



## Origin of Asia Dalit Rights Forum

With its genesis in the upsurge created by the World Conference against Racism at Durban in 2001, which challenged the conscience of humankind against racism and other forms of inequality, cross-country solidarity building among Dalits has had a decade and a half old history. On that significant occasion, the powerful voice of the strong contingent of civil society organizations reverberated around the globe and caught the imagination of progressive human rights activists and social intellectuals, media pundits and donor partners, UN agencies and international governments regarding the form of hidden apartheid suffered by Dalit communities in India. This voice grew louder and stronger with Dalit communities in South Asian countries joining the chorus of protest against caste discrimination and violence suffered in their own respective countries, and asserting claims for their rights and entitlements. It is in this background that Asian Dalit Rights Forum as a collective of Dalit rights protagonists, originated as a germinal idea at the World Social Forum 2004 in Mumbai, India.

## News Letter Contains

1. **Work and Descent Based Discrimination (Dalits) in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).**
2. **Annihilate Caste and Other Structural Inequalities in Implementing SDG's**
3. **Asia Parliamentarians Conference on Dalit Concerns**
4. **South Asia Conference Towards a Regional Agenda on Social Inclusion and Dalit women's Concern**
5. **Regional People's Tribunal on Atrocities**
6. **Concluding Consultation on Regional Programme on Dalit Rights in South Asia**

## **1. Work and Descent Based Discrimination (Dalits) in Sustainable Development Goals.**

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals>

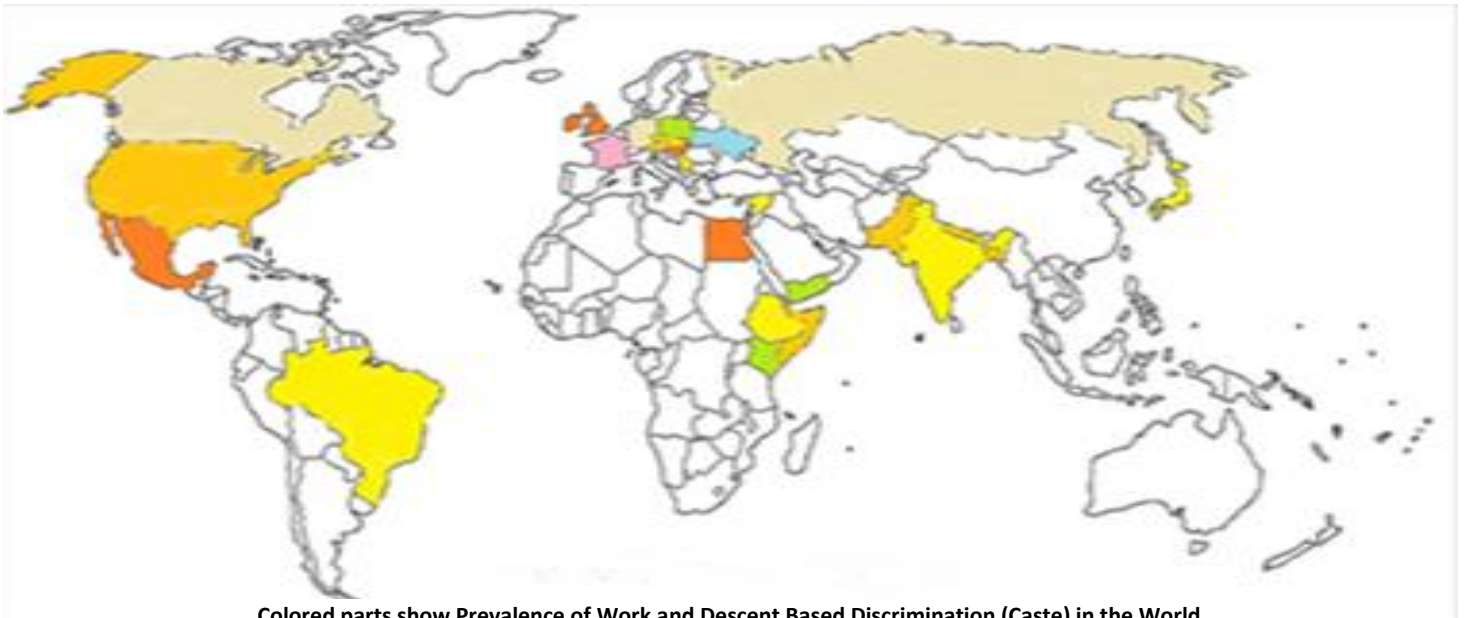
Caste based exclusion is often limited to Indian subcontinent, but in reality exclusion based on descent is a global phenomenon, which are found in Burakumin communities in Japan, Roma community in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, Quilambo in Brazil and Osu people around the world. 260 million people worldwide has been discrimination based on Work and Descent (Caste), especially women among these communities, faces the problem of caste based exclusion, segregation and violence. Caste is also an important determinant of intergenerational poverty due to exclusion from access to development and rule of law. Discrimination based on work and descent and other forms of discrimination are not only human rights violations but also major obstacles to achieving development. Inequalities inevitably diminish development gains and are among root causes of armed conflicts. Ineffective allocation of human resources due to discrimination based on work and descent distorts the labour market and affects the efficiency of an economy.



