

## Trade Union Position on Indigenous People in Nepal

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### Indigenous people in Policy frame

The major trade union confederations of the country cover most of the segments of workers in Nepali society. Peoples in various sub classes of the Nepali working class, peoples from most of the caste/ethnic groups, people from various regional origins are under organizational framework of the unions. As the focus of the new organizational activities is being centred on informal sector, both wage employed and self-employed groups of worker come under the process of unionization, where inclusion of indigenous people should be given emphasis by the union movement.

### Who are indigenous people in Nepali context?

Formal efforts from the state to define indigenous & ethnic people are not yet concretely done in Nepal and non government efforts are also based on particular prejudices.

Based on practices, those who do have following characteristic features can be categorized as indigenous people/Adivashis:

- Outside of Hindu Caste Hierarchy
- Land based
- Unique cultural identity or typical culture
- Special indigenous skill & Product
- Own language or dialect
- Concentration in a particular locality

In February 2001, HMG/N passed the 'National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act - 2058' under the Ministry of Local Development. The Act formally recognises 59 different groups as indigenous peoples/nationalities, who are therefore entitled to special development assistance directed towards these groups. There is a chapter on Indigenous peoples in the 10th 5 year plan and also some references

to their specific problems in the PRSP. According to the census figures over 1/3 of the population are from ethnic groups.

In our view, Indigenous people may be classified into four location-based categories:

Location-based categories	Groups
Terai	Satar, Rajbanshi, Meche, Koche, Jhangad, Kisan, Gangai, Dhimal, Tharu, Mushar, Kewat, Dusadh, Khatwe, Tajpuria
Inner Terai	Bote, Danuwar, Darai, Kumal, Majhi, Raji, Raute
Hill	Chepang, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Sunwar, Jirel, Newar, Bhujel, Chhantyal, Dura, Hayu, Kusunda, Pahari,
Mountain	Bhote, Sherpa, Thakali, Byashi, Walung

### Issues of workers from the indigenous origin

The issue of indigenous workers should be considered primarily as a class issue and secondly as the issue of discrimination based on gender, caste/ethnicity and region/location, which come on the surface as given below:

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Right, labour right and dignity</li> <li>• Land Right and Ownership on land &amp; natural resources</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern citizen rights &amp; consumer rights</li> <li>• Poverty and deteriorating living conditions</li> <li>• Exploitative working conditions</li> <li>• Unemployment and disguised unemployment</li> <li>• Minimum wages</li> <li>• Social Protection &amp; health protection</li> </ul>
Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social &amp; cultural identity</li> <li>• Educational opportunities</li> </ul>
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displacement &amp; migration</li> <li>• Socio-economic development</li> </ul>

These issues have overall impact on work relationship being faced by Adivashis and access to work on their part is highly influenced.

## How to integrate the issues in mainstream of labour issues

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Basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unionization &amp; organization</li> <li>• Policy-sensitization of trade union leadership</li> <li>• Workers education &amp; awareness creation</li> <li>• Education opportunities</li> <li>• Market access</li> <li>• Regular consultation &amp; interaction</li> <li>• Representation in political, economic, developmental and other concerning bodies</li> </ul>
Necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership development</li> <li>• Gender sensitive approach</li> <li>• Ensuring Participation in decision-making process &amp; structures</li> <li>• Labour inspection services in their favour</li> <li>• Resource mobilization for focused programmes</li> <li>• Policy lobbying</li> </ul>
Additional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross border contacts</li> <li>• Campaigning &amp; lobbying to influence political forums and political parties</li> <li>• Deal with issue of displacement through planned relocation &amp; resettlement activities</li> <li>• Ensure no attack on their economic self-reliance &amp; protection mechanism</li> </ul>

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### Go ahead with what type of organization/collaboration

- Trade unions in rural grassroots based on nature of the work
- Organizing in other relevant CBOs, POs, MOs & Co-ops
- Promoting their own socio-cultural forums
- Creating appropriate networking mechanism for collaboration

### Priority areas of activities

- Unionizing/organizing
- Right-based awareness building
- Wages, Market Access & Income generation
- Social protection

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