



# Nepal Hotspot Annual Report 2021



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# 1. Operating context

Nepal experienced a number of very challenging circumstances in 2021 including the covid-19 pandemic and prolonged political instability. Despite this context, the Freedom Fund and our NGO partners have transitioned from one phase of our work with the Harawa-Charawa to a Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) funded program uniting the three largest bonded labour groups, Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya, in a united movement to end agricultural bonded labour.

Through the expanded focus, our eight frontline partners will support survivor movement building and government advocacy across three provinces in Nepal to end exploitative agricultural work. Our partners are operating in provinces 2, 5 and 7 where there are high populations of the three groups: Province 2 with the Harawa-Charawa, Province 5 with the Kamaiya and Province 7 with the Haliya.

Target community	Partner	Province	District
Harawa-Charawa	Community Improvement Centre (CIC)	2	Dhanusa
Harawa-Charawa	Dalit Janakalyan Yuba Club (DJKYC)	2	Siraha
Harawa-Charawa	Shripurraj Community Development Centre (SCDC)	2	Saptari
Harawa-Charawa	Janachetana Dalit Sangam (JDS)	2	Saptari
Haliya	PeaceWin	7	Bajura
Haliya	Equality Development Centre (EDC)	7	Doti
Kamaiya	Kamaiya Mahila Jagaran Samaj (KMJS)	5	Bardiya
Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya	Rastriya Dalit Network Nepal (RDN)	2, 5, 7	All above

## 1.1 Nepal hit by multiple covid-19 waves in 2021

In April 2021, cases of the delta variant began to rise rapidly in Nepal and within a short period the health system became overwhelmed with a lack of oxygen and hospital beds for critically ill patients.<sup>1</sup> The government introduced lockdown restrictions through the District Administration Offices to try and stem the spread of the virus. As with the previous lockdowns in 2020, daily wage earners like agricultural labourers suffered as movement restrictions meant they could not work to earn an income. This left thousands of people highly

vulnerable to severe food shortages. In August and September 2021, cases started to decrease as the wave tailed off and normal life began to be restored in the country.

Nepal once again braced for a covid-19 wave towards the end of 2021 with the omicron variant. While cases began to rise across the country it did not result in a large increase in hospitalisations and deaths. To combat the pandemic, the government is continuing to administer the vaccine, targeting the most vulnerable.

<sup>1</sup>: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/30/nepal-facing-deadly-covid-wave-similar-to-india-doctors-warn>

As the country comes out of the third wave, the government is turning its focus to rebuilding services and supporting communities and families to recover. According to a World Bank survey, the pandemic has hit jobs and livelihoods hard, with one in three agricultural workers losing their jobs, and half of the female respondents reporting loss of earnings.<sup>2</sup> The government will need to ensure that its recovery plans are inclusive and targeted towards vulnerable and marginalised communities.

## **1.2 Federal government functioning after a long period of political instability**

The federal government of Nepal experienced a long period of instability in 2021 due to infighting within the ruling coalition led by the Nepal Communist Party. The Supreme Court of Nepal reinstated the parliament after ruling it was illegal for the previous Prime Minister KP Oli to dissolve it and ordered that Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Congress Party be appointed as the new Prime Minister in July 2021.<sup>3</sup> Following this, the federal government resumed its normal functions and there is now greater political stability at the federal level. Nepal will hold a general election in 2023 to decide the next government.

## **1.3 Nepal prepares for local elections in 2022**

Since Nepal introduced a federalised system of government in 2015, local governments have gained greater powers and budgetary responsibility. In 2022, Nepal will hold local government elections to elect municipality representatives such as mayors, vice-mayors and ward chairs. The local government election is an important opportunity for our partners to raise key issues facing bonded labour communities with incumbent representatives as well as other political parties.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/ensuring-resilient-and-inclusive-covid-19-recovery-nepal>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/nepals-supreme-court-orders-appointment-of-sher-bahadur-deuba-as-prime-minister-2484780>

## 2. Progress towards systems change

Through the current phase of the program, we are working with our partners and the Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya survivor networks to advocate with the government to end agricultural bonded labour and provide services for recovery. In 2021, we achieved some significant successes in our advocacy with the government at federal, provincial and local levels.

### 2.1 Government implements policy changes at provincial and local levels

As a result of our advocacy work with the provincial and local governments, the program has achieved a number of important policy changes in 2021.

In 2019, the Province 2 government passed the Dalit Empowerment Act to improve access to services for Dalit communities. This is an important piece of legalisation for agricultural bonded labourers in Province 2 as a high proportion of them are Dalit. Our partners have been advocating with the provincial government since the act was passed to demand that the government passes regulations to enable the delivery of services such as livelihoods, housing and education. In 2021, the Province 2 government passed a series of regulations in the provincial parliament and we are now waiting for these to be published publicly. When they are published, our partners will work to ensure communities are aware of the new provisions and support them to access the related schemes.

In Province 7, the government is bringing a Dalit Empowerment and Inclusion Bill and our partner EDC will be engaging with the government to ensure it is enacted.

Our partner Action Aid International Nepal (AAIN) has worked with the Sayal Rural Municipality in Doti district, Province 7, to prepare and endorse Haliya livelihoods guidelines. The guidelines set out how

the municipality government will provide livelihoods support to Haliya families, especially families who are the most marginalised and in need. AAIN will now be advocating with the local government to allocate sufficient funding in the next budget to implement the guidelines.

In Province 2, our partner SCDC has been advocating with Dakneswori municipality government to provide support to help marginalised children to go to school. As a result, the municipality government has developed a scholarship scheme to provide children with the materials and resources that they need. SCDC will now work to ensure that children can access the scheme.

### 2.2 Federal government assembles taskforce to investigate agricultural bonded labour

In 2021, the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation assembled a government taskforce to investigate the current status of groups affected by agricultural bonded labour in Nepal. Throughout the year our partners had been advocating with the federal government, including the ministries of land management and labour, to take concrete steps to address the issue and provide recovery services to survivors. The taskforce was an output of their advocacy work with the federal government.

The taskforce investigation is a significant development for the Harawa-Charawa in particular, as it is the first time the federal government is investigating bonded labour in their communities. The Haliya and the Kamaiya groups have previously been declared liberated by the government, but this new investigation is an opportunity for the government to understand who might have been left out of this process and what challenges they still face.

The taskforce was due to conduct visits to the three different groups in Provinces 2, 5 and 7 in

January and February 2022. Our partners aimed to work closely with the taskforce to organise and facilitate discussions with communities and survivor networks leaders. After completion of the site visits, the program will advocate with the taskforce and the government to publicly publish the report and recommendations.

### **2.3 The Federal Land Commission reformed by the government**

In 2021, the Federal Land Commission was disbanded as a result of the political disruption at the national level. We had established a close relationship with the previous committee and were working together to highlight the landlessness of agricultural bonded labour groups. The commission has the power to collect data on landless families and provide land to them.

When the new Prime Minister was appointed, the federal government assembled a new committee with Keshav Niraula as the chair. The program is now working with the new committee and advocating with them to restart their data collection with district level committees.

### **2.4 UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights documents findings on agricultural bonded labour in Nepal**

Olivier De Schutter, a UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, visited Nepal in November 2021 to assess the government's efforts to alleviate poverty and protect human rights. During his visit, he met with high-level government representatives, INGOs, community members and civil society organisations.

Our partner RDN provided a briefing to Mr De Schutter on agricultural bonded labour in Nepal and detailed the difficult challenges the communities face. Following his visit, Mr De Schutter prepared an official report highlighting the continued existence of bonded labour in Nepal.<sup>4</sup> His report documents the link between landlessness and indebtedness. Landless families are unable to get credit from the bank and have no option but to take loans from landowners to cover essential costs such as medical expenses, dowries and migration costs. Despite the new constitution in 2015 and subsequent legal reforms, the issue persists and attempts to address the issue have not been completed.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/30/nepal-facing-deadly-covid-wave-similar-to-india-doctors-warn>

## 3. Hotspot outputs and outcomes

### 3.1 Headline results

#### **347 Harawa-Charawa liberated in 2021**

In 2021, our partners supported 347 agricultural workers to be liberated from bonded labour with support for their recovery. All of the liberations were Harawa-Charawa who have been receiving support from our partners for a number of years. Key factors that led to the liberations included access to alternative livelihoods and income, increased freedom to choose work and access to government support services and registration documents, such as citizenship.

#### **3,575 community members gain access to essential government services**

Our partners have been supporting communities to access government support services and entitlements. In many cases, community members are unaware of the services they are entitled to and are unable to apply for them due to illiteracy.

Some of the key services the community have accessed include healthcare, education, employment support and land ownership certificates. In Saptari district, our partner JDS supported 200 people to gain land ownership certificates which provide evidence that community members are inhabiting an area of land.

