



National Consultation

'Exclusion of Dalits - Disaster Risk Reduction interventions - Effective civil society Monitoring'

18th & 19th June 2010

Jacaranda I, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Organised by:

Sphere India



National Dalit Watch-NCDHR



Cordaid



Oxfam India



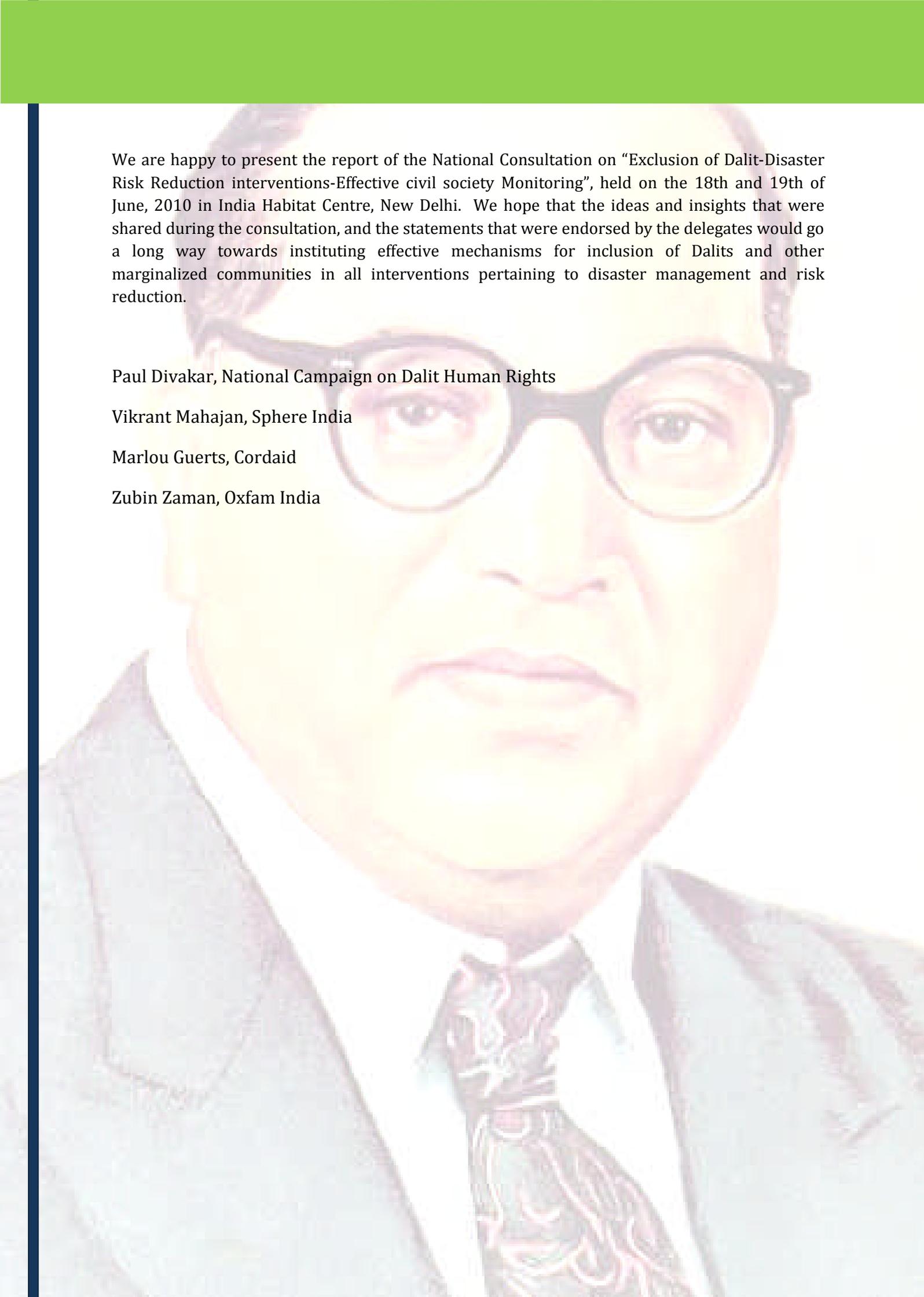
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PREFACE

Disasters, both natural and man made are now becoming a part of common man's life especially in the rural India. Flood, droughts, cyclones are becoming common annual occurrences. Devastation in some recent disaster, right from the Gujarat earthquake 2001 till the floods of 2009 in Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka have spell ruined the lives of the most marginalised and vulnerable people. Their vulnerability is both social and locational. Unbelievable but true, these most vulnerable sections that have been worst hit with these disasters are Dalits, apart from some other minority sections. The agony of DALITS is further perpetuated by caste based exclusionary practices in DRR interventions by keeping them away from just system of relief and recovery.

The facts of exclusion in some of the major disasters of our times (Tsunami in 2004, Bihar Floods in 2007 and 2008) and more recently of floods in Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka in 2009 have just further validated the otherwise well established fact of caste based exclusion and discrimination of Dalits in disasters. Hard core evidences have been gathered through the studies conducted by the National Dalit Watch (NDW) of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in the events of these recent disasters. Recognizing the need to institute a policy environment that recognizes such discrimination and defines entitlements of survivors in a manner that makes the state accountable at local levels, NDW-NCDHR, and Cordaid proposed that a National Consultation be organized jointly with many CSOs on this pressing issue. To this end, a planning meeting was also held on 18th May 2010, at NCDHR, New Delhi, which had participation of from NGOs, INGOs, and Humanitarian agencies. Following the preparatory meeting Sphere India, a National Coalition of Humanitarian Agencies, and Oxfam India expressed their willingness to jointly organize this National Consultation with NDW-NCDHR and Cordaid.

The National Consultation aimed to bring together civil society organizations, International NGOS, experts in the field of disaster response, mitigation and preparedness, senior government officials (National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) and nodal ministries such as Ministry of Home Affairs) and officers from the UN bodies to deliberate on the issue of exclusion of Dalits from all disaster related interventions, so as to conceive effective solutions for their inclusion. The Consultation reviewed the existing evidence and experiences of exclusion, developed guidelines for developing tools to monitor dalit exclusion, map caste-induced vulnerability by civil society organizations and finalized an agenda for advocacy. We were fortunate to have Prof. Vinod Menon, Member of the NDMA and many other highly experienced persons giving their inputs and suggestions during the National Consultation on the issue of making the government systems, legislations and policy on disaster management inherently inclusive in Disaster Risk Reduction.



We are happy to present the report of the National Consultation on “Exclusion of Dalit-Disaster Risk Reduction interventions-Effective civil society Monitoring”, held on the 18th and 19th of June, 2010 in India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. We hope that the ideas and insights that were shared during the consultation, and the statements that were endorsed by the delegates would go a long way towards instituting effective mechanisms for inclusion of Dalits and other marginalized communities in all interventions pertaining to disaster management and risk reduction.

Paul Divakar, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights

Vikrant Mahajan, Sphere India

Marlou Guerts, Cordaid

Zubin Zaman, Oxfam India

Purpose and Flagging issues of Equity

The first day of the National Consultation commenced with an inaugural session with which issues pertaining to the Exclusion of Dalits in Disaster Risk Reduction and equity in DRR were flagged off by the distinguished panellists all of whom have made significant contribution in the field of social inclusion in humanitarian interventions during disasters.

Panellists- Dr. Harsh Mander , Member, National Advisory Council & Special Commissioner, Supreme Court, Ms. Belinda Bennet, South Asia Representative, Christian Aid, Ms. Marlou Geurts, Sr. Programme Officer, Cordaid, Netherlands, Mr. N.M. Prusty, Chairperson, SPHERE India and Dr. S.D.J.M. Prasad (NCDHR)



The impact of disasters depends on the nature and intensity of the event, but in all cases the impact varies according to the degree of vulnerability of the social groups that constitute the affected population. This gives enough ground to demonstrate different strategies during disasters to ensure inclusion and equitable outreach to the marginalised. The menace of discrimination by 'default' or the claim of it being unintended in DRR by those in power and authority has to be challenged. For this it is important for government and NGOs to possess disaggregated data on vulnerable and at-risk people.

It is vital to introspect how 'inclusive' the civil society organisations are in their approach and whether our culture, policies and procedures are inclusive at all. Strategies of government agencies, NGOs and international agencies should be specific to the needs of the dalit community. This would be possible only with a scientific assessment of their vulnerabilities and needs. It is important to remember that the communities in India are heterogeneous and have different needs. The principle of 'neutrality'ⁱ (equal approach to all in disasters) should not lead to neglect or negation of the existence of inhuman caste based discrimination in DRR interventions. The principle of neutrality certainly doesn't contradict affirmative action for the vulnerable groups; nor does it mean that heterogeneity should not be acknowledged and factored into our interventions. The fact that authorities mention of disasters is that emergencies create a common cause. Specific strategies for future emergencies have to be devised ensuring priority

in all relief and rehabilitation measures for the most vulnerable sections of people in disaster-prone areas, enumerating them in advance and ensuring their capacity to withstand future disasters.

Man made disasters caused due to ethnic and communal violence and genocide, like in Gujarat in 2002, has also witnessed the unequal approach of recovery to the victims and survivors. Absence of acknowledgment, remorse, reparation and justice stops the process of healing after human made disasters and caste based atrocities. Absence of acknowledgment, remorse, reparation and justice stops the process of healing after human made disasters and caste based atrocities.

Each group has different priorities in the rehabilitation process and the needs are not synonymous. Different groups are hit differently; those with no capacity find it hard to rebuild their lives. Providing services in disaster relief and rehabilitation without the realisation of community specific requirements and concerns is likely to cause more damage than relief. Women being more socially and economically vulnerable than men in most societies, are affected more than men. The burden of looking after their family members falls more heavily on them. During the Latur earthquake, the issue of gender bias came up extensively in rescue operations. The needs of women are not really effectively assessed during such events nor adequately provided for, which results in a large number of women's deaths in disasters. The post-earthquake deaths were more of women than men in Latur; the reason was crystal clear. The women did not receive as much medical care as did the men. A clear instance of gender bias in the social value of giving medical care and attention to women! A man's life is valued more than that of a woman in a patriarchal society.

Existing laws, policies and guidelines are not comprehensive enough to capture the sensitive issue of caste based disparity in emergencies. Their implementation is biased. Therefore, a transformation is called for at the policies and legislations levels, which in principle bear the notion of equity in a broader sense, but do not really work to ensure the same in practice. Hence, the best would be to convert Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) guidelines into a central Act like NREGA, so that it becomes enforceable and a right of the disaster-stricken people. Relief and Rehabilitation should be viewed from the human rights perspective to make it a rightful claim of the people of the state/nation.

The root causes of disasters need to be attended, which could be a result of societal transformation and rampant development leading to corrosion of the nature. The leaders and parliamentarians need to be sensitised on the issue to have an appropriate piece of legislation in place. Communities need to be better capacitated to help them recover from the effect of disasters. Preparedness and equitable approach to all social groups in disasters should be the norm of planning in DRR policies. Transformation in the humanitarian domain could at least be worked out by creating monitoring tools and guidelines together with SPHERE India.

Presentations from the states where exclusion monitoring studies were undertaken (Evidence of exclusion)

The session was designed to bring forth some of the vicarious findings and evidences of segregation and exclusion of Dalits from Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation interventions through the monitoring studies jointly undertaken by NDW and its partners/constituents in the states of Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Assam- the post Tsunami interventions of NCDHR. The notion was to deliberate on such instances of systemic collapse that failed to see dalits as victims of natural calamity, and went on to discriminate in every possible manner in relief and later stages of recovery.

Panellists- Mr. Benoy Acharya, Director, Unnati, Dr. Wilson Bezwada, Director, Safari Karmachari Andolan, Mr. Leslie Martin, Dalit Watch-Andhra Pradesh, Ms. Asha Kowtal, Human Rights Forum for Dalit Liberation-Karnataka, Mr. Ravindranath, Director, Rural Volunteer Centre – Assam, Mr. Mukhtar-ul-Haque, Dalit Watch – Bihar & Mr. Munish Kaushik, Cordaid Advisor, CMDRR India Programme



Dalits were affected badly during the Tsunami in 2004, Bihar floods in 2007 and 2008 and recent floods in Assam, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in 2009. The findings have been almost similar and the fact that the victims have still not received their rightful compensation even for the death of their loved ones speaks volumes about exclusion; perhaps 'Exclusion by Default'. Dalits were the last to receive any aid. Internal political rivalries and local leaders' involvement in overseeing the relief operation at all stages, made the simple process of getting information and relief distribution hard and biased. Even the fodder for their animals was diverted to non dalits for their livestock and did not reach dalits to help them sustain their livestock. The losses and deaths among the dalit survivors were not properly recorded and enumerated.

