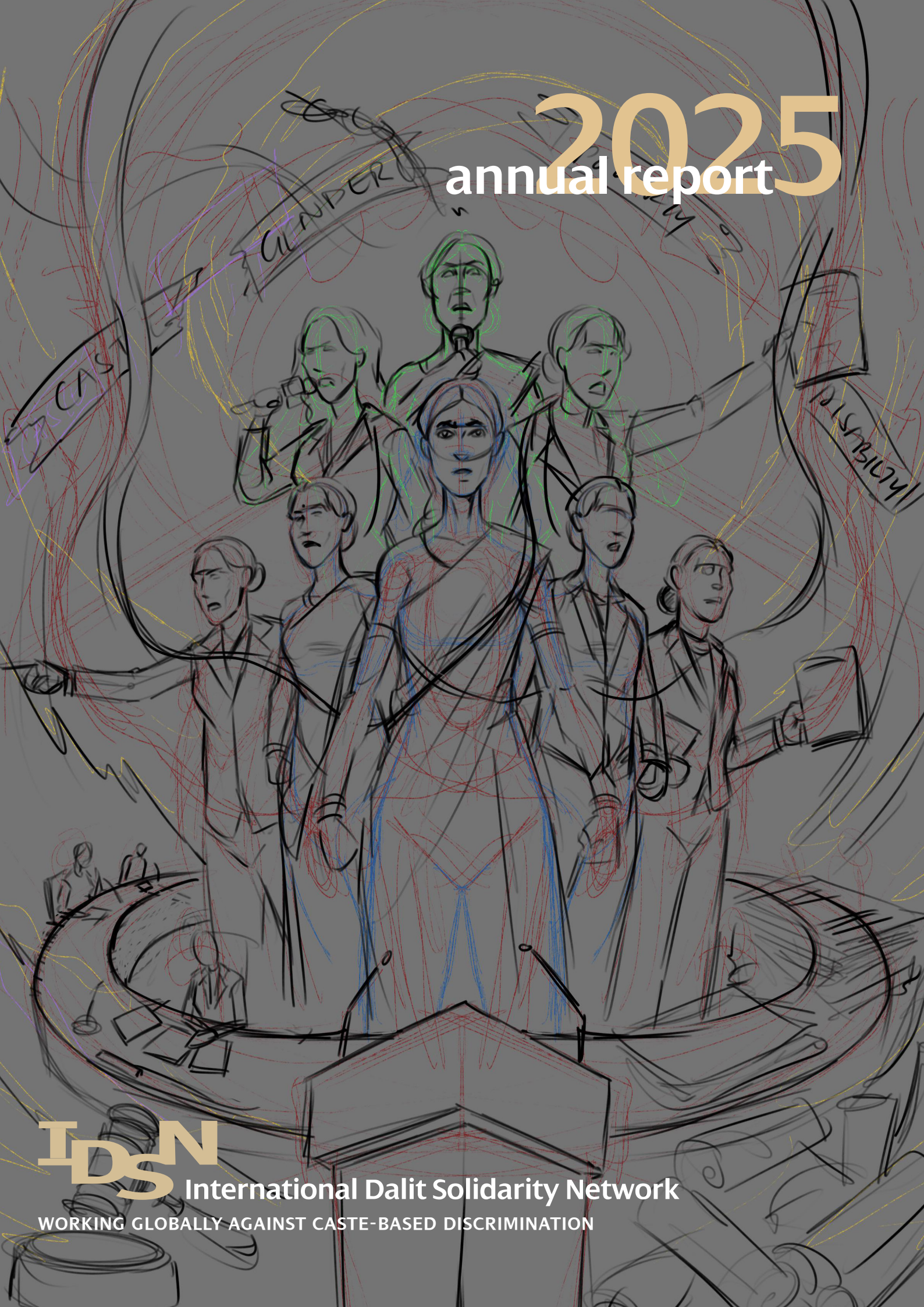


2025 annual report



IDS
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International Dalit Solidarity Network

WORKING GLOBALLY AGAINST CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION

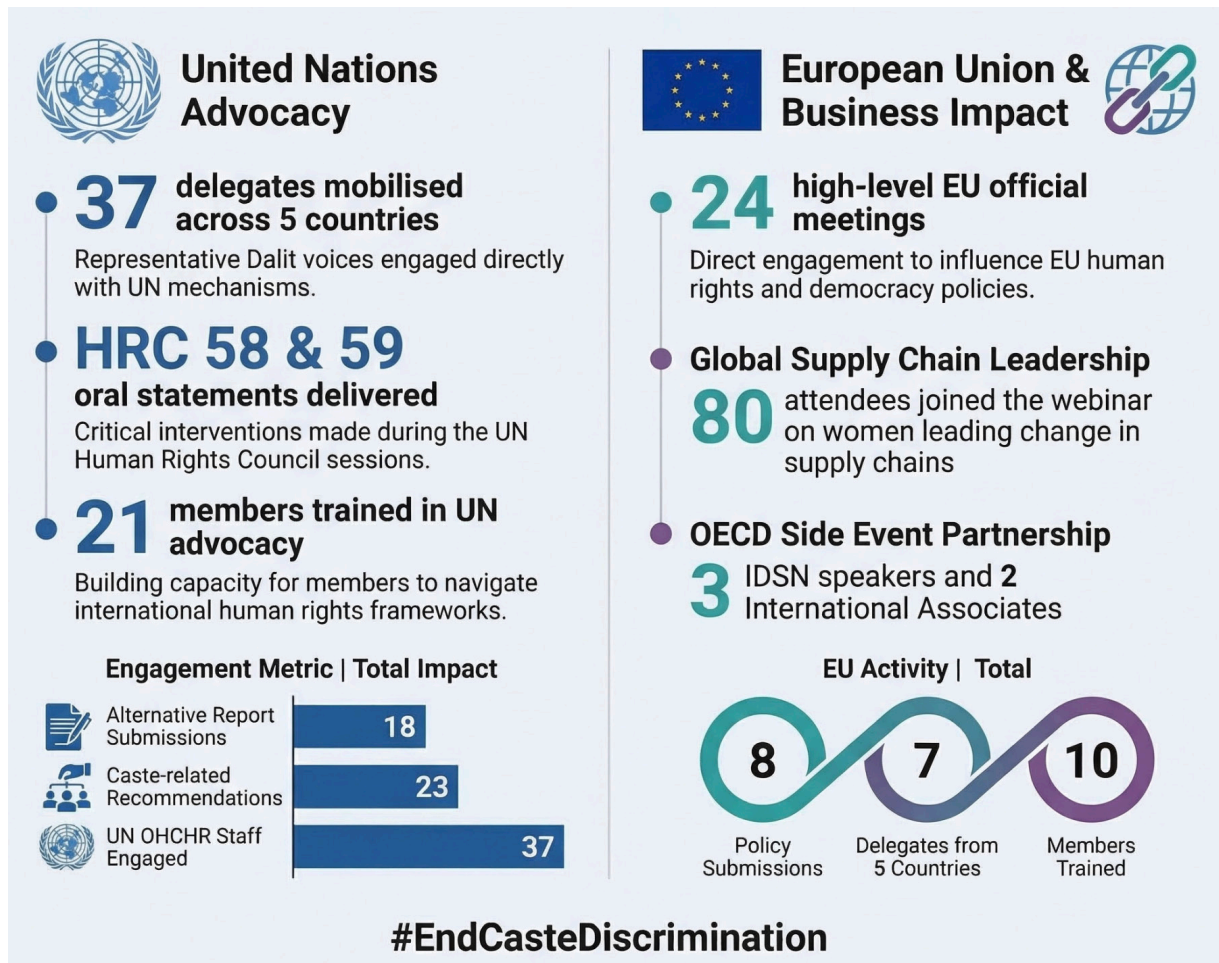
Cover sketch: Jay Sagathia

2025 annual report

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2025 Highlights

- Dalit women human rights defenders addressed the UN CEDAW Committee, calling for action on caste and gender based discrimination in Nepal
- The UN Special Rapporteur on Racism issued a landmark report recognising caste and gender as intersecting forms of structural discrimination
- IDSN co organised a CSW69 parallel event centring lived intersectionality and the leadership of Dalit women from South Asia
- Dalit human rights defenders engaged directly with EU institutions during two IDSN organised advocacy missions to Brussels
- Dalit activists contribute to EU-NGO session on discrimination based on work and descent leading to proposal for EU Strategy on Caste
- Dalit activists from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan took part in an IDSN delegation and gave statements at the UN Forum on Minority Issues
- IDSN supported a Dalit delegation to Nepal's UPR Pre Session and submitted a joint shadow report by 36 Dalit led organisations
- IDSN submitted multiple inputs to UN Special Procedures, Treaty Bodies and the Human Rights Council
- IDSN co-organised a joint Ethical Trading Initiative webinar on 'Women leading change in global supply chains'
- IDSN submitted an evidence based report to the European Commission to inform the EU Forced Labour Regulation Risk Database
- IDSN co-organised a side-event at the OECD Forum and participated in the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, highlighting caste based labour exploitation in global supply chains



Foreword

Dear friends and supporters of the International Dalit Solidarity Network,

As always, I am delighted to share with you our Annual Report 2025.

If anyone was in any doubt as to what we have achieved this past year, then here we put our money where our mouths are. We are always being asked to 'Show me the evidence'.

We remain strong and resilient, facing head on the many challenges thrown at us.

As always, thank you to the IDSN Board and especially to the small but mighty and powerful Secretariat who all work tirelessly to ensure ending caste discrimination remains high on the human rights agenda. 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.

A special thank you also to illustrator Jay Sagathia for using his talent to create the powerful illustrations for this report. You can find his sketch on the cover and his illustrations on page 7 and 12.

#EndCasteDiscrimination #DalitVoices

Meena Varma

Executive Director - IDSN

Caste and Gender Justice

In 2025, IDSN and its members, associates and affiliates expanded efforts to promote caste and gender justice in international human rights spaces. Building on years of advocacy and mobilisation, Dalit women human rights defenders from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka played a leading role in drawing attention to the complex ways in which caste and gender intersect to reinforce systemic discrimination, marginalisation and violence.

At the heart of this work was the deepening recognition, across UN mechanisms and platforms, that the lived experiences of Dalit women represent a convergence of multiple, overlapping forms of structural injustice. These efforts were matched by increased engagement with UN Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and intergovernmental processes, reinforcing IDSN's position as a key facilitator of voices on caste and gender justice globally. As gender cross cuts with all of IDSN's work, you will also find more activities centring Dalit women throughout the report.