Parliamentarians Gian Chand(L1), Poonjo Bheel (L2) (Pakistan), Thilakarajah (L3) (Sri Lanka), Nurjahan Begham(L7) (Bangladesh), Meen Bishwakarma(R5) (APFDC Convenor), Jeet Gautam(R4) and Dulari Harijan(R3) with ADRF Members Ramesh Nathan(L4), Sono Khaghrani(L5), Siva Pagasam(L6), Paul Divakar(R6) (ADRF Chair), Afsana Alam(R2) and Bhakta Bishwakarma (R1).



The adopted **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals** has called for reducing inequality and giving equal rights with the motto of **Leaving No One Behind**. *However, is failed to recognize and therefore ignore those affected by the caste based exclusion and those Discriminated by Work and Descent who number over 260 million worldwide.* They face the problem of caste based exclusion and, gathered in one place, they would be the 6<sup>th</sup> largest nation in the world! Their issue needs to be recognized as an important determinant of poverty and as under-development in various countries especially in South Asia and in some Africa and Latin American countries.



Colored parts show Prevalence of Work and Descent Based Discrimination (Caste) in the World  
(<http://asiadalitrightsforum.org/publications.php>)

**'Leave no one behind'** encapsulates a holistic development framework. However this framework needs to take into account the situation of Dalits as those vulnerable and are affected by intergenerational poverty due to inherent systems of hierarchy and exclusion that prevent, discriminate and prohibit access to development and rule of law. It is integral for any inclusive developmental agenda to identify and recognize Caste as the major discriminatory or exclusionary factor in development, thus the importance of elimination of caste based exclusion should be represented through national policy and implementation. **For the SDGs to be transformational, it is essential that the Indicators take into account the current realities in many parts of the world that affect 260 million Dalits and those Discriminated by Work and descent.**





With SDGs focusing on the 'leaving no one behind' it has to ensure Dalits and other traditionally excluded communities to have gainful participation in the development process undertaken by Governments and all development stakeholders. They need to ensure transparency and participation of all communities which are crucial to access as well as to monitor the commitments made in achieving the SDGs and the targets.



Parliamentarians sitting Naba Kumar (L1), Ramdas Athawale (L2), B.L. Mungekar (India)(L4), APFDC Convenor Meen Bahadur Bishwakarma(L5), Kamala Bishwakarma(L6), Jit Bahadur Gautam (L7), Anita Pariyar, Sima Kumari Bishwakarma(Nepal), Md. Ishrafil Alam, Nurjahan Begam, Quazi Rosy, Manoranjan Shill Gopal, Gulam Mustafa (Bangladesh) with ADRF members Paul Divakar (Chairperson), Padam Sundas, Ganesh BK, Aloysius Irudayam and others

The focus has shifted from the global sphere to the national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. With Indicators for the implementation, follow up and review of SDGs is been finalizing in April, every states should atleast ensure basic minimum areas of inclusion for the Dalits and other structurally excluded communities. These areas of focus are (i) Affirmative Action, (ii) Access to Justice, (iii) Gender Justice, (iv) Youth and Child Rights, (v) Transparency, Accountability and Participation in development, (vi) Budgetary Rights, (vii) Environmental Rights and Humanitarian aid and (viii) Market and Private sector.

Regional cooperation in the monitoring and review with national implementation is crucial for the achieving the goals and targets of the SDGs. The regional cooperation would provide space for identifying best practices and knowledge sharing as well as creating a commitment from the national governments. The regional networks as well as the regional parliamentarians forums might play an important role in addressing the various issues like caste based discrimination and could intervene and do advocacy with the national governments for ensuring inclusion and participation in the development indicators.





## Interventions

### 1. Annihilate Caste and Other Structural Inequalities in Implementing SDG, New York, September 2015

Parallel event co-organized by Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF), Asia Parliamentarians Forum on Dalit Concerns (APFDC) and Regions Refocus 2015 (RR) on the inclusion of Caste based Discrimination in the SDG final document. This also coincided with the 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary celebration in Columbia University, where an interactive discussion was also conducted. Read more <http://bit.ly/1SEBYFj>

### 2. Asia Parliamentarians Conference on Dalit Concerns, Dhaka, Bangladesh, November 2015

Parliamentarians from Bangladesh, India and Nepal has come together to address the issue of Caste based discrimination in South Asia. A declaration was agreed in this meeting on a South Asian framework for the implementation of the policies especially under SDGs for inclusion and participation of Dalits. Read more <http://bit.ly/1SEDesi>

### 3. South Asia Conference Towards a Regional Agenda on Social Inclusion and Dalit women's Concern at Dhaka, Bangladesh 29.02.2016



APFDC Co-convenor Md. Ishrafil Alam (Extreme right) addresses the participants with Ramesh Nathan, Padam Sundas, Nurjahan Begham, Zakir Hussain, Belinda Bennet and Zulfiqar Alam were present

This conference was an attempt to build a robust dialogue between a wide range of stakeholders -government, civil society, international agencies, multilateral and bilateral agencies, private sector and the media – on addressing caste-based discrimination and promoting social inclusion in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, with a specific focus on the rights of Dalit women. The conference aimed to capture some of the best practices, strategies and achievements emerging from the South Asian countries on addressing caste-based discrimination and promoting equity and inclusion in different areas. These areas include policies and frameworks to improve government responses on this issue; affirmative action and diversity measures; addressing multiple discrimination against Dalit women; ensuring equal economic opportunities and employment rights; education, media and ICT to promote social inclusion; and localising the SGDs and leaving no one behind.





#### 4. Regional People's Tribunal on Atrocities on Dalits in South Asia, New Delhi, India, at Constitutional Club, New Delhi, India. March 2016



P L Punia, Chairperson of National Commission on Scheduled Caste, Government of India, inaugurated the Regional People's Tribunal (RPT) which provides a platform for victims and witnesses of caste-based discrimination and atrocities to highlight the insidious problems hindering access to justice in the sub-continent. He called for the human rights organisations to work impactful advocacy and interventions towards addressing the issues of the Dalits especially Dalit women. He expressed his sorrow towards victims of caste based violence and ensured that SC commission would play influential role in providing legal aid and justice for all who are affected by caste related violence.



Cases were deposited off with eminent jurists included Mr. Aakar Patel, Executive Director, Amnesty International; Ms. Anjali Bhardwaj, Co-convenor, National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information; Mr. CoenKompier, South Asia Specialist on International Labour Standards, ILO; Ms. Ruth Manorama, President, National Alliance of Women (NAWO); Justice (Rtd) C. L. Thool, Chairperson (Acting), State Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Commission, Maharashtra; and Dr. Ram Krishna Timalsena, Former Registrar Supreme Court of Nepal and Executive Directive National Law College, Lalitpur, Nepal.

