

2024 annual report



International Dalit Solidarity Network

WORKING GLOBALLY AGAINST CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION

2024 annual report

3	Foreword
4	Caste and Gender Justice
12	Business and Human Rights
15	Organisation and Networking
19	Financial Statements

2024 Highlights

- OECD side-event co-organised by Arisa and IDSN addressed caste in garment and footwear supply chains
- Dalit women called for global action on caste at IDSN's UN Human Rights Council #LetsTalkAboutCaste side-event
- IDSN delegation participated and gave statements at the UN Forum on Minority Issues to foster action
- IDSN spoke at a session at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights and a delegation took part in the Forum
- UN OHCHR workshop in Bangkok shedding light on barriers to justice for Dalits in South Asia co-organised by IDSN
- Recommendations on caste were made by UN UPR and Treaty Bodies following IDSN statements and submissions
- The European Parliament adopted reports on EU-India relations and human rights calling for action on caste discrimination
- Caste was included in the new EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)
- Dalit human rights defenders participated in EU human rights event in Brussels and trained EU diplomats on caste

Foreword

Dear friends and supporters of the International Dalit Solidarity Network,

We are delighted to share with you our Annual Report 2024. Having finally been granted ECOSOC consultative status in December 2022, we pushed open even more doors in our advocacy efforts at the United Nations in Geneva and we also had a remarkable year with our interventions at the European Union in Brussels. Furthermore, we continued to build our engagement with the corporate sector, and through the Ethical Trading Initiatives in the UK, Denmark and Norway we continued to put caste on the business and human rights agenda.

All of our key successes are highlighted in this Annual Report and I urge you to take the time to read and enjoy. It is a testament to all that we do.

At the United Nations, we made several submissions and interventions resulting in recommendations on caste by the UN Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies. There are many Special Rapporteurs at the UN who have included caste in their reports and presentations. And we are grateful to them for their support and commitment.

Our UN Human Rights Council side-event '#Let'sTalkAboutCaste' featured IDSN Dalit Women board members from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues gave a strong opening statement expressing his desire for the UN to embed caste at the heart of what it does.

IDSN, alongside the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Asia Dalit Rights Forum, co-organised a unique event in Bangkok on 'Access to Justice' - shedding light on barriers to justice for Dalits in South Asia, featuring country-specific research and strategies for improvement. An IDSN delegation participated in both the UN Business and Human Rights (BHR) and Minority Forum. We also organised a snapshot event at the BHR forum alongside the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD).

We also kicked off our business and human rights work in February with an OECD side-event co-organised by Arisa and IDSN, proposing strategies for action to address caste discrimination in the global garment and footwear supply chains.

At the European Union, the European Parliament adopted reports on EU-India relations and human rights calling for action on caste discrimination. We were delighted that caste was included in the new EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). And to end the year, Dalit human rights defenders participated in a EU human rights event in Brussels and trained EU diplomats on caste.

Alongside these many achievements, there are also increased challenges of free and open participation as many embassies in caste-affected countries seem to be clamping down on visa approvals. This has certainly affected our ability to bring in the next generation leadership to participate in key international events. Human rights defenders have become targets for oppression with visas often being denied.

2024 also brought with it the sad news of the passing of IDSN's first Director. She will be much missed and remembered by many. Our tribute to Rikke is included at the end of this report.

We remain strong and resilient and face these challenges and are committed to our goal of a world without caste discrimination. As always, particular thanks to the IDSN Board and the small but mightily powerful Secretariat who have worked tirelessly to ensure ending caste discrimination remains high on the human rights agenda.

So, once again, thank you to all who contribute to our work in whatever way they can. Our work together has not ended, but we keep hope for a caste-free world.

Meena Varma

Executive Director - IDSN

Caste and Gender Justice

The pursuit of caste and gender justice remained central to IDSN's efforts in 2024, building upon the foundations laid in previous years and aligning with the [strategic priorities](#) for 2024-2030 which aim to achieve a just and equitable world free of caste discrimination, with a particular focus on Dalit women and youth. Throughout the year, IDSN actively engaged with international bodies and fora, advocating for the rights of those facing intersectional caste and gender discrimination. This chapter includes highlights of IDSN's work in 2024. Alongside this work, IDSN took part in meetings, dialogues, webinars and other advocacy activities.

Joint submission to the UN CEDAW review of Nepal

In January, IDSN jointly submitted a [report](#) to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in advance of the review of Nepal, with many IDSN members and associates from Nepal.

The report incorporated first-hand insights from Dalit civil society organisations and aimed to strengthen the advocacy for Dalit women's rights and prompt further progress in Nepal's efforts to fulfill its commitments under CEDAW. The submission addressed various articles of the CEDAW convention, detailing the specific challenges faced by Dalit women in relation to discrimination, gender equality, special measures, stereotyping, trafficking, political and public life, education, employment, health, economic and social benefits, marriage and family.

Recommendations on caste adopted at the UPR of Bangladesh

March saw IDSN engage with Bangladesh's review under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the 55th session of the Human Rights Council. In preparation for Bangladesh's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), IDSN effectively highlighted caste discrimination through advocacy meetings and efforts and IDSN also submitted a

[joint report](#) with BDERM, DALIT, and Nagorik Uddyog to the UPR Secretariat, documenting systemic and intersectional caste and gender discrimination against Dalits in education, employment and healthcare, and urging legislative changes to address these issues.

