities we support are included in the survey and the subsequent processes to allocate land.

Local Government Minimum Wage Policies

Many Harawa-Charawa labourers do not receive the legal minimum wage for their work. They are often paid in rice or a combination of rice and cash which is less than the national minimum wage. As a result of inadequate

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA3112212019ENGLISH.pdf>

⁸ A prevalence study conducted by IDS and the FF found 96% of Harawa-Charawa respondents were Madhesi by ethnicity and 86% belonged to Dalit or 'Other Backward Classes' social groups.

https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/13399/Participatory_statistics_to_measure_prevalence_in_bonded_labour_in_Nepal.pdf?sequence=1

and illegal wages, Harawa-Charawa are left with no option but to take out loans from their landlords to pay for daily living expenses such as food and healthcare. They become trapped in cycles of debt as they struggle to repay the loans and incur very high interest rates.

A national minimum wage was introduced as part of the reformed Labour Act in 2017. The act states that a minimum wage should be set every two years and the federal wage determination committee has the responsibility for determining what the minimum wage should be. The current minimum wage, which was set in July 2018, is 517 NPR per day or 13,450 NPR per month. The minimum wage was due to be revised in 2020 but this has been delayed due to the covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the law at the federal level, municipality governments have the authority, under the Local Government Operation Act, to annually revise minimum wage based on the local context to a rate which must be no less than the federal minimum wage. Local governments, through their own minimum wage committees, can determine the wage rate and pass it through the municipality assembly. The wage rate is then formally adopted by the government and becomes part of the local government policy.

The local government's authority to set minimum wage is very important for informal workers such as the Harawa-Charawa. It shows that local government has prioritised the payment of minimum wage and sends a clear message to employers that this is a legal requirement. Employees are able to report wage payment issues to the determination committee and seek support.

The Freedom Fund and our partners have prioritised working with local governments in our program area to fix minimum wage rates and develop municipality level wage policies. Five of our partners have worked with seven municipalities to determine the local minimum wage and pass the wage rate in their assemblies. Partners are hoping to expand this to all 14 municipalities that we work with and support the annual wage review process. As a result of this work, hundreds of Harawa-Charawa labourers are now accessing minimum wage for the first time.

We will need to work with local governments to ensure that minimum wage rates are monitored and enforced in their localities. Our partners will be monitoring the provision in their communities and reporting issues to municipalities that have introduced minimum wage policies.

3. Hotspot Outputs & Outcomes

3.1 Headline Results

Despite the disruption caused by the covid-19 pandemic, our partners made adjustments to their planned activities and have been able to continue supporting the Harawa-Charawa communities and empowering them to claim their rights and entitlements. We have provided an extension to the 2020 project for all ten partners so they can implement some activities that were postponed during the lockdown, between January and the end of March 2021.

3,516 individuals provided with social or legal services

During 2020, our hotspot partners supported 3,516 community members to access social and legal services. The communities have experienced significant challenges as a result of the government lockdown and the economic and social damage caused by the pandemic. The support of the local NGOs to help people access government services has been needed by the communities now more than ever.

Access to registration documents is one of the key services that our partners provide. This year they have enabled hundreds of community members to complete and submit registration documents such as citizenship, birth registration, marriage and death certificates. These registration documents are vital as they allow the community members to access other important services. For example, citizenship enables people to access employment schemes, healthcare and open bank accounts and birth registration enables children to enrol in school and access other child development and nutrition services.

1,926 people gaining new access to government services

As a result of the partners' work with the communities, 1,926 people received a wide range of government services and schemes. One of these services was the 'educate the daughter, save the daughter' program run by the Province 2 government. In this scheme a girl can get an insurance certificate worth 300,000 NPR if her parents complete the birth registration and submit the relevant forms within 35 days of her birth. The insurance can be used to support needs such as healthcare. During this year 350 girls were able to access this government scheme as a result of our local partners.

Families also gained access to basic services such as electricity, water and new roofs for their houses. Many Harawa-Charawa villages are built on unmanaged government land and far away from main roads and water, sanitation and electrical supplies. DJKYC, in Siraha district, supported 32 families to access electricity for the first time in their village. Our partners are continuously pressing the government to provide such services to many other families who are without basic amenities.