Partners have also helped community members to access the Prime Minister's employment program, which guarantees a minimum of 100 days of work per year. In 2021 our partner SCDC supported 64 people to register for the scheme and our partner DJKYC supported 80 people to gain employment through it.

#### **1,626 children enrolled in school**

Over the past two years, many schools in Nepal have been closed for prolonged periods due to the covid-19 pandemic. Now that the pandemic

is receding and the government has been re-opening schools, there is a big need to enrol and re-enrol children in school.

In 2021, our partners CIC, DJKYC and SCDC conducted school enrolment campaigns and have enrolled 1,626 children in school. In addition to enrolling the children in school, our partners have been providing scholarships and tuition classes. In Saptari district, JDS provided tuition classes to children to support their education and SCDC enrolled 481 children through their campaign. They also provided a scholarship pack to each child, which includes school materials such as a notebook, pencil/pens and a uniform.

### 3.2 Progress towards hotspot objectives

In 2021, the Nepal program underwent a number of changes. In March, seven of our program partners' contracts with the Freedom Fund came to an end and they closed out their programs. All partners made significant efforts to establish sustainable structures for their community interventions and used their strong relationships with local government to support the phase-out. For example, our partners registered over 100 community and savings groups with the government, supporting approximately 2,000 people.

In April, the Freedom Fund initiated a new phase to the program with support from Norad for a project entitled Ending Agricultural Bonded Labour in Nepal. In partnership with AAIN, the new program will continue to support Harawa-Charawa bonded labourers in the southeast of Nepal while expanding our work to include the Haliya and Kamaiya former bonded labourers.

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*Hotspot objective 1: A united movement of agricultural bonded labour groups is formed and active at the national level*

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A core focus for the new phase of the program is to support the three largest agricultural bonded labour groups, the Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya, to come together and form a united movement. Each of the groups has an existing survivor network, which to date have been focusing on addressing the issues facing their own communities. By coming together and uniting their efforts, the groups can have a collective voice and advocate for change on common issues such as landlessness, livelihoods and access to government support services.

### **Engaging Kamaiya and Haliya survivor networks in the program**

AAIN and their local partners PeaceWin, EDC and KMJS have been engaging the Haliya and Kamaiya survivor networks in the set-up of the new phase of the program. In 2021, meetings between the NGO partners and the networks took place and municipal level groups started to be mobilised. In Sayal Rural Municipality in Doti district, one Haliya network group has been reactivated. The chair of the group committed to support the objectives of the program. In 2022, AAIN and its partners will be reactivating and mobilising many more Haliya and Kamaiya network groups.

RDN, who chair the Forced Labour Elimination Advocacy Group (FLEAG), a national network to address force labour, have been mobilising the national Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya networks in a series of federal level advocacy events. One such event was the 13th National Human Rights Magna Meet, an annual civil society human rights gathering in Nepal. The three networks jointly raised the issue of bonded labour at the event and the key challenges faced by their communities.

### **Harawa-Charawa network expands to three more districts in Province 2**

In 2021, the Harawa-Charawa network expanded to three new districts, Bara, Parsa and Rauthat, and is now covering six of the eight districts in Province 2. RDN and the Harawa-Charawa network engaged with local government and communities in the three districts to understand where there might be high concentrations of Harawa-Charawa families. They identified 12 priority

municipalities and established local committees with 11 members in each.

After forming the municipality level groups, RDN supported the network to establish district level committees. Municipality group members selected candidates from their groups for the district committee formation process. Three district committees were formed with 15 members in each. The new municipal and district level committees will meet regularly with support from RDN.

In 2022, RDN and the network will conduct a similar process to establish more committees in the remaining two districts of the province. This will enable the network to cover all eight districts in the province.

### **Harawa-Charawa network starts process of registering with the government**

The network, with support from RDN, submitted an application in 2021 to register with the Saptari District Administration Office. The network is awaiting feedback from the government on their application to complete the process. The network will benefit from registration by becoming an entity recognised by the government. They will be able to apply for government funding and will have greater influence in their advocacy work. The Haliya and Kamaiya networks have previously registered with the government and this has been beneficial for the networks in advancing their objectives and sustainability.

### **Bringing together Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya networks in the program's Community of Practice (COP)**

In December 2021, the Freedom Fund brought the three survivor networks as well as AAIN and our eight NGO partners together for the first COP under the new phase of the program. The Freedom Fund provided orientations on core objectives of the program, program indicators, reporting and the planned research. There were also sessions in which the networks and partners expressed their expectations and desires for the program and ideas for how they can work together. We plan to bring together all the networks and partners in the COP at least twice a year.