**The 13 cases presented come from Bangladesh, Nepal and India. Some of the cases being heard by the Tribunal includes, from Nepal, LaxmiRaut Dom a Dalit man belonging to Dom community was discriminated on the basis of untouchability in denying access to community water resource; from Bangladesh, Shree Dulal Chand Rabidas, A Dalit youth who was physically abused by the local representative; from India two Dalit children aged 2 years and 9 months were charred to death in Faridabad and dismissal of safaikaramcharis from their post in Delhi university without providing any reason.**





## 5. Asia Pacific CSO Forum on Sustainable Development March-April 2016, Bangkok

The Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development was convened by ESCAP in collaboration with Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) on behalf of Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM) as a preparatory event for the APFSD. Following on the progress of the region in bringing the concept of Development Justice<sup>1</sup> to the attention of the global community, and the establishment of AP-RCEM2 in 2014,



the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 will bring civil society organizations from different sectors and countries together to explore common ground and actions and develop common messages for the APFSD, as well as coordinate strategies for more meaningful participation in the regional intergovernmental processes for sustainable development. ADRF Chairperson Paul Divakar represented Dalit voice in this conference, where he brought out the importance of caste based exclusion on the poverty and under development especially in South Asia.

## 6. Concluding Consultation on Regional Programme on Dalit Rights in South Asia. - March 2016

The consultation focused on the experiences of the teams in implementing various programmes from Rights of Dalit Women, Access to Justice and initiation of a South Asian Parliamentarians Forum on Dalit Concerns. The group discussed various hurdles and challenges faced by them in various stages of the programme implementation.





The group also discussed the experiences and the learning in distinguished aspects, such as training the DHRD, inclusion of women, interactions and working with the Parliamentarians etc. and taking this learning forward towards working for the community. This meeting was attended by Dr. Belinda Bennet (CEO), Ms. Manisha Majumdar, Ms. Jaysree Mangubhai and others from Change Alliance; Dr. Ramesh Nathan (General Secretary), Adv. Rahul Singh, Mr. Kamal Kispotta, Ms. Nalori Chakma, Dr. Deepak Nikarthil, Ms. Jesi Antony and others from NCDHR; Padam Sundas (Chairperson), Ram Bahadur Chamakdar and others from Samata Foundation and Mr. Zakir Hussian (Director), Afsana Amin and others from Nagorik Uddyog.

**ADRF is a platform of Dalits and those working with Dalits in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka:**

- Committed to the Empowerment and Emancipation of Communities subjected to descent and work based (caste based) discrimination and violence (DWDV).
- Aiming at Addressing Violations of the Rights and Entitlements of these communities, in particular their women and children, in the respective countries as well as collectively in Asia.
- Supporting all those Communities subjected to DWDV in Any Part of the World in their noble aspirations and courageous struggles to establish an inclusive society that is marked by equity and equality, dignity and self-governance, justice and freedom.
- Committed to Collaborating with all National and International Agencies - civil society organizations and human rights agencies, UN bodies and state institutions espousing the cause of eliminating DWDV and building an inclusive and egalitarian society in Asia, Africa, Europe, and elsewhere in the world.
- Committed in Collaborating with the People's Representatives from Asia and World in addressing the issue of caste based discrimination in the policy making and implementation.

ADRF is currently has members from five countries including **Bangladesh** (Bangladesh Dalit and other Excluded Rights Movement, Nagorik Uddyog), **India** (Swadhikar-National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights [NCDHR]) **Nepal** (Feminist Dalit Organisation, Dalit NGO Federation, Jagaran Media Centre, Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization, Samata Foundation, Rashtriya Dalit Network, Dalit National Federation), **Pakistan** (Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network) and **Sri Lanka** (Human Development Organisation). ADRF has also have solidarity members from **Japan** (Buraku Liberation League) and the International Movement Against Dalit Rights (IMADR)



# Asia Dalit Rights Forum

NEWS LETTER  
JANUARY – MARCH  
2016



ADRF and APFDC Members Meet for the UN-SDG meet in New York, September 2015

Sitting: (L-R) Dulari Harijan, Suresh Kudikkunil, Nurjahan Begam, Meen Bishwakarma, Gian Chand, Jit Bahadur Gautam, M Thilakarajah (Parliamentarians); Standing (L-R) Beena Pallical, Mary Alice Jackson, Chandrasen Rao, Satyendra Kumar, Deepak Nikarthis, Rem Bahadur BK, Ajay Singh, Ganesh BK, Sono Khagharani, Paul Divakar, Ramesh Nathan, Bhakta Bishwakarma, Poonjo Bheel, Anita Nayar, Vimal Thorat, Burnard Fathima, Annie Namala, Logeswary Ponnaiih, Aloysius Irudayam, Aiav Kumar, Satish Kumar, Prasad Sirivella and Rahul Singh.

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