

## **IDSN Organisational Model and Statutes**

### **Introduction**

This model builds on the existing structure of IDSN, delegates policy approval and decision making to an elected IDSN Board, and it further establishes a General Assembly of members and associates, who meet every third year.

The membership base will gradually be expanded with more members working at a national level in caste-affected countries.

Membership from organisations in caste-affected countries will no longer be tied to a national platform structure. This opens up opportunities for bringing in more members and new active partners especially who are working at the ground level and doing effective work.

Membership of IDSN will be gradually expanded with up to five new national level organisations or networks per year. The board approves of new members and associates; based on applications received and relevance of the organisation or institution nationally to the promotion of Dalit rights and to IDSN's international work. Membership applications are considered at every board meeting.

Membership entails certain benefits, rights and obligations. Accessibility, engagement and access to information are keywords; IDSN should avoid raising expectations that cannot be met, while harnessing the power and energy of multiple, competent and important stakeholders. Membership applications will be reviewed based on a set of criteria.

A member can be removed by the Board if authentic evidence is found of infringement of standards or agreed obligations to which it has to abide.

IDSN also retains a category of association. The category of international or regional associates are maintained mainly for organisations, which for statutory or other reasons cannot seek membership of other organisations. The group of associates may include international and regional level organisations or networks.

As part of IDSN's commitment to broadening its base and reach, IDSN introduces a new category of 'affiliates'. Affiliate organisations will need an invitation from an IDSN member. No unsolicited applications will be considered. The Affiliate will then need to send a profile statement of no more than 2 pages, highlighting its key areas of work and how it may add to and engage with IDSN strategic activities. The Affiliate must show that it subscribes to the broad aims of IDSN.

A prospective 'IDSN affiliate' shall only be from organizations, registered or not, but actively engaged in the grassroots from a caste affected country or country in solidarity with the cause.

Once approved by the Board, the Affiliate may highlight that they are 'An affiliate of IDSN' on their website and other material. An Affiliate is entitled to subscribe to the IDSN Dalit-Solidarity List serv and to receive the IDSN Annual Report. The Affiliate may be directly contacted to pursue a specific long term or short-term objective, task or assignment.

A second category is research affiliates, which can be individual or institutional.

Members, associates and affiliates are expected to subscribe to IDSN email newsletter, and possibly other IDSN media outlets, and share information regularly with their constituencies.

The Board can decide to set up an ad hoc policy advisory committee on strategic or thematic issues by invitation to members, associates or external advisors based on their expertise, vantage point and contribution to the collective IDSN work.

The General Assembly may establish ad hoc working groups, to support and enhance the work of IDSN, run by members or associates of the Assembly, and with an obligation to keep the Board and the secretariat informed about activities. There are no financial obligations for IDSN tied to the working groups.

## **Statutes of the International Dalit Solidarity Network**

### **1. Name and Status**

1.1. The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) is an international human rights non-profit organisation which is politically independent secular and dedicated to work for the elimination of caste-based discrimination and discrimination based on work and descent. IDSN is registered in Denmark, and its international secretariat is currently based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

1.2. IDSN is an organisation as defined by the laws of the country in which the secretariat is located, and is governed by the applicable laws of that country, including in relation to employment conditions. It can establish ad hoc structures in other countries.

### **2. Terminology**

2.1 The term 'Dalit', as used in these statutes, refers to members of communities formerly considered to be "untouchable" in South Asian caste systems, and it is meant to encompass other communities suffering from similar forms of discrimination on the basis of work and descent, with full recognition that members of these communities do not necessarily identify with this terminology.

2.2 The term "caste-based discrimination" as used in these statutes is meant to include discrimination based on caste, based on work and descent and based on analogous forms of inherited status.

2.3. For the purpose of this document, "caste-affected country" refers to countries where the practice of discrimination based on caste or analogous systems of inherited status is indigenous to the country itself.

### **3. Vision, Mission and Objectives**

3.1. IDSN's vision is a world free of caste discrimination and untouchability.

3.2. The mission of IDSN is to make an effective contribution to the elimination of caste-based discrimination and similar forms of discrimination based on work and descent in the caste affected countries and globally, and to promote effective measures for its elimination.

3.3. Founded in March 2000 to advocate for Dalit human rights, registered as an international organisation in October 2003, IDSN works to fulfil its mission through the following objectives:

- Working towards global recognition of Dalit Human Rights and contributing to the fight against caste-based discrimination globally by raising awareness, building solidarity and disseminating information about caste discrimination.
- Advocating for Dalit rights by influencing the laws, policies and practices of state and non-state actors and of international and regional bodies and institutions.
- Monitoring the enforcement and implementation of measures aimed at combating caste discrimination and protection of Dalit rights.