The COP meeting took place in Province 2, which is located in south-eastern Nepal. Following the COP meeting, NGOs and survivor network leaders from the Haliya and Kamaiya groups joined local partners CIC, DJKYC and JDS for visits to Harawa-Charawa communities to share what they are doing.

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*Hotspot objective 2: The government changes policies to address agricultural bonded labour and provide support services for survivors*

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The three survivor networks identify municipal and provincial level advocacy priorities

In October 2021, the Freedom Fund conducted an advocacy strategy workshop with the Harawa-Charawa network and our NGO partners. During the workshop the participants identified five key changes they would like to achieve at provincial and municipal levels, which included issues such as accessing livelihoods, land, housing and essential government registration documents. They also identified key stakeholders to engage, windows of opportunity and activities that they could do individually and collectively.

In December, AAIN in collaboration with RDN conducted similar consultations with the Haliya and Kamaiya groups. Through the consultations the groups also identified key changes at municipal and provincial levels. These groups identified some similar issues to the Harawa-Charawa such as livelihoods and access to land. They also raised separate issues such as identifying families who were left out of the government rehabilitation packages.

In 2022, the Freedom Fund will support the Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya networks to come together to develop a joint national level strategy for the movement to end agricultural bonded labour. The findings from the municipal and provincial level meetings will feed into the national strategy.

**Forced Labour Elimination Advocacy Group (FLEAG) coordinate a series of advocacy events at the national level**

FLEAG coordinated a series of advocacy events at the national level to highlight the issue of agricultural bonded labour and demand the federal government to take action. These meetings engaged different federal ministries, members of parliament and other influential bureaucrats.

In December 2021, FLEAG organised a meeting with the National Land Commission to discuss the landlessness of agricultural bonded labourers in Nepal. The Harawa-Charawa, Haliya and Kamaiya networks expressed how their communities continue to face landlessness and homelessness. The commission agreed that bonded labour groups should benefit from the constitutional provisions to provide land to landless groups.

FLEAG organised another joint meeting in December with the labour and land management ministers. In the meeting, the survivor groups raised that on one hand the Harawa-Charawa had yet to be liberated and provided with support for recovery, while on the other hand the rehabilitation of the Kamaiya and Haliya groups has not been concluded. Many families have been left out of the rehabilitation process, while those who received support claim that it is insufficient to support their household costs and livelihoods.

In the meeting, the ministers acknowledged that there were gaps in the previous efforts to address agricultural bonded labour. Following the advocacy activities conducted by FLEAG, the minister of land management assembled a government taskforce to investigate the current status of agricultural bonded labour communities.

**NGOs demand local government provide minimum wage to agricultural workers**

The federal government is responsible for setting the national minimum wage in Nepal. However, municipal level governments have responsibility for monitoring and enforcing the provision of the minimum wage. Our local partners have been engaging with municipal governments to raise awareness about their responsibility to monitor wages and ensure that agricultural workers are receiving it.

In Saptari district, SCDC held meetings with four municipal governments to discuss minimum wages. SCDC raised that there are many agricultural workers in the municipalities who are receiving wages below the legal entitlement. Through the meetings, municipality government representatives recognised that workers are not receiving the minimum wage and that they must work to enforce it. SCDC will continue to engage with the local government to pressure the government to conduct monitoring of wage provision.

In Siraha district, DJKYC have also been engaging with local government on labour rights and the minimum wage. In collaboration with the government, DJKYC established a labour desk in Dhanagadhi Mai municipality. The desk provides information to workers about their rights and minimum wage entitlements. DJKYC are also working with the municipal government to develop a wage determination committee to fix and monitor provision of the minimum wage in their area.

### **Network and NGOs demand services from provincial government for Harawa-Charawa communities**

The provincial level government is responsible for developing policies and providing funding for issues such as education, employment and social security. Our partners along with network representatives met with the Province 2 government to demand that they prioritise providing these services to marginalised Harawa-Charawa communities.

CIC conducted a meeting with the province policy and planning commission vice-president and other planning officers. CIC raised that Harawa-Charawa communities were still experiencing bonded labour and taking high interest loans to survive. They made a series of demands of the provincial government including the need to provide land for Harawa-Charawa homes and livelihoods.