The UPR process underscored a strong international call for Bangladesh to eliminate caste discrimination, with numerous countries recommending the swift implementation of the Anti-Discrimination Bill that has been pending since 2022 and many mentioning caste and gender.

These recommendations, specifically referencing the situation of Dalits, were accepted by the State. This was [welcomed](#) by IDSN and at the adoption, Milan Das from IDSN Associate, Paritran, gave a [video statement](#) highlighting the escalating attacks on Dalits in Bangladesh and calling on the Government to accept the UPR recommendations and adopt the necessary legislation for the protection and promotion of the rights of Dalits.

Submission to the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

In April, IDSN alongside numerous members and associates submitted a [report](#) on 'Women's active, free, and meaningful participation in development, with emphasis on decision-making' to the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development. The report highlights the severe intersectional discrimination Dalit women face due to caste and gender, critically impeding their active and meaningful participation in development and decision-making. It details how across South Asia (Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh), patriarchal and caste-based systems create significant barriers to Dalit women's access to education, employment, healthcare, and protection against violence.

Noting the low representation of Dalit women in decision-making and the limited impact of broader interventions, the report urged the Expert Mechanism to explicitly address the distinct challenges of Dalit women in its study and recommendations to ensure their targeted inclusion and genuine agency for equitable development.



IDSN delgation of Dalit women human rights defenders at the UN Human Rights Council - September 2024

Engagement with the UN review of Civil and Political Rights in India

Continuing its engagement with UN mechanisms, IDSN contributed in May to a joint NGO Alternative [Report](#) on the Situation of Civil and Political Rights in India. This collaborative effort aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the human rights situation, addressing various issues including the intersection of human rights violations and caste discrimination. The submission highlighted the disproportionately high rates of sexual violence faced by Dalit women and the barriers they encounter in accessing justice.

In July, the United Nations Human Rights Committee reviewed India's adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The Committee

expressed grave concerns about the ongoing caste-based discrimination and violence that disproportionately affect Dalits and Adivasis. Highlighting alarming incidents of violence and low conviction rates for crimes against these marginalised groups, the Committee recommended that India introduce laws to combat caste discrimination in all spheres of life, implement public awareness campaigns, and provide training to key stakeholders to foster respect for diversity and ICCPR principles.

Submission to the UN CERD review of Pakistan

August brought further scrutiny on state accountability, with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) conducting a review of Pakistan's efforts to combat caste discrimination. Informed by



Participants at workshop. Photo by OHCHR

UN workshop sheds light on barriers to justice for Dalits in South Asia

In the workshop titled “Mapping out Access to Justice for Persons from Descent-Based Communities,” human rights defenders, researchers, legal experts and civil society representatives gathered to discuss some of the pressing issues faced by Dalits in South Asia. The three-day workshop held from 19th to 21st August 2024 and organised by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) with IDS and Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF) as co-organisers, was pivotal in highlighting the barriers to justice and in formulating strategies for improving the human rights protection for Dalits and addressing caste and gender discrimination.

The workshop, focusing on Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, featured country-specific research that provided a comprehensive view of the legal and social landscapes in these countries through a panel of experts to discuss the findings and way forward. IDS members contributed with fresh research demonstrating the need for urgent action to address the human rights situation of Dalits with a special focus on Dalit women and youth. The presentations on the five individual countries were instrumental in understanding the varied challenges and opportunities.

IDS Executive Director, Meena Varma, took part in the workshop alongside the delegation from IDS’s South Asia members.

The shared insights and strategies developed over the three days will serve as a foundation for future efforts to work towards a future where Dalits have full access to justice across South Asia. The need for legislative reform, increased resources and greater political commitment are key in the pursuit of equality and human rights protection for all.

The workshop concluded with a strong recommendation to establish regional mechanisms at the South Asia level to consistently address caste discrimination.

“It is clear from the research presented at this workshop that we must urgently find effective ways to address human rights violations faced by persons belonging to communities discriminated against on the basis of work and descent,” Michèle Buteau, from UN Human Rights/OHCHR.

a detailed [submission](#) from IDS, the Committee raised significant concerns about the effectiveness of existing measures to protect minorities, particularly Dalits, from bonded labour and discrimination. The submission addressed how Dalits in Pakistan face extreme stigma and exclusion in the labour market, often leading to forced labour, particularly in brick kilns and agriculture. Dalit women are especially exposed to labour exploitation due to low education, no property rights, retaliation violence and limited legal recourse. IDS also reiterated concerns about the abduction of Dalit women and girls for forced conversion and marriage. The submission recommended that Pakistan adopt and effectively implement legislation prohibiting caste-based discrimination, strengthen enforcement mechanisms against bonded labour and address the intersectional discrimination faced by Dalit women.

At the [review](#), the UN Committee stressed the need for comprehensive data collection on the socio-economic status of Dalits and highlighted the pressing issues of forced conversions and educational discrimination faced by Dalit communities.

