

IDSN ONLINE RESPONSE TO NARRATIVE SECTION OF POST-2015 HIGH LEVEL PANEL REPORT

International Dalit Solidarity Network – July 2013

The High Level Panel Report 'A New Global Partnership' sets the ambitious target of eradicating extreme poverty all over the world by 2030. However, the report's overall lack of focus on inequality, discrimination and social exclusion means that this target will be difficult to achieve. Unless specific attention is paid to the situation of particularly marginalised groups, such as those affected by caste discrimination, these groups will continue to live in poverty.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, noted in 2009 that "caste is the very negation of the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination. It condemns individuals from birth and their communities to a life of exploitation, violence, social exclusion and segregation."

Caste discrimination has been a major obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and a continuing failure to address the issue will lead to a similar fate for the post-2015 agenda. Victims of this form of discrimination – particularly hundreds of millions of Dalits in South Asia - are routinely denied access to water, schools, health services, land, markets and employment. 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. It furthermore precludes their involvement in decision making and governance, and their meaningful participation in public and civil life.

Dalit women and girls belong to the category of particularly vulnerable groups, who are exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence on the basis of gender and caste. The intersection between gender and caste therefore needs to be explicitly addressed under the post-2015 framework's focus on inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination.

Hence, it is disappointing to note the High Level Panel report's limited focus on inequality and the almost complete lack of attention to the plight of Dalits and other victims of caste discrimination. The Summary of Outreach Efforts (Annex IV) contains one single reference to Dalits: "Legislative and institutional mechanisms to recognise the indivisible rights of indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, Dalits and other socially excluded groups must be put in place". Otherwise, the report is bereft of references to a group that numbers more than a quarter of a billion people and is subjected to poverty, social exclusion and discrimination - factors that the post-2015 agenda is very much supposed to deal with.

IDSN believes that the precarious situation of Dalits and similarly affected groups warrants specific mentioning in a report such as the one presented by the High Level Panel. The first of the report's five transformative shifts states that "neither income, nor gender, nor ethnicity, nor disability, nor geography, will determine whether people live or die, whether a mother can give birth safely, or whether her child has a fair chance in life." Leaving out caste and other forms of discrimination from this equation means that hundreds of millions of people will indeed be "left behind" and unwittingly prevent the agenda's ambitious targets from being achieved.

The complete lack of attention to the caste issue in the description of the report's 12 illustrative goals (Annex II) is also detrimental to the aspirations and hopes of the hundreds of millions of victims of caste

discrimination. A more detailed analysis of the goals can be found in IDSN's response to this part of the High Level Panel report.

Another example of the lack of inclusion of the caste issue can be found in the implementation section of the report (Chapter 4). The panel emphasises the importance of collecting disaggregated data by various categories, including gender, disability etc. and 'other categories' in order to reach the neediest groups. While this is commendable, these 'other categories' should include marginalised groups such as those that are subjected to caste-based discrimination. The collection of disaggregated data and research on intersecting forms of discrimination, including caste-based discrimination, is a means to measure inequalities and to develop and implement programmes to address the systematic patterns of marginalisation and exclusion at the root of poverty and exclusion.

That the global consultation on the post-2015 agenda did recognise caste discrimination as a source of inequality was a very encouraging step. IDSN strongly recommends that the issue of inequality and its close connection with the situation of Dalits and other groups that suffer caste discrimination figure prominently in the continuing and very important discussion on the post-2015 development agenda.

References:

[IDSN webpage on the post-2015 agenda](#)

[UN experts' joint statement on caste discrimination](#)

[Draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent](#)

[IDSN Compilation of UN references to caste-based discrimination](#)