Our partners JDS and SCDC also conducted delegations to the provincial government to highlight similar issues facing their communities. Following these meetings with our partners, the provincial government passed a series of regulations to implement provisions within the Dalit Empowerment Act.

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### *Hotspot objective 3: Agricultural bonded labourers have greater resilience as a result of accessing government and NGO support services*

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#### **Partners establish community groups in new working areas**

Through the new phase of the program, our NGO partners have expanded their working areas and formed new community groups. We have established a network of hundreds of community groups in our working areas. Community group members meet on a monthly basis and discuss pressing issues facing them and their families. Through the groups, NGO partners provide information about key entitlements such as vital registration documents, education and health services. They also support members to apply for these services and engage with local government.

AAIN and their partners supported Haliya and Kamaiya communities in the far west to establish and re-activate community groups. In some of the areas, community groups previously existed but became dormant over time. In total, they have mobilised 27 ward level community groups, nine in Doti district, ten in Bajura district and eight in Bardiya district. AAIN will continue to establish and strengthen more groups in 2022.

In Province 2, our partners have also established 133 new Harawa-Charawa community freedom and savings and credit groups. Savings and credit groups enable community members to collectively save to support their household needs and livelihoods. Some examples of group formation include CIC establishing eight new community groups in Dhanusha district, DJKYC ten new savings and credit groups in Siraha district and JDS 15 in Saptari district.

#### **Harawa-Charawa access vital registration documents**

Many agricultural bonded labourers do not have vital registration documents such as citizenship or birth certificates. As a result, these people cannot access government services as they have no identification with which to apply for them. Our NGO partners have been working closely with community members to support

them to apply and receive their registration documents.

Our partners typically identify people without registration documents through community discussions and campaigns. During a campaign a partner will try to engage a large number of community members at one time by going door to door and discussing the issue with households. When the partner has collected information on who needs support, they will then help each person to complete the required paperwork and submit it to the local government office. If needed our partners will go to the government offices and follow up on applications and put pressure on them to ensure that the documents are provided to those who apply for them.

DJKYC made a large drive to support community members to access citizenship in 2021. They managed to support 438 people (276 women and 162 men) to get their citizenship. In Dhanusha district, CIC supported 276 children (165 girls and 115 boys) to get the birth certificates. This is important for enabling the children to enrol in school. In Saptari district, JDS supported 80 people to receive citizenship while SCDC supported 192 people. SCDC also enabled 350 people to access a national ID card and 275 people to get the covid-19 vaccination.

### **Harawa-Charawa access homes through housing scheme**

In Province 2, the government is running the Janta Awas housing scheme to provide houses to homeless families and our partners have been supporting Harawa-Charawa families to access the scheme.

In 2021, DJKYC supported 249 families in Siraha district to get new homes and in Saptari district SCDC supported 24 families. In the coming years, our partners will continue to support families to access housing as well as land for livelihoods.

### **Partners provide livelihood support to community members**

Providing alternative livelihoods support remains an important way to support families to exit bonded labour. By accessing new skills, resources and seed money, individuals can set up their own enterprises or seek employment in different sectors.

In 2021, DJKYC provided training to 21 women on preparing and selling snacks in the local market. The snacks are popular in the market and can provide a sustainable income for vendors. One of the women, Runa, said that by preparing and selling the snacks she is able to earn enough income to support her family. Following the training, DJKYC reported that 17 of the trainees continued to run a small business selling snacks.

In Dhanusha district, CIC coordinated with UNDP and Heifer International to support 125 Harawa-Charawa to engage in their agricultural and livestock training program. The participants were trained on vegetable cultivation and goat and cow rearing. Following the training the participants are engaging in their own smallholder agriculture.

In 2021, the ILO initiated a project to provide livelihoods support to Harawa-Charawa families. Our partners coordinated with the ILO and referred 210 participants for livelihoods training. The participants received training on skills such as carpenter, e-rickshaw driver, aluminum fabricator, motorcycle mechanic, mobile phone repair, housekeeper, tiles and marble fitter, electrician, plumber, mason and off-season vegetable cultivation.

## 4. Emergency Response Fund

In April 2021, the number of covid-19 infections began to rise sharply in Nepal. To respond to the crisis, the local government in our operating districts brought in lockdown measures which meant agricultural workers were unable to work and faced severe food shortages.

The Freedom Fund granted \$90,000 to 11 local NGO partners through the Emergency Response Fund, providing 4,403 Harawa-Charawa households (over 26,000 people) with a six-week supply of food and other essential items. 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.