Floods in Bihar and Assam are a perennial phenomenon. Of the 500 households surveyed in Assam this year, 388 houses were entitled to compensation following 2009 floods, which never reached them. Neither the government nor the community was aware of the entitlements to be granted and received. This was the level of unconsciousness regarding the CRF guidelines. Of these 500 families, relief that reached 487 families lasted only a day for them. The scenario at present is such that those empathising with the Dalit cause are accused of Naxalism. Powerful

landlords usurped the land that originally belonged to tribals, which led to tension between the landless tribals and the authorities. Naxalism spreads in situations like this because of the desperation and helplessness of tribals and dalits. The loss of Dalit lives, houses and possessions are the highest in floods. Not only is the physical loss highest suffered by them, but they are not even protected and rescued in time. In Bihar 2007 and 2008 (Kosi) floods it was found that boats were too limited in number that were obviously used for rescuing the upper castes and well off people.

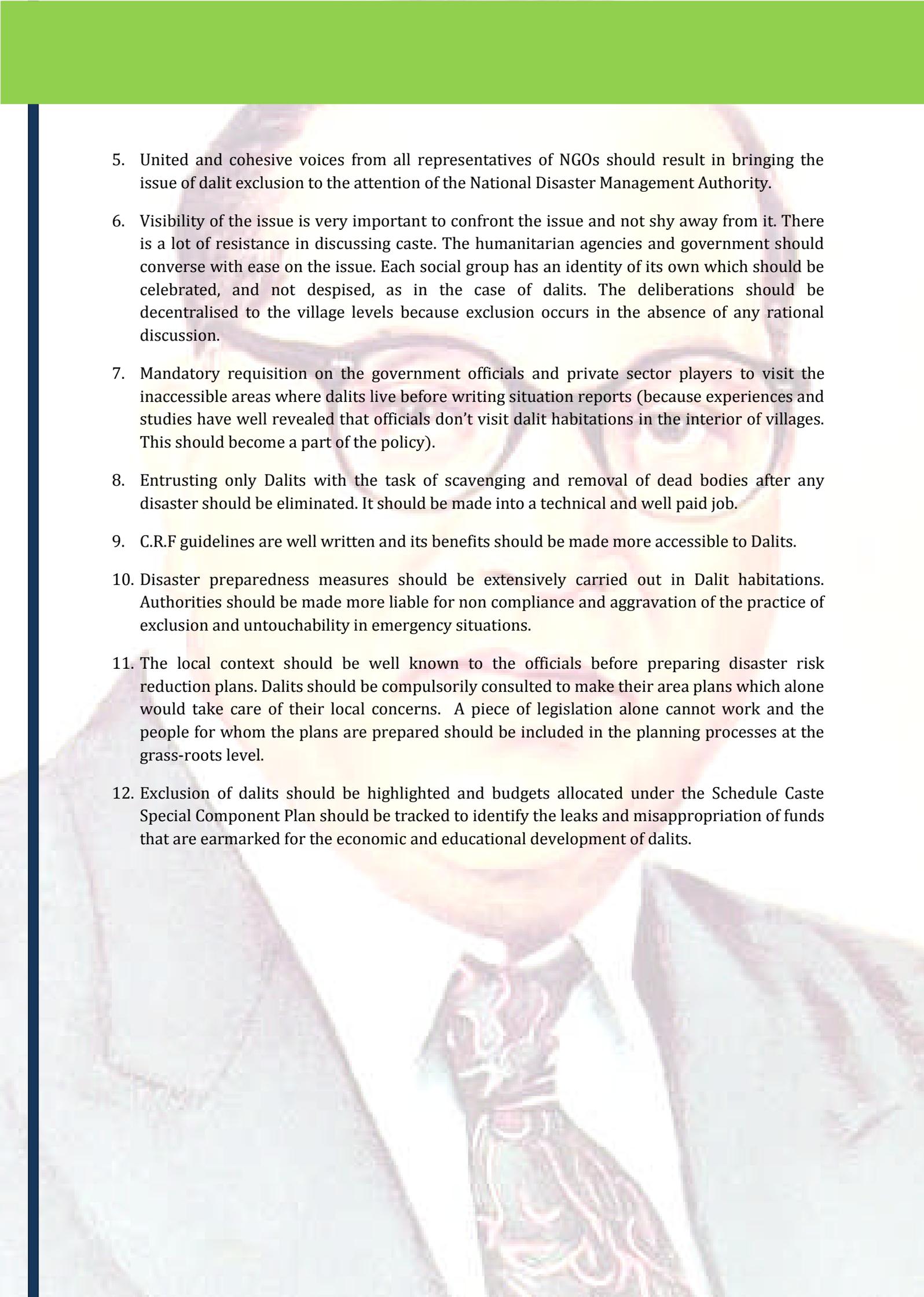
Regional imbalances on account of privatisation, which is becoming the development mantra, apathy and ignorance in Northern Karnataka signals a very unhealthy trend in the state of Karnataka. Donations in crores flowed in from different corners of the world and has still not been accounted for. The state government also has been promoting the relief distribution services through the religious mutts (congregations), which have further aggravated the caste based discrimination of dalits. These dalit families have lost their homes and sources of livelihood. The situation is distressing and people have still not been compensated for their loss.

Bengal again is the most frequented with disasters due to natural calamity with the recent Aila cyclone. The annual flooding of Ganges and the recent flooding of Sunderbans with the Aila cyclone have had disastrous effect on Dalits. Aila has left them devastated, but till date there has been no reparation and adequate support for rehabilitation from the government to the cyclone victims. Livelihood of a sizeable Dalit population in Bengal has come under constant threat due to continuous disasters. People's land is also getting submerged in the Ganges, which has further propelled them to live on as nomads. This issue of Bengal, however, has never been talked of at higher levels, not even by the humanitarian agencies, which now need to be given its required attention.

It is difficult to build confidence among dalits due to their long suppression. Being a "Dalit" makes a person more "Vulnerable" by default. It so happens that sometimes the dalits may be allowed to partake in group based 'activities' at the village levels with the upper castes, but they are denied membership to that 'group'. Therefore, a high degree of sensitization and social engineering is required in other community members as well. Government's attention needs to be sought on the issue time and again through facts and studies on instances of exclusion.