IDS and UN Human Rights co-organise access to justice workshop in Bangkok

Later in August, IDS co-organised a [workshop](#) titled “Mapping out Access to Justice for Persons from Descent-Based Communities” in collaboration with UN Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Asia Dalit Rights Forum. This three-day event brought together human rights defenders, researchers, and legal experts to examine the multifaceted barriers to justice faced by Dalit communities in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The workshop facilitated the sharing of country-specific research, leading to vital insights into legal frameworks, law enforcement challenges and the urgent need for increased political will and resources to ensure access to justice for all with many highlighting the need to address intersectional discrimination against Dalit women and other marginalised groups. (See feature box on page 6)

EU Reports

European Parliament reports call for action on caste and gender discrimination

In 2024, IDS welcomed the European Parliament’s adoption of a comprehensive [report](#) on EU-India relations. This significant document, while focusing broadly on EU-India ties, crucially acknowledged and addressed the persistent issue of caste discrimination in India – deeply affecting Dalit women at the intersection of caste and gender.

The report issued vital recommendations, urging the EU to develop a country strategy to combat caste discrimination and to mainstream efforts to end caste discrimination in its partnerships with India. Furthermore, it emphasised the need to support Dalit human rights defenders and to urge Indian authorities to end caste discrimination.

In February 2024, the European Parliament adopted the European Parliament’s [annual report](#) on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union’s policy on the matter. IDS welcomed the adoption of this report, which calls for concrete action to support the work to end caste discrimination. The report underscores how caste-related barriers severely limit the exercise of basic human rights and human development, noting obstacles to accessing justice and employment, and the persistence of segregation and poverty.

The report explicitly condemns caste discrimination under the right to equality and non-discrimination and also addresses its gendered impact, including online hate speech related to caste. It emphasizes the importance of corporate responsibility in human rights and the need to address caste-gender discrimination through an intersectional lens.

Dalit women call for global action at #LetsTalkAboutCaste UN side-event



Panel at the UN event. Photos by IDSN

Dalit women human rights defenders highlighted the need to explicitly address caste discrimination, as a root cause of widespread human rights violations, at a UN Human Rights Council IDSN side-event on 18 September 2024. The event also featured a keynote speech by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.

Professor Nicolas Levrat, opened the discussion by stressing the need for the United Nations to explicitly address caste discrimination as part of its global human rights agenda. He highlighted that caste-based discrimination is a profound global human rights issue that affects millions and intersects with other forms of marginalisation such as poverty and gender. Prof. Levrat called on the UN international mechanisms to recognise caste as a key factor in addressing human rights abuses.

“Caste discrimination is a complex issue that cuts across all dimensions of human rights and deserves specific treatment,” Prof. Levrat commented, “If we want to tackle the issue of caste it is not sufficient to just have legislation. We must work directly with Dalits and ensure that human rights can be claimed.”

Nicolas Levrat, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

All the panellists’ presentations emphasised that caste is not merely a local or regional issue—it is a global human rights crisis that must be addressed explicitly by the UN and other international agencies. From child labour to climate justice and gender-based violence, caste discrimination intersects with almost every major human rights issue. The global fight against caste discrimination is essential to achieving the goal of leaving no-one behind. The panellist presentations can be seen in a [video](#) from the side-event on the IDSN YouTube channel.

The event was co-organised by IDSN and International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), FORUM-ASIA, Minority Rights Group, Human Rights Watch (HRW).



IDSN organises #LetsTalkAboutCaste side-event at the UN

September marked a powerful moment for advocacy with IDSN organising a UN Human Rights Council side-event on [#LetsTalkAboutCaste](#). This event provided a platform for Dalit women human rights defenders to articulate the urgent need for the explicit recognition of caste discrimination as a fundamental root cause of widespread human rights violations, including caste and gender-based exclusion and violence. The UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues lent his support to this call and Dalit activists from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal, shared their poignant experiences of bonded labour, political marginalisation, discrimination in disaster relief efforts following the Jajarkot earthquake and the intersectional nature of caste and gender-based violence. Activists called for decisive action from the UN and the international community to address these systemic injustices. (See feature box on page 8)

CEDAW Review of Japan highlights discrimination against Buraku women

In October, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), during its review of Japan, specifically [addressed](#) the persisting intersectional discrimination against Buraku women. The Committee acknowledged some progress while reiterating its concern regarding prevailing gender stereotypes and various forms of gender-based discrimination that disproportionately affect Buraku women. In the [Concluding Observations](#), It recommended that Japan draft and implement a national policy to effectively address gender stereotypes against Buraku and ethnic minority women and to ensure their equal access to education, employment and health.

Engaging the EU on action to counter caste discrimination in South Asia

IDSN continued its strategic engagement with the European Union in November, as Abirami Jotheeswaran of IDSN member AIDMAM-NCDHR delivered a compelling [presentation](#) to European Union diplomats stationed in Asia and the Pacific, facilitated by IDSN. Her training session focused on the historical and cultural roots of caste and gender discrimination and its complex intersections with other forms of inequality



Dalit HRDs from Pakistan and Nepal at the UN HRC

and human rights violations. Ms. Jotheeswaran provided crucial recommendations for the EU to strengthen its advocacy and policy interventions regarding caste discrimination in South Asia, including advocating for affirmative action, supporting Dalit human rights defenders, and pressing South Asian states to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination laws.

