



JOINT LAND OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE FOR EQUALITY, DIGNITY AND PROSPERITY RESOURCE MANUAL



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1. Introduction

The joint land ownership certificate campaign has been initiated in order to promote women's access to and ownership of land as a resource. Under the campaign, 4,142 couples in 37 districts have taken out joint land ownership certificates over 1406 hectre of land as of the end of June 2016. This resource material has been prepared so that community leaders and workers, rights activists and social organisations will share the learnings of running the campaign and the challenges that have been encountered. It will help foster response skills with regards to the effective running of the joint land ownership certificate campaign.

This material encompasses the rationale for the campaign, its beginnings, the preparations, sensitization, arranging the evidence, the process of making the ownership certificates, and Frequently Asked Questions.



Credit: CSRC/Oxfam

2. Rationale for the campaign

2.1 Background

Although the national census of 2011 shows that 19.71 per cent of women have ownership of housing or land, such ownership by women who are involved in agriculture is minimal. Women farmers put more effort into the land than anyone else. Women bear the triple burden of home, society and land cultivation. But these same farmer women have only minimal ownership in the land. With no ownership over cultivable land, the women have a low level of self-confidence. They have not been able to secure a proper place in the household and family, in society or in the market. Because of this, women have remained deprived of various services and facilities, such as credit, entrepreneurship and skill development, and insurance. Such deprivation has been greatly detrimental to agricultural production. Ultimately, this has contributed to hunger and food insecurity for individual families and for society.

Ownership over land determines the level of power of the individual or family. It is this power that makes their basic rights possible. Women's lack of ownership over land is tantamount to serious deprivation of their human rights.

Against this background, the government has adopted a policy favouring joint land ownership certificates, which are seen as vital for fostering women's ownership in land. However, useful as it is, the policy has not seen effective implementation because of a lack of adequate awareness in the community, geographical remoteness and the absence of a conducive atmosphere for families to make out joint ownership certificates. So a joint land ownership certificate campaign appears to be urgently needed if this joint ownership policy is to become meaningful.

“Ownership over land determines the level of power of the individual or family. It is this power that makes their basic rights possible. Women's lack of ownership over land is tantamount to serious deprivation of their human rights”

The joint land ownership certificate constitutes an important opportunity for promoting women's ownership in land. It will establish their right not just as a claim but in practical terms as well, which in turn will open the door to the enjoyment of other rights.

Let every family owning housing and land make out joint ownership certificates among themselves and thus initiate a sound practice.

The birth of the Joint Land Ownership Certificate Campaign

Women's ownership in land is taken as a significant issue by the movement for land rights. Farmer families that have succeeded in acquiring land ownership through this movement found themselves asking why land ownership had been confined to men alone. Given the participation of women in the movement and their contribution to it, it was natural that this question should arise.

In the course of the debate on this topic, the first national conference concerning women's ownership in land was held in Kathmandu in the month of Magh, 2062 (Jan 2006). In 2064 (2007), 41 farmers in Ramche Village Development Committee in Sindhupalchowk district were able to convert 'guthi' or trust land into leasehold. The land ownership certificates were made out in the name of the menfolk. A request was submitted to the Ministry of Land Reform and Management to make a policy arrangement for transforming the land ownership certificates issued in this fashion into joint ownership certificates and to not levy the fees payable for this. An 11-day march staged in Kailali, Kanchanpur, Banke and Bardiya districts in Falgun 2066 (March 2010) with the theme of women's rights in land had the effect of bringing this issue onto the forum of general debate.

In Chaitra 2068 (April 2012), one thousand women from 50 districts came to Kathmandu under the leadership of the National Land Rights Forum Nepal and staged sit-ins at the offices of various political parties. One of the demands of this movement was that policy-level arrangements should be made concerning joint land ownership certificates, and the demand was taken positively by the government. The government, through its policy and program statement for Fiscal Year 2067/68 (2010/11), brought in a provision under which housing and land held under the ownership of the husband can be transformed into common ownership with the wife and joint ownership papers made out accordingly. For this only one hundred rupees (0.7 GDP or 1\$) would be required. However, the provision did not come into implementation. A movement is now under way to bring about the enforcement of this policy-level provision.