DISCUSSION & GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Disasters are of varying nature and have a distinct social context. Focus on relief and rehabilitation will not be enough to combat the menace of exclusion of dalits. Emphasis should be laid on equitable power sharing and decision making processes. It is essential to have their representation in the policy making processes to ensure far reaching results.
2. The aspect of inclusion should feature in the Disaster Management Act and policies to address Dalit agony.
3. Sensitive functionaries in the government should be approached to deliberate and undertake action on the issue of dalit exclusion.
4. Have such tools and mechanisms to address discrimination/exclusion, besides this, have different studies and data from various NGOs collated into one comprehensive compendium.

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5. United and cohesive voices from all representatives of NGOs should result in bringing the issue of dalit exclusion to the attention of the National Disaster Management Authority.
 6. Visibility of the issue is very important to confront the issue and not shy away from it. There is a lot of resistance in discussing caste. The humanitarian agencies and government should converse with ease on the issue. Each social group has an identity of its own which should be celebrated, and not despised, as in the case of dalits. The deliberations should be decentralised to the village levels because exclusion occurs in the absence of any rational discussion.
 7. Mandatory requisition on the government officials and private sector players to visit the inaccessible areas where dalits live before writing situation reports (because experiences and studies have well revealed that officials don't visit dalit habitations in the interior of villages. This should become a part of the policy).
 8. Entrusting only Dalits with the task of scavenging and removal of dead bodies after any disaster should be eliminated. It should be made into a technical and well paid job.
 9. C.R.F guidelines are well written and its benefits should be made more accessible to Dalits.
 10. Disaster preparedness measures should be extensively carried out in Dalit habitations. Authorities should be made more liable for non compliance and aggravation of the practice of exclusion and untouchability in emergency situations.
 11. The local context should be well known to the officials before preparing disaster risk reduction plans. Dalits should be compulsorily consulted to make their area plans which alone would take care of their local concerns. A piece of legislation alone cannot work and the people for whom the plans are prepared should be included in the planning processes at the grass-roots level.
 12. Exclusion of dalits should be highlighted and budgets allocated under the Schedule Caste Special Component Plan should be tracked to identify the leaks and misappropriation of funds that are earmarked for the economic and educational development of dalits.

Overview of Policy and Legislation

The session intended to present an overview of Disaster Management Act and Policy, highlight some very fundamental lacunae in them, to work on these gaps to have comprehensive recommendations for making the existing policy and act work. Some of the clauses and provision that have inherently aggravated exclusion of Dalits and the non-acknowledgement of the discrimination were also talked about.

Panellists- Mr. Bobby Kunhu, Law expert, Fr. T.D. John, Dalit Watch-Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Prasad Chacko, National Coordinator, National Dalit Watch-NCDHR& Mr. Kirit Parmar, Programme Officer, DRR Unnati



Disaster Management Act, 2005, appears to be an illustration of the dominance of the bureaucracy in our country, whereas its substantive contribution is miniscule. Barring the Preliminary Section and Definitions in Chapter I, the next seven chapters are essentially speaking of the functioning of the different authorities institutions that have to respond to disasters. This bureaucratic approach goes from the Centre to the Panchayat levels. Whereas Discrimination finds mention in the 'Miscellaneous' part of the Act in Section 61 of the Act, Caste based discrimination doesn't even feature in the Act. The definition of man made disasters fails to include caste atrocities, communal riots and loss on account of breaches of dams due to non-maintenance of machinery (as in Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh) or unplanned release of water from dams (in the event of floods) as part of human made disasters. Instead, man-made disasters have been reduced to just chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) disasters. All beneficial provisions in Chapter X with regard to liability and accountability of officials are made unimplementable and cumbersome through 59 and 60. These provisions act more as blocks in fixing the liability on the non-performing or corrupt officers in the system.

Dalits are threatened into silence or blamed for not coming on time, or migrating, even if for their very survival! Section 12 on 'Guidelines for minimum standards of relief to be provided to persons affected by disaster mentions' in sub-section (ii) mentions about special provisions to be made for widows and orphans'. Strange but true, the very purpose of the Act as given in the

Statement of Objects and Reasons, does not mention anything about PEOPLE or about human suffering. Rules under sub-section (1) have not been formulated yet in many states.

Vulnerability is mapped in terms of economics by dismissing other social determinants of vulnerabilities. The programmes for rehabilitation are biased against Dalits in the sense that a major part of the money would be spent on housing for the economically better off sections – since pucca houses would be given a larger compensation while kutcha houses are given a pittance. Culture of prevention, preparedness and resilience becomes relevant only when the disaster is viewed from the perspective of what is the human interface that leads a hazard into a disaster. While the DM Act provides for an enhanced role to the local bodies, it is yet to be translated into a reality.

Vulnerability and risk cannot be reduced without appreciating the social causes (Caste exclusion as a significant determinant of vulnerability and risk). While the guidelines are clear that the community/village should be part of the development of the Disaster Management plan, the difficulty is that currently there is no real devolution to the Panchayat / local body level. In the Disaster Management Act guidelines, 'community' approach and 'equity' have been highlighted. However, the heterogeneous fabric of the 'community' has still not been comprehended too.

Embankments have failed in every disaster; still the construction of embankments is financed out of National Disaster Mitigation Fund and National Disaster Response Fund. To ensure that funds are allocated for the real priorities of the communities, Disaster Risk Reduction priorities should be accommodated into the micro-planning process. In this process, Dalits and other marginalized communities should be specifically taken into account. The vulnerable groups have to be explicitly mentioned in the Disaster Management Act. Disaster Management financing should have explicit links with the Special Component Plan (SCP) and should also follow the same principle as the SCP.

Instances of exclusion from DRR interventions were almost alike even during the Bhuj earthquake in 2001. Discrimination unfolds itself at the very stage of rescue operations. Large scale corruption results from the misappropriate implementation of CRF guidelines. The relief and compensation don't reach the victims more so because information is withheld from them.

Gaps lie in the procedure of implementation because officers swing into action only when they receive circulars/orders from their senior officers.

Hence, the definition of Disaster in Section 2 (d) and Section 61 on Prohibition against Discrimination gives us the opportunity to commit into writing all our aspirations with regard to Encountering Exclusion and Ensuring Entitlements and address the structural and procedural defects. In developing the model rules for the Disaster Management Act, the principles of Chapter v1, in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, amended in 2006, could be kept in mind, as it deals beautifully with certain fundamental principles in the caring for and protection of children, which should also be for the dalits or those victims of caste based exclusion in disasters. Similarly, the spirit of Forest Rights Act should be brought into the Disaster Management Act, which acknowledges the traditional right of the STs over the forest land by recognising their existence and granting them what they are entitled to.