10,044 community group members supported

This year we have engaged 10,044 community members through our program's community groups across the three districts we work in. Some of the group members have participated in the groups for many years, while some were new to the groups. The groups include community freedom groups, savings and credit groups, children's and youth groups. Our partners mobilise the Harawa-Charawa community members through the groups and empower them by providing information about their rights and government services. Through the

group discussions, the community members are able to highlight their priority issues and demand support from their local NGO or government.

1,140 people who earn a new income

Accessing a new and/or alternative income is a key way for Harawa-Charawa community members to decrease their dependency on local landlords for loans and support their daily living and household costs. Our drive to pressure local government to develop minimum wage policies has had a direct impact on increasing household incomes. In Saptari district, our partner JDS worked with three municipality governments to develop minimum wage policies. Through this work with local government, hundreds of Harawa-Charawa have accessed minimum wages and increased their household income.

3.2 Progress towards hotspot objectives

Hotspot Objective 1: Embed a sustainable structure for communities to prevent and challenge the norms and systems enabling Harawa-Charawa bonded labour in Nepal

A core focus of our strategy in 2020 has been to ensure the sustainability of the community groups that have been formed, as we prepare to shift the hotspot to a more advocacy-based approach. Our partners have been registering the groups with local government and providing capacity building to prepare the members to manage the groups independently.

Registering Groups with Local Government

Over the past five years, our partners have mobilised and empowered hundreds of community groups. In 2020, we have supported 314 groups with thousands of men, women and child members. To ensure that the groups continue to flourish and remain active, we have supported the groups to officially register with the local government which can enable the groups to access government schemes and funding.

In quarter one of 2020, our partners focused on the registration of child clubs with the government. The child clubs have been important for supporting children to go to school, learn about their rights and have a space to play and socialise. In total we have supported over 60 child clubs with over 2,000 members. All the clubs have now been registered with the local government.

We have also supported the savings and credit groups to register with the government. Some of the groups registered as savings groups, while other groups merged together and formed cooperatives. Cooperatives enable members to save and access larger sums of money and can benefit from more government schemes. However, becoming a cooperative is a difficult process and the group must have a strong structure, meet government guidelines and have good management systems. Samriddha Foundation in Siraha district supported ten savings and credit groups to register in their local municipality. BIDC, also in Siraha district, supported 314 group members to form three registered cooperatives. In Saptari district, JDS supported 29 savings groups to form of three registered cooperatives.

There have been some challenges to the registration process in the first half of the year. When the national lockdown came into force, many government offices closed and so it was not possible to conduct the registration process. Furthermore, the requirement for group members to have a legal registration document, such as citizenship, made some members ineligible to join the registered groups. The partners are working to resolve these issues during the 2021 project extension and finalise the registration process for the groups.

Capacity building and planning for the sustainability of community groups

The partners have conducted a series of assessments, planning and capacity building activities with the groups in 2020. They assessed the status of the groups to understand their capacity and determine the most appropriate entity for their government registration. DJKYC provided financial literacy and savings group management training for leaders of the savings groups. They provided a follow up training on business plan development to have a clear strategy for managing the groups and accessing funding from local government. BIDC provided management and accounting training for members of the cooperatives to strengthen the capacity of the group members to operate independently.

Phase out of community based mental health work

CMC have been providing mental health support together with our partners in Harawa-Charawa communities since 2017. The support has consisted of Bharosa group sessions and psychosocial counselling services. The groups sessions were conducted during the pilot phase and have enabled over 1,500 community members to engage in peer based mental health support and discuss any stress mental health issues in a supportive environment. Through the group work, our partners were also able to refer those who needed further support to psychosocial counsellors for more in-depth one to one support sessions.

In 2020 we began the phase out of the mental health component of the program and focused on embedding the work that has been done over the past number of years. The psychosocial counsellors focused on supporting their clients to finish their sessions and they referred those who need further support to the local municipal health services. The groups were also prepared for the phase out. They discussed how the group members can continue the groups and manage them independently. The groups remain connected to the local NGO community facilitators from the local NGO will remain in contact with the groups and the groups can ask the facilitator for advice if needed.

