

Press Release

EQUALITY IN AID: ADDRESSING CASTE BASED DISCRIMINATION IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

New Delhi, January 28th, 2014: International Dalit Solidarity Network, Dalit Watch – NCDHR and the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) today jointly launched the report [“Equality in aid: Addressing caste discrimination in humanitarian response”](#) in New Delhi.

The South Asian region has always been particularly prone to natural disasters, be it in the form of floods, cyclones, droughts, earthquakes or landslides, and with climate change, these phenomena tend to strike with greater frequency and intensity. Experience shows that those belonging to the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged positions in society (along caste, religion, class, gender) systematically bear the brunt of these natural disasters. This was again witnessed during the recent flash floods that devastated Uttarakhand or when Phailin cyclone struck the coast of Odisha.

The report is based on a comprehensive case study that was done by National Dalit Watch-National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in 2012. Based on case studies gathered from across South Asia, this pioneering report aims to ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to combat caste discrimination both in aid delivery and in Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives.

“The European Commission has demonstrated over the years how humanitarian initiatives can effectively address gaps and inequalities in vulnerability by ensuring that such initiatives specifically take into account, and are targeted to, the needs of excluded persons and groups”, notes Claus Sørensen, Director-General of the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), in his foreword to the report. *“I would like to commend the International Dalit Solidarity Network for having identified clear recommendations for how to achieve this in the context of caste discrimination”.*

Numerous examples of caste discrimination in humanitarian response have been reported during these crises: Dalits regularly face problems when trying to register in relief camps; they often receive poorer and fewer relief goods; they are exploited to remove corpses or debris; their losses are less visible as ownership is not formally recognized; and they are rarely consulted when needs of affected communities are assessed.

“It is very critical and timely that the humanitarian stakeholders including the State ensure inclusive methods to address caste-based discrimination in Disaster Risk Reduction and explicitly recognise this phenomenon in Disaster Management legislation and policy, to prevent violation of human rights of Dalits”, said N. Paul Divakar of National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR).



The report recommends steps and tools to ensure that Dalits and similar groups are not excluded from disaster prevention and response including practical advice for humanitarian organizations. They also stress the importance of formulating policies in aid delivery and Disaster Risk Reduction that specifically address the problems of marginalised groups, including Dalits.

“It is our hope that this report will set new standards among providers of humanitarian assistance to end caste discrimination”, remarks Rikke Nöhrind, Executive Director, International Dalit Solidarity Network.

Online link to the report:

http://idsn.org/fileadmin/user_folder/pdf/New_files/Key_Issues/Disaster_response/EqualityInAid_web_version.pdf

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IDSN website: <http://idsn.org/>

National Dalit Watch- NCDHR website: www.ncdhr.org.in ; nationaldalitwatch-ncdhr.blogspot.in

ECHO website: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm