

End caste discrimination

~ Support the Dalits

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**IT AFFECTS 260 MILLION
PEOPLE WORLDWIDE**

Dalit Network Netherlands



A global outrage

Caste discrimination is one of the most serious human rights issues in the world today. It affects 260 million people worldwide, the vast majority of whom live in South Asia.

Because of their caste, Dalits are excluded and segregated to an extent that is – not in law but in practice – comparable to conditions during South Africa's apartheid regime. The practice of treating human beings as “untouchables” causes unacceptable suffering on a massive scale. Dalits face abuse, violence, modern-day slavery, rape, humiliation, torture and even death. Untouchability is mostly outlawed in countries affected by it, but a lack of implementation leaves Dalits with little protection.

Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN) works against caste discrimination, which subjects 260 million people worldwide to inhuman treatment, poverty and exclusion.

The exclusion of Dalits also leads to extreme poverty, hunger and disease while at the same time they lag behind in reaping the fruits of development e.g. in the areas of education, health and employment opportunities. It also rules out their involvement in decision making and meaningful participation in public and civil life.



Dhaka, Bangladesh. Dalit sweepers' slum without safe drinking water, electricity, health facilities or schools.



A Dalit sewage worker in Mumbai. He is lowered down into the pipe to clean it with his bare hands. No protective gear is provided by the government to shield him from the human waste. He simply dives in!

Who we are

Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN) is a network of Dutch civil society organizations, working together to fight caste discrimination on a national and international level.

DNN currently consists of Cordaid, ICCO & Kerk in Actie, Justitia et Pax, the India Committee of the Netherlands and Mensen met een Missie.

DNN was founded in 1998, in reaction to the call of the Indian network National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), which consisted of numerous Dalit organizations in India. While celebrating 50 years of Indian independence, they concluded that their situation as Dalits still had not improved, regardless of laws and regulations. Their human rights were still being violated on a large scale. Because caste discrimination is a global human rights issue, and not purely an Indian phenomenon, they decided to ask the international community to support their cause of struggling for Dalit human rights.

At present DNN and its members have active relations with partner organizations in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL DALIT SOLIDARITY NETWORK (IDSN)

DNN is a member of the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), an international network consisting of national advocacy platforms in caste-affected countries in South Asia, Dalit Solidarity Networks in Europe (such as DNN), international associates and research associates. IDSN links the local struggle against caste-based oppression with international mechanisms and institutions in order to change policies and practices that lead to caste discrimination. DNN plays an active role within IDSN.

What we do

DNN works on a national and international level for the elimination of caste discrimination and similar forms of discrimination based on work and descent. DNN focuses on Dalit women as well as on the connected areas of caste discrimination such as child and bonded labour and corporate social responsibility.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Caste discrimination and the human rights violations that inevitably follow can only be eliminated if decision makers at all levels decide to take action. It is a global human rights issue, which must be dealt with by governments and the international community.

DNN works at the following levels:

DUTCH GOVERNMENT

The Dutch government and members of parliament can raise the issue of caste discrimination in their bilateral relations with India and in international bodies such as the UN or EU. For that reason, DNN lobbies Dutch decision makers. As a result, the struggle against caste-based discrimination is supported by the parliament, and has become an important issue in Dutch foreign policy over the last couple of years.

EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union has strong economic and political relations and development co-operation with caste-affected countries and is an active player in the United Nations human rights forums. Together with IDSN the Dalit Network Netherlands does advocacy work with the institutions of the European Union to raise and tackle caste-based discrimination in the fields of development co-operation, humanitarian aid, political and human rights dialogue, trade and corporate accountability. We also urge the EU to take up the issue in several forums of the United Nations.

Change has to come from within caste-affected countries themselves, but DNN raises awareness and engages with policy makers at national and international levels in order to create pressure from the outside.

UNITED NATIONS

DNN also supports IDSN in its work on the acceptance and adoption of the draft 'UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent'. This draft is the result of years of work in the UN, especially the Human Rights Council and its predecessor the Human Rights Commission, raising the issue of caste-based discrimination. DNN and IDSN also raise the issue with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

INFORMING AND ADVISING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Business operations in caste-affected countries are at a high risk of being based on the economic exploitation of Dalits and other groups at the “low” end of the caste hierarchy. Violations of national and international human rights standards regularly occur, especially in the supply chain of companies.

