

Oral statement: 53rd regular session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

Delivered by Kalpana Biswakarma on behalf of the International Dalit Solidarity Network

28 June 2023

The International Dalit Solidarity Network and the National Campaign on Dalit human welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on poverty. The employment schemes implemented in India and Nepal, while aiming to address poverty and promote social inclusion, have been criticized for their limited effectiveness in addressing caste-based discrimination and the situation of the Dalits in these countries. Despite the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in India witnessing increased participation from Dalits, the scheme's effectiveness in addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by Dalits may vary across different regions and contexts. Moreover, the implementation of MGNREGS has been criticized for perpetuating caste-based discrimination in the labour market, with Dalits often being relegated to low-paying and menial jobs.

Similarly, while employment schemes in Nepal have provided employment opportunities to marginalized groups, including Dalits, they have been criticized for their limited impact in challenging traditional caste and gender norms. The schemes have been accused of perpetuating discrimination and exclusion, with Dalits often being relegated to the lowest-paying and most hazardous jobs.

It is clear that the issue of caste discrimination and its impact on Dalits requires comprehensive and multi-faceted approaches. While employment schemes can provide short-term relief, they must be accompanied by efforts to address the underlying structural and the societal factors that perpetuate caste-based discrimination. This includes challenging traditional occupational barriers, promoting equal access and opportunities, and addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality. Without such efforts, employment schemes risk perpetuating caste-based discrimination and failing to address the specific needs and challenges faced by Dalits.

Thank you.