Advocacy at the UN Minority Forum on Caste-Based Discrimination and Exclusion

Later in November, at the UN Minority Forum, IDSN delegates actively [called for action](#) on caste-based discrimination and exclusion. Sundar Bahadur Sheni from Nepal highlighted the persistent barriers to Dalit inclusion in political and public life, particularly for Dalit women, while a delegate from India addressed the pervasive issue of caste-based hate speech on online platforms, urging for stronger regulatory measures. (See feature box on page 11)



IDSN delegation at UN Forums in 2024. Photo by IDSN

UN Minority Forum: Defenders call for action on caste-hate, political inclusion and intersectional discrimination

At the 2024 UN Forum on Minority Issues, IDSN delegates called for action on caste-based discrimination and exclusion. Sundar Bahadur Sheni from Nepal emphasised the need for Dalit inclusion in political and public spaces, highlighting the barriers faced by Dalit women. The delegate from India addressed the pervasive problem of caste-based hate speech on social media, calling for stronger regulatory measures and culturally informed solutions. Their contributions underscored the urgency of combating caste discrimination and amplifying marginalised voices globally.

The Forum was held in Geneva on 28-29 November, focusing on the theme of “Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses”. Both delegates actively engaged in sessions and side-events, with Sundar Sheni delivering a speech in the plenary session.

The full [statement](#) was posted on IDSN’s website and a [video](#) of the statement shared on LinkedIn. In addition to the delegates from India and Nepal, Siphon Kumar Robidas from Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM) was invited to attend but was unfortunately not able to attend in person. He did prepare a pre-recorded video statement sharing how Dalits in Bangladesh face discrimination and human rights issues, including in their work life. The [video statement](#) was uploaded to the IDSN YouTube channel.

The participation and contributions of IDSN’s delegation at the UN Forum reinforces the urgency of addressing caste discrimination globally and advocating for substantive and proportionate representation of Dalit communities in public life.

IDSN delegation participates in EU human rights event

December saw Swapon Das of DALIT Khulna, Bangladesh, and Rini Elizabeth Babu participate in the [EU event](#) in Brussels “A Spotlight on Human Rights Defenders”. They brought the issue of caste discrimination to the forefront during various workshops and meetings with EU officials.

IDSN delegates spoke about caste discrimination at several workshops and Swapon Das took part in meetings with the European External Action Service, Members of the European Parliament and other EU officials. He also met with Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, and the Vice Chair of the Human Rights sub-committee, MEP Marta Temido. They also met several Brussels-based civil society organisations and had interactions with many other participants.

The event was a great opportunity for knowledge sharing and was organised by the European Parliament, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights and Democracy Network and ProtectDefenders.eu



Swapon Das meeting officials in Brussels. Photo: IDSN



AWID Forum in Bangkok. Photo: AIDMAM-NCDDR

Dalit activists engage in AWID Forum

At the end of the year Dalit activists actively engaged in the 15th International AWID Forum in Bangkok. A panel session featured IDSN’s Executive Director discussing the critical intersection of caste and gender-based discrimination, and AIDMAM launched a [factsheet](#) on caste-based gender violence analysing the rise in this type of violence.

The forum also provided an opportunity to underscore the crucial need for the meaningful inclusion of Dalit women within national and global feminist discourse. The ongoing challenges faced by Dalit women were further highlighted through a [documentary](#) released by AIDMAM, showcasing their resilience against discrimination and violence.

Through these diverse engagements and strategic interventions, IDSN continued to amplify the voices of Dalit women and advocate for their rights at the highest levels, striving towards a world where caste and gender no longer dictate opportunities and life chances.

Intersectional discrimination

In addition to addressing caste and gender discrimination in advocacy, submissions and events, IDSN also endeavoured to bring attention to other forms of intersecting discrimination including disability, religion, migrant-status, climate, sexuality and socio-economic status. IDSN also made UN submissions on the intersection of [climate, caste and gender](#) and on [caste, gender and toxics](#) in 2024.

Business and Human Rights

In 2024, IDS^N's work on business and human rights remained crucial in addressing the exploitation and discrimination faced by Dalits within global supply chains, aligning with the [strategic objectives](#) for 2024-2030 that aim to eliminate caste-related labour exploitation and abuse. IDS^N actively engaged with international bodies, businesses and civil society organisations to raise awareness of caste discrimination as a significant business and human rights issue.

IDS^N co-organises side-event on caste in global supply chains at OECD Forum

In February, IDS^N collaborated with Arisa to co-organise a significant [OECD side-event](#) focused on caste discrimination within global garment and footwear supply chains. This session, part of the 2024 OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector, brought together Dalit speakers and other experts to provide practical strategies for companies to identify and address caste discrimination in their operations.

The discussion highlighted the systemic barriers and abuses faced by Dalit workers in the textile and garment industries in South Asia, emphasising the urgent need for companies to move beyond general due diligence processes and adopt targeted measures such as raising awareness, conducting thorough assessments, initiating sensitive dialogue with suppliers, implementing inclusive policies and establishing effective grievance mechanisms with Dalit representation.

Engagement with the UN Special Rapporteur on Slavery

IDS^N contributed in April to the UN Special Rapporteur on Slavery's report on workers, workers' associations and trade unions. IDS^N facilitated a meeting with members to share

crucial insights and perspectives on the intersection of caste and contemporary forms of slavery, including forced and bonded labour prevalent in regions affected by caste discrimination.

IDS^N presents at Ethical Trade Norway South Asia webinar

Later in April, IDS^N's Executive Director, Meena Varma, participated in a significant [webinar](#) organised by Ethical Trade Norway. The webinar brought together stakeholders, including Norwegian companies sourcing in South Asia, to share insights and strategies for tackling caste discrimination and other forms of discrimination in global supply chains.