A significant focus for the phase out period has been on advocating to the local government to continue the work that has been initiated by the Freedom Fund and prioritise the provision of mental health services. As a result of this advocacy work, local governments across our work area have agreed to hire two of the psychosocial counsellors trained for our mental health pilot so they can continue to provide counselling. The third counsellor is continuing to work with CMC. In Surunga, Khadak and Lahan municipalities, the government have allocated budget to organize basic mental health training for health professionals and to purchase medication. CMC helped establish a process for municipality health workers to coordinate with the psychiatric hospital so that referrals can be made for people with severe mental health problems.

CMC have also worked with our local partners and the Harawa-Charawa Network to encourage and supported them to continue to raise the profile of mental health issues in the communities and demand the local government to provide support.

Hotspot Objective 2: Activate an effective government system that can prevent and respond to forced labour of children and adults in Nepal

We have increased our focus on advocacy efforts in 2020 to pressure the government to support Harawa-Charawa communities. Together with our local partners we have enabled community members to access a range of services.

Harawa-Charawa access the Prime Minister's Employment Program

The Prime Minister's Employment Program, a scheme which aims to provide 100 days of paid employment for those who apply, is designed to specifically target marginalised groups like the Harawa-Charawa. In 2020/21 the program received an increase in funding to support 50,000 people into employment and enable organisations to skill a further 75,000 people from the informal labour sector and returnee migrant workers.⁹ However, the scheme has been massively oversubscribed over the past year with more than 700,000 people applying for employment, double the number that applied in 2019/20.¹⁰ Experts in Nepal are claiming that the high number of applications reflects the shortage of jobs in the country, which has been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic.

Our partners have supported approximately 2,500 people to apply for the scheme resulting in 1,028 people gaining employment. The government will need to allocate more funding and resources in the next budget to ensure that people can access the program and employment opportunities.

Data collection finalised and handed over to the government

The Freedom Fund together with our partners CSRC, CIC and DSWCN have been working with three municipality governments in Dhanusha district to collect data on the number of Harawa-Charawa households in their locality and document their key needs. The Freedom Fund along with its partners provided technical assistance to the local government to conduct social mapping, collect the data, carry out verification and analysis. The verified data was handed over to the three municipality on 26th November 2020.

The data collection captured some important information about Harawa-Charawa communities in these municipalities. Of the total population in the three municipalities the percentage of households that identified as Harawa-Charawa ranged from 15% to 17% and of these 5% to 11% were found to be in bonded labour. The majority of respondents identified as Terai Dalits who lived in temporary housing, do not own their land and lack access to government services.

Our partners are using the data to advocate with the local governments for greater support for Harawa-Charawa households. The Dhanauji Rural Municipality President committed to allocating more funding to support the needs of the Harawa-Charawa community. We will be following up with the government to pressure them to deliver on their commitments.

New homes built for Harawa-Charawa families through government scheme

Since 2009 the government of Nepal has implemented the Janata Aawas Karyakram (People's Housing Program) to provide low-cost modern housing for poor families in a select number of districts. Nepal's new constitution (2015) guarantees the right to housing for all its citizens with the state responsible for fulfilling this right for socially and economically deprived groups.¹¹ To meet this objective, the program has recently been extended to all the districts of Nepal.

A number of our partners have been supporting Harawa-Charawa families to access the scheme. In Dhanusha District, our partner CIC have supported 45 families to get new homes. A Province 2 parliamentarian joined a ceremony to mark the start of the construction work and laid the foundation stone for one of the homes. In Siraha Districts, BDC have supported families to access six new homes and DJKYC eight, with 14 receiving repairs. In Saptari District, SCDC enabled 26 families to access homes. The hotspot partners are prioritising

⁹ Nepal Economic Forum; <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/neftake/national-budget-2020-21-an-analytical-review/>

¹⁰ <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/02/15/prime-minister-employment-programme-aims-to-provide-200-000-jobs-this-fiscal-year-receives-over-700-000-applications>

¹¹ The national census 2011 in revealed that 12% (3.1 million) of the total population of Nepal is homeless

this initiative in their advocacy work and have applied for a further 189 houses to be built for Harawa-Charawa families.