- Facilitating and supporting Dalit rights interventions/interventions of affected communities internationally, including before UN human rights mechanisms, institutions of the European Unions, the International Labour Organisation, and other multilateral bodies and forums.
- Maintaining a resource base, communication and media platforms that facilitate and strengthen advocacy and solidarity functions.

## **4. Governance**

### **4.1. The General Assembly**

4.1.1. The General Assembly is the highest body of the IDSN. The General Assembly is the body, which elects the members of the Board. It approves or rejects the organisation's strategies as recommended by the Board. The Board is the delegated authority between General Assembly meetings.

4.1.2. The General Assembly consists of all members and associates. Each member and associate entity holds one vote at the General Assembly. Decisions are made by majority vote. In the case of an equal number of votes for election to the board, the chair has a double vote.

4.1.3. Voting for election of board members follows a principle of one vote per member or international associate.

4.1.4. A General Assembly is held every three years.

4.1.5. The Board may call for an extraordinary General Assembly if circumstances so require.

### **4.2. The Board**

4.2.1. Board members are appointed for a term of three years, and may stand for re-election for one further consecutive term, i.e. a total of six years. In the event that there is an inadequate number of other candidates entitled under these Statutes to stand for election, persons who have already served two consecutive terms and who are willing to serve a third and final term may stand for re-election for one more term.

4.2.2. The Board has a membership of no less than seven and no more than ten in accordance with the following stipulations:

4.2.2.1. Members shall come from at least three caste-affected countries.

4.2.2.2. There shall be at least three Dalit women members.

4.2.2.3. Two of the members must represent Dalit Solidarity Bodies outside South Asia.

4.2.2.4 The Board has the authority to decide on number of Board members for announcement before a General Assembly.

4.2.2.5. The Board has authority to co-opt an external member, who is not necessarily a member of the General Assembly, in order to supplement and strengthen the Board's expertise on aspects of importance to the organization and its work.

4.2.2.6. Additional stipulations on the composition of the Board may be defined in the bylaws

4.2.3. The Board constitutes itself during its first meeting electing a Chairperson and a Vice-Chair. Board members shall, among them, hold the responsibility for the following portfolios: fundraising, administration and finances, and personnel matters.

4.2.4. The Executive Director functions as the secretary of the Board and has a voice but not a vote at meetings.

4.2.5. The Board will set its own order of business for Board meetings.

4.2.6. The Chairperson, and the Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chairperson, and the Executive Director are authorized to sign for IDSN jointly. The Board may delegate powers of attorney. As far as concerns the day-to-day running, IDSN is bound by the signature of the Executive Director.

**4.2.7. Requirements of Board members:**

4.2.7.1. Board members must subscribe to the aims and objectives of IDSN and concur with its value base and principles.

4.2.7.2. Board members are obliged to respect the agenda and plans.

4.2.7.3. Board members are required to provide regular information from their respective countries and field of expertise and be dedicated to pursuing common objectives with transparency and integrity.

4.2.7.4. Board members are expected to contribute to network activities and IDSN interventions.

4.2.7.5. Board members serve in their own personal capacity.

4.2.7.6. Board members must fulfil their responsibilities.

**4.2.8. Responsibilities of the Board:**

4.2.8.1. The Board is responsible for IDSN's overall policy and the financial affairs of the organisation and shall approve transactions of overall importance for the management and development of the organization. Under no circumstances, except when expressly provided by law, shall the members of the Board be held personally liable for debts or liabilities incurred by IDSN.

4.2.8.2. The Board recruits and appoints the Executive Director.

4.2.8.3. The Board approves the annual financial statements and the annual budget of the organisation.

4.2.8.4. The Board recommends the organisational strategy for approval to the General Assembly.

4.2.8.5. The Board decides periodically or as required on policies affecting governance of the organisation.

4.2.8.6. The Board approves of new members, associates and affiliates; based on applications received and relevance of the organisation or institution nationally and to IDSN's international work.

4.2.8.7. The Board may set up ad hoc policy advisory committee on strategic or thematic issues by invitation to members, associates or external advisors based on their expertise and contribution to the collective IDSN work.

4.2.8.8. Summary minutes of actions agreed to be taken at Board meetings will be circulated to the General Assembly members.

#### **4.2.9. Procedures**

4.2.9.1. Board meetings will be held at least twice a year.

4.2.9.2. The Board forms a quorum when more than half of the Board is attending. Voting is made by simple majority and in case of equal votes the Chairperson's vote is decisive. Voting by ballot may be applied. The Board may have an electronic vote on specific matters. In such cases, a 2/3 majority is required for approval.