2.2 What is the joint land ownership certificate movement?

Joint land ownership certificates mean establishing the legal ownership of the wife also in the ownership certificate for any housing or land that is owned by a married male (husband). The joint land ownership certificate movement aims at fostering awareness among the general community about the joint land ownership certificate policy, entrusting local bodies and stakeholders with responsibility for implementing the policy, fostering the conducive atmosphere needed for making out joint ownership certificates, facilitating the removal of obstacles and difficulties hampering implementation of the policy, and taking organised action to realise the objective of getting the utmost number of couples to go for the joint ownership certificates.



2.3 Why joint land ownership certificates?

A joint land ownership certificate ascertains a woman's ownership in land. It will enhance the woman's individual capabilities and arouse self-confidence. At the same time it will help raise women's status in the community. This is foundational for the economic empowerment of women. Land rights for women will lead to greater agricultural production and ensure food security for the family and the community.

During discussions held before this with families that already have joint land ownership certificates, it was stated that they felt their joint certificates led to reconciliation in the family, self-confidence and a greater sense of identity. The women have evidently become more capable of engaging in financial transactions. In a study carried out by the Community Self-Reliance Service Centre in 2069 (2012) among some 200 families, 70 per cent of the families said there had been a reduction in violence against women.



DeviShahi WEC Dailakh demonstrates about JLO (Photo: RojyJoshi OXFAM)

3. The how of the campaign

A man and wife who possess housing and land and wish to make out a joint ownership certificate should hold consultations and go to the land revenue office with the necessary documents to get their joint certificate.

3.1 Institutional commitment

Organisations, groups or cooperatives wishing to run a joint land ownership campaign should hold a meeting of its executive or management committee to discuss the policy underlying the campaign, its impact and the process involved, and take a decision. Once such an institutional mandate is secured, it will be easier for the group in question to take up the campaign. This approach will help all the office-bearers of the campaigning organisation, group or cooperation to arrive at a common understanding.

3.2 Campaign orientation

Once the institutional mandate is clear, the organisation, group or cooperative should provide an orientation to its office-bearers and staff on the subject of joint land ownership certificates. For this purpose, workers from organisations already active in the campaign and lead individuals from the National Land Rights Forum can be called in to help out. Or available reading material on the subject can be put to use. Such orientation will help one become clear about policy, the significance of the campaign and the underlying process. One day of orientation should be enough. During the orientation it will be better if there is greater participation by workers who function at the community level. At the end of the orientation, a comprehensive plan of action, inclusive of the purpose of the campaign, should be worked out.

When it comes to deciding from which village development committee or community the campaign should start, bear in mind that it will be more useful to choose an area where there are a lot of helpful entities, cooperatives and lead individuals in the community. The campaign will of course expand of its own accord, but it would be better to start off from a place that is comparatively more suitable.

3.3 Interactions at district and village development committee levels

Interactions can be held at the level of the district or the village development committee to impart information about the campaign. Such interactions will not only have the effect of imparting campaign information but also help mobilize the cooperation of other entities concerned and stakeholders.

District-level interaction

Before starting the campaign, an interaction should be held with the participation of all stakeholders at the district level, media practitioners, and the lead individuals of various associations and organisations and women's and farmers' groupings affiliated to political parties. This paper can come in handy as resource material for the interaction. Similarly, the work plan prepared at the time of the orientation held before this, the budget and the role expected of the stakeholders should be read out and suggestions solicited. Media practitioners also should be invited to such programs. The interaction will take on added life if documentary films on the joint land ownership campaigns held elsewhere can be screened.

VDC-level interaction

Following the district-level interaction, interactions should also be held with the village development committee secretaries, the citizens ward forum, representatives of political parties, teachers, female health volunteers and lead individuals in society in each of the village development committees where the campaign is to be carried out. For this purpose use can be made of posters, pamphlets and study material concerning joint land ownership certificates. The campaign can also make such materials itself. At the end of such discussions, the focus should be turned towards how the human and economic resources existing in the village development committee can be brought to bear on the campaign and an atmosphere fostered for eliciting cooperation from all quarters.

