

<b>Special Rapporteur on human rights and extreme poverty</b> - <b>Mr. Philip Alston (former: Ms. Maria Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona)</b>	
<p><b>Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona</b> Focusing on participation</p> <p><a href="#">A/HRC/23/36</a></p> <p>(23<sup>rd</sup> session HRC, June 2013)</p>	<p>13. The right of people living in poverty to participate fully in society and in decision-making is blocked by multiple compounding obstacles – economic, social, structural, legal and systemic.<sup>3</sup> All of these relate to their lack of financial, social and political power. Discrimination and stigma, disempowerment, lack of income, mistrust and fear of authorities all limit the possibilities and incentives for people living in poverty to participate. Due to their lack of status and power, people living in poverty are also particularly vulnerable to corruption, clientelism or co-option. At the most extreme level, poor or marginalized individuals may face reprisal (emanating from State or non-State actors such as corrupt community leaders of business enterprises) if they speak out in participatory spaces, in the form of violence or threats to them, their families, property or livelihoods. Often, the economic dependency of people living in poverty on more powerful individuals or groups may also prevent them from participating or speaking out, even in the absence of concrete threats, for fear of losing their livelihoods. This is a problem particularly in very hierarchical or caste-based societies. (p.5)</p>
<p><b>Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona</b> Follow up to Bangladesh visit (2009)</p> <p><a href="#">(A/HRC/20/25)</a></p> <p>(20<sup>th</sup> HRC session, June 2012)</p>	<p><b>IV. Bangladesh</b></p> <p>61. From 3 to 10 December 2009, the Special Rapporteur undertook a mission to Bangladesh, in collaboration with the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation (see A/HRC/15/55). Updated statistics reveal a significant reduction in poverty from 2005, when the incidence of poverty at the national level was estimated at 40 per cent, to 31.5 per cent in 2010.</p> <p>62. Nevertheless, Bangladesh remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Advancements in poverty alleviation have not been sufficiently drastic or widespread, and have excluded, in particular, the rural population, more than 35 per cent of whom live in poverty. As a result, Bangladesh is unlikely to fully meet a number of the Millennium Development Goal targets, specifically those related to rural poverty, primary education completion rates, and maternal health.</p> <p><b>B. Situation of people vulnerable to poverty</b></p> <p>66. Those most vulnerable to poverty in Bangladesh include women, children, persons with disabilities, minority groups, indigenous peoples and refugees. As described in the mission report, these groups experience multiple forms of stigmatization and intolerance and are frequently deprived of the opportunities and resources necessary to enjoy minimum essential levels of economic, social and cultural rights (A/HRC/15/55, paras. 14–33). According to the information available to the Special Rapporteur, it appears that the situation of the most vulnerable groups in Bangladesh has not changed significantly since her visit. She reiterates the need for Bangladesh to actively tackle discrimination against those groups and ensure their access to services and adequate social protection.</p>
<p><b>Joint report of the Independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty and the</b></p>	<p>The Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty and the Independent Expert on water and sanitation presented their joint report from Bangladesh at the 15<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council. The report contained extensive references to Dalits:</p>

<p><b>Independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation - Mission to Bangladesh</b> A/HRC/15/55 (15th HRC session, September 2010)</p>	<p>24. Bangladesh has a diverse ethnic, religious and indigenous population. The experts met with various members of different minority groups, and also received reliable information concerning the situation of other groups. They note that some of these groups are victims of discrimination and live in extreme poverty. The experts recall that the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of “religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth”.</p> <p>25. The experts met with groups of people who identify themselves as Dalits. The caste system was described as an occupational system, whereby people, according to their descent, undertake certain professions that are generally considered to be menial. The experts were informed that these people suffer discrimination in all areas of life, including segregation in their access to housing. Most live beneath the poverty line, earn less than the minimum wage and have no access to education. Dalits also suffer from numerous diseases, not least because of their lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and they sometimes face discrimination in their access to public-health facilities.</p> <p>26. In their meetings with Dalits, the experts perceived an overwhelming feeling of their being “trapped”. Dalits feel they have no opportunity to seek other jobs, since their families have had these occupations for generations and because they lack adequate education. Pervasive discrimination against them keeps them poor, uneducated, in terrible living conditions and in menial jobs. While the Government of Bangladesh does not make specific reference to the situation of Dalits in its National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction, it recognizes the pattern of discrimination against occupational groups related to caste systems. The strategy indicated the need to understand further the situation of these groups and to promote targeted policies aimed at improving their living conditions. The Government should explicitly recognize the discrimination experienced by Dalits and take more concrete steps to redress it, including through the enforcement of existing laws and the establishment of a special commission with a mandate to address concerns particular to Dalits. The National Human Rights Commission also has a central role to play in combating discrimination based on caste.</p>
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