Engagement with the European Parliament's human rights structures

In January, IDSN's EU Representative met with Myriam Goinard, Head of Secretariat of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, and Celine Château, the official responsible for civil society cooperation, to discuss closer engagement and follow-up on caste-related priorities with a focus on Dalit women. In February, IDSN joined a cross-NGO effort, adopting and sending a [joint letter](#) to EU institutions on India, urging a stronger human rights approach and attention to intersectionality ahead of a Commission visit and the development of a Strategic Agenda for EU–India relations. The letter was presented to the European External Action Service and shared with the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights and the European Parliament Delegation for relations with India.

UN CEDAW Review: Dalit women's rights in focus

In February, the 90th session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) brought the voices of Dalit women to the forefront. Speaking on behalf of the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) and IDSN, Durga Sob [addressed](#) the Committee's Informal NGO Briefing in Geneva.

Ms. Sob drew attention to Nepal's persistent failure to implement existing legal protections, including the Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability Act and noted that Dalit women continue to face systemic barriers in accessing justice, education and political participation—even where formal quotas exist. She described the violence experienced by Dalit women and the failure of the justice system to respond effectively to these violations.

Ms. Sob's presentation was grounded in a joint shadow [report](#) by Dalit organisations and IDSN, along with a summary of [key recommendations](#). Her [oral statement](#) highlighted the urgent need for States to fund and institutionalise community-led legal aid, strengthen caste and gender-disaggregated data collection and engage Dalit women in shaping national policy.

Intersectionality at CSW69: Lived realities and policy gaps

At the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), IDSN co-organised a well-attended virtual [parallel event](#) titled "What Do We Really Mean by Intersectionality and Inclusivity?" on 13 March in partnership with CIVICUS, Dignity Initiative and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR).



Speaking up at the UN CEDAW review of Nepal

The panel featured testimonies from Dalit women from India, Nepal and Bangladesh, who shared how caste, gender, religion and disability combine to produce multidimensional inequality. UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, Dr Ashwini K.P., delivered the keynote, stating that for Dalit women, “intersectionality is not theoretical—it is lived.”

Speakers underscored the need for international institutions to go beyond rhetoric and commit to structural changes, including the integration of caste into all gender and development frameworks, the collection of caste-disaggregated data, and funding for Dalit-led organisations. The session also called for international donors to prioritise marginalised women’s leadership in movement-building and policymaking.

European Union annual report highlights caste

In April, the European Union’s Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy addressed caste discrimination and the situation of Dalits, and specifically also Dalit women, in the country sections on India and Nepal. The report

also raised themes relevant to IDSN’s work across other country contexts, including the rights of minorities, women’s rights and forced labour. IDSN had offered input ahead of the report and followed these developments closely as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen EU attention to caste discrimination and its intersection with other human rights concerns.

Advocacy Delegation to Brussels

In June, IDSN coordinated a successful [advocacy](#) visit to Brussels involving six Dalit human rights defenders from India, Nepal and Pakistan. The delegation engaged with representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), national government missions and civil society partners.

Delegates raised concerns about caste and gender justice, caste-based violence, bonded labour, barriers to political participation and the shrinking civic space in caste-affected countries. The meetings underscored the importance of integrating caste into the EU’s foreign policy, funding frameworks and human rights dialogues. Delegates also urged greater support for Dalit women

and youth leaders. The delegation visit underlined IDSN's strategy of building direct relationships between Dalit rights advocates and European policymakers.

Input to the renewal of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy

Also in June, IDSN met with the EEAS in the context of consultations on renewing the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, contributing to reflections on implementation of the current plan and priorities for the next cycle. In July, IDSN submitted proposals for the renewed Action Plan, underlining the continued need for EU policies and action addressing discrimination based on work and descent, and proposing clearer and more defined activities to strengthen implementation and follow-up.

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.

Briefings ahead of EU–Pakistan human rights engagement

In October, IDSN contributed to an EU civil society consultation ahead of the EU–Pakistan human rights consultation, briefing the EU on caste discrimination and related human rights concerns with a focus on caste and gender.

UPR Pre-Session on Nepal

Alongside its engagement at the UN Forum on Minority Issues, IDSN also facilitated a Dalit [delegation](#) to participate in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) pre-session on Nepal. The delegation submitted a joint shadow [report](#), endorsed by over 30 Dalit-led organisations, highlighting constitutional non-compliance, entrenched caste-based violence and the continued invisibility of Dalit persons with disabilities and LGBTQ+ individuals in national law and policy.

In a series of meetings with Member State missions in



IDSN Nepal UPR delegation meets UN missions

Geneva, the delegation urged governments to translate these concerns into concrete UPR recommendations. In particular, they called for the effective implementation of Article 40 of Nepal's Constitution, increased resourcing and strengthened independence of the National Dalit Commission and explicit legal and policy protections for Dalit women, LGBTQ+ individuals and persons with disabilities. The delegation further stressed the importance of disaggregated data collection and reforms to improve access to justice, including stronger accountability and remedies for caste-based discrimination and violence.

The UPR session was held in February of 2026 and was a great success with 16 strong recommendations on caste and Dalits from participating Member states.



Illustration: Jay Sagathia



Photos: UN Photo

UN Report on Intersectionality highlights caste

A major milestone in 2025 was the publication of the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism's thematic [report](#) on intersectionality in May, presented at the 56th session of the Human Rights Council in July.

The report affirmed that caste discrimination intersects with gender, poverty, religion, disability and more to produce a cumulative disadvantage, particularly for Dalit women and girls. It specifically cited forced and bonded labour, sexual violence, underrepresentation and lack of access to justice as key manifestations of intersectional caste-based discrimination.

