

ID with the SR on right to safe drinking water and sanitation – item 3

Speaker: Mr. Paulo Lugon Arantes

Mr. Heller,

Minority Rights Group and the International Dalit Solidarity Network welcome your report. The denial of access to safe drinking water and sanitation in public spaces is a particularly severe manifestation of discrimination. Dalits in South Asia often face violence from the outset when trying to access the public well or hand pumps. In India, more than 20% of Dalits do not have access to safe drinking water. Only 10% of Dalit households have access to public sanitation, as compared to 27% for non-Dalit households.

Dalits are frequently disempowered and not allowed to use public taps and wells located in non-Dalit areas. A quarter of the Dalit households have water sources within premises as compared to almost half for the general population. 23.7% of Dalit households have access to latrine facilities as compared to 42.3 % for general households. Only 17% of the tribal households have access to latrines that is well below the figure for the general population, namely 43.2%.

Tribal areas are frequently served with poor quality sanitation and lack access to information regarding hygiene measures. In short, prejudicial concepts of purity and pollution, frequent among the public at large, still dominate the thinking of people in affected countries even after untouchability has been abolished legally.

Dalit women are frequently assigned within the family to fetch water and are placed at the frontline of discrimination and violence by their communities, such as verbal, sexual and physical abuse, and blockades from dominant castes.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance that your mandate keeps monitoring such serious instances of discrimination on the basis of caste and descent to the enjoyment of the right to clean and safe water and sanitation in public spaces, which affects many countries in Asia, as well as other countries in other regions.

I thank you.