Common examples of caste discrimination in business operations are:

- Exploitation of workers from caste-affected communities, including the use of children and bonded labourers (debt slaves), working under hazardous conditions for minimal pay.
- Discrimination in employment practices – applicants from caste-affected communities are often not considered for skilled jobs.
- Misappropriation of land belonging or allocated to caste-affected communities.

TOOLS FOR COMPANIES

Companies that are active in caste-affected countries can prevent and tackle Dalit discrimination by including it in their corporate social responsibility policy and practices. DNN provides information and advice to such companies, based on the *Ambedkar Principles*, which are principles and guidelines to address caste discrimination in the private (corporate) sector. It covers employment issues as well as community related and social issues affected by corporate decisions.

In addition, companies are encouraged to use the *Dalit Discrimination Check*, a web-tool developed specifically to help companies identify and prevent discrimination and exploitation of Dalits in their Indian operations and suppliers. The use of these tools are also, at the request of DNN, recommended to companies by the Ministry of Economic Affairs of The Netherlands.

To download the Dalit Discrimination Check and/or the Ambedkar Principles:
www.dalits.nl/companies



Celebrate death and mourn the newborn! The lives of Dalit street sweepers are so poor that death is often preferred above life. The sweeping makes them sick. With no protective gear they often suffer from skin diseases, cholera, tbc and asthma.

CAMPAIGNING

In order to persuade actors in both the political and the private sectors to tackle caste discrimination, it is important that the general public demands change. DNN aims to inform Dutch citizens, and motivates them to support our campaign or set up a new initiative. To this end, DNN has developed promotional and educational materials such as a photo exhibition, a documentary and, recently, a leaflet with ten ideas to make a difference. An official opinion poll showed that the Dutch public is more knowledgeable about caste discrimination than five years ago and more willing to act against it.

DNN runs the campaign 'End caste discrimination – support the Dalits'. An online petition can be signed, in which the Dutch government and the European Union are asked to

- 1** Make caste discrimination a priority in the political, economical and developmental relations with the countries where these human right violations occur;
- 2** Exert the maximum effort in order to achieve an active policy on caste discrimination in the UN;
- 3** Ensure that European companies implement an active anti-discrimination, pro-recruitment and schooling policy for Dalits.

Contact

Members of DNN:

Mensen met een Missie:	www.mensenmeteenmissie.nl <i>(only in Dutch)</i>
Cordaid	www.cordaid.nl
ICCO	www.icco.nl
Justitia et Pax	www.justitiaetpax.nl
India Committee of the Netherlands	www.indianet.nl

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Cover photograph: *Dalit children are at a high risk of becoming child labourers. Being discriminated at school by fellow students and teachers, they often give up on their education and start working.*



An elderly Dalit woman prepares for the night in her shelter next to a village in Bihar, India.

10 FACTS ABOUT CASTE DISCRIMINATION

- 1 *Untouchable, paria, harijan* are some of the terms used for those who now call themselves Dalit. The overwhelming majority of Dalits live in poverty.
- 2 Although India has good legislation against untouchability, the Indian Prime Minister compared the real situation to apartheid in South Africa.
- 3 In almost 40% of Indian schools Dalit children are seated separately.
- 4 Dalits are often the victims of crimes for which the perpetrator is not sued or convicted.
- 5 In 75% of all villages Dalits are prohibited to enter a non-Dalit's home.
- 6 Most child labourers and 'bonded' labourers (modern slaves) are Dalits.
- 7 Dalits play a major role in the supply chain of companies producing for the Dutch market, including garments, leather and natural stone.
- 8 Sexual and other violence against Dalit women is widespread. They are discriminated thrice: because they are Dalit, poor and women.
- 9 In all countries there are organizations of Dalits fighting for their human rights. The Dalit Network Netherlands supports these local organizations.
- 10 According to the 2001 census, there are some 167 million Dalits in India alone. There will be around 200 million now.