

Urgent appeal to combat caste discrimination in Nepal earthquake relief efforts

A [rapid assessment report](#) of the situation of Dalit communities following the Earthquakes in Nepal, has found that Dalits are discriminated in the distribution of post-earthquake relief materials, receiving less aid than those from castes ranking higher in [Nepal's caste system](#).

Inequality in access to rescue and relief provisions for Dalit communities is [documented](#) in the *Waiting for Justice: Report of Initial Findings from Immediate Needs Assessment and Monitoring Responses towards Affected Dalit Communities in Nepal Earthquake 2015*, released by the Dalit Civil Society Massive Earthquake Victim Support and Coordination Committee and the Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF). The report covers 37 villages, in the ten worst affected districts in Nepal, and the committee behind the report includes members and advisors from 15 human rights and humanitarian civil society organisations.

The report uncovered that sixty percent of Dalits interviewed felt there has been wilful negligence due to caste prejudice and that they experienced discrimination in relief and rescue services when comparing to members of the dominant castes. Sixty-five percent believed that authorities had wilfully ignored bringing rescue and relief efforts to Dalit locations. The assessment team found discrimination in access to shelter, food aid, health and water and sanitation.

Immediate needs for Dalit families assessed are outlined in the report including food, shelter, health, and special attention to Dalit women, children and elderly and the provision of immediate compensation, not based on land rights. A number of [recommendations](#) for 'Dignified recovery and rehabilitation' are offered in the report.

In the [Amnesty International report](#) *Nepal: Earthquake recovery must safeguard human rights*, released on 1 June 2015, concern is also raised over caste discrimination in relief work in Nepal.

IDSN appeals to stakeholders providing humanitarian assistance in Nepal to:

- Involve local Dalit civil society representatives and organisations in their planning and provision of relief and rehabilitation, following the Nepal Earthquakes, including regular consultations.
- Ensure that mechanisms are established for assessing equitable access to aid for Dalits and other discriminated groups.
- Collect disaggregated data along caste lines, to monitor relief and rehabilitation services.
- Use affirmative policies to ensure Dalit organisations are also involved in implementation.
- Engage with the [recommendations](#) laid out by the Dalit Civil Society Massive Earthquake Victim Support and Coordination Committee in their [report](#) of May 2015.
- Follow the recommendations and guidelines in the IDSN [Equality in Aid - Addressing caste discrimination in humanitarian response](#) report and call upon international level policy and standard settings groupings in the field of humanitarian assistance to take due account of these aspects in their future work.

Evidence of caste discrimination in relief efforts in Nepal

The assessment team behind the [‘Waiting for Justice’ report](#) conducted 65 focused group discussions with villagers and 30 meetings with officials in the villages to assess the situation. Dalits shared their experiences of negligence and discrimination by rescue teams, mobilized by the Government, in detail with team members.

In reports from Gongambu, Nepal it was found that an international rescue team trying to rescue buried Dalit families from a collapsed house were taken by the Government to the next non-Dalit house. Another Dalit woman reported that due to being poor and a Dalit, police had ignored her when she was begging for help to retrieve her daughter who was buried under the rubble.

“We have not received relief because we are Dalits ... only big people know when the relief is coming ... first they distribute it among their near and dear ones and the leftovers will be distributed to Dalits,” said a Dalit woman interviewed by the team.

According to the findings 60-70% of the Dalits in a situation of despair are still waiting for shelter in the form of tents/tarpaulins or safer locations. It was found that in 80% of the villages shelter had been provided to the dominant caste members and in most cases not to Dalit families. While the Government have attempted to make temporary settlements possible based on land ownership, this is also excluding the Dalits who are mostly landless.

The report states that in Dandakhark, Nepal only 36 out of 57 Dalit families had received tents while all dominant caste families had received tents. The team also observed that while Dalit tents were very basic those received by the dominant castes were more sophisticated.

In relation to receiving food the report finds that two weeks after the earthquake only 40% had received food support. In relation to the food received Dalits also complained that this was unequally distributed, where, for example, Dalit families received one pack of rice and non-Dalits two packs. On the positive side the report does however note that in Rasuwa, Nepal, dominant caste members were found to be giving rice they received to the Dalits.

Access to health services and water was also reported to be a severe issue for the Dalits interviewed. In the relief distribution effort Dalits noted that relief was first and foremost distributed to those that owned concrete houses where those with mud houses (Dalits), damaged as severely, received it last or not at all.

Links to reports and recommendations:

[Waiting for Justice: Report of Initial Findings from Immediate Needs Assessment and Monitoring Responses towards Affected Dalit Communities in Nepal Earthquake 2015 Report](#) (The Dalit Civil Society Massive Earthquake Victim Support and Coordination Committee)

[Recommendations from the Waiting for Justice Report](#) (IDSN)

[Equality in aid: Addressing caste discrimination in humanitarian response](#) (IDSN)

[Nepal – Earthquake recovery must safeguard human rights](#) (Amnesty International)