The statelessness experienced by Dalit and marginalized groups in Nepal is both a symptom and a cause of their exclusion which stems from discrimination based on difference, and it reinforces their lack of full membership in the societies they live in, making everyday life much more difficult and solidifying civil and political exclusion.

The land is the main asset for determining an individual's social status and standard of living in Nepali society. But most of the land suitable for crop cultivation is consequently occupied by more sedentary communities, eventually leading Dalit and marginalized communities to landlessness. Dalits’ landholdings are small and the landlessness among Dalits is extreme –36.7% Hill and 41.4% Madhesi Dalit are landless and this has made Dalits economically vulnerable and dependent upon landlords.
Such dependency is often exploited by the landlords, allowing for many cases of abuse against Dalits. Most Dalit victims of violence and discrimination are agricultural and occupational laborers who are generally landless. Likewise, one of the worst forms of slavery is still there in Nepal. Though the government has already liberated bonded laborers by decree and law, Dalits have still not been liberated nor have they benefited from rehabilitation programs and are still being forced to work as bonded labor as Haliya, Khali, and Charuwa.

So adding this point to the context, according to Nepal Citizenship Act 2006, one can apply for Nepali citizenship if he/she acquires some land in Nepal. Simply telling, those residing in the territory shall be considered citizens of Nepal and this is why most Dalits in Nepal are deprived of acquiring a citizenship certificate.

Similarly, one of the other major reasons for statelessness among Dalit and marginalized groups is the 'unacceptable' inter-caste marriage in Nepal. Most seriously, they are also refused the right to marry with free consent. With the continued atrocities on Dalit in the name of inter-caste marriages, where a higher-caste man marries a lower-caste woman. It also happens when non-Dalit women marry Dalit men. In both cases, the women bear the brunt of the disapproval of the marriage which eventually affects the children as they are denied getting citizenship because the name of the father is a must in having a citizenship certificate, and without acceptance of the relationship, it’s not possible. There is a relationship between land ownership, citizenship certificate, and access to government facilities. Dalits who are still landless, living as squatters have affected their rights as citizens.
Moreover, the idea of citizenship is associated not only with the holding of rights and responsibilities, equality, and inequality but also as a matter of a dignified life.

Without understanding the notion of citizenship the problem of diverse groups cannot be solved. To solve the problem of specific groups, a specific definition of citizenship is required because there are enormous injustices, oppression, and marginalization in democratic as well as in democratizing states, and recognition of citizenship is anything but a straightforward struggle.

With the constant effort toward overcoming the struggle, FEDO succeeded in helping 67 excluded women acquire their citizenship certificate for ensuring their right to live a dignified life. This eventually helped in their access to bank accounts for cash-based support. Among the 67 excluded women of Kailali, Bajura, Siraha, and Saptari districts, 5 were from the Brahmin/Chhetri community, 1 was from the Janajati community and 61 were from the Dalit community.

FEDO was also able to facilitate 27 children (14 girls and 13 boys) of excluded women to get their birth certificates. Total 94 (67 citizenships and 27 birth certificates) stateless women and children received their state identity.

Although the State has recognized the issue of exclusion and denial of citizenship by underscoring its major responsibility to establish the rights of all citizens to education, health, housing, employment, and food sovereignty, as well as to provide basic economic and social security, including land, to economically and socially backward groups, visible changes on the ground have been slow in coming, particularly in connection to the Dalit and marginalized community. So FEDO has been constantly supporting the excluded group on acquiring membership to the nation (citizenship) through the lobby, advocacy, and also by organizing various awareness programs on the importance of Citizenship and Participation to the Dalit and marginalized community.
"I am Rekha Devi Sada. I live in Kanchanpur Municipality 4, Jhankatta in Saptari district. There are three of us in the family, my husband, son, and myself. I am engaged in seasonal daily wages work at the village and sometimes near the market. Before the lockdown, my husband used to work as a construction worker in the cities like Kathmandu, Birtamod, Jhapa, etc., and sometimes did seasonal fishing in Koshi Tappu and sold that fish at the local market.

After lockdown, my husband could not go outside the village for the labor work. During that time, we went through a challenging phase. My husband used to drink alcohol and beat me. I tried my best and even took help from the community to stop the abuse. He always promised to change his habit in front of the community but the abuse repeated again and again.

I have been deprived of various opportunities and my own basic rights. I did not get my citizenship before marriage because I was underage. Looking at my condition, FEDO listed me in their relief support list and provided three lots of relief support, food and non-food items such as rice, dal, chana, sugar, cooking oil, medicines, soaps, salts, detergents, Dettol, cotton, oral rehydration solutions (ORC) and re-usable sanitary pad, gas stove, gas cylinders and mobile phone with data cards.

These food and non-food items supported us from starving for a few days. The second wave of the pandemic again put us in a more vulnerable position. We remained out of work and had no food to eat. I really want to understand why God is being merciless and repeatedly testing us like this? Having citizenship was compulsory in order to open a bank account.

With the support of FEDO, I finally was able to make my citizenship. I became a citizen of my country, which makes me very proud. I want to express special thanks to FEDO for helping me become a citizen of this country and providing me three lots of relief support for food and non-food items. I am also very happy because I can even vote to choose a good leader because of the citizenship in the upcoming days. I can utilize government services and benefits along with different kinds of allowances due to my citizenship. After receiving the citizenship, FEDO opened my own bank account. Now, I can save money in the bank if I will earn more. FEDO has said that I am also eligible to receive cash-based support from the organization. After receiving the money soon, I will invest it in my child’s education, health, and nutrition. I also plan to save a certain amount of money for future emergencies. I want to express my gratitude towards FEDO and humbly request continue support in the upcoming days.
I am Rajbati Sada, 47, from Piprapura 5, Saptari district, I had lost my citizenship card about 10 years ago, but recently got a new one made with the support of FEDO. I come from a marginalized village called Pipra Purwa of Saptari district where people are totally unaware of the value of citizenship. I lost my parents in my early childhood. Even though I lost my citizenship which I had made with the help of my maternal uncle before I got married, I did not make an effort to get it back since I was unaware of the value of having citizenship.

I don't even remember the name I had used in that citizenship card. I am from the Dalit community and marginalized too. I have been facing discrimination based on caste and poor economic conditions from my early childhood. This has deeply hurt my self-esteem and dignity. After I was included in the list of excluded women by FEDO, I learned about the value of having a citizenship and bank account.

I regard FEDO as my savior, for helping me solve my hand-to-mouth problems through comprehensive relief support and also to reissuing my citizenship and opening my personal bank account. I am very happy to get back my citizenship after these long years. Because daily wage work had halted, my family was surviving on one meal per day. I express my gratitude to FEDO and everyone involved in this relief support program during the pandemic. I thank God for sending FEDO to help people like us in need.