In recognition of the work put into the cultivation of the land by women and their contribution to production, let one's family make out joint certificates and help and encourage other families to do likewise.



Land Rights Activists Development training in Dadeldhura (Photo: CSRC)

3.4 Preparing, mobilising lead individuals and workers

Lead workers should be chosen from the local community with the help of the community and through consensus, and those chosen should be given 2-3 days of training in the process of running the campaign and various related matters. The campaign action plan should spell out clearly for whom, what and where the responsibility of lead individuals and workers, mobilised to inform families in designated areas about joint land ownership certificates, lies. In this connection they should take along with them the necessary policy paper, pamphlets, posters, the forms to be filled while making out joint ownership certificates, and the like. Such lead individuals or workers should be mature individuals that the community trusts.



JLO Camp in DDL (Photo: CSRC)

Starting With Oneself

Prior to informing people in the community about this campaign, office-bearers and staff who have immovable assets and are married should themselves make out joint ownership certificates. This will bring further clarity about the process involved and also provide them the moral strength for influencing others. In similar fashion, all lead individuals involved in social and political circles who have been raising their voice for equality, as well as social workers, teachers, health volunteers and such other lead individuals in various fields should also be inspired to set an example by going for joint ownership papers.

4. Generating mass awareness

4.1 Door to door

Community workers or lead individuals who have received orientation about joint land ownership certificates and have themselves made out such joint ownership papers should reach out to the community from door to door to explain about the significance of this idea. For this purpose, the experience of those from elsewhere who have taken out joint certificates, photographs, newspaper cuttings, posters, pamphlets and like will come in handy. While working from door to door in this fashion the families covered in the door to door movement should be recorded in a diary.

4.2 Gatherings at settlements

Get-togethers should be organised for couples (man and wife) at settlements after the door-to-door campaign, and also in communities where there has been no door-to-door drive, and the joint ownership certificate explained to them. For this purpose the groups should be of 15 to 25 individuals at the most. At such gatherings people should be asked to come as couples. A small flash-board with information about joint ownership certificates can be installed to make the gathering more effective. Materials on the campaign should be available at the gathering on a mandatory basis. At the end, everyone should be allowed to relate their experience, and particulars about those agreeing to take out joint ownership certificates and those agreeing to discuss the matter at home should be entered in a register.

4.3 Discussions at local meetings and centres

In every village are to be found various kinds of groups and different organizations. There are also cooperatives. Similarly, various organisations and associations will be found running learning centres, discussion centres, empowerment centres and the like. These programs might be locally owned or run by other organisations or by government bodies. Time should be sought at the meetings and discussions at such centres in order to hold discussions about joint land ownership certificates. This will motivate members of the community to make out joint ownership certificates for themselves. It should be borne in mind that holding discussions alone is not enough; one should discuss what is to be done and work out an action plan. There should also be regular follow-up on the plan.

The existing trend under which there is no ownership in the land and the emphasis is on dowry will not reduce violence and hunger, but rather increase these ills. Power and self-respect can only come from ownership of the green fields and terraces.

4.4 Broadcasting the message

Mass awareness of the campaign can also be fostered through a simple message about joint land ownership certificates to be used for writing on walls, putting up posters and hoarding boards at public places, distribution of pamphlets at gatherings and in the market place, broadcasting over the local FM station, and the like. For example, at the time of the Teej festival a pamphlet with the message, how about going for joint ownership certificates, was distributed in Surkhet and Dadeldhura.

4.5 Rallies and marches

Rallies and marches can be held in the villages and urban and market centres to foster general awareness of joint landownership certificates. For instance, a program centred solely on this theme can be held in connection with International Women's Day. Such a program can reach the information to many and turn it into a subject of public debate.



Credit: CSRC/Dixam

5 Compiling the Evidence

5.1 Making a list

At the end, after carrying out door-to-door work, holding gatherings at settlements, group meetings and discussions at education centres, a list of those wishing to take out joint ownership certificates should be made, and once the list is ready it should be settled at once when they are to come to a meeting for collecting the necessary evidence.