Key recommendations included:

- Disaggregation of data by caste and gender in all national and UN datasets
- Legal recognition of caste-based discrimination as a ground for protection under international human rights law
- Establishment of reparatory mechanisms for survivors of caste and gender-based violence
- Consultation with Dalit women's groups in law reform, policymaking and implementation

During the Interactive Dialogue at the Human Rights Council, Abirami Jotheeswaran of AIDMAM–NCDHR delivered a powerful [oral statement](#) on behalf of IDSN, welcoming the report and urging States to embed intersectionality in all anti-discrimination frameworks. She called for concrete steps to ensure the participation of Dalit women's organisations



in UN processes and to extend legal recognition and protection to Dalit LGBTQ+ persons and Dalit persons with disabilities.

The report marked an important development in IDSN's long-term advocacy to have caste discrimination addressed as a structural form of racial discrimination within the UN system. It strengthened calls for the full implementation of CERD General Recommendation No. 29 and the integration of caste within intersectional analyses across all UN mechanisms.

“Dalit women are particularly affected and are disproportionately trapped in informal, hazardous labour situations, such as manual scavenging. The interconnection between caste and occupation further exacerbates the status of Dalit women”

UN Special Rapporteur on Racism's thematic report on intersectionality

Minority Forum

Statements by Dalit human rights defenders at the UN Forum on Minority Issues

Rup Sunar (Dignity Initiative, Nepal) emphasised the exclusion of Dalits from public institutions and called for legal reforms in Nepal.

Manisha Rani (AIDMAM, India) raised the issue of impunity for caste-based sexual violence in India.

Sarita Barmashakha (FEDO, Nepal) described intersecting barriers such as social segregation, discriminatory labour practices and limited access to justice.

Navamani Murthi (TTCU, India) shared how Dalit women-led garment unions are transforming labour rights from the ground up.

Krishna Gahatraj (DDAN, Nepal) highlighted how Dalits with disabilities are excluded from both disability and caste frameworks.

Shagorika Das (DALIT, Bangladesh) documented the role of Dalit communities in sanitation and urban services in Bangladesh and called for recognition and rights.

Dalit Voices at the UN Forum on Minority Issues

In November, IDS_N supported a delegation of Dalit human rights defenders to participate in the 18th UN Forum on Minority Issues in Geneva. The Forum's theme, "The contribution of minorities to diverse, resilient and peaceful societies," offered a critical platform for highlighting the realities of caste discrimination across South Asia.

Delegates from Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan presented powerful testimonies on caste-based violence,

access to education and employment, disability rights and civic participation. Their contributions elevated Dalit voices including Dalit women and persons with disabilities.

The Forum served as an opportunity to build solidarity across communities and to push for caste discrimination to be meaningfully addressed within UN minority rights frameworks.

Dalit human rights defenders engage with EU institutions in Brussels

In December, IDS_N facilitated Brussels-based advocacy and outreach involving Dalit human rights defenders and allied civil society representatives. Rup Sunar (Dignity Initiative, Nepal) and Aiswarya Rao (Better World Shelter, India) met with European Parliament officials working on South Asia and human rights files, including policy staff supporting the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Delegation for relations with South Asia.

Aiswarya Rao also contributed as a panellist at the Brussels EU NGO Human Rights Forum, speaking in a thematic plenary focused on intersectionality, with the session moderated by Mary James Gill (Center for Law and Justice, Pakistan), an IDS_N member. At the same Forum, IDS_N delegates alongside other IDS_N members Beena Pallical (NCDHR) and Mary Gill (CLG) participated in a Strategy Lab on Work and Descent-based discrimination together with EU officials and other activists from, or working on, discriminated minorities, to draw lessons from the EU Roma Strategy and develop elements of an EU Strategy on Discrimination based on Work and Descent (DWD).

Meetings continued with European Commission officials working on gender, human rights and democratic governance, as well as with Members of the European Parliament engaged on human rights and South Asia,



UN Submissions and Advocacy

Throughout 2025, IDSN actively engaged with the UN system by submitting targeted inputs to a range of mechanisms. This advocacy helped centre caste discrimination within broader global human rights agendas and draw much needed attention to often overlooked human rights violations. The submissions cut across IDSN thematic priorities caste and gender justice and business and human rights as well as access to justice.

Key submissions included:

[To the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, on climate and just transition](#)

[To the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, focusing on gender and development](#)

[For the UN Secretary-General's report on minorities](#)

[On caste-based child labour for the UN Special Rapporteur on Slavery](#)

[To the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism on intersectionality](#)

[To the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues for thematic reporting](#)

[To the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on intersectionality addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities in law, policy and practice.](#)

At the Human Rights Council:

[HRC58: IDSN recommendations submitted](#)

HRC58: Oral statement by Chander Kolhi in the General Debate on Item 3, and by Aran Nadeem at the SRSR report on violence against children.

[HRC59: Oral statement by Abirami Jotheeswaran](#)

[HRC59: Written recommendations](#)

[HRC60: IDSN recommendations submitted](#)

[HRC60: Written statement on child labour \(A/HRC/60/NGO/176\)](#)

[HRC60: Written statement on caste and gender \(A/HRC/60/NGO/261\)](#)

[HRC60: Oral statement by Bhagwani Rathore](#)

Other submissions:

[UNGA Minority Issues report](#)

[UNGA Human Rights Defenders report](#)

[OHCHR SG Minorities Report](#)

[WAMI Submission \(What Are Minority Issues?\)](#)

UPR Submission – Nepal:

[Joint report submitted by 36 Dalit-led organisations](#)

This coordinated and comprehensive engagement ensured that caste discrimination remained a visible and actionable concern across UN processes in 2025.

