



Badilekh village, Baitadi – home to ex-Haliyas (bonded labourers) families
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Access to land and tenure security in Nepal

Developing a Land Information Management System

Economic land use in Nepal takes place amidst significant tenure insecurity for many, and often without generating any land and property taxes. Up to 21 per cent of Nepal's population is landless or has insufficient recorded information resulting in significant tenure and livelihoods insecurity. They include the lowest-caste Dalits, indigenous people, agricultural labourers, squatters and slum-dwellers. The plight and insecurity of the poorest was further compounded in 2020 by a monsoon, COVID-19 and plunging tourism.

UN-Habitat has been involved in Nepal's land sector since 2012, leading on stakeholder engagement and providing policy support. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006 brought a decade of armed conflict to an end. Nepal committed to pro-poor land reforms, made possible in the constitution of 2015, leading the new National Land Policy in 2019 and subsequent legislation reform in 2020. The new policy framework seeks improved land rights for women and vulnerable groups, rehabilitation of landless squatters and informal tenure-holders, access to land and security of tenure for all, and sustainable land management.

UN-Habitat hands over results of the informal Land Tenure Information System to the Mayor of Ratnanagar
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Dolakha, an emerging municipality in the mountains
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In 2019–2020, under the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) initiative on Support to Land Reform Initiatives in Nepal, the UN-Habitat country office and its partners supported the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation and the newly constituted Land Issues Resolving Commission (LIRC). The piloting of a Land Information Management System (LIMS) was undertaken in Ratnanagar and Belaka municipalities. LIMS is based on GLTN's Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) database tool.

Local innovation potentials to reduce vulnerability identified

As a result of the pilot, LIMS databases were created in each municipality with detailed records of the usage and other factors relating to land parcels of 13,643 households without, or with insufficient, land documents. Institutional

capacity was built for mapping and identification, verification and recording of person to land relations.

The geo-spatial approach of LIMS saw an unexpected application in the identification of vulnerable households. For example, Belaka Municipality used the LIMS related information to identify highly vulnerable families that lost wage earnings during COVID-19 lockdowns and enabled beneficiary households to receive food relief and government grants as a result. This innovation is a clear reflection of the potential of STDM information to give visibility and validity to the most vulnerable.

Local land governance

The project's achievements demonstrate the viability of creating land records at scale in line with the expectations set out in Nepal's new pro-poor land policy framework. Piloting at a local level, even with COVID-19 restrictions, is possible. LIRC operates at national, provincial and municipal levels. Municipalities are the key implementing partners at the local level.

LIMS will support municipalities in their efforts to regularize land tenure. LIRC has a mandate to address regularization of informal tenure and has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with 426 different municipalities to undertake participatory mapping under similar guidelines developed during the project pilot.

The case of Nepal demonstrates that:

- The success of tenure security depends on governments' ability to identify underrepresented families who suffer the most from natural disasters and emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Functioning land governance should take the issues regarding landless and informal settlements into consideration to be more sustainable and inclusive.

“With the adoption of National Land Policy in Nepal, we are committed to implementing groundbreaking reform in the land administration and management sector. One reform is to address the situation of the landless and regularize informal land tenure. As conventional techniques of mapping and land information management are costly and time-consuming, we were looking for a fit-for-purpose approach. The application of participatory mapping and open-source tools for land information management have been a great solution. We appreciate the support of UN-Habitat and other stakeholders in this effort.”

Janak Raj Joshi,
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation

Up to **21%** of Nepal's population is landless or has insufficient recorded information resulting in significant tenure and livelihoods insecurity.

Country: **Nepal**

Cities: **Belaka and Ratnanagar**

Donor: **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**

Local Authority: **Municipalities of Belaka and Ratnanagar, Government of Nepal**
Implementing Partners: **Community Self Reliance Centre, Global Land Tool Network, Lumanti Support Group for Shelter, UN-Habitat**

Duration: **2019–2020**