5.2 Preparing the file

Documents pertaining to couples who have agreed to opt for the joint ownership certificates (as mentioned in box 3) should be compiled and a file prepared. It may be that somebody does not have a citizenship certificate. Others may not have registered their marriage. This creates an opportunity to encourage such individuals to get all things taken care of at one go. A separate legal scribe is not required for this. It is enough to fill the accompanying form in two copies.

Documents needed for joint land ownership certificates

- original of the ownership certificate
- citizenship certificates (both husband's and wife's)
- marriage registration certificate if the husband's name is not mentioned in citizenship certificate
- 2 photos of wife (husband's also if these are not present in the old ownership certificate or in the records)
- land revenue payment receipt for the current year
- application letter (joint application to the land revenue officer by husband and wife along with particulars of three generations) with a Rs 10 (0.1\$) postage stamp
- 2 copies of the joint form should be filled

6. Land certificate under joint name

6.1 Visiting land revenue office

Once the file is ready one should go to the land revenue office if it is nearby or to the district headquarters, along with preparations for any other business. One can go directly to the land revenue office and get the land ownership document taken care of. While applying for the land ownership certificate one can also see to one's other business such as partition of paternal property, ownership transfers, getting a citizenship certificate and the like. This will be making good use of one's time and resources.

6.2 Organising a camp

If the files have been prepared for processing joint land ownership certificates for 20 or more families in a single community, ward or village development committee, a representative of the land revenue office can be brought to the community to see the process through. The work can be carried out in a speedy, simple and inexpensive fashion in coordination with the land revenue office. But before expediting matters in this way, someone should take all the files to the land revenue office and tally them with the records kept there. To this end, all the documents should be in a fully ready condition. Once all the verification is completed one lead representative should go to the land revenue office and come back with the joint ownership certificates. If the land revenue office staff do not agree to make a field visit then the couples should be taken to the land revenue office on the understanding that everything will be completed in a single day and the joint certificates thus taken out. If the resources available at the village development committee or the municipality can be utilised in such work it will be easy to make the campaign more wide-ranging.



6.3 Distributing certificates and feting the couples

The joint land ownership certificates prepared by the land revenue office should be distributed at a group function. For this purpose an individual of good standing could be invited as a guest. At the function the couples should not just be distributed the joint ownership certificates but also offered garlands, letters of appreciation or some other token of merit. This will be a further encouragement for them and also motivate others who have yet to make out such documents. Holding a function to fete the couples with the joint certificates will also help to make this issue more public. There are examples of how exchanges in the communications media of the experiences of couples in making the joint certificates has had the effect of the campaign taking hold in various districts.



A couple happy receiving JLO certificate in the camp organized in Dadeldhura (Photo: CSRC)

7. Frequently Asked Questions

Will it become difficult to take out bank loans or carry out other transactions?

First of all there is no need to at once link land ownership certificates with banking transactions. It is not as if one has no choice but to deposit the ownership certificate in the bank. Another thing, it is not as if one has to keep going to the bank every day. If one does have to visit the bank on some extremely important work it would be the initiation of a good practice for both man and wife to take the decision and carry out their transactions jointly. This can have a positive effect on other social campaigns also. Women will develop their decision-making capacity. They will increase their knowledge of how to do things. In later life it will not be necessary for men alone to step forward in such work. In doing things in this way both will share the praise and the blame. A letter of agreement can be used so that either the husband or the wife can go and get their business done at government offices. Land holdings will become more secure as will the benefits to be derived from them or transactions in these assets. The husband and wife acting together to take out loans, to repay the loans, selling the land or not selling and other such steps taken through mutual consultations should not be looked upon as a hassle. With man and woman enjoying equal rights to property and the resulting social standing, the responsibility for making proper use of such assets also falls on both.

Why joint ownership certificate since husband's property is wife's also?

If it is in fact the wife's property also what problem is there in having it put down in writing. If it is so in reality it is so not just in the spoken word. Have it in writing as well. True, the law provides for the wife's right to her husband's property. But most wives have never been able to enjoy this right in practice or feel that they have property under their possession. Such rights are enjoyed only as long as the husband is alive or, when in a bind, only by those who can assert a claim and engage in litigation. Joint land ownership certificates will establish these rights in practice. If in future the property has to be shared out there will be no need to file litigation.