4.2.9.3. Members of the Board shall not participate in the handling of questions relating to agreements between the respective Board member/the represented organisation and IDSN, nor in relation to law suits against him or herself/the represented organisation or in relation to agreements entered between IDSN and a third party or law suits against a third party, if the respective Board member/the represented organisation has a considerable interest herein, which may be contrary to that of IDSN.

#### **4.2.10 Board membership**

4.2.10.1. Representatives of all registered members and associates are eligible for election to the Board. Elected members of the board are members of the General Assembly.

4.2.10.2. The nomination of a candidate must reach the Secretariat in writing no later than four weeks before the election. Each candidate must provide a short profile and supporting statement as the basis for his/her candidature.

4.2.10.3. Board members are elected by the General Assembly, or if necessary, election may take place electronically among General Assembly members.

4.2.10.4. Board members shall not be remunerated for tasks carried out as an IDSN Board member, except to cover expenses incurred in this connection.

4.2.10.5. In the case that a Board member leaves before his/her period expires or that he/she is absent from two consecutive Board meetings, the Board can decide to appoint a replacement member who will serve as a Board member until the next regularly scheduled election. The Board may also decide to call for an extraordinary election if several positions become vacant.

4.2.10.6. Exclusion of a Board member may be decided by the Board by a 2/3 majority should a member fail to honour responsibilities set out in 4.2.7.1. – 4.2.7.6.

### **4.3. The Executive**

4.3.1. The executive body of the organisation is the International Secretariat (the Secretariat), which is headed by the Executive Director who is accountable to the Board and responsible for reporting to the Board. In between Board meetings the Director will consult the chair on matters requiring Board decision or advice.

4.3.2. IDSN's daily work is co-ordinated by the Secretariat.

4.3.3. In accordance with staff policies adopted by the Board, the Executive Director is appointed by the Board and other staff are recruited and appointed by the Executive Director.

### **4.4. Members, associates and affiliates**

#### **4.4.1. Membership**

4.4.1.1. All members and associates shall seek to advance the interests of IDSN and shall avoid any action, which might discredit or damage IDSN or interfere with its aims and objectives.

4.4.1.2. Members are networks, platforms or organisations from caste-affected countries and Dalit solidarity networks.

4.4.1.3 Associates are international and regional human rights or development organisations or networks.

4.4.1.4. The board approves new members and associates; based on applications received, relevance of the organisation or institution nationally and to IDSN's international work.

4.4.1.5. Members and associates shall not be held personally responsible for debts or liabilities incurred by the IDSN.

4.4.1.6. All members and associates are invited to the General Assembly. IDSN is not obliged to cover cost of participation.

4.4.1.7. Membership or association may be terminated by resignation, inactivity for a period of three years, or by a 2/3 majority vote of the Board in case of violation of section

4.4.1.8. A member or associate can be removed by the board if authentic evidence is received of infringement of standards or agreed obligations.

4.4.1.9. The organisation follows a gender policy, and a policy of participation in IDSN-related events.

#### **4.4.2. Requirements for members in caste-affected countries - rights and obligations**

4.4.2.1. Members are organisations, networks, or platforms working to eliminate caste-based discrimination as their primary focus and are characterised by having a national level outreach, broad constituency, multiple stakeholders' involvement and clear accountability structures.

4.4.2.2. Members are expected to subscribe to the aims and objectives of IDSN and to contribute to IDSN's work and international interventions, when possible.

4.4.2.3. Members are entitled to receive IDSN email newsletter (by self-subscription), publications and Annual Reports.

4.4.2.4. Members are invited to the General Assembly held every third year.

4.4.2.5. Members are expected to share information and updates on a regular basis with IDSN members' group and the Secretariat, and provide country level information for the Annual Report of IDSN.

4.4.2.6. Members are obligated to share with their constituency information on IDSN's work, results achieved internationally, and to conduct some follow up work in their national context.

4.4.2.7. Members may delegate responsibility for follow up actions to focal points upon informing the IDSN group of members, the Board and the secretariat.

4.4.2.8. Members are required to enable adequate participation of Dalit women and young Dalits in IDSN interventions, where and when possible.

4.4.2.9. Members may suggest involvement of organisations or individuals with specific expertise in IDSN's work and interventions, following the general rules stipulated in IDSN's policy for participation.

#### **4.4.3. Requirements for Dalit Solidarity Networks (DSNs)**

4.4.3.1. The primary purpose is to contribute to the overall work for Dalit human rights, and the elimination of caste-based discrimination.

