

Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), Kathmandu, Nepal



International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), Copenhagen, Denmark



**SUMMARY: Joint Shadow Report on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination
Against Women regarding Dalit women and girls in Nepal**

**The full report submitted for the UN CEDAW 2025 review can be downloaded here
<https://tinyurl.com/IDSN-FEDO-CEDAW2025>**

Submitting Organisations - The joint shadow report was submitted by the Feminist Dalit Organisation and the International Dalit Solidarity Network. The FEDO is a Dalit women-led Nepalese NGO. FEDO works towards a discrimination-free society where dignity, human-rights, equal participation and benefits from development are afforded to Dalit women. The IDSN is a global membership network advocating and raising awareness for Dalit human rights.

Background – ‘Dalit’ refers to the oppressed caste in the Hindu caste hierarchy. 1.6 million Dalits live in Nepal, of which 15% of Dalits are Dalit women. The shadow report was prepared following consultation with a range of Nepalese Dalit women and Dalit organisations.

Articles 1 and 2, Discrimination against Dalit women and girls

Overview – The establishment of a National Dalit Commission and passing of national legislation that prohibits and criminalises caste-based discrimination (CBD) has not eliminated CBD, sexual harassment and gender-based violence against Dalit women and girls. They are deprived of social, economic and cultural rights. Those who have a disability, are elderly, LGBTQIA+, single, and are Madhesi face intersecting forms of discrimination. FEDO has also recorded multiple cases of caste-based discrimination and untouchability against elected Dalit women.

Ineffective implementation of legislation – Nepal has not implemented CEDAW’s recommendation to take all measures necessary to ensure the effective implementation of anti caste-based discrimination. Nepal has amended its discriminatory laws from a gendered perspective, but have not taken into consideration CEDAW’s recommendation to include a specific, holistic and intersectional definition of discrimination against women. In contrast to Nepal’s replies to the list of issues in CEDAW’s seventh periodic review, Dalit women and girls have not in reality witnessed the provision of free legal support for victims of caste-based discrimination. Access to justice is also restricted by limited knowledge of human rights amongst Dalit women and girls, a lack of disaggregated and limited interactions between the federal, provincial, and local

women do not report crimes due to fear of retaliation, lack of trust and limited access to justice mechanisms.

Key recommendations:

1. Formulate anti-discrimination legislation that defines caste-based discrimination against Dalit women and girls, specifically focused on intersectional discrimination.
2. Document and monitor nationwide data on caste-based discrimination against Dalit women in local and provincial governments, in coordination with the Dalit Desks, NDC, and Dalit organizations.
3. Enhance the capacity and confidence of women and girl victims of caste-based discrimination to register the cases of caste-based discrimination.
4. Increase accountability of the police and justice mechanisms to ensure victims of caste-based discrimination are free from social and political pressure, and afforded reparation.
5. Involve Dalit women lawyer organizations in raising awareness of the Integrated Legal Aid Policy, its implementation and monitoring.
6. Implement the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Act of 2011 following the 2018 concluding observations of the Committee and its recommendation that refers to the recommendation of the UPR ([A/HRC/31/9](#), para. 122.35).

Articles 7 and 8, Participation

Overview - Dalit women's participation is severely lacking in leadership positions. Nepal demonstrates a promising mandatory representation of women in political structures. However, the representation and participation of Dalit women both at national and international levels, in line with the human rights principles, recommendations of international human rights instruments, and the SDGs, are far from being achieved. The high representation of Dalit women in local positions is celebrated, but their tangible influence is limited.

Key recommendations:

1. Conduct research on the representation and participation of Dalit women in the decision-making of the government and private sectors at all levels.
2. Increase Dalit women's representation at all levels of governmental and non-governmental institutions and their policy-making bodies.
3. Design advanced courses and introduce targeted programmes to enhance the capacity, skills, and leadership of Dalit women to build their confidence and capacity and enable them to compete for senior positions at national and international levels.
4. Promote zero tolerance for discrimination against Dalit women in all professions and fields.
5. Monitor and investigate the allegations of caste-based discrimination and untouchability against Dalit women across all sectors and dismiss the elected representatives from positions if found guilty.
6. Implement the CEDAW Committee's previous recommendations regarding women's political and public life at all levels.

Article 15, Right to Marriage and Family Life

Overview - Despite legal protections, caste-based discrimination continues to impact the rights of Dalit women and girls to choose a spouse or enter into marriage. Almost all inter-caste marriages in Nepal between Dalits and non-Dalits face caste-based discrimination, violence (often life-threatening), and untouchability. Patriarchy is a driving factor. Without any consultation, the government terminated the vital financial support previously given to inter-caste couples upon marriage.

Key recommendations:

1. Take measures to protect the rights of Dalit women and girls, ensuring child marriage is forbidden.
2. Introduce programmes by expanding partnerships with multilateral and bilateral organizations to change the societal attitudes towards caste and inter-caste marriages and provide inter-caste marriage couples with assistance.
3. Amend and implement the existing legislation, including the Marriage Registration Act, 1971, and the Gender Equality Act 2006, for mandatory registration of inter-caste marriages upon the verbal dissolution of unregistered marriage through the single decision of the husband or ex-husband.
4. Punish the law enforcement authorities for denial of FIR registration in inter-caste marriages between people from diverse backgrounds, including LGBTIQ+, and protect the couples and their dignity during and after inter-caste marriage.