Won't it be better still if the land is transferred to the wife's name instead of opting for joint ownership?

The important thing is not whether the certificate is in the wife's or the husband's name but how both can have equal right to the property. The joint ownership option was taken up when a question arose as to what would happen to property held in the wife's name if she marries someone else? Another point is that what has been initiated is a positive exercise. A lot of effort has been put in by many for this arrangement to materialise. That is why it would be better for those in favour of social change to help make this approach more practicable.

Won't joint ownership certificates only aggravate violence?

Joint ownership certificates are decided upon through discussions in the family and consensus. With both having a right to the property both will enjoy equal power. There is no need for one to be the ruler and the other the ruled. For this reason violence will not increase but is sure to decrease instead. In the long run this will promote harmony. There will be no room for arbitrariness by either side. As the idea is to create a situation where both will respect each other, violence will be lessened in the long run, not increased.

What happens to land under joint ownership if the wife leaves the husband?

Some people may see their families break up after opting for joint land ownership. In this situation the property will revert to the husband or the wife as before if there is proof of a relationship with someone else, whether it is the husband who walks away or the wife. If the property has been earned jointly by the two, the one leaving will get half. This right does not extend to paternal property. Joint ownership certificates will bring about a decline in the instance of divorce.

What happens if the husband leaves the wife?

There will be no need for filing litigation to claim half the property. Under prevailing law one might have to engage in lengthy litigation to get one's property but those with joint ownership certificates will not have to move the courts.

Can certificates for joint ownership with the husband be made out for property held in the wife's name also?

Yes. The process is the same.

Annex 1 Published News Reports

Published articles and news reports about the joint land ownership certificate campaign in various districts.

JOINT LAND OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATES DISTRIBUTED TO 10 COUPLES IN DADELDHURA

Times News | Dadeldhura, 15 Bhadra

Distribution of land ownership certificates to couples jointly has started under a campaign launched by the Land Rights Forum to secure a right over land for women, who have remained deprived of the right to property.

Under the campaign, launched in the district under the slogan of 'half for man half for woman right to land is even' to encourage joint-couple certificates, such certificates have been distributed to 10 couples in Jogbudha VDC.

At a joint-couple certificate distribution function held at the land revenue office, Dadeldhura Land Revenue Office officiating chief Nara Bahadur Karki handed over the certificates.

Thanks to the public awareness programs held in various places in Dadeldhura district by the National Land Rights Forum Dadeldhura to institutionalise women's right to land, there has been an increase in the numbers of those taking out joint ownership certificates. This development has sent out a positive message to society and will also bring about ameliorations in the exploitation, injustice and discrimination practiced against women, the land rights forum claims. The joint ownership certificate movement got its start after the government in its budget statement for Fiscal Year 2010/11 announced a policy under which it would cost only Rs 100 to make out a joint ownership certificate for man and wife over property held under the husband's name alone. Among those taking out joint ownership certificates are Mohan Singh Saud and Rambha Devi Saud, Gore Saud and Harina Devi Saud, Jog Bahadur Saud and Jhupa Devi Saud, Chandra Bahadur Khadayat and Chanamati Khadayat, Nare Dhami and Bishna Dhami, Chandra Bahadur Dangi and Kavita Devi Dangi, Khadak Singh Saud and Dura Devi Saud, Lal Bahadur Sarumagar and Tilasari Devi Sarumagar and others from Sharagauda, Thandajala and Rampur in Jogbudha-2, Dadeldhura, it is stated by the Land Rights Forum, Dadeldhura. Women, who till yesterday were restricted to house and home, are happy that they now have rights over land to which their husbands alone used to be entitled. Prior to this also 17 couples had acquired joint land ownership certificates under the initiative of the Dadeldhura forum.

DISTRIBUTION OF JOINT CERTIFICATES

Kantipur Correspondent

Surkhet—Distribution of joint-couple certificates has been started under a campaign launched by the land rights forum to provide rights over land to women who have remained deprived of property rights.

Under the campaign launched in the district by the land rights forum with the slogan 'let's go for joint-couple certificates, let's respect women', joint-couple certificates were distributed to 11 couples in Sombar Sahare VDC.

