

Inclusive Education to empower minority youth.

Thank You Mr. Chair, for giving the floor.

I am Ankita, speaking on behalf of Dalit youth in Nepal and also representing Feminist Dalit Organization.

Dalit youth in Nepal face many challenges in the education system in Nepal.

1. High Illiteracy and low enrollment rate

The educational scenario in Nepal is highly centralized and presents difficulty of access for economically poor and marginalized groups. Despite making education free at the primary level when moving to secondary and tertiary level, there is a very low rate of enrollment. The gross enrollment rate at the primary level for Hill Dalits and Terai Dalits is between 70-90% while at tertiary level it can be as low as 1.2%.

Given this scenario, it is hard to retain dalit youth in education due to number of reasons. One of which is due to extreme poverty and having the responsibility to sustain themselves and family. Also, the course of the curriculum does not give space for encouraging the culture of Dalit community.

2. Discriminatory practices against Dalit children in schools

The forms of structural discrimination and abuse that Dalit children face is stigmatizing due to which they are often times forced to drop out of school. Teachers and other peer groups belonging from a so called higher caste at school exclude Dalit children- segregating classrooms, excluding them from various both extra and curriculum activities, denying for access to school water supplies and toilets, physically punishing them and also act of favoritism.

3. Multiple forms of discrimination faced by Dalit girls and defined gender roles

The extreme poverty in which most of the Dalit families live and defined gender roles force Dalit girls out of school. Dalit girls are overburdened with household works or are married off at an early age. As a result of which they have less opportunity to enroll in formal education.

4. Lack of role model from Dalit community

As mentioned earlier only 1.2 percent make to tertiary level and even less pursue higher. From my personal experience, while I was studying masters, I was the only one attending school from Dalit community from a group of 30. The reason for also very low representation is due to the cost of private education in Nepal. Also, many Dalit youth have the frustration and do not seek to pursue for further studies and rather migrate for menial jobs.....

5. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene

As the settlements, particularly in rural areas of the Dalit community do not have proper access to toilet facilities, clean drinking water and also medical first-aid. To fetch drinking water they have to cover 5-10

km just for drinking water. This leads to poor hygiene and cleanliness and hence, the school management discourages the children to attend schools.

Also there is a pre-conception rooted in the mind of people that a person from Dalit community is unhygienic and polluted hence, cannot be touched. They face discrimination based on it as a result are de-motivated to attend school.

Recommendations:

The current scenario of education in Nepal is nationally standardized and homogenous and lacks space for local culture and resources. Because the Dalits are traditional occupants, the course that is offered does not promote and protect its usefulness. Dalits are often the crafted skilled artisans- for example; blacksmiths, cobbler, carpenter. So these occupations need to be protected and promoted and seen as a respectful job. Even educated Dalits are less offered in the job market. Therefore, the affirmative and positive action should be promoted to the private sector.

The government does provide scholarship- limited within the government schools and colleges, but there is no outreach of the Dalit youths; hence unaware of schemes provided by the government. Hence, the state should bring programs to spread awareness.

The state should ensure quality education in governmental schools and subsidize for those willing to study in private schools; provide professional training especially for women and girls to promote leadership.

Participation of minority youth in public life.

Thank You Mr. Chair, for giving the floor.

I am Ankita, speaking on behalf of Dalit youth in Nepal and also representing Feminist Dalit Organization.

My friend from Nepal presented the overall scenario where as I would like to present on some key challenges.

Dalit youth in Nepal face many challenges in participating in public life.

1. High Illiteracy and low access to education

The educational scenario in Nepal is highly centralized and presents difficulty of access for economically poor and marginalized groups. Despite making education free at the primary level when moving to secondary and tertiary level, there is a very low rate of enrollment. The gross enrollment rate at the primary level for Hill Dalits and Terai Dalits is between 70-90% while at tertiary level it can be as low as 1.2%.

Given this scenario, it is hard for Dalit youth to attain qualifications and participate in a growing social, economic and cultural scene in Nepal.

There are many reasons for this lack of participation.

One of which is due to extreme poverty and having the responsibility to sustain themselves and family. The other is the systemic and systematic discrimination widely practiced across Nepal and in all spheres of life. Young Dalit women often suffer from multiple forms of this discrimination and exclusion from public life.

2. Discriminatory practices

The forms of structural discrimination and abuse that Dalits face is stigmatizing due to which they are often times forced to drop out of school and work from a young age in order to sustain their families. . Peer groups belonging from a so called higher caste at exclude Dalits segregating them from social events, religious activities including attending marriages.

Even in death Dalits are excluded and segregated in separate crematoriums.

3. Multiple forms of discrimination faced by Dalit women and girls and defined gender roles

The extreme poverty in which most of the Dalit families live and defined gender roles force Dalit girls out of school. Dalit girls are overburdened with household works or are married off at an early age. Dalit male youth migrate for better opportunities making Dalit women and girls with confined mobility, prone to violence and discrimination.

Inter-caste marriage is still one of the main forms areas that are unaccepted by the so called higher caste population. Violence and sexual abuse is often the punishment faced by young Dalit women if they dare to marry out of their caste.

4. Access to housing, water, sanitation and hygiene

As the settlements, particularly in rural areas of the Dalit community do not have proper access to toilet facilities, clean drinking water and also medical first-aid. To fetch drinking water they have to cover 5-10 km. Despite the source of water available, they are not allowed to have access, due to the pre-conception rooted in the mind of people that a person from Dalit community is unhygienic and polluted hence, cannot be touched. This phenomenon also prevents the participation of Dalits in public life.

If a Dalit family in a very rural part of Nepal tries to construct a concrete house in the community where Dalits and non-Dalits live, although separated by some sort of visible line of division, the non-Dalits will not allow this construction because they don't want Dalit communities to be raised above their Untouchable status.

Access to job opportunities

Dalits in Nepal are traditional occupants and artisans but their job is never given any value. It is always considered as a menial job and not something to be encouraged through introduction of technology and into the mainstream. Because they are not educated they are excluded from the job market and forced to either migrate or work in low paid jobs making them unable to come out of the vicious cycle.

In these traditional occupation too, only Dalit men and boys participate and are the ones who have the control of money making Dalit girls and women to remain limited within the household chores therefore, are at very minimum exposed to social, economic, cultural and hence the overall public life.

Recommendations:

Because the Dalits are steeped in tradition, they are often the crafted skilled artisans- for example; blacksmiths, cobbler, carpenter. So these occupations need to be protected and promoted and seen as a respectful job. Even educated Dalits are less offered in the job market. Therefore, the affirmative and positive action should be promoted to the private sector.

The state should ensure quality education and provide professional training especially for women and girls to promote leadership and take control of their lives.

The government does provide scholarship- limited within the government schools and colleges, but there is no outreach of the Dalit youths; hence unaware of schemes provided by the government. Hence, the state should bring programs to spread awareness.

Dalits need to be protected by full implementation of anti-untouchable legislation. This will not change mind-set over night but over time behavior will change.