

## Good Practice -2: Campaign for Discrimination Free Government Services

### Elimination of Apartheid and Discrimination with Dalit Children and Women in Government Services

By – Jan Sahas, India

#### Background:

An Action research has been conducted by Jan Sahas on **Social exclusion in education, health and nutrition related services in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India**. In this study 4 districts were selected on the basis of Dalit (SC) population. These districts were selected from 4 regions of Madhya Pradesh. In this research various issues raised of social exclusion and discrimination with Dalit community especially with the children and women. Discrimination, harassment and untouchability are still prevalent in society toward Dalit community. Due to this, they are deprived of education, health and nutrition related services. Non Dalit communities are dominant in most of these services and schemes and they are being run mostly by them in villages. Due to this, people from Dalit community are unable to take full advantage of these services and schemes. The study has shown that the situation of Dalit community is very poor with respect to education, health and nutrition. The Main highlights of the study are Dalit community Children are eating Mid Day Meal in separate place/lines, discrimination are seeing in the sitting arrangement in class room, Dalit children are not going to Anganwadi centers due to social discrimination and ANMs are not going in Dalit colonies. Due to this Dalit children and women are facing discrimination in education, health and nutrition services and they are not able to take benefit of these services.

#### Apartheid and Discrimination with Dalits in Government Services

**Discrimination and Social Exclusions in ICDS:** 54% children of Dalit community are deprived from Anganwadi facilities. This means that more than half of Dalit children do not get Anganwadi facilities. Out of the children who do not go Anganwadi regularly, 59% do not go because various types of discrimination are done with them there. It includes not letting them to sit inside, giving them nutrition feed from outside and asking them to go home etc. In addition, even the Anganwadi helpers do not go to Dalit colonies to ask their children to send to Anganwadi. The distribution of nutrition feed to Dalit community children is also biased. They have to take their plates from home, i.e. they are not given plates at Anganwadi center to take meals. 92% parents confirmed this thing. They are given feed outside the center itself, i.e. not allowed to enter to the center and asked to take it home and eat. 47% surveyed families said that their children bring food home and eat as they are not allowed to sit inside Anganwadi center. 52% parents said that though they eat it at Anganwadi center only, they have to take plates from home itself. 42% parents said that Anganwadi worker make their children to sit based on their caste while feed distribution. 33% parents said that the behavior of Anganwadi workers is discriminatory towards their children.

**Discrimination and Social Exclusions in Health:** Study showed that ANM do not visit the Dalit colonies in village where as they visits non Dalit colonies regularly and make the health facilities available there. 92% such villages were found where no ANM visited any Dalit colony. They visit only on 8% villages. Some time they sit at Anganwadi Center only. Pregnant women have to walk to Anganwadi Center to visit ANM and get their health checkup. Due to non visit of ANM in Dalit colonies, 42% Dalit women did not get required vaccination during the pregnancy. ANM and Anganwadi Worker practice untouchability with Dalit women. 46% women said that they do not touch them while checkup where as 28% women said that they used caste based names and abused them.

**Discrimination and Social Exclusions in Education:** School is also not free from various discriminatory practices with Dalit community. It directly effects their education. Dalit children are deprived of quality education due to discrimination prevalent in school. The study shows that 81% children of dalit community do not go to school regularly and 90% of children from dalit community sit within their community only. 68% children said that teachers scold them and beat them in the class. 11% children out of surveyed children said that teachers call them by caste based names. 1 girl said that teacher said to her that *“Padh kar kya karogi?”* (What will you gain by studying). 2 children said that teacher abuse them and say that *“Saale, tum gande ho”* (You are dirty fellows). 2 children said that teacher said that *“Saale, tum naha-dhokar nahi aate, tum to aise hi rahoge”* (You don't wash properly. You will be like that only). 1 child told that teacher said that *“Chamar ke*

*chore padhte nahi*" (Kids of *Chamars* don't study). These statements show the mentality of teachers towards children of dalit communities due to which discrimination is prevalent in school. The children from dalit communities are made to perform school cleaning work. 79% children clean the school daily or sometimes. The survey clearly pointed out the discrimination and untouchability practiced with children from dalit community during mid day meal. 63% children from dalit community said that children from other community do not take mid day meal along with them i.e. children from dalit community are made to sit in separate rows. On this issue, teachers had to say that they are pressurized by non dalit people in village due to which they ask dalit children to sit in separate rows.

### Action on the basis of Study

Jan Sahas shared the findings and recommendation of this study with various stake holders of the society. Like government, various commissions, media, civil society organizations, policy makers and others. Many national and international news papers and TV channels published or telecasted the emerged issues of research at National and International level. Various regional and national organizations, peoples' groups and individuals have initiated some action on this issue at their own level. In the starting period government stand is that there is no any type of discrimination and exclusion in education, health and nutrition services. So that Jan Sahas started **Campaign for Discrimination Free Government Services**. Due to all these efforts Government of India, National Human Right Commission, National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Madhya Pradesh High Court took some steps.

*It is disgraceful to live at the cost of one's self-respect. Self-respect is the most vital factor in life. Without it, man is a cipher. To live worthily with self-respect, one has to overcome difficulties. It is out of hard and ceaseless struggle alone that one derives strength, confidence and recognition.*

-Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

1. **The Human resource and Development Ministry** of the Government of India asked for a report from the Government of Madhya Pradesh in this regard. The asked reports seeks answers from the Government of Madhya Pradesh to the question that whether discrimination is taking place in issues like provision of mid day meals in schools with Dalit children.
2. **The National Human Rights Commission of India** sought report from the state government on discrimination and exclusion in both health and education services. The commission has asked the Chief Secretary of the state to file a report within 4 weeks on this issue. Commission also conducted fact finding visits in all 4 covering district of the state. After taking suo motto by National Human Rights Commission based on the study by Jan Sahas, a team from the Commission visited 4 districts of the State with members of Jan Sahas. The Commission team toured 18 villages in four districts. It investigated the issues of discrimination with dalit communities in the services related to health and education.
3. **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** of the Government of India also took action on this issue.
4. **The National Scheduled Caste Commission** sought report on this issue during its visit to Madhya Pradesh. The Chief Secretary of the state and the Principal Secretary, School Education have been called to Delhi to take information on the steps taken by the state government to end discrimination and exclusion.
5. **The High Court of Madhya Pradesh** issued a notice to the state government on 11<sup>th</sup> may 2009 asking why it should not accept a PIL on the issue.
6. **Some international organization** like Netherlands based **Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN)** took action. DNN released a press release in Dutch on the findings of this study and many others organizations also took some action at international level.

### Strategies and Action of the Campaign

1. **Advocacy Campaign:** After action being taken by ministries of central government and various commissions based on the study done by Jan Sahas on social exclusion. Advocacy initiatives were initiated to continuously follow up the actions. Various activities were organised under this which included:
  - a. **Conduct of advocacy meetings:** Advocacy meetings were conducted with National Human Rights Commission, Ambedkar Institution (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India), National Mid Day Meal Cell (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India) etc. the

agenda was to develop environment for continuous action by these entities and other commission and ministries on the issues related to social exclusion, dalit discrimination and to make national policy and plan to eradicate these issues. 6 such meetings were held.

