

IDSN Input to the World we Want [E-discussion](#) on the Open Working Group Final Report on the Sustainable Development Goals taking place from 15 September to 15 October 2014.

[QUESTION 2: What do you think needs to be added to the current Open Working Group proposal, especially in relation to Addressing Inequalities?](#)

The Open Working Group (OWG) outcome document regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for post-2015 lacks inclusion of those affected by caste-based discrimination. Discrimination based on caste status is a strong indicator for the high poverty levels that caste-affected people experience. Most ‘untouchables’ – known in South Asia as Dalits, live below the poverty line, earn less than the minimum wage, have no access to education, experience segregation in access to housing and suffer from numerous diseases, not least because of lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Pervasive discrimination keeps them poor, uneducated, in terrible living conditions and in menial jobs. See [IDSN webpage on the post-2015 agenda](#).

IDSN is concerned about the failure to recognise caste-affected groups and specifically identify these marginalized groups in the OWG Final Report. This, given it is a group that numbers more than a quarter of a billion people who are subjected to poverty, social exclusion and discrimination – factors to be addressed in the post-2015 agenda.

Almost all UN human rights bodies have raised concerns about caste-based discrimination in a multitude of states. See [IDSN Compilation of UN references to caste-based discrimination](#), [Draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent](#) and [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights statements on caste](#). In their [joint statement](#) from May 2013, seven UN experts expressed their hope that the post-2015 agenda would include specific goals for the advancement of Dalits, stressing that caste-based discrimination is a major structural factor underlying poverty. In 2013, the UN Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism [stated](#) that, “a disproportionate percentage of Dalits live in abject poverty and face discrimination and exclusion at social, economic and political levels.” The Inclusion and addition of references to caste, caste status or caste discrimination, alongside and on par with other forms of discrimination, in the OWG Final Report would be well justified and in line with language applied in recent, official [UN reports and statements](#) by high level UN officials, including the UN Secretary-General and High Commissioner for Human Rights. Additionally, the [UN-NGLS recommendations on the SDGs](#), based on numerous consultations with a multitude of civil society actors, address and explicitly mention caste-based discrimination in a number of areas.

As victims of caste-based discrimination are routinely denied access to water, schools, health services, land, markets and employment, it has been a major obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The social exclusion of Dalits and similarly affected communities lead to high levels of poverty among affected population groups and exclusion, or reduced benefits, from development processes.

IDSN strongly recommends that caste-affected groups are addressed in the post-2015 agenda and are clearly identifiable in the outcome document. Specifically, IDSN recommends that caste be explicitly mentioned and addressed in Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries, Target 2: by 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex,

disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, **caste** or economic or other status. Leaving out caste and similar forms of discrimination from this equation means that hundreds of millions of people will indeed be “left behind” preventing the agenda from being achieved.