## 5. Case study

### **Rajbati's journey from agricultural bonded labour to Harawa-Charawa network leader**

Rajbati Devi Mandal is from Siraha district, Province 2, and is a survivor of agricultural bonded labour. Previously, she and her family were forced to work for a local landlord and were not allowed to choose alternative employment. As a result, they had very little income and struggled to meet their household costs. Rajbati said: "Our master [landlord] compelled us to work in his land as agricultural labourers and we were not given a fair wage. I was afraid to say something. I could not speak with others about my rights."

Rajbati joined a Harawa-Charawa community group in her village and after some time she became the treasurer. Through the group, she participated in various meetings and became aware of her rights and entitlements.

Rajbati became more active within the local Harawa-Charawa movement to stop agricultural bonded labour. She was appointed the vice-chair of the Siraha district Harawa-Charawa network. The Freedom Fund's partner RDN, a grassroots capacity-building organisation, organised a series of leadership activities for the district network in which she took part. Following this, Rajbati went from strength to strength and was finally elected treasurer of the national Harawa-Charawa network in 2021.

In 2021, Rajbati advocated for the emancipation of the Harawa-Charawa in various federal level meetings. She took part in the 13<sup>th</sup> National Human Rights Magna Meet, a national human rights forum, and raised the issue of agricultural bonded labour. She took part in delegations to the labour and land management ministries and submitted memoranda outlining the network's demands for liberation and recovery services. She also joined a meeting with the newly formed land commission to discuss how land

can be allocated to landless Harawa-Charawa.

Rajbati was invited to join a talk-show program on national television in Nepal to discuss the issue of agricultural bonded labour. During the program, she confidently raised the issues facing the Harawa-Charawa, such as landlessness and livelihoods.<sup>5</sup>

Rajbati is happy that she now has a better economic situation, access to more services and her children are getting an education. She is also more confident to share her views, advocate on the issue of agricultural bonded labour and be a leader in the national network.



<sup>5</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar0g\\_z6r8xM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar0g_z6r8xM)

## 6. Independent evaluation and research

### **New research to inform program advocacy**

As part of the research planned for the Norad project, we released a request for proposals in June 2021. The research has two workstreams: 1, to understand the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on bonded labour communities; and 2, to conduct a market assessment of employment and vocational training programs offered by the government and NGOs, and to understand the barriers that agricultural bonded labourers face in accessing them. The findings of the research will be used as evidence to support our advocacy to government, donors and local businesses.

Following the tendering process ODI and their local partner National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) were selected to conduct the research. By the end of December 2021, we have jointly designed the research methodology and plan for implementation. From January 2022, they will be conducting key information interviews followed by a quantitative survey and focus group discussions. We hope to conclude the research by August 2022.

## Annex 1: Internal report

We have conducted a series of trainings with partners to induct them on the systems and processes required to be compliant with the Norad funded grant. The trainings were conducted online due to the pandemic and include topics such as procurement, financial monitoring, safeguarding and global indicators.

To support the implementation of the Norad grant, the Freedom Fund recruited a new Program Advisor, Brahma Deo Ram, in July 2021. Brahma is based in the southeast of Nepal and will work with the four partners operating there. Our existing Program Advisor, Jiyam Shrestha, will shift his focus to working with our new partners supporting Haliya and Kamaiya ex-bonded labour communities.

Jiyam Shrestha, the safeguarding focal person for Nepal, has been working closely with our partners to increase their understanding of safeguarding risks and strengthen organisational policies and procedures to respond to concerns. All four partners based in southeast Nepal have now nominated safeguarding focal points and have ensured safeguarding policies are incorporated into the code of conduct which has been understood and signed by all staff. In 2022, we will be conducting a tendering process to hire a safeguarding consultant to provide additional capacity building for all program partners on safeguarding.

We contracted the financial review company, RajMS, to conduct regular financial monitoring of the partners' finances and to provide capacity building where required. In quarter four of 2021, RajMS visited all partners to review their finances. RajMS also held refresher training for partners on the Freedom Fund's financial reporting template and process.




The Freedom Fund appointed Sayer Vincent to conduct the independent audit of the Norad grant covering the period April to December 2021. They will complete the program audit by March 2022.





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The Freedom Fund is a United States 501(c)(3) public charity (EIN number 30-0805768).  
The Freedom Fund UK is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales  
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March 2022