4.4.3.2. DSNs shall have a membership of organisations and/or individuals contributing to joint efforts of the network, or be a registered organisation.

4.4.3.3. DSNs shall subscribe to the aims and objectives of IDSN.

4.4.3.4. DSNs shall contribute to network activities and IDSN interventions.

4.4.3.5. DSNs use relevant contacts to raise awareness of the issue of caste discrimination to e.g. the general public, Parliamentarians, the Government, and international NGOs.



4.4.3.6. Where possible and appropriate, DSNs arrange relevant meetings and events for visiting Dalit and other colleagues from caste-affected countries.

4.4.3.7. DSNs are willing to share and communicate relevant activities with a caste/Dalit focus – whether in their own country or as part of any overseas activities, as well as willing to cooperate with other DSNs to increase impact.

4.4.3.8. DSNs agree to write a brief report for the IDSN Annual Report.

4.4.3.9. DSNs reach out to Dalits in diaspora where possible.

#### **4.4.4. International and Regional Associates**

4.4.4.1. Associates are expected to subscribe to the aims and objectives of IDSN and may contribute to IDSN's work and international interventions.

4.4.4.2. Associates are primarily regional and international organisations or networks.

4.4.4.3. Associates are entitled to receive IDSN email newsletter (by self-subscription), publications and Annual Reports.

4.4.4.4. Associates are invited to the General Assembly held every third year; they are not entitled to cost coverage for participation in such meetings.

4.4.4.5. Support and contributions from Associates to IDSN's work is welcomed and appreciated.

4.4.4.6. Association with IDSN is acquired by invitation by the Board or with the submission of an application and the subsequent approval by the board of IDSN.

#### **4.4.5. Affiliates**

4.4.5.1. IDSN retains two categories of affiliates. The first category encompasses organisations actively engaged in the grassroots work from a caste-affected country or country in solidarity with the cause and subscribe to the values and principles of IDSN. Dalit led organisations are especially encouraged for affiliation. They must be recommended in writing by an IDSN member and submit a profile statement to be kept on record.

4.4.5.2. A second category is research affiliates, which can be individual or institutional. Dalit researchers or Dalit led institutions focusing on caste discrimination are especially encouraged for affiliation.

4.4.5.3. Decision on affiliation is made by the Board.

4.4.5.4. Affiliates are not entitled to any funding or financial benefit from IDSN. They are not members and therefore do not take part in IDSN's formal General Assembly.

4.4.5.5. Affiliates are entitled to receive monthly newsletter updates. Their expertise may be called on where specific international interventions are taking place and in this case only may be entitled to subsistence and travel expenses.

## **5. Financial regulations**

5.1 The financial year follows the calendar year.

5.2. The executive submits quarterly financial reports to the board. Annual audited financial statement are presented to the board for approval. The Chair may be delegated responsibility to sign financial statements on behalf of the board based on approval in writing from other board members.

5.3. The Board appoints an independent, reputable, registered auditor to carry out the annual audit.

5.4 IDSN shall not permit any of its income or assets to be distributed or applied for benefit of a private person or non-charitable organization other than pursuant to the conduct of its charitable activities and must apply all income and assets in fulfilment of its statutory objective.

5.5 IDSN is not a grant-making organisation.

5.6. IDSN is a good steward of its resources and operation and follows a zero tolerance policy on corruption.

5.7. IDSN is only liable to the full extent of its assets for its liabilities.

## **6. Amendment of statutes; bylaws and dissolution**

### **6.1. Amendments**

Amendments to IDSN's statutes can be made if they are submitted in writing to the Board one month before a Board meeting and if two thirds of the Board agree to them. Revised statutes, or amendments, must be approved by the General Assembly members in writing. The changes are adopted when a simple majority are in favour. On-line voting may be used.

### **6.2. Bylaws**

The Board shall have power to promulgate, amend or remove by-laws, as it may consider necessary for the effective operation of the IDSN within the framework of these statutes.

### **6.3. Dissolution**

Dissolution of the organisation can only be effectuated provided, that the Board has given a written warning of three months to General Assembly members, and two thirds of the Board are in agreement. Should this be the case, the General Assembly shall decide by simple majority how the organisation's funds should be used taking into consideration that programme and project funding shall be returned to funders. Any remaining funds should go to one or more organisations working on a non-commercial basis for the protection and promotion of rights of people affected by caste-based discrimination.

**7. Coming into force**

The present statutes came into force on 19 December 2014, and replace the statutes adopted on 16 September, 2003.