



International Dalit Solidarity Network
WORKING GLOBALLY AGAINST CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION



Strategy

2024-2030



Photo of a group of "barefoot lawyer" women meeting as part of an initiative training men and women from all communities to fight against the practice of manual scavenging. Photo © Suchit Nanda
Front page photo © 2018 Dignity March to End Sexual Violence in India

Who we are

We are a unique global human rights network that has been mobilizing international solidarity for the elimination of caste-based discrimination for over fifteen years. Our network includes civil society members from countries affected by caste discrimination, national Dalit Solidarity Networks and international human rights and development NGOs.

We create change by

- Raising global awareness of the realities faced by Dalits to foster international solidarity and support for ending caste-based discrimination
- Facilitating that Dalit voices and concerns are amplified and heard at the international level
- Documenting patterns of caste-based human rights violations and bringing these to the attention of international institutions, networks, organisations, businesses, activists and researchers

Vision

Our vision is a just and equitable world free of caste-based discrimination and untouchability.

Mission

Our mission is to make an effective global-level contribution to the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of those affected by caste-based discrimination and to promote effective measures for its elimination, with a particular focus on intersectional discrimination and the inclusion of Dalit women and youth.

Values

Human Rights

We apply a human rights based approach and strategy to all aspects of our work with a firm basis in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments.

Solidarity

We act in solidarity and collaborate with Dalit communities, and seek increased solidarity for the cause of eliminating caste-based discrimination at the global level.

Inclusion

We ensure the participation of representatives from communities affected by caste, especially Dalit women and youth, in our global advocacy work and governing structures.

Collaboration

We seek to collaborate with network members and associates and with other relevant organisations and institutions to ensure the maximum impact of our work.

Integrity

We are known for delivering accurate, relevant and reliable input to global mechanisms and processes and strive to maintain this level at all times, and ensure the integrity, accountability, transparency and respect for the network.

Key thematic areas 2024-2030

Following on from a successful strategic period from 2019-2023, we have chosen to continue the work within two of the key thematic areas over the next six years. This has been done to maximize our impact and work on areas where we have key strengths and the capacity to effect meaningful change.

- **Caste and gender justice**
- **Caste, business and human rights**

These thematic areas incorporate the cross-cutting themes; access to justice, equity and participation, and intersectional discrimination.

Strategic objectives and targets

Our overarching change objective is to instigate action by multiple stakeholders at the global level through consistent advocacy, information sharing and engagement with stakeholders to make caste-based discrimination a recognized global issue backed by global engagement and commitment. This engagement will provide solidarity and an international platform for Dalits fighting for their rights in their local and national settings.

It is also a long-term ambition of IDSN to work towards the adoption of the UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent, ultimately leading to a UN Convention on Work and Descent-based Discrimination.

Within the two key thematic areas that form the focus of the 2024-2030 strategy, we have identified two overall long-term strategic objectives and subsequently related targets to be achieved by 2030.

Long-term objective 1:

Achieve caste and gender justice with a particular focus on Dalit women and youth

Especially relevant to SDG Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries and SDG Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, but the objective cuts across all 17 SDGs.

IDSN's 2030 Targets:

- The fight to end violence and discrimination against Dalit women, youth and children and the promotion of justice has received international attention
- Intersectionality of multiple forms of discrimination faced by Dalit women and girls, as well as those who identify as LGBTQIA+ has been raised at the UN, EU and through global awareness-raising efforts
- We have brought attention to forced conversion and forced marriage as well as to so-called "honour killings" and violence in retaliation against inter-caste relationships, and have ensured that this has been addressed at the UN and EU level.
- We have ensured meaningful and dignified participation with equal opportunities for Dalit women in key international fora, including promoting Dalit women leadership
- We have ensured capacity sharing for Dalit women and youth to take part in global level processes
- We have strengthened the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the voices of Dalit women
- International networks of Dalit women are strengthened and visible in key global human rights and development fora
- Dalit women are actively engaging with mainstream global networks for the achievement of SDG 5 on Gender Equality
- Right to life and livelihoods for Dalit women, including food, water, decent work, education, health and housing has been reflected in IDSN's submissions and dialogue with UN and EU mechanisms
- Caste and gender justice in climate resilience and humanitarian efforts in disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation, have been highlighted in IDSN submissions to the UN and EU and in broader communications
- We have ensured the inclusion of Dalit women's voices in wider global campaigns and initiatives
- We have promoted the active inclusion of Dalit women in policy and decision-making processes directly affecting their lives

Long-term objective 2:

Eliminate caste-related labour exploitation and abuse in global supply chains

Especially relevant to SDG Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all; SDG Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries and SDG Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development but also cuts across a number of other SDGs.

IDSN's 2030 Targets:

- Labour exploitation including child labour, forced and bonded labour and hazardous work, faced by Dalits is reflected in the international business and human rights agenda
- The intersections of caste and labour exploitation, including child labour, forced and bonded labour and hazardous work, in global supply chains, is highlighted in global reports on business and human rights, labour and/or slavery
- The intersections of caste, gender and labour exploitation, including violence, sexual abuse and gender discrimination against Dalit women in work settings, has been addressed and highlighted where relevant in IDSN's activities, advocacy and awareness-raising work
- Efforts have been made to address caste-related human rights and labour rights abuses in the informal sector including homeworkers, agricultural and construction workers
- IDSN has input into relevant EU human rights legislation, for example the CSDDD, as well as UN human rights mechanisms, and international and national trade unions working alongside our local members to ensure a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach
- Caste-related child labour, forced and bonded labour and hazardous work has been explicitly addressed at the UN and EU level
- International solidarity from trade unions, trade initiatives, and international NGOs has been fostered to address exploitation of Dalits in global supply chains
- Key international businesses and trade-related networks have been sensitized to the existence of caste-related exploitation in their supply chains, recognize caste discrimination as a salient risk and have been informed of ways to tackle it
- Intersections of caste, environmental and climate justice and its relevance to labour rights and land resources for Dalits have been explored and highlighted in IDSN advocacy work and communications

Approach

Our work is based on a human rights-based approach, and adheres to the values and mission set out above. Our 2024-2030 strategy is strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals – 2030 Agenda.

In order to impact change at the national and local level we work with advocacy and awareness-raising with global institutions concerned with human rights, including the UN and EU, as well as with international NGOs, transnational businesses, trade unions, rights bodies, research institutions and activists across the world.

Our human rights-based approach is further grounded on the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights, without any discrimination. We furthermore have a specific focus on intersectional discrimination and a commitment to ensuring meaningful and direct participation of Dalit human rights defenders in the network as well as in advocacy efforts at the international level.

The international secretariat functions as a resource hub and coordinates advocacy and awareness-raising activities in close cooperation with members, associates, affiliates and alliance partners. Members from countries affected by caste discrimination are primarily Dalit-led organisations and are driving forces at the national level as well as leaders in or key contributors to interventions internationally.

We facilitate dialogue, documentation and advocacy and submissions on caste-related human rights violations to UN bodies and the EU and its institutions. We will contribute to enhancing demands for accountability of countries affected by caste and other duty-bearers to meet their obligations, and support Dalits to make their voices heard and claim their rights. This strategic approach ultimately aims to cause change at the local level through collaboration with and pressure from international actors.

We strive to ensure the inclusion of representatives from Dalit communities in all our advocacy work and interventions in international fora, and work in collaboration with our network members, including Dalit Solidarity Networks and International Associates, to maximize our impact. IDSN furthermore aims to ensure that Dalit women and youth participate actively in key IDSN activities.

We will ensure that our strategic objectives are monitored and evaluated in a systematic way so that IDSN is clear on organisational effectiveness, outcomes, successes and equally, any areas for improvement.

Definitions

The term “caste-based discrimination” as used in this strategy document is meant to include discrimination based on caste, based on work and descent and based on analogous forms of inherited status.

The term “Dalit” as used in this strategy document refers to members of communities historically considered to be at the lowest rung in South Asian caste systems, that face discrimination and untouchability practices and it is meant to encompass other communities suffering from similar forms of discrimination on the basis of work and descent, with full recognition that members of these communities do not necessarily identify with this terminology.

The term “countries affected by caste discrimination” as used in this strategy refers to countries where the practice of discrimination based on caste or analogous systems of inherited status is indigenous to the country itself.



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Caste-based discrimination

Caste discrimination is a global human rights issue affecting over 260 million people.

Caste-systems have fostered a form of 'hidden apartheid', dividing people from birth into unequal social groups. Those at the bottom of the system, known as Dalits in South Asia, are historically considered inferior to other caste-groups. While caste discrimination has been banned in many countries, implementation of the legislation is often inadequate or inhibited by deeply rooted caste bias in law enforcement and justice systems.

Dalits face marginalisation and exploitation in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka and caste discrimination continues to manifest itself in countries such as Japan, Yemen and a number of African countries, as well as in global South Asian diaspora communities.

Caste discrimination continues to involve massive violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Those at the bottom of the system may be forced to do the most hazardous jobs and are at increased risk of modern slavery or child labour. Dalit women are particularly exposed to severe rights violations, including violence and sexual abuse, as they face intersectional caste and gender discrimination.