Speakers underscored the critical need to explicitly address hidden forms of discrimination like caste with targeted strategies and policies and highlighted the direct links between caste discrimination and severe human rights violations, such as forced and bonded labour. Participants were also directed to resources like the ETI-UK's Base Code [guidance](#) on caste in global supply chains for further learning and action.

Ahead of the event, Ethical Trade Norway published an [article](#), in Norwegian, on caste discrimination in supply chains, by Maya Sunde Singh, who is also the Coordinator of the Dalit Solidarity Network Norway.

The webinar follows on from a number of previous events and initiatives by Ethical Trade Norway to address caste discrimination in the operations of Norwegian companies.

Caste included in new EU corporate due diligence legislation

In May, the EU adopted the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). IDS^N had provided input and information throughout 2024 in relation to the legislation. IDS^N welcomed the CSDDD focus on anti-discrimination and the direct [inclusion of the word caste](#), in the recitals, underscoring that EU businesses, and those based outside the EU but with significant presence in the Member states,

must ensure they are addressing caste discrimination, and the situation of Dalits in their supply chains, in order to live up to the new legislation. This is a crucial inclusion for millions of Dalits exploited or discriminated against in supply chains and working in forced labour, child labour or under hazardous or indecent conditions.

Following the adoption of the CSDDD, IDS^N also interacted with the EU-based Dalit Solidarity Networks and circulated a briefing note highlighting three priorities in the national level transposition of the legislation. IDS^N also participated in seminars and dialogues on the legislation to ensure that caste in supply chains was included in the discussions and decisions. Towards the end of the year, the EU Commission announced that they would propose a simplification and conjoining of the legislation with other EU due diligence and sustainability legislation into a so-called Omnibus legislation. This has been a point of concern for IDS^N and we engaged in dialogues and statements to work to ensure that any new proposal would not be at the cost of human rights. IDS^N will continue to follow this process in 2025.

Bonded labour in Pakistan highlighted in IDS^N's UN CERD review submission

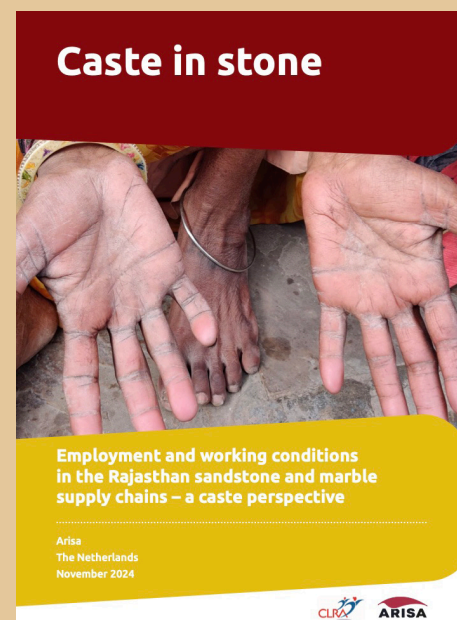
Also in May, IDS^N continued its efforts to hold States accountable by submitting a detailed [report](#) to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) concerning Pakistan. While the report had a broader focus on caste discrimination, it also highlighted the intersection of caste with labour exploitation, particularly bonded labour affecting Dalits in Pakistan. (See also previous chapter)

UN Forum on Business and Human Rights

In November 2024, an IDS^N delegation actively engaged at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in various sessions, side-events and discussions, drawing critical attention to caste-based human rights violations within global supply chains and their devastating impact on Dalit workers in South Asia. Delegates specifically raised the challenges of caste in Nepal's post-conflict context and highlighted intersectional caste discrimination in global supply chains.

Stone report

Caste discrimination in sandstone and marble industries



A [report](#) released in 2024 by IDS^N associate Arisa (Advocating Rights in South Asia) and The Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA) highlighted the critical link between caste discrimination and forced labour in Rajasthan's sandstone and marble industries. The report urged companies sourcing from these industries to recognise and address caste as a primary driver of labor rights violations and to implement more inclusive human rights due diligence practices that directly engage with affected workers and support organisations.



UN BHR Forum Snapshot Series event. Photo: IDS N

IDS N's Executive Director, Meena Varma, also addressed an official [snapshot event](#), underscoring the urgent need to tackle caste-based human rights violations in global supply chains and sharing practical tips for identifying, addressing and remedying these violations, including ensuring diversity in hiring and promotion practices.

Caste, business and human rights raised in UN submissions

In all of IDS N's submission to the UN in 2024 - as highlighted in the previous chapter - issues such as forced and bonded labour, child labour, exploitative labour and situations increasing exposure to exploitation were raised.

Continuous engagement with business and human rights networks and platforms

Throughout 2024, IDS N maintained active engagement with key networks on business and human rights, including the Ethical Trading Initiatives in Denmark, Norway and the UK, as well as holding meetings with the OECD, OECD Watch and the European Center for Law and

Justice (ECLJ).

A significant focus was placed on advocating for the explicit inclusion of caste across all tiers of supply chains in the development of new EU Business and Human Rights Legislation, including the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the Forced Labour Regulation, as well as their transposition at the national level.

Developing the 2025-2030 IDS N business and human rights strategy

In 2024, IDS N embarked on a process of developing a comprehensive strategy for its business and human rights work from 2025-2030, which involved broad consultations with stakeholders and expert interviews to define priorities and activities for the coming years.

This strategic development underscores IDS N's ongoing commitment to addressing the deeply entrenched links between caste discrimination and human rights abuses in the business sector.

Organisation and Networking

Governance

IDS N's work in 2024 was carried out in adherence with IDS N statutes, bylaws and policies and continued to be centred around the IDS N 2024-2030 [strategy](#). IDS N's evaluation carried out by Gender at Work - India, as part of IDS N's grant from the Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF) - was completed in 2024 and also informed IDS N's work going forward. As mentioned in the previous chapter, IDS N undertook the development of a strategy for our work within business and human rights. Reporting on activities and finances was carried out throughout the year and the IDS N Board held four meetings, three of which were online and one in-person meeting in Geneva.

IDS N Board

The IDS N board is comprised of five Dalit women from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and India and one Dalit man from India, representing IDS N's members in South Asia. They are joined by two representatives from IDS N's international associates and two representatives from Dalit Solidarity Networks in Europe. The Board as of 31 December is eight women and two men.

New members and affiliates

In 2024, the IDS N Board promoted a number of affiliates to member status. These are Dalit Welfare Organisation, READ, The Blue Club, Dignity Initiatives, DALIT (Khulna) and Center for Law and Justice. In addition to this, the Board also adopted Thamate, RIGHTS and Better World Shelter as new IDS N affiliates. Read more about them in the feature box on page 16.

Visa challenges

2024 was particularly challenging when it came to obtaining visas for IDS N delegates to Brussels and Geneva. On several occasions, IDS N experienced that especially younger delegates were denied visas. IDS N is following this up with Belgian and Swiss authorities.

Secretariat

The IDS N Secretariat team is based across Europe and work together remotely as well as at the headquarters in Copenhagen.

IDS N Secretariat as of 31 December 2024:

- Executive Director
Meena Varma
- Head of Communications
Maria Brink Schleimann
- Programme and Outreach Manager
Madeleine Cowper
- UN Advocacy Adviser (appointed 1 Sept. 2024)
Matthew Cave
- EU Advocacy Adviser
Emma Achilli
- Bookkeeper
Peter Søby Petersen

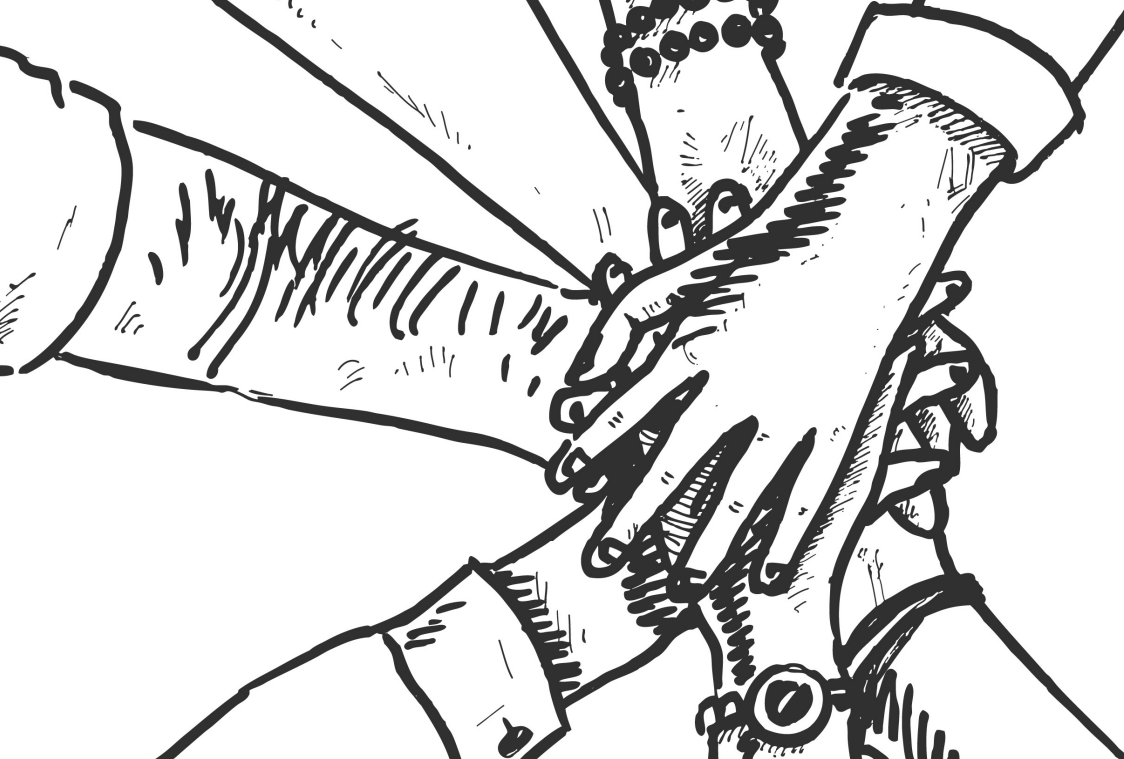
Andrés Zaragoza was also contracted by IDS N in 2024 on a consultancy basis to draft the new IDS N 2025-2030 Business and Human Rights Strategy.

Finances and funding

We would like to thank the following for their generous contribution to IDS N in 2024: the Norwegian Human Rights Foundation, Bread for the World (Germany), Misereor, Laudes Foundation and those who made individual private donations through PayPal and Candid.

IDS N continued fundraising efforts in 2024 in order to ensure the long-term stability and sustainability of the organisation.

See the financial statements on page 19 for more details of IDS N's finances in 2024.



New affiliates join IDSN in 2024

IDSN is delighted to be joined in 2024 by three new affiliates bringing each their unique expertise to the network. The new affiliates will strengthen IDSN's work across caste and gender justice, business and human rights, climate change and resilience, other forms of intersectional discrimination and access to justice. We warmly welcome the new affiliates to the network.

Better World Shelter

Better World Shelter, operated by the Dorcas Research Centre for Education, Art, and Culture, stands at a critical juncture where the intersections of caste, gender, and disability define the lived realities of some of the most marginalized individuals in India. The organisation has a long-standing commitment to empowering Dalit and other marginalised women with disabilities, and contribute vital expertise on this type of intersectional discrimination that can be amplified further through IDSN's International platform.

Website: <https://dorcas.org.in>
Social media: [facebook.com/betterworldshelter](https://www.facebook.com/betterworldshelter)
[instagram.com/betterworldshelter](https://www.instagram.com/betterworldshelter)

Thamate

Thamate (literally a Dalit Drum) is a community-based Organization founded in 2006 working in Karnataka with madiga and other most marginalised communities for the eradication of manual scavenging practice and

comprehensive development of the community. It was founded in 2006 by senior Dalit human rights activists from the safaikarmachari community with the goal of breaking the vicious cycle of caste-based occupation leading to lack of education, poverty, discrimination and exclusion through community-based mobilisation. Thamate brings extensive knowledge on exploitation and forced labour in the form of manual scavenging to the network and solid knowledge on the ways to address this.

Website: www.thamate.org/

RIGHTS

RIGHTS is a not-for-profit Organization in Kerala working in the space of climate justice for marginalised communities. In its ten years of existence, RIGHTS has conducted a number of studies and interventions in the field of education, budgets, rights of children, especially, those who belong to marginalised communities. RIGHTS directly engages with children belong to marginised communities and is a partner of the Alliance of Climate Frontline Communities. RIGHTS contributes significant insight into the intersection of caste discrimination and climate change issues, eduction and childrens' rights to IDSN.

Website: www.climatefrontline.org



Website and newsletter

Throughout the year, IDSN wrote and published [news articles](#) for the IDSN website. The articles cover developments within IDSN's thematic areas caste and gender justice and business and human rights and IDSN's advocacy activities. They are based on IDSN's work and input from network members, associates and affiliates.

The IDSN [website](#) continued to be a leading global online resource on caste-based discrimination. Unique visitors to the website rose to over 46,000 with visits from over 170 different countries. The top-ten countries visitors were coming from in 2024 were India, US, Nepal, China, UK, Canada, Germany, France, Pakistan and Australia.

The news articles, as well as other news curated from IDSN's network members, associates and affiliates, were published in IDSN's [newsletters](#) throughout the year. In 2024, subscribers to the IDSN newsletter continued to grow.

The newsletters also promoted films and videos, including a [documentary](#) on Dalit Women in India released by AIDMAM-NCDHR and "[To Belong](#)", a documentary offering an intimate self-portrait of the life of a Dalit in Nepal released by Minority Rights Group. The newsletters featured a [review](#), penned by IDSN's Executive Director, of the screening of the documentary "Untouchable – Laughing Out Caste" by Manjeet Sakar as well as a [review](#) written by IDSN Ambassador, Aidan McQuade, of the film "Origins", inspired by Isabel Wilkerson's groundbreaking book – Caste.



IDSN continued to add new entries to the IDSN online documentation [database](#) on caste discrimination, where entries are cross-referenced and searchable according to theme, institution, country and year, as well as other relevant parameters. The database was also updated with a more user-friendly interface and structure in 2024.

Social Media

IDSN's social media channels continued to support internal and external communications, with members, associates and affiliates interacting regularly via social media and cross promoting news and documentation. In 2024, IDSN made the decision to suspend activities on X, as the platform is no longer conducive to engagement and dialogue for IDSN. IDSN will also suspend Facebook activities for the same reasons. IDSN instead stepped up activities on [LinkedIn](#) and IDSN LinkedIn followers rose to over 1,200 with significant engagement on IDSN posts.

On IDSN's [YouTube channel](#), views of IDSN's online video on Dalit women rose to a total of 239,800 views, and views of the general IDSN video on caste discrimination rose to over 112,100 views. The original "I'm Dalit how are you?" video continued to prove popular with a total of over 235,500 views. IDSN also posted videos of Dalit human rights defenders engaging with the UN on the YouTube channel.



Tribute to IDSN's former Director Rikke Nöhrhind

It was with immense sadness that IDSN learned in August 2024, that former IDSN Director, Rikke Nöhrhind, passed away.

Rikke was an instrumental part of laying the foundations of the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) and a formidable force in breaking down barriers and kicking in doors to ensure that the human rights violations caused by caste discrimination were addressed at the global level.

Under her leadership between 2003 and 2016, IDSN went from strength to strength. She fought tirelessly to ensure that Dalit rights defenders could access global platforms where their voices could be heard. She followed up relentlessly to demand that action be taken at all levels to address the immense injustices and inequities that stem from caste discrimination, and her efforts have made a lasting impact. She was a true force of nature and would never take no for an answer.