Monitoring of exclusion – Methodologies and Instruments - developing a framework

The session intended to give an overview and discuss some methodologies and tools to track exclusion in the context of disasters, thereby develop a framework to document / highlight exclusion.

Panellists- Ms. Annie Namala, Director, Centre for social Equity and Inclusion & Mr. Srijan Nandan, National Coordinator, Social Equity Watch –PRAXIS



Widespread reports of discrimination during Relief and Rehabilitation after the Tsunami in 2005, instances of exclusion of Dalits in subsequent disasters led to the emergence of Social Equity Audit (SEA), anchored by Social Equity Watch. SEA is a systematic enquiry into processes of exclusion in emergency and other developmental interventions, evolving strategies to address them. Christian Aid, CARE India, PRAXIS, Social Watch in Tamil Nadu and many other organizations and individuals came together and began exploring various options.

Social Equity Audit enables a better understanding of the root causes and processes of social exclusion and discrimination. It (i) pro-actively addresses issues of social exclusion and discrimination, (ii) facilitates analysis of complex social and economic relations affecting the poorest and the marginalised, (iii) assesses how the principles of non-discrimination and inclusion are operational in the organisation as a whole and (iv) Identifies best practices and blind spots regarding inclusion.

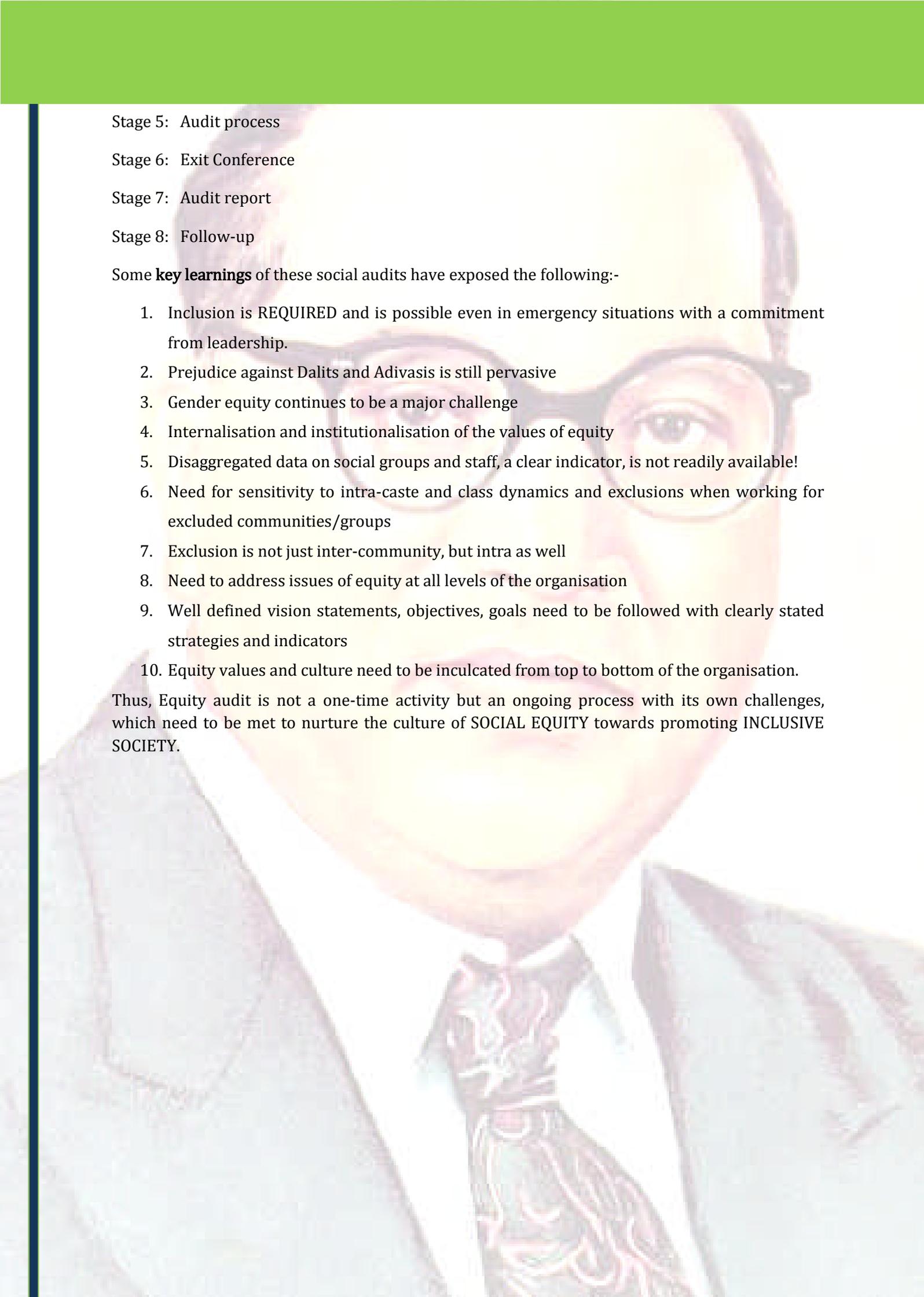
SEA is an internationally accepted audit standard with objectivity, verifiability, transparency, principles of participatory research, which is inclusive and participatory analysis. The SEA process involves the following steps:-

Stage 1: Orientation to the commissioning organisation

Stage 2: Pre-audit research and planning

Stage 3: Pre-audit meeting of the SEA team

Stage 4: Entrance conference



Stage 5: Audit process

Stage 6: Exit Conference

Stage 7: Audit report

Stage 8: Follow-up

Some **key learnings** of these social audits have exposed the following:-

1. Inclusion is **REQUIRED** and is possible even in emergency situations with a commitment from leadership.
2. Prejudice against Dalits and Adivasis is still pervasive
3. Gender equity continues to be a major challenge
4. Internalisation and institutionalisation of the values of equity
5. Disaggregated data on social groups and staff, a clear indicator, is not readily available!
6. Need for sensitivity to intra-caste and class dynamics and exclusions when working for excluded communities/groups
7. Exclusion is not just inter-community, but intra as well
8. Need to address issues of equity at all levels of the organisation
9. Well defined vision statements, objectives, goals need to be followed with clearly stated strategies and indicators
10. Equity values and culture need to be inculcated from top to bottom of the organisation.