- b. Media Advocacy:** Communication with media was established to eradicate the discrimination with Dalit children and women in the services related to health, education and nutrition and bring forward various issues related to them to media. This communication was made with total 28 TV channels and news papers. It was documented at field level and published and publicised widely.
  - c. Support in High court public interest litigation:** On the basis of the study conducted by Jan Sahas, one organisation filed public interest litigation in Indore Bench of Madhya Pradesh High court. Campaign is providing regular support related to information collection at the local level.
  - d. Visits of Commissions:** National Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Protection of Child Right and Planning Commission of India conducted field visits of Jan Sahas Working area and took up the cases related to discrimination.
  - e. Large numbers of Cases of Discrimination filing in the Commissions:** Under the campaign we filed large number of cases related to discrimination in various commissions like NHRC, NCPDR and NCSC. Commissions took appropriate action on these cases.
- 2. Community Score Cards on Discrimination:** Community score cards on discrimination in education and health were developed under the campaign. These community score cards were prepared based on the scores provided by the community, Panchayat representatives and the functionaries and government officers associated with this service. Community score cards were prepared in four groups of service seekers in each of the villages. These groups were categorized as Dalit men, Dalit women, Non Dalit men and Non Dalit women. After this process a common score card for the service was prepared along with the four groups and the service providers jointly. Before preparing the common score card a self evaluation score card of the service provider was also prepared and an input tracking exercise of the services was also carried out. The indicators for the community score cards were prepared with participation of the community during the community meetings and these indicators only were given a score on the scale of 0 to 10. An action plan also developed with the participation of Dalit community for elimination of discrimination.
  - 3. Bal Pachayats:** Jan Sahas formed the 182 Bal Pachayats (Children Groups) and these Bal Pachayats are playing the important roll towards the eradication of caste based discrimination in schools and ICDS centers. Bal Pachayat is a common platform of children to develop understanding on democratic processes, values and decision making. Bal Pachayat is platform for children, where they can express and raised their views, issues and problems. Bal Pachayat is also an effective model to develop leadership in children and decrease social exclusion and various types of discrimination on the basis of caste, gender and other aspects.
  - 4. Community Based Organizations:** Dalit Vanchit Vikas Manch (DVVM) is a community based people's organization existing in more than 800 villages. DVVM is conduct regular monitoring for elimination of discrimination through various methods like Discrimination Mapping, visits in institutions, Yatras and raising the issues in PRIs and local bodies.
  - 5. Dialogue between institutions and community for eradication of discrimination:** Discussions were carried out with service providers and community on the issues related to discrimination and social exclusion with dalit community in services. During the institution visits found the discriminatory practices. Through the community meetings and discussions campaign built the community action plan for eradication of exclusion and discrimination in gov. institutional services.
  - 6. Action Research:** Jan Sahas conducted the action researches on the issues of social discrimination and exclusion in public services. These researches focused on the aspect of social exclusion and discrimination in the government programs and scheme related to education, health and nutrition etc and took advocacy initiatives on the basis of the research findings.
  - 7. Developed the Module and Implement the Activities for Eradication of Social Exclusion:** Jan Sahas believes that to remove social exclusion, policies and programs are needed at government level, but to implement them, continuous field level advocacy is necessary. Developing field based models is also necessary for the same. Considering this, school level activities were organised to remove social exclusion and create social inclusion. Activities conducted included wall newspaper, Bal panchayat (a platform of

children at village level), learning by doing etc. These activities were documented in the form of a module by Jan Sahas. This module is being used by many other organisations also to eradicate social exclusion.

## Impacts

- 1. Actions by the commissions:** National commissions like National Human Right Commission, National Commission for Scheduled Caste, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and others have started taking the actions on issue of social exclusion and caste based discrimination on priority basis.
- 2. Actions by the Government:** After raising this issue effectively by Jan Sahas, various orders were passed by State and national commissions and government ministries and departments.
- 3. Raising and Highlight the Issue by Media:** News papers and news channels published issues related to social exclusion giving it due importance and provided the big space at state and national level.
- 4. Initiatives of the Civil Society:** Many local, state and national Organizations start taking the issue of discrimination with dalit community in government services.
- 5. Monitoring of Social Exclusion by the Government:** Madhya Pradesh government set up monitoring committees at district levels towards the eradication and monitoring of caste based discrimination with dalit children in MDM in schools.
- 6. Punishment to the Government Employees:** Government took action against the government employees like teachers on cases of untouchability and social discrimination with dalits
- 7. Developed the Methods for Elimination of Social Exclusion:** The modules developed by Jan Sahas for social inclusion have also been used by other organisations as well in the many parts of India.
- 8. Elimination of Caste Based Discrimination:** Campaign have eliminated caste based discrimination in many government services:
  - a. School:** we eliminated caste based discrimination in the mid day meal, sitting arrangement, corporal punishment, cleaning of toilets and classrooms of 388 schools.
  - b. ICDS centres:** Eliminated discrimination related to supplementary nutrition, entry of dalit children and women in ICDS centre and sitting arrangement in 422 ICDS centres.
  - c. Community Health Centres:** Eliminate many type of discrimination in 28 community health centres.
- 9. Community Based Monitoring System:** Developed the Community Based Monitoring System for effective monitoring and elimination of social exclusion related practices in government services in 800 villages. This Community Based Monitoring System running by children groups (Bal Panchayats) and community based organizations (DVVM).
- 10. Women Cooking MDM Food:** Women of dalit community got work related to cooking of Mid Day Meal through the Self Help Group in 88 schools of various districts .This is a big step to eradicate of discrimination in the schools.
- 11. Socialization of Dalit and Non-Dalit children:** Developed activities for socialization of Dalit and Non-Dalit children based on principles of equity and equality. Successful implementation in 52 pachayats.
- 12. Community Scoring and Action Plan for Elimination of the Discrimination:** Community developed 85 community score cards and action plan for eradication of all types of discrimination in services.

## Publicity:

Can IDSN use this case publicly, e.g. on an open conference website or in a conference report?

Yes