At the joint-couple certificate distribution function organised at the land revenue office, land revenue officer Kamal Poudel initiated the campaign by giving out joint-couple certificates to Amardev Giri-Laxmi Giri, Lal Bahadur Dangi-Dajakumari Dangi and Nokhendra Khatri-Pabitra Khatri.

Distributing the joint-couple certificates, land revenue officer Poudel said joint rights over land constitute a due honouring of women. The joint-couple certificates not only confer on women the right to property but will also make the property more secure.

Purna Bahadur Sunar, convenor of the land rights forum which launched the campaign, said it will help provide women, who have remained deprived of property rights, a right to land and make them owners of property on par with their husbands.

In order to increase the access of women to land, the government has made arrangements under which, upon payment of Rs 100 in revenue, a joint land ownership certificate can be prepared to include the name of the wife also in the ownership certificate hitherto held in the husband's name alone.

The land rights forum states that the campaign should be further expedited as joint-couple certificates will give due recognition to the work put in by women, there will be harmony in the family, violence against women will decrease and happiness in the family will increase, with the status of women improved they will feel on par with men, as the land cannot be sold or pawned without consultations between man and wife the property will be more secure, and there will be fewer landless squatters and less fragmentation of land holdings.

THEY LOOK UPON JOINT CERTIFICATES AS A GIFT: RAMBHADEVI SAUD

For 67-year-old Rambhadevi Saud, the happiest day of her life was the day she became a land-owner. Says she, when my name was added to the land ownership certificate which was in my husband's name, I felt as though I had been presented with a gift. Hitherto, I had no legal right to any moveable or immovable property in the family. In our time we could not even eat until the husband had eaten his fill. We had never even thought about family property. It is no small thing that we now even have a right over land. With equal right to property we feel more confident of security in our old age. Women no longer have to put up with things and they feel more self-confident.

Rambhadevi's husband Mohan Singh Saud is no less happy either. Says he, in my old age I had regretted that I had not been able to do anything for the person with whom I have spent my entire life. When the joint land ownership certificate policy was adopted I was able at the age of 72 to give my wife half my property. That wife and husband are two wheels of the same chariot was a notion limited to an adage. Now it has been put into practice, with equal rights for both to their land. To those who ask what was the point in going for joint land ownership certificates at this advanced age, he says, "When it comes to doing something good, there is no such thing as late or early. We have opted for the joint land ownership certificate because if we initiate something that is good it will set an example for our children and our grand children." One should set an example of equality and show the way for the coming generation by taking out the joint ownership certificates, he urges.

JOINT OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE HAS FURTHER STRENGTHENED OUR BOND

I, Manju Mijar, am extremely happy at being able to make out a joint land ownership certificate at the age of 33.

I used to have to devote all my time to house work. In my childhood my wish to roam about and put on nice clothes was limited to a wish. After getting married to Manbir Mijar of Lele VDC-9, Lalitpur district, my wish to study also became just a wish. Later on an adult literacy program was started in the village, and I was able to fulfil my wish to study. After that I found opportunities to participate in various groups and women's cooperatives. I learnt about a campaign to get 100 couples to opt for joint land ownership certificates under the slogan, 'Half for men half for women, the right to land should be even'. After learning about this I also felt like taking out a joint land ownership certificate to establish my right to the land and I brought this up with my husband. In order to explain things to him even further, I invited a young lady from the land campaign to our house. She explained to him the advantages of a joint land ownership certificate.

Thereafter my husband also came around to the view that the wife should be given a right to the land as well. We then went with people from the land rights forum to the land revenue office and had a joint ownership certificate made out. With the joint certificate my right also has become secure. It is a right of women to have ownership in the land. My husband Manbir is also equally pleased. He happily shared his right through a joint ownership certificate, saying, since my wife also works the land she has as much right to it as I have. Others point out that if there is joint ownership the wife may subsequently elope, but why does it not occur to them that the land cannot be sold unilaterally, and even in case of an elopement the wife cannot take it all with her. Awareness of this has yet to be cultivated in the villages. As for myself, making out a joint certificate with my husband for land ownership has made me feel that the bond of marriage has been further reinforced. These days I go about telling others also that they should opt for joint ownership certificates.