Thus, Equity audit is not a one-time activity but an ongoing process with its own challenges, which need to be met to nurture the culture of **SOCIAL EQUITY** towards promoting **INCLUSIVE SOCIETY**.

The experience of INGOs and the scope of Inclusion of Dalits

The idea was to hear of the experiences of humanitarian actors; some of the operational challenges faced during DRR interventions in reaching out to the vulnerable; limitations posed by the scale of devastation posed by disasters, with some recommendations to overcome the same.

Panellists- Mr. Manas Ranjan, Senior Manager, ActionAid India, Mr. Mani Kumar, Regional Programme Officer, DRR, Dan Church Aid, South Asia Regional Office & Mr. Zubin Zaman, Humanitarian Manager, Emergency Relief & DRR



The analysis of issues in disasters have thrown open instances of classic under-representation of dalits, practice of untouchability, denial of access to participatory processes and compensation / rehabilitation entitlements determined more on the basis of 'Asset Ownership' often working in tandem with the market economy.

A classic instance is the focus on compensation for bigger livestock, determined by the economic value of the bigger livestock, which are possessed mainly by better off people. The loss of smaller livestock, which is what dalits can afford to rear for their sustenance is not compensated adequately or the loss is not considered significant. The practice of giving more to the better off also draws upon the fallacious ideology of Compensation and Replacement. Hence, the discrimination and poverty they endure, originates from their being dalits and not vice versa.

Hyogo Framework of Action clearly outlays guiding principles and practical means for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable deprived communities in the context of sustainable development. Disaster Risk Reduction should be a part of every day decision making processes and development plans. This vital component should not just be relegated to interventions at the time of occurrence of disasters only. Different groups have different needs and interests, which must be reflected right from the stage of planning of strategising assistance. However, the process in DRR is not free from challenges. Some challenges faced during the course of intervention are as below:-

1. Identifying and accessing most vulnerable villages/people in disasters when they are cut off during assessments and even deprived of immediate assistance.
2. Speed of response and targeting the vulnerable, particularly in the context of coping with the scale and impact of disaster
3. Difficulty in achieving community ownership through active and wide participation of diverse communities worked with.
4. Making government functionaries at all levels to facilitate inclusion the vulnerable groups/ communities in processes of appropriate targeting.

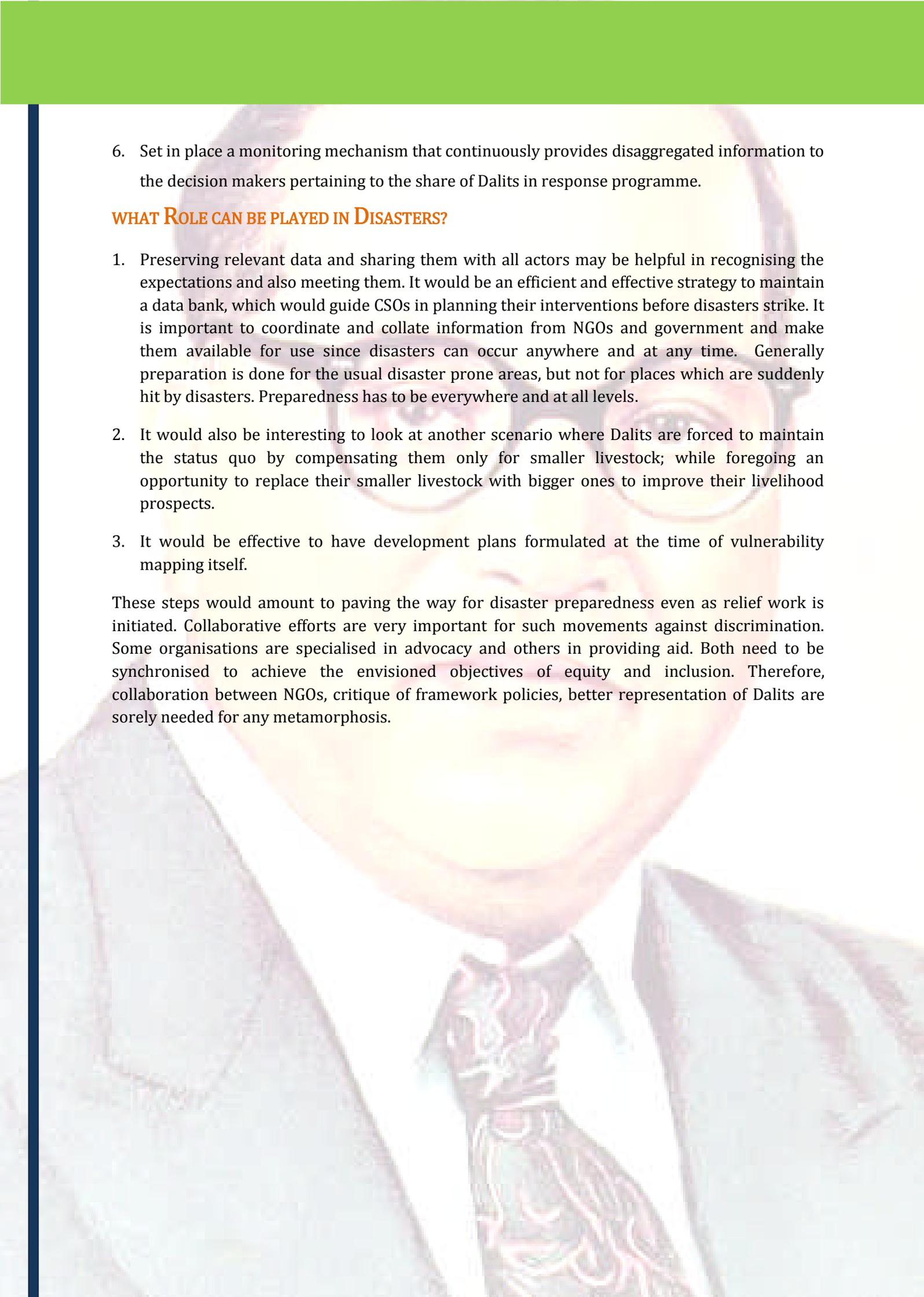
Appropriate targeting of the most vulnerable people in times of emergencies has always been a huge challenge. Myriad organisations and humanitarian actors enter spontaneously at the relief stage. Yet, the socially marginalised remain unreached by these actors. Hence, at such times, it becomes a challenge to reach out to most vulnerable in the face of mass devastation. It's important to manage expectation as to the requisite extent of inclusion that should be brought into the existing Relief and Rehabilitation work already being carried out. Sometimes the scale of devastation exceeds the normal boundaries of intervention, and one has to take a call to engage in new areas which are unfamiliar to them. Then it becomes even more difficult to target the needy as the numbers keep escalating in the camp substantially (as in Kosi foods in Bihar)¹.

Therefore, CSOs should be able to use data from National Sample Survey (NSS) and other government data available online also, to help decide the nature and the location of support required. Generally a broader approach will lead to insulating the most marginalised. It is utmost important to bring synergy into work and use experiences of partners working on dalits issues to support humanitarian and DRR partners in developing and monitoring discriminations during disasters and beyond.

Some Principles & Practices for ensuring Inclusion of Dalits in Disaster Response Programmes should comprise the following perspectives:-

1. Recognise that Dalits are more vulnerable to the impact of disasters;
2. Recognise that village level societal processes are often at work to deny relief & rehabilitation related benefits to Dalits;
3. Identify the Dalits communities and households and reaching out to them without mediation of uppercaste/dominant interests;
4. Understand the impact of disasters on Dalits through participatory processes and design disaster response programmes relevant for them;
5. Make the process of programme design and implementation sensitive to the rights of the Dalits; &

¹ It is not expectation that needs to be managed! What needs to be managed is our eagerness to set targets and work within that, whereas the disaster itself has breached all boundaries of set targets within which organizations generally function.

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6. Set in place a monitoring mechanism that continuously provides disaggregated information to the decision makers pertaining to the share of Dalits in response programme.

WHAT ROLE CAN BE PLAYED IN DISASTERS?

1. Preserving relevant data and sharing them with all actors may be helpful in recognising the expectations and also meeting them. It would be an efficient and effective strategy to maintain a data bank, which would guide CSOs in planning their interventions before disasters strike. It is important to coordinate and collate information from NGOs and government and make them available for use since disasters can occur anywhere and at any time. Generally preparation is done for the usual disaster prone areas, but not for places which are suddenly hit by disasters. Preparedness has to be everywhere and at all levels.
2. It would also be interesting to look at another scenario where Dalits are forced to maintain the status quo by compensating them only for smaller livestock; while foregoing an opportunity to replace their smaller livestock with bigger ones to improve their livelihood prospects.
3. It would be effective to have development plans formulated at the time of vulnerability mapping itself.

These steps would amount to paving the way for disaster preparedness even as relief work is initiated. Collaborative efforts are very important for such movements against discrimination. Some organisations are specialised in advocacy and others in providing aid. Both need to be synchronised to achieve the envisioned objectives of equity and inclusion. Therefore, collaboration between NGOs, critique of framework policies, better representation of Dalits are sorely needed for any metamorphosis.

Realizing the Inclusion of Dalits

The session had an interface of CSOs/Humanitarian actors with a Member of National Disaster Management Authority. The session intended to explore the possibilities of explicitly acknowledging the caste exclusion of dalits in the existing policy and act; and thereby ways of ensuring the agenda of inclusion in the government.

Panellists- Prof. Vinod Menon, Member, National Disaster Management Authority, Mr. Zubin Zaman, Humanitarian Manager, Emergency Relief & DRR, OXFAM India, Mr. Vikrant Mahajan, Chief Operating Officer, SPHERE India, Mr. Ravindranath, Member, National Task Force, NDMA, Mr. Rajeshwar HelpAge India & Mr. Paul Divakar, General Secretary, NCDHR



It is important to see that people at grassroots level are sensitised because implementation takes place at the ground level. 300 to 450 million – almost 42% of the population - are from the weaker sections and insulated from discussions and planning affecting them. They have to be heard, and hence, there is a strong need to operate more at the community level and for the sensitisation of the district administration. This requires up-scaling of the system through policy interventions that are strategic, and also capacity building of the field workers to make them understand the dynamics of the problem. There is considerable possibility to work in this direction till the year 2015, the deadlines set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Hyogo Framework for action, to which India is a signatory. It would be more feasible to strengthen the existing institutions than to go for new ones. An effective dialogue and lobby with people who are committed to the cause and are playing a critical role in the government is essential, because 'Inclusion' is a subject matter that is being discussed seriously in the government. Mid-term review is underway for the Twelfth 5 year plan and it would be just opportune for the civil societies to come on board and table their agenda for inclusion.

Principle of neutrality has been misused. Neutrality doesn't mean that vulnerable people are not seen and given special attention. Reaching out to the most vulnerable groups is the mandate of

Sphere Standards. Data should be readily available to target out intervention. In the Disposal of the dead, the guidelines of the NDMA, the proposal of not using only Dalits for removing corpses in disasters could be tabled to the NDMA. Guidelines on Roles of NGO and Owner Driven Construction are also underway, which also could be worked on further to make it amenable.

Special focus is required to make inclusion possible. The three important aspects that need attention are THAT:-

1. There is a hesitancy to talk about the caste system, and this makes it difficult to address several forms of exclusion that are in practice.
2. That there is no body of systematically developed guidelines or government orders that could be thought of; evidences of exclusion should be translated into clear guidelines.
3. The issue of exclusion thus calls for the intervention of and with multilateral and bilateral bodies that should take up the issue right from its planning stage and not just at the time of emergencies.

Therefore, certain suggestions that could be pushed into the government framework and also on the Role of NGOs in DRR are as follows:-

1. Formation of taskforce to ensure inclusion of Dalits
2. Having an Ombudsman to respond to complaints and hence eliminate or minimize lapses
3. Government-led mission approach to sensitise the nation about dalit discrimination
4. Tribunals to highlight the systemic gaps and bring it to the cognizance of the government
5. A monitoring mechanism to record and bring justice to the atrocities struck minorities
6. Having a special bench in the courts to look into the matter seriously and speedily
7. Some mechanism to ensure that officials from INGOs or government reach the far flung areas and conduct an assessment of all conditionalities before writing the situation reports.
8. Operational perspective/ suggestions from CSOs point of view
9. Some kind of an alliance building among the actors engaged in emergency work is needed.
10. Possibilities of DRR intervention should be viewed in the light of short term and long term deliverables.
11. Possibility of the Rights Based Advocacy groups sharing their data base/details with the Humanitarian agencies and government should be explored and worked out.
12. Having a risk manager, someone like an ombudsman at state and centre level to look into the cases of social exclusion/inclusion, who would be accountable only to the District Magistrate.
13. Having district level response programmes that involve marginalized people's response
14. Increasing inter-developmental plans at district levels to increase ability of marginalized people to deal with disaster.
15. Having inter-departmental dialogue in planning process.