Business and Human Rights

In 2025, IDS N significantly advanced its Business and Human Rights agenda, focusing on caste-based labour exploitation in global supply chains. Through close collaboration with ethical trading bodies, UN mechanisms, civil society organisations and EU institutions, IDS N continued to position caste as a structural risk factor that must be addressed through binding due diligence frameworks and inclusive monitoring practices.

Throughout the year, IDS N also maintained and expanded its working relationships with EU institutions and civil society partners in Brussels, including through regular coordination with NGOs on human rights and responsible business conduct and targeted engagement with European Parliament structures and the EEAS to support sustained attention to caste discrimination.

Strengthening corporate accountability in supply chains

In January, IDS N board member and DSN Norway member, Kenneth Bo Nielsen, participated in a [seminar](#) hosted by Ethical Trade Norway titled “Responsible Trade with India – What Must You Know?” The event brought together businesses, civil society and trade experts to examine caste-based risks in Indian supply chains. Speakers addressed systemic exclusion in the leather, textiles, agriculture and construction sectors, with Dalit and Adivasi workers overrepresented in the most hazardous, informal and underpaid roles.

Businesses were called on to incorporate caste as a core human rights risk category within their due diligence frameworks. Participants were encouraged to make use of practical tools such as the ETI Base Code [Guidance](#) on Caste in Global Supply Chains, and to engage directly with Dalit-led unions and community organisations as rights-holders and accountability partners.

Addressing caste-based exploitation at the OECD Garment and Footwear Forum

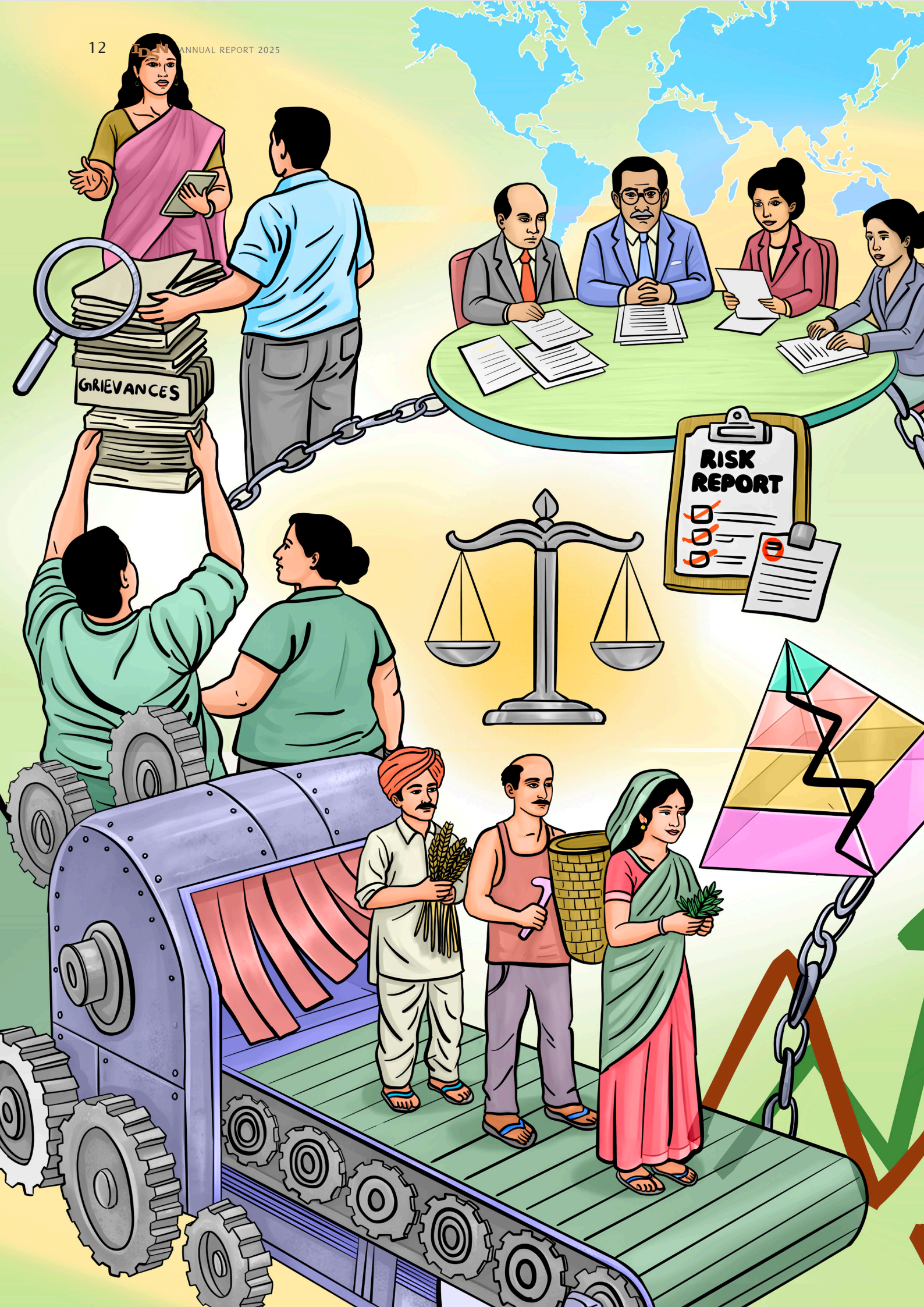
In February, IDS N co-organised a [side event](#) at the OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector alongside Arisa and Homeworkers Worldwide. The event focused on caste- and gender-based exploitation in South Asian supply chains, particularly in India and Pakistan.