JOINT OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE HAS STRENGTHENED THE WILL TO CULTIVATE THE LAND

Kalpana Thapa Magar was born on Chaitra 15, 2035 in Sathighar VDC, Kavre district. She has had schooling only up to class 10. She says her wish to study further remained incomplete because of the death of her mother. She was married off at the tender age of 17 to Pralhad Thapa Magar of Jharuwarasi VDC Ward No. 5. Once she was married she had to put up with a great many things. Although she enjoyed the love of her husband, she was subjected to severe treatment by her mother-in-law and aunts-in-law. It was in a way a life of domestic violence. Although she wished to cultivate commercially the vegetables and other crops that she liked, fear of her mother-in-law meant that this was limited wishful thinking. She says that perhaps because of the help of her husband she has been able to cope so far no matter what difficulties she faced. Just as rocks rest on clay and clay on rock, success in life is not possible for women and men without their relying on one another. Kalpana is involved in cooperatives, mothers' groups, etc. Meanwhile, the joint land certificate campaign for equal ownership between man and woman was well under way in Lalitpur. Working through the district land rights forum, they made out a joint ownership certificate through mutual agreement and now, along with her husband's help, she has become owner of 1 ropani and 4 anna of land also. A happy family of 4, including a son and a daughter and man and wife, they are living even more happily since opting for a joint land ownership certificate.

Happy as she is at having made out a joint land ownership certificate, she has been going about telling others also that they should secure their rights in land just like she has done. Under her initiative 4 other couples have also made out joint ownership certificates and secured their rights.

Once she acquired her right over land, she has become emboldened enough to take up commercial vegetable cultivation. She is also building a pen for the group rearing of improved breed pigs. She says, it is not enough to secure your rights, you should also have the capacity to make use of those rights. I am not for leaving fallow even a single scrap of land over which I have a right; with everything so expensive now, cultivation of vegetables and rearing pigs will render it easier to make ends meet. This is the advice that I give to everyone. The important thing is to secure rights in order to put them to use. The most significant thing is that once you have land on your own account, you will have the confidence to work that land yourself and keep ahead even if the man leaves you or starts ignoring you. Nobody will hand out your rights to you, you should be able to secure them yourself. She adds, "Now, even my mother-in-law and aunts-in-law also help out with my commercial farming, and they are also positive toward the idea of joint ownership certificates". She has managed to secure her right to the land and requests other women to do likewise, says a contented Kalpana.

UKMINIDEVI: AFTER 43 YEARS I SAW A LAND OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE

In the month of Jestha 2043, Suruj and Rukmanidevi of Malangawa got married. After the family took membership of the village land rights forum, Rukmanidevi started participating in the forum when her husband was away. It was there that she at last learnt about rights to land. Later, in Asar 2070, when her husband Suruj said to her that they were going to take out a joint land ownership certificate for their house, she did not believe him. The husband brought out the land ownership certificate and said, "Now your name is also going to be added to it." She still did not believe him. She kept thinking, "I have to ask him even to sell just ten kilo of paddy, so how is he going to make out an ownership certificate in my name also?"

Says Rukmini: "The two of us went to Malangawa, we had our photos taken. After 43 years I saw the land ownership certificate, and I could believe it all only after my photo was pasted on to it. I also had soil in my name now." It was always I who sowed the paddy in the field but when there was a need to sell some paddy to meet some expenses I had to wait for my husband. "I sold this year's paddy this very month (Asoj) and my husband was in Kathmandu. We discussed this over the telephone and I sold the paddy to meet household expenses. I am now happy and contented. At the same time I feel an increased sense of responsibility also. And I have asked other women also to opt for joint ownership certificates."

The wives of those in the community who have somewhat more land say – Rukmini has now become a big landlord. But she only responds that she now feels bolder – I also have right to the soil, however much or little it may be. I make it a habit to say to them that by the way they also should discuss with their husbands about taking out joint ownership certificates. Once a joint ownership certificate materialises there will be greater affection within the family.