16. Having CMDRR plans to counter or survive a disaster by accumulating the resources and inter-agency groups at district level.

Marginalized are being drawn into cross fires and collateral damage is a sad reality. Optimum support and solidarity needs to be channelized through social engineering, media mobilisation, national leadership and leaders etc in powerful positions. Investments are required and are mandatory for mitigation measures to be successful, which the government is accepting and imbibing. Confrontational methods may not help the cause in the long run. Hence, it is crucial to comprehend the powerful allies and work with them. There should be groups that focus on short term doable plans for disaster response and concurrently have a continuous interface with the government.

Therefore, wherever public hearings are held, efforts should be made to involve people who can take decisions and find solutions to the problems being addressed. To make the survivors of disasters aware of their entitlements and minimise corruption, Orissa State Disaster Management Authority printed the entitlements in all newspapers. As a result the community was informed of it and could demand their rights. Similar steps could be advanced in other states also. There is a greater need for information dissemination at community, state and INGO levels.

Inclusion of Dalits in Right to Food/Food Security Interventions

The session intends to discuss the issue of food scarcity in disasters in tandem with the coming Bill of the National Food Security Act and certain suggestions that could go into making the proposed bill an inclusive Act.

Panellists- Mr. Vikrant Mahajan, Chief Operating Officer, SPHERE India, Mr. Manas Ranjan, Senior Manager, ActionAid India & Mr. John Suresh Kumar, Christian Aid



There have been also studies to reveal why food did not reach the vulnerable and most marginalised dalits and minorities in floods and droughts. The current National Food Security Bill 2010) does not look at the nutritional aspect, but only at the hunger aspect, as is evidenced by the reduction of the quantity entitlement at present by 10kgs. 45% of India is malnourished

which is the highest in world. Adequate attention has not been accorded to this ongoing reality that is further accentuated during disasters like droughts and famines.

Food security during disasters could be increased through some of the following steps:-

1. Monitoring of general entitlement schemes during disasters
2. Doubling the quotas for PDS and ICDS
3. Increasing NREGA quota in places where disasters have occurred to at least 150 days
Special monetary reports should be extended
4. Midday meal should be continued even if the school takes time to resume functioning.
5. Issuing Relief Entitlement Card should be given as also developed by Sphere, CASA and Dan Church Aid.

The Food Security Bill does not also address the impediment of 'Structural poverty' in the country. Some other points that could be worked for could be;-

1. Distribution of millet powder as dry ration to be encouraged
2. Food grains should be purchased from government go-downs only
3. The current bill doesn't contain anything on women-headed households and children; it should include these sections
4. All disaster victims should be enumerated as BPL for that particular year of a disaster
5. PDS should be decentralized
6. It would also be interesting to see if people earning less than minimum wages could be viewed as disaster-stricken.
7. It would be impactful if Sphere handbook brings in a separate chapter on caste borne exclusion since it has international presence and lays down certain standards for humanitarian relief action in DRR.

Developing an agenda and strategy for Advocacy

The session tries to sum up the proactive steps that should be taken for promoting inclusion of the marginalised dalit community in disaster preparedness and also emphasises the importance of lobbying with the government in pushing the agenda of inclusion in various Acts and policies.

Panellists- Dr. Mihir Bhatt, All India Disaster Management Institute, Vijay Raghavan, Project Director, Praxis led Consortium, Mr. Narendra, Indraprastha Public Affairs Centre & Paul Divakar, NCDHR



Impact of disasters on the ground and their cumulative implications are clearly established, seen and well known to all. Relief reaches the last, if at all, to the dalits. The experiences during Gujarat earthquake and Tsunami just reinforced this belief. Some of the suggestions that emerged are:-

1. NDMA has approved 2,500 crores for cyclone shelters. Those vulnerable should be the first ones to acquire these shelters. The friendliness and accessibility of shelters to the marginalised sections of people also need to be monitored.
2. In the earthquake preparedness projects, hospitals and schools which are situated closer to Dalit areas or accessed by them should receive highest priority under earthquake resistant programme. Schools should be reconstructed on priority basis in Dalit habitations.
3. Vulnerability mapping should be continued so as to help make resilient those communities that are at high risk owing to high vulnerability factors.
4. Disaster Management programmes should integrate with development plans so that they can be best applied and presented to the bureaucracy for application/consideration.
5. Lobbying is required to work with the government in the best interest of the common masses. Hence, the work on ground and in the government has to go simultaneously to influence changes in the Act and the policies to make them inclusive and equitable.

CONCLUSION

Following the two day deliberations on different crucial aspects of the disaster management and the possible areas to intervene to make the existing legislation and policies inherently inclusive and equitable, a drafting committee was instituted. The members of the committee comprise Abha Mishra of UNDP, Vikrant Mahajan of Sphere India, Manas Ranjan of Action Aid India, Ravindranath of Rural Volunteers Centre, Assam, Zubin Zaman of Oxfam India, Fr. T. D. John of Dalit Watch-Andhra Pradesh, Vijay Raghavan, Consultant, UNICEF, Mani Kumar of Dan Church Aid, Achieng Kokonya of Save the Children, and Paul Divakar from NCDHR with Prasad Chacko from National Dalit Watch-NCDHR as convenor.

The delegates unanimously proposed to formulate a set of Recommendations for the Civil Society Organisations and the Government, proposing steps to achieve inclusion in DRR initiatives of the government and CSOs. The committee came up with a statement formulating the resolutions for CSOs and another statement articulating the demands from the government. These statements aim at achieving the objective of an inclusive and justiciable approach to disaster management, making efforts to seek acknowledgment of the caste induced discrimination in disaster situations and thereby, taking preventing steps to combat it.

¹¹ The principle of 'neutrality' does not apply in the case of disaster, just as the right to equality is not a reality before the disaster. The only principle that holds is that those who are affected need to be given relief, etc. And who are affected? The most vulnerable sections of the people, the dalits and the tribals leading the list