Speakers presented evidence of forced and bonded labour in Tamil Nadu’s garment factories, homeworker exploitation in Pakistan’s textile sector and child labour in hybrid cottonseed production. Panellists stressed that traditional auditing models fail to reach informal and Dalit workers, and that meaningful due diligence must centre on their lived realities. The session concluded with calls for brands to embed caste within risk assessments and grievance mechanisms and to invest in bottom-up monitoring.

Civil society coordination on EU due diligence developments

IDS N took part in regular civil society coordination calls focused on the EU’s corporate sustainability and due diligence framework, including NGO engagement on the proposed “Omnibus” approach affecting the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, the Taxonomy framework and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. IDS N contributed to coordination efforts aimed at ensuring that any legislative changes do not weaken human rights protections, including attention to caste discrimination risks in supply chains.

In March, IDS N joined more than 360 civil society organisations in endorsing a joint [statement](#) opposing the proposed “Omnibus” changes to the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). These changes sought to significantly dilute the directive’s scope and enforcement mechanisms, undermining protections for the most vulnerable workers.



The statement warned that weakening the directive would disproportionately affect marginalised workers in South Asia, who are often invisible to top-tier supplier audits. IDS N advocated for robust, binding obligations and supported maintaining strong provisions for stakeholder consultation and civil liability within the final directive. Unfortunately at the end of 2025 there were several changes proposed to the Directive that would weaken its impact.

EU–Sri Lanka human rights consultation input on plantation community concerns

In April, IDS N participated in a civil society consultation ahead of the EU–Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights. IDS N supported the sharing of a briefing prepared by Human Development Organisation, highlighting human rights concerns affecting the Plantation workers and providing recommendations for EU engagement with the Sri Lanka Government. IDS N also followed up on child labour concerns, which the EU raised in its dialogue.

Women leading change in global supply chains webinar

In October, IDS N co-organised a well attended [webinar](#) with Ethical Trade Denmark, Ethical Trade Norway and ETI UK titled “Women Leading Change – Ways Forward for HRDD in 2025.” The session highlighted the leadership of marginalised women in driving improvements in supply chain conditions, particularly in South Asia’s garment, leather and agriculture sectors.

Speakers included Dalit women trade union organisers from Tamil Nadu and Sindh, who shared experiences of negotiating with management, building peer-led education initiatives and advocating for safe, dignified work. Participants underlined that women workers from Dalit and other minority communities face the highest barriers to redress and that gender-responsive due diligence must explicitly address caste.

The webinar also reinforced calls for brands to fund worker-led monitoring and to adopt inclusive models of risk assessment that recognise intersecting forms of discrimination. It strengthened cross-country collaboration and highlighted the need for a structural shift in supply

chain governance rooted in the voices of those most affected.

Submission to the EU Forced Labour Risk Database

In June 2025, IDS N submitted a comprehensive evidence-based [report](#) to the European Commission in response to the call for input to inform the EU Forced Labour Regulation Risk Database. The submission documented how caste discrimination is a key structural driver of forced labour across multiple sectors and geographies linked to EU trade flows.

Focusing on India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the report outlined how Dalit are disproportionately impacted by forced labour in the garments, textiles, leather, construction, mining, seafood, sugarcane and tea sectors. Drawing on the ILO’s indicators of forced labour, it detailed widespread abuse — including debt bondage, withheld wages, coercion, and exploitative recruitment practices — and highlighted the invisibility of home-based and informal workers in global supply chains.

The report called on the EU to recognise caste as a cross-cutting risk factor in the implementation of the Forced Labour Regulation and to strengthen monitoring of high-risk sectors sourcing from caste-affected countries. The submission formed part of IDS N’s broader efforts to ensure that EU due diligence frameworks respond effectively to structural inequality and exploitation.

UK Parliamentary debate on caste and slavery in Pakistan

In November, the UK Parliament held a Westminster Hall [debate](#) on slavery and bonded labour in Pakistan. MPs raised concerns about exploitation in the brick kiln industry and other informal sectors, noting that the majority of affected workers belong to Dalit and religious minority communities.

The debate highlighted the persistence of caste-based labour stratification in Pakistan and called for greater bilateral action between the UK and Pakistan to improve labour rights and transparency. IDS N has continuously advocated for this with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Pakistani Minorities and welcomed the debate as a



#DalitVoicesUN 2025

IDSN delegates at the UN Forum on Minority Issues and UN Business and Human Rights Forum. Photo by IDSN

key moment of visibility and reiterated the importance of naming caste in international human rights and trade dialogues.

Briefing the EU ahead of Pakistan GSP+ mission

In November, IDSN provided an additional briefing on Pakistan to the EEAS, the EU Delegation and DG Trade ahead of a GSP+ mission. The briefing drew attention to caste discrimination, including concerns raised in recent reporting on sanitation workers and highlighted the need for systematic follow-up in EU human rights and trade-related engagement with Pakistan.