Suruj Kumar says: "The change seen in my wife after getting the joint ownership certificate has brought me great happiness. That is because we discuss among ourselves about everything that we embark upon. And we have met with success also. The wife looks after the house and the land. I earn something on the outside."

At present they are making efforts to add to the number of couples in the community who have made out joint ownership certificates. Rukmini discusses this with the women and Suruj Kumar does the same with the men, they say. They are also planning to call a gathering of couples soon to discuss the joint certificates.

JOINT CERTIFICATE HAS BROUGHT SECURITY, RESPECT

When talking about joint certificates there were those who ridiculed it as meaningless. Some did not even hesitate to allege that some individuals were out to sow dissension between man and wife, undermine whatever trust there was between them and instigate the women, all to serve their own ulterior motives. There were also times of despair when some people who work at the land office said that such work was a big headache and it might cause problems during land transactions in future. When it was pointed out that joint certificates were needed to reduce violence against women, some said husbands will not stop beating their wives if they do not do as they are told, joint ownership notwithstanding. Undaunted by all this, those with land who had organised themselves under the land right forum came up with a code of conduct requiring them to compulsorily opt for joint ownership. Once the advantages of this was explained to them, people started opting for joint ownership certificates.

Since the arrangement came into force requiring people to spend only Rs 100 to add the wife's name also to a land ownership certificate held in the husband's name, 44 couples in Baitadi, Dadeldhura and Kailali have taken out joint ownership certificates. This work is something new even for the staff at the land revenue office while some government officials themselves have started asking how such an arrangement came about. Even members of ordinary families that are associated with the land rights forum take pride in being able to furnish an answer.

When Basanti Tirwa of Baitadi opted for a joint ownership certificate, she was ridiculed by neighbours. Land owned by the husband is already owned by the wife also. Why was it necessary to include the wife's name in the certificate itself, they would ask. Some went so far as to comment that the women were being instigated by certain entities that were acting out of their own motives. But Basanti Tirwa is now in fact happy with the new arrangement. Four brothers had paternity rights to her husband's land. When the joint ownership certificate was made their shares in the land were separated out. With their separate land ownership certificates, the four were able to get four separate electricity meters from the electricity office. She is of the opinion that had it not been for the joint ownership arrangement the paternal property would not have gotten partitioned. Without the partition, there would have been only one electricity meter for the four families. The joint ownership certificate has come in handy for seeking services from the government also.

It has been one year since 37 families at Srikot acquired ownership of their land. With the help of the land rights forum, 32 of the families that have received the ownership certificates have converted these into joint ownership certificates. The women of Srikot, who had abandoned hope of even their menfolk acquiring ownership papers, are now happy that they too have become land owners. With the joint ownership paper, she feels that she can survive on her own if need be, says Sundari Bhul of Srikot. For 32 families in Srikot, they were yesterday equal only in thought, but the joint ownership certificate has now rendered them equal in terms of evidence also.

It is not only women who take pride in the joint ownership certificate. It has enthused the menfolk also and enhanced their will power. Campaign worker Prem BK of Kailali sees a difference of energy between yesterday's theoretical talk against violence perpetrated on women and the evidence-based approach of today. He says their campaign is now no longer limited to injunctions. They have also started setting an example of what they can do. There is no need to answer whether one is against violence targeted at women. One just needs to show the ownership certificate.

In making out joint land ownership certificates, it is not just women but also the men who have felt a sense of self-respect. Kailali's Prem BK is a rights worker. He has no problem speaking out about women's rights. Because he has himself set an example by making out a joint ownership certificate and establishing one woman's right to property.

When farmers in Jogbudha took out joint land ownership certificates, the director general of the Department of Land Reform and Management also turned up. He encouraged the couples opting for joint ownership certificates and assured them that other problems relating to land would be taken care of also. This has increased pressure on social campaigners, teachers and political workers to go for joint certificates also. The sixth village council of Jogbudha, which concluded on January 12, 2014, set aside a sum of Rs 150,000 for imparting training at three localities concerning women's empowerment, the chaupadi tradition and joint land ownership certificates.

Fourty-four people in Baitadi, 47 in Dadeldhura and 13 in Kailali, or a total of 104, have made out joint land ownership certificates and established women's equal right to land.



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