The Freedom Fund support Anti-Slavery International's (ASI) work with the Haliya

In 2020, the Freedom Fund has supported ASI's program which works with the Haliya, an agricultural bonded labour group who have been declared free by the government, to assist them to register for the government rehabilitation package. The covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the program with many of the outreach activities being postponed or cancelled. However, ASI have finalised important policy briefs which will be used to engage federal, provincial and municipal level government. The policy briefs are based on the findings from the participatory monitoring that ASI has been conducting with Haliya communities. Key findings include:

- Of the 7,667 free Haliya families surveyed, just 34% were documented by the government and received identity cards – a requirement to apply for the rehabilitation fund. However, 98% of those who received identity cards had successfully accessed the rehabilitation fund. The remaining 66% are ineligible as they were not included in the government's original survey of Haliya communities following the liberation declaration and have received nothing.
- 92% of school-age children are enrolled in school, yet just 3% complete a full 12 years of education.
- Only 12% of Haliya who complete 12 years of schooling are in full-time employment, and 92% of female graduates are unemployed.
- More than a quarter of surveyed Haliya remain in some form of exploitative shared cropping.

From the information that ASI have collected, it is clear that the many Haliya have not been identified by the government for the rehabilitation package and those who have received the package struggle to access education and decent work. It seems that 13 years after the government declared the Haliya freed from bonded labour, many of the most difficult issues facing the Haliya communities remain unresolved. Some ex-bonded labourers have claimed that life is now more difficult than when they worked for the landlords as the government is not providing adequate support.¹² More work needs to be done to address the issue of agricultural bonded labour in Nepal to ensure all communities affected have access to services to come out of exploitation and recover.

Hotspot Objective 3: Strengthen survivor networks and alliances to build a sustainable movement to end forced labour in Nepal

Harawa-Charawa Network concludes district level elections

In January 2020, the Harawa-Charawa Network concluded its third and final district elections in Dhanusha district, following the Siraha and Saptari district elections held at the end of 2019. Over 350 community members took part in the Dhanusha elections in addition to NGO staff and local government representatives. 15 community members were elected to serve on the district committee for three years. The Harawa-Charawa Network now has a formalised democratic structure with three district and eight municipality committees which are linked to hundreds of community groups. The structure brings cohesion to the network and a platform to mobilise the movement to end Harawa-Charawa agricultural bonded labour. The network will conduct its national committee elections in quarter one 2021. This will be the first time that the network democratically elects its national committee.

Harawa-Charawa Network strengthens its capacity to conduct effective advocacy

¹² <https://kathmandupost.com/karnali-province/2021/02/24/haliyas-declared-free-on-paper-but-their-plight-remains-same-1614132909>

The Freedom Fund helped establish the Harawa-Charawa Network in 2017 and since then has been working with its members to build their capacity and leadership. In 2020 the Freedom Fund worked with the network to increase its capacity to advocate with local government to demand more support services for their communities.

Our technical assistance partner RDN, conducted a series of workshops and trainings with the network during the year. They informed the district level network committees about key policies and services the government should be providing for their communities. RDN also outlined how to access these services and when the best times are to engage with the government and demand support. For example, they informed the network that the preparation of the local government budget for the next financial year was a good time to engage the government and demand services and support for Harawa-Charawa communities.

Greater coordination between NGO partners and Harawa-Charawa Network

In 2020, we focused on strengthening the coordination between our local NGO partners and the network to ensure that their efforts are joined up and effective in advocating with the government.

Our NGO partners have been organising meetings with the district network committees to discuss priority issues for their joint advocacy work. In Siraha, our partners DJKYC, CDF, BDC and Samriddha Foundation held joint meetings together with the district network committee. They agreed to prioritise issues around minimum wages, local government budget preparation and land management.