Caste in focus at the UN Business and Human Rights Forum

Also in November, IDSN [participated](#) in the 14th UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva. IDSN's

#DalitVoicesUN delegation contributed to sessions on diversity and inclusion, gender-responsive due diligence and climate-linked human rights risks.

In connection with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion panel, IDSN advocated for caste to be formally recognised as a protected category in corporate policies and internal hiring practices. In sessions on due diligence, IDSN highlighted how Dalit workers are often denied access to grievance mechanisms and face barriers to remedy.

Throughout the Forum, IDSN reaffirmed the need for a rights-based, worker-centred approach to business and human rights. IDSN called for meaningful partnerships with Dalit-led organisations, improved traceability and enforcement of due diligence regulations that leave no one behind.

Organisation and Networking

In 2025, IDS^N strengthened its international connections, enhanced visibility at high-level human rights events and celebrated the recognition of long-time Dalit rights advocates. These efforts reflected IDS^N's commitment to building a resilient, inclusive and well-connected network to advance the work towards a world free of caste discrimination. This chapter will cover some of the broader level networking activities, communications activities as well as IDS^N's governance and membership updates.

UN Community of Practice on Descent-Based Discrimination

In October, IDS^N was invited to participate in a United Nations Community of Practice session focused on improving the UN system's response to caste and other descent-based discrimination. The [session](#) brought together UN officials, members of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), OHCHR representatives, and featured expert inputs from Chinsung Chung (CERD), Dr. Ashwini K.P. (UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism), Asang Wankhede (D.Phil (Law) candidate at the University of Oxford) and Meena Varma.

IDS^N's presentation at the session highlighted the need for the UN's existing '[Guidance Tool on Descent-Based Discrimination: Key Challenges and Strategic Approaches to Combat Caste-Based and Analogous Forms of Discrimination](#)' to be streamlined and adapted for practical operational use across agencies, ensuring that UN staff have the tools they need to address caste discrimination effectively in their work. The session provided an opportunity to build shared strategies for mainstreaming caste in UN programming and monitoring.

International Art Contest for Minority Artists

In November, IDS^N participated in the annual International Art Contest for Minority Artists in partnership with OHCHR, Minority Rights Group, Freemuse and the City of Geneva. The event celebrated artistic expression as a form of resistance and empowerment, with minority artists presenting works reflecting themes of identity, discrimination and resilience.

Meena Varma served as Master of Ceremony. The exhibition and award ceremony were held in Geneva and drew participation from human rights experts, artists and diplomats. The [event](#) provided an important platform for marginalised voices and IDS^N delegates that were in Geneva for the UN fora also took part.

ICERD 60th Anniversary Commemoration

In December, Meena Varma was invited to speak at the high-level commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) at the UN in Geneva. In her address, Ms. Varma reaffirmed that caste discrimination constitutes a form of racial discrimination under international law and falls squarely within the scope of ICERD.

She called for the full implementation of [General Recommendation No. 29](#), which provides specific guidance on addressing caste discrimination, and urged States to improve disaggregated data collection, remedy mechanisms and protections for Dalit human rights defenders.

Prize

Human Rights Prize for Pirbhu Satyani

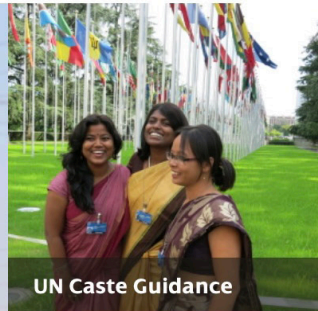
IDS^N was proud to celebrate the awarding of the 2025 Franco-German Human Rights and Rule of Law Prize to Pirbhu Satyani, founder of the Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network (PDSN) and long-time partner of IDS^N. The award recognised Mr. Satyani's decades of work fighting caste discrimination, promoting legal reform and empowering women and children from Dalit and religious minority communities in Sindh.

The prize brought well-deserved international attention to communities affected by caste discrimination in Pakistan and highlighted the urgent need to address bonded labour and exclusion through sustained civil society leadership.



IDSN Strategy 2024-2030

Read about IDSN's work and priorities



UN Caste Guidance

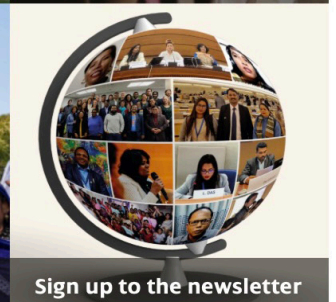


Base Code Guidance:
Caste in Global Supply Chains

Caste & business



Caste & Gender Justice



Sign up to the newsletter

Other speakers throughout the day — including UN mandate holders, CERD experts and NGO colleagues, in particular Paul Divakar, the Convenor of the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated based on Work and Descent — also referenced caste and descent-based discrimination, reaffirming its relevance to ICERD's core purpose and the need for strengthened State action. IDSN welcomed the recognition throughout the event that discrimination based on descent — including caste — remains a global human rights challenge requiring urgent, coordinated action.

Website and newsletter

In 2025, IDSN's [news](#) and [newsletters](#) reflected key advocacy moments and thematic priorities. Coverage included updates on UN engagement, including interventions and submissions to Special Procedures and Human Rights Council sessions, advocacy linked to UN reviews and thematic reports and participation in relevant UN forums. Communications also highlighted business and human rights developments, including debates on human rights due diligence and responsible sourcing, events and webinars with partners and ongoing attention to risks of labour exploitation linked to caste discrimination in supply chains. News and newsletters further reported on IDSN networking and advocacy, including engagement with EU stakeholders and contributions to international

spaces addressing discrimination and minority rights. The newsletters also included news of new publications, articles and events by IDSN members. In 2025, the number of subscribers to the IDSN newsletter grew to 1,528.

The [IDSN website](#) continued to be a leading global online resource on caste discrimination. Unique visitors to the IDSN website rose to over 72,000 in 2025, with visits from 180 different countries. The top ten countries drawing visitors were India, China, United States, Singapore, United Kingdom, Nepal, Canada, France, Germany and Australia.

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.

IDSN Social Media and Videos

IDSN's social media channels continued to form a base for both internal and external communications, with members, associates and affiliates interacting regularly via social media and cross-promoting news and documentation. IDSN stopped its activities on Twitter/X and Facebook in 2024 and continued this suspension of activities in 2025, as these platforms were no longer conducive to engagement

and dialogue for IDSN. IDSN has instead focused its social media engagement on [LinkedIn](#) where IDSN's followers rose to 1,654, with continued engagement around IDSN posts and updates. On IDSN's [YouTube channel](#), views of IDSN's online video on Dalit women rose to a total of 246,695 views (all languages) and views of the general IDSN intro video on caste discrimination rose to 114,197 views (all languages). The original "I'm Dalit how are you?" video continued to prove popular with a total of 237,009 views.

Governance

IDSN's work in 2025 was carried out in adherence with IDSN statutes, bylaws and policies and continued to be centred around the IDSN [2024–2030 strategy](#). Reporting on activities and finances was carried out throughout the year.

IDSN Board

The IDSN Board held two meetings in 2025. The Board is comprised of Dalit women from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and India and one Dalit man from India, representing IDSN's members in South Asia. They are joined by two representatives from IDSN's international associates and two representatives from Dalit Solidarity Networks in Europe.

New affiliates joined IDSN

In 2025, the IDSN Board approved two new IDSN affiliates: Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Labour Union (TTCU) and Stand Up Movement Lanka.

TTCU is a Dalit women-led trade union of textile and garment workers in Tamil Nadu, India. The union brings grounded, worker-led expertise on labour rights, workplace safety, gender-based violence and harassment and the ways caste discrimination shapes conditions in garment and textile supply chains. TTCU's organising experience and direct engagement with workers strengthens IDSN's capacity to connect international human rights advocacy with realities in workplaces and supply chains, including in discussions on human rights due diligence and responsible business conduct.

Stand Up Movement Lanka is a Sri Lanka-based organisation, established in 2008, working to advance the rights and entitlements of marginalised workers, including workers in Free Trade Zones and other groups facing exclusion and

exploitation. The organisation brings practical experience in worker support, rights awareness and advocacy, including on barriers to justice and access to remedies. It addresses the unique problems faced by workers across different languages, religions and castes. Its affiliation broadens IDSN's network and perspectives in the Sri Lankan context and supports stronger cross-country solidarity and exchange on discrimination, labour rights and protections for workers facing intersectional vulnerabilities.

Secretariat

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

IDSN Secretariat as of 31 December 2024:

- Executive Director
Meena Varma
- Chief Adviser
Maria Brink Schleimann
- Programme and Outreach Manager
Madeleine Cowper
- EU Advocacy Adviser
Emma Achilli
- Finance Manager
Abigail Holm Osei

Finances and funding

IDSN continued fundraising efforts in 2025 in order to strengthen the long-term stability and sustainability of the organisation. See the financial statements in this report for more details of IDSN's finances in 2025.

We would like to thank the following for their generous contribution to IDSN in 2025: the Norwegian Human Rights Foundation, Bread for the World (Germany), Misereor, Laudes Foundation and other donations.

See the financial statements on page 17 for more details of IDSN's finances in 2025.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025

Profit and loss

	2025 DKK	2025 EURO	2024 DKK
Income			
Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF)	736,868	98,776	564,342
Brot für die Welt	1,546,386	207,290	1,521,543
Misereor	0	0	560,368
Laudes Foundation	441,558	59,190	556,534
Other Income	355	47	8,388
Total Revenue	2,725,167	365,303	3,211,175
Staff costs	1,213,196	162,627	1,067,355
Other operating expenses	1,500,190	201,097	1,684,107
Total Expenditure	2,713,386	363,724	2,751,462
Result	11,781	1,579	459,713


Please find the detailed full financial statements for IDSN including the Balance Sheet on:

www.idsn.org/idsn-financial-statements-2025

**International Dalit Solidarity Network**

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 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](https://www.linkedin.com/company/idsn)
 [youtube.com/idsnvideo](https://www.youtube.com/idsnvideo)

Members as of 1 April 2026**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)

Affiliates


- Association For Dalit Women's Advancement of Nepal
- Better World Shelter - India
- Centre for Ethnic Studies – Sri Lanka
- Dalits with Disabilities Association Nepal (DDAN)
- Eva Foundation – India International
- National Dalit Christian Watch - India
- Parittran - Bangladesh
- RIGHTS - India
- South Asian Research Institute For Minorities (SARIM) – Pakistan
- Stand Up Movement Lanka – Sri Lanka
- Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Labour Union (TTCU) – India
- Thamate - 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

Solidarity Networks Europe

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

 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.