Rikke devoted her life and service to the pursuit of justice for marginalised and excluded communities. She leaves behind a beautiful family and a strong legacy and testament to that no matter how immense the challenges, we should never give up the fight.

IDSN posted a [tribute](#) to Rikke on the IDSN website and shared the sad news with IDSN members, associates and affiliates as well as in the IDSN newsletter.

In her memory and to honour and recognise her immense contribution, IDSN arranged an online tribute to bring together the founders of IDSN and dozens of network members to share their thoughts and memories in a two hour long event on Zoom. Rikke's daughter also took part in the tribute.

IDSN also launched a memory board where all those who had known and worked with Rikke could post their own tributes and photos and this was then printed as a memory book and gifted to Rikke's daughter.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2024

Profit and loss

	2024 DKK	2024 EURO	2023 DKK
Opening balance¹	293,165.24	39,297.87	431,446.53
Income			
Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF)	564,342.23	75,648.28	681,364.64
Brot für die Welt	1,521,542.77	204,600.00	1,724,012.57
Misereor	560,367.54	75,300.00	
Other income	8,388.40	1,124.44	596.32
Laudes Foundation	556,534.20	74,601.64	38,655.00
Total	3,211,175.14	430,447.82	2,444,628.53
Expenditure	2,751,462.01	368,824.73	2,582,909.82
Result	459,713.13	61,623.08	-138,281.29
Balance	752,878.37	100,920.95	293,165.24

Balance statement

	2024 DKK	2024 EURO	2023 DKK
Assets			
Cash at bank at 31.12.	1,492,596.83	200,077.86	786,412.45
Other assets			
Rent deposit	13,326.00	1,786.31	13,326.00
Petty cash	815.46	109.31	10,548.16
Outstanding accounts	76,019.52	10,190.17	22,392.56
Total other assets	90,160.98	12,085.79	46,266.72
Liabilities			
Compulsory holiday payment fund	-581.21	-77.91	-549.01
2) Outstanding Accounts	-203,175.70	-27,235.06	-131,928.65
3) Laudes Foundation for 2025	-441,558.67	-59,189.54	-333,117.27
4) NHRF for 2025	-184,563.86	- 24,740.20	-73,919.00
Total Liabilities	-829,879.44	-111,242.70	-539,513.93
Balance carried forward	752,878.37	100,920.95	293,165.24

The financial statements are presented in Danish kroner.

For reasons of comparison, amounts in Euro are presented, using a fixed exchange rate based on a monthly average from Infocore: 7.4601

Hence, some discrepancies may appear compared to actual amounts received in Euro.

Notes:

1) Opening balance is in accordance with accounts for 2023

2) Consist of audit, annual report, insurance and tax for 2024 to be paid in 2025

3) Support paid in 2024 for use in 2025

4) Support paid in 2024 for use in 2025

Please find the detailed financial statements for IDSN on www.idsn.org/idsn-financial-statements-2024



International Dalit Solidarity Network

Farvergade 27D, 1.floor
DK-1463 Copenhagen V
Denmark

Phone +45 31 49 31 04

info@idsn.org

www.idsn.org

www.idsn.org/newsletter

Connect with IDSN on social

 linkedin.com/company/idsn

 youtube.com/idsnvideo

Members as of 1 April 2024

Nepal

- Dalit NGO Federation
- Feminist Dalit Organization
- Jagaran Media Center
- Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organisation
- Dalit Welfare Organisation
- Dignity Initiatives
- Dalit Alliance for Natural Resources

Pakistan

- Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network
- Center for Law & Justice

Sri Lanka

- Human Development Organization

India

- National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights
- National Federation of Dalit Women
- People's Watch
- The Blue Club
- READ – the Rights Education & Development Centre
- National Confederation of Dalit & Adivasi Organisations
- Social Awareness Society for Youths

Bangladesh

- Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement
- DALIT (Khulna)

Solidarity Networks Europe

- Dalit Solidarity Network – UK
- Dalit Solidarity Network – Norway
- Dalit Solidarity Network – Finland
- Dalit Solidarität Deutschland (Germany)

Affiliates

- Association For Dalit Women's Advancement of Nepal
- International Centre for Ethnic Studies – Sri Lanka
- National Dalit Christian Watch - India
- Parittran - Bangladesh
- Thamate - India
- RIGHTS - India
- Better World Shelter - India

International Associates

- Advocating Rights In South Asia
- Anti-Slavery International
- Asian Centre for Human Rights
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
- Asian Human Rights Commission
- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
- Franciscans International
- Human Rights Watch
- ICMICA/Pax Romana
- International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination
- Lutheran World Federation
- Minority Rights Group International
- Robert Kennedy Memorial Foundation, USA
- The Rafto Foundation
- World Council of Churches



was founded in March 2000 to advocate for Dalit human rights and to raise awareness of Dalit issues nationally and internationally. IDSN is a network of international human rights groups, development agencies, national Dalit Solidarity Networks from Europe and organisations in caste-affected countries. IDSN engages with the United Nations, the European Union and other multilateral institutions, working for action-oriented approaches to address 'untouchability' and other human rights abuses against Dalits and similar communities that suffer discrimination based on work and descent. IDSN bases its work on contributions from members, associates and affiliates. The network produces crucial input in the form of documentation, strategic interventions and lobby action and also supports national-level lobbying.