In Saptari, our partners HURYC and TSWO also supported the Harawa-Charawa District Network to conduct advocacy activities. HURYC in coordination with the district network mobilised 50 Harawa-Charawa members to jointly visit the local municipality government office. The network presented a demand letter to the government requesting action on illegal loans, access to minimum wages, land rights and more budget to be allocated to develop Harawa-Charawa villages.

Similarly, TSWO worked with the secretary of the national committee, the treasurer of the district level committee and 35 Harawa-Charawa network members to visit their local municipality government office. The Harawa-Charawa leaders presented a six-point demand memorandum to the mayor of the municipality. The demand memorandum requested data collection of Harawa-Charawa communities, introduction of a minimum wage policy, land rights and funding to provide basic services.

Harawa-Charawa Network support emergency relief response

The Harawa-Charawa Network has played an important role in ensuring the Freedom Fund's emergency relief support has reached the households that needed support the most during the lockdown. Our partner RDN mobilised 45 Harawa-Charawa Network members to support the relief work across the three districts. The network worked with their local community to identify the most vulnerable households. Our local partners were then able to deliver the food and emergency relief directly to the identified households. The network was able to provide oversight of the distribution of the emergency relief to their communities and continue to monitor the situation throughout the lockdown.

4. Emergency Response Fund

When the national lockdown was introduced, our partners turned their focus to meeting the urgent needs of their communities and highlighting gaps in the government relief provision. To support the Harawa-Charawa communities, the Freedom Fund provided three rounds of emergency relief support, which our partners distributed.

Through the three rounds of emergency relief we supported approximately 30,000 people. We enabled local partners to provide food and essential health supplies to thousands of families across our target communities. We provided cash injections for the community savings and credit groups, which allowed the groups to provide additional funds to members to cover daily living and household expenses while they are unable to work. This support has been a lifeline for communities who were unable to put food on the table and provided an alternative to taking further loans from landlords. We are continuing to work with our partners to advocate with the government to ensure that they provide support services to vulnerable Harawa-Charawa communities as the country recovers from the pandemic.

5. Supporting a Community of Practice

We have been unable to conduct our normal in person Community of Practice (CoP) meetings with the partners due to the pandemic and restrictions on gatherings. We have been able to conduct a number of virtual CoP meetings, which has helped to bring a sense of solidarity amongst the partners and readjust the focus of their work during the pandemic.

In June we conducted a meeting with the partners to help them plan their local advocacy work more effectively. The partners submitted their plans following the meeting and our team has been advising the partners on their plans since then. We have also conducted a series of safeguarding training sessions for the partners over the past few months to improve their understanding and capacity to deal with safeguarding issues.

In October we conducted a virtual meeting with the partners to update them about the extension to the 2020 project and the new strategy for 2021/22. We informed the partners that due to funding restrictions we would be scaling back the program and continuing with a smaller presence in the three districts. We informed the partners that we would be conducting a request for proposals process to select for partners for grants to start on the 1st April 2021.

6. Case study

In Saptari District, Bulanti Devi Sada lives with her husband and five children. Bulanti and her family have faced many challenges. Her husband was paralysed following an illness and she was left to care for the whole family. She had been working as a domestic worker in the house of the nearby landlord. When her husband became ill, she had to stop working and look after the whole family. The family struggled to pay for basic supplies and at times went without food for a number of days. Urmila, Bulanti's 15-year-old daughter, had to take up some of the household tasks. She also started to collect wood to sell in the market and earn some money for the family. All of the children stopped going to school.



The whole family lived in a small hut made out of tree branches. Their home was poorly made and did not protect them from the weather. In the rainy season the house would let in rain and in the winter season, the family would be very cold.

Our partner SCDC started to engage and work with Bulanti and her family. SCDC encouraged Bulanti to send her children to the tuition classes they were running in the village. SCDC then provided scholarships to the children and supported them to enrol in school. Bulanti joined the savings and credit group and took part in the different trainings SCDC provided to the group on saving and money management.

SCDC identified that Bulanti and her family lived in a very poorly built home and they did not have the resources to build a new one. SCDC approach the local municipality government office and made a request that they build a new home for Bulanti and her family. After advocating with the government, they agreed to build the new home for the family. The family now has a more secure and protective home where Bulanti can care for your husband and children.





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