

# Factsheet: Promoting the Implementation of the UNDROP in Nepal

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – 51<sup>st</sup> Session (January-February 2026)

Submission by the Social Work Institute (SWI)

Founded in 1988, the Social Work Institute (SWI) is a Nepali NGO promoting **social and climate justice, agroecology, food sovereignty, and community empowerment**. Through participatory research, education, and advocacy, SWI and its partners amplify the voices of peasants, women, youth, and rural communities to achieve equitable and sustainable development in Nepal.

The Social Work Institute (SWI) and its national partners – Himalayan Permaculture Centre (HPC), Karnali Development Co-operation Service Society (KDCSS), Interdependent Society Surkhet (ISS), and the Agroecological Youth Network (AYN) – have jointly advanced advocacy for the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)* in Nepal. This engagement, based on comparative legal studies, action research and grassroots consultations involving peasants, youth, women, and children from rural communities, culminated in a civil society submission for the UPR of Nepal (January 2026).

Nepal voted in favor of both the adoption of the UNDROP (2018) and the establishment of the UN Working Group on Peasants' Rights (2023), demonstrating its global commitment to protect the rights and dignity of rural communities. Yet, domestic implementation of these commitments remains incomplete.

## Current Situation

Over 60% of Nepal's population depends on agriculture, yet a large share of peasants remain food insecure. The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act (2018) legally guarantees peasants' rights and food sovereignty, alongside other laws. However, gaps in policy coherence, weak institutional mechanisms, and fragmented federal coordination hinder their implementation. Despite constitutional guarantees - including the rights to food sovereignty, equality, housing, social security, and a clean environment - peasants and rural workers remain among Nepal's most marginalized groups. The absence of a comprehensive agriculture law, combined with scattered and poorly implemented policies, prevents a holistic and rights-based approach to rural development.

Nepalese peasants face multiple challenges:

- **Fragmented Policy Framework:** Nepal lacks a comprehensive umbrella law on agriculture, and existing policies often overlap or contradict each other.
- **Weak Institutional Coordination:** Limited cooperation among federal, provincial, and local authorities hinders effective policy implementation.
- **Restricted Market Access:** Peasants face unfair competition from low-cost imports and lack adequate infrastructure for storage, processing, and distribution.
- **Youth Disengagement:** Agriculture is not widely regarded as a dignified or viable profession, leading to high levels of rural youth migration.
- **Limited Access to Resources:** Many smallholders struggle to access land, affordable credit, and markets.
- **Inequitable Social Services:** Rural communities continue to face barriers to quality education, healthcare, and social protection.
- **Economic Insecurity:** Low and unstable agricultural incomes keep many peasants trapped in cycles of poverty.

- **Lack of participation:** Peasants remain largely excluded from decision-making and policy dialogue.
- **Rising climate Vulnerability:** Increasingly frequent floods, droughts, and land degradation threaten livelihoods and food security.

Existing agricultural and environmental laws often conflict or neglect peasants' realities. The government has yet to integrate UNDROP principles into a Comprehensive Agriculture and Food Policy ensuring dignity, equity, and sustainability for all rural people.

#### **Nine Priority Areas for Reform – Key recommendations:**

1. **Legal Framework:** Enact a **comprehensive agriculture law** aligned with UNDROP; Reform the **Seed Act** to protect farmers' seed rights.
2. **Food Sovereignty:** Strengthen local food systems and uphold peasants' right to define their agricultural models.
3. **Youth & Children:** Integrate agroecology into school curricula; provide quality education and health services for children and youth in rural areas.
4. **Fair Wages:** Ensure fair wages and pricing for agricultural products; Declare the purchase of produce below production cost as an *Unfair Trade Practice* and ensure fair minimum prices.
5. **Access to Land:** Reform land laws to ensure equitable access and security of tenure for marginalized groups like landless peasants, Dalits, and youth.
6. **Fair Markets:** Regulate agricultural imports, promote local markets, and invest in rural storage and processing infrastructure.
7. **Social Security & Dignity:** Expand inclusive social protection for peasants and recognize farming as a dignified profession.
8. **Participation:** Ensure meaningful participation and inclusive representation of peasants in policymaking.
9. **Human Rights & Climate Change:** Develop **climate adaptation and compensation mechanisms** for smallholders to ensure compensation for climate-induced losses and support community-led adaptation.
10. **Ecological Rights:** Safeguard seed sovereignty, biodiversity, and traditional knowledge from corporate monopolization.