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HUMAN RIGHTS
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DANISH INSTITUTE FOR
 HUMAN RIGHTS



International Dalit Solidarity Network
 WORKING GLOBALLY AGAINST DISCRIMINATION BASED ON WORK AND DESCENT

Dalit Discrimination Check



The Dalit Discrimination Check

The Dalit Discrimination Check is a tool developed specifically to help companies prevent discrimination and exploitation of Dalits in their Indian operations and suppliers. The tool is designed as a comprehensive checklist consisting of self-guided questions and indicators that highlight possible violations. The tool provides simple descriptions of what the components of Dalit discrimination looks like in the business context, and allows managers to check their company's policies, procedures and performance.

The tool is relevant for all companies operating in or sourcing from India and can help companies implement corporate social responsibility principles, such as the Global Compact principles or the Ambedkar Principles.

The Dalit Discrimination Check comprises a total of 27 questions in two checklists; a Main Check and a Supplier Check. In addition, the tool provides suggestions for promotional activities and useful background information on caste-based discrimination.

The check takes its point of departure in the Ambedkar Principles, a set of employment principles developed by the International Dalit Solidarity Network to assist employers wishing to avoid discrimination on the basis of caste in their operations. The Ambedkar Principles can be downloaded at www.idsn.org

Why a tool for caste discrimination?

Caste-based discrimination constitutes one of the most wide-ranging human rights problems of our time, affecting in its severest forms the lives of at least 260 million people globally, of which some 170 million live in India. Caste-based discrimination and 'untouchability' affect every facet and dimension of Dalits' lives. It includes segregation of living areas where Dalits are denied access to other caste villages and certain public areas. It includes a system of labour allocation that forces Dalits to undertake certain types of work, most often menial and degrading jobs for either very low pay or payment in kind. It also includes discrimination in employment where Dalits often serve in low level positions and suffer from both open and 'hidden' discrimination, drastically affecting their ability to amass and provide for their families.

Despite the fact that India has abolished untouchability and introduced formal protections by law, caste-based discrimination remains endemic and is accompanied by strong patterns of impunity. Dalits remain at the bottom of society when it comes to education, income, formal employment, health and political participation.

The number of foreign companies operating in and sourcing from India is increasing, and the majority of these companies will have limited knowledge of the scope and dynamics of caste discrimination. As an intrinsic element of the Indian society, caste-based discrimination and exclusion is often invisible to the outsider. As a consequence, companies may unknowingly contribute to and benefit from the discrimination and exploitation of Dalits. The purpose of the Dalit Discrimination Check is to provide companies with a practical tool that allows them to identify discrimination and abuse against Dalits and implement corrective actions.

The Dalit Discrimination Check is the result of the cooperation between the International Dalit Solidarity Network, the Human Rights & Business Project of the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

How do I get access to the Dalit Discrimination Check?

The Dalit Discrimination Check is available for free and exists in a booklet version and in a web-based version, which can be accessed at www.humanrightsbusiness.org. To access the web-based version of the tool, select 'HRCA Portal' on the webpage and create a user account. The User Guide provides useful instruction in how to use the tool.

The Dalit Discrimination Check constitutes a specialized check of the Human Rights Compliance Assessment (HRCA) tool, which is a self-assessment tool for companies to assess their compliance with international human rights. The HRCA has been developed by the Human Rights & Business Project of the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

More information about the aim and development of the Dalit Discrimination Check can be found on the websites of the Human Rights & Business Project: www.humanrightsbusiness.org and the International Dalit Solidarity Network: www.idsn.org