

Newsletter

APRIL 2022 | ISSUE NO-7

GFOD MATTERS

Dalit History Month

## MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

➤ CDWD Women and COVID-19

## News from

➤ Asia

➤ Africa

➤ Europe

➤ Latin America

Special Edition: Dalit History Month



## WOMEN OF COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED ON WORK AND DESCENT AND THE PANDEMIC

Discrimination based on work and descent (DWD) is the UN terminology for caste discrimination. The term has been used by several UN human-rights bodies, including treaty bodies and Special Rapporteurs, reaffirming that this form of discrimination is prohibited under international human-rights law. It continues to be one of the most wide-ranging human-rights violation, prevailing for decades and having affected almost 260 million people globally. Often misunderstood as a South Asia concept, it is a reality for many countries across the globe: the highest concentration of affected communities is in South Asia, and there are also affected communities in Africa, Middle East and the Diaspora. It is used as a mechanism to socially organize people who are severely discriminated and restricted in accessing social-economic and political resources and opportunities. This system implies not only the denial of equality and freedom but also denial of basic human rights. Based on one's occupation and descent, it can be defined as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on inherited status such as caste, including present or ancestral occupation, family, community or social origin, name, birthplace, place of residence, dialect and accent that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life". This hierarchical system places individuals on a social hierarchy based on the notions of purity and pollution. Those at the bottom of this hierarchical structure are the most excluded communities not only in socio-cultural processes but also political and economic domains.

They continue to be subjected to different forms of 'untouchability' or social disabilities on the basis of their birth into 'lower caste'. The social and cultural stigma of impurity and pollution puts them in a vulnerable position. As rightly pointed out in the Special Rapporteur Report on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, stigma can be understood "as a process of dehumanizing, degrading, discrediting and devaluing people in certain population groups, often based on a feeling of disgust". This stigma involves widespread social segregation of those affected by it, by segregated living spaces and by confining them to degrading jobs they cannot free themselves off. Women from these excluded communities experience many forms of discrimination arising from their low social position in the caste system. They get further marginalized, excluded and discriminated against. The nexus of caste, class and gender places women in a triply disadvantageous position, and makes them extremely vulnerable. They are the most marginalized community, and face multiple forms of exploitation and discrimination in both public and private spheres.

The novel Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic startled the world with its uniqueness, reach and impact. Whilst research and analysis have mainly focussed on global economic losses and the challenges ahead for governments and policy makers, it is important to throw light on the plight of the poorest and marginalised people who have been disproportionately impacted owing to their occupation and descent. This edition aims to discuss the position of CDWD women during the pandemic.

## SITUATION IN AFRICA



COVID-19 has triggered the second biggest crisis in a decade, and possibly the worst recession ever, whilst many countries have not yet recovered from the 2008 financial crisis. These are unprecedented times that will dramatically increase inequalities and have severe impacts on people in developing countries. The pandemic has hit hardest those who have no access to healthcare, who lack a social safety net to fall back on, who don't rights to sick leave, are in precarious work conditions, have no access to land titles, and those with the greatest unpaid care responsibilities. Among those most impacted by this pandemic and its fallout are poor smallscale farmers, many of whom are women. Whilst being very vulnerable, small-scale farmers also show incredible resilience and supporting them is a key way to help meet the food needs of the people. Already in 2019, 135 million people were determined as being acutely food insecure. WFP has warned of famine of “biblical proportions,” due to COVID-19, which can lead to an increase in acutely food insecure people to 265 million people. FAO estimates that, if the anticipated global recession were to trigger a reduction in the growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) of between two and ten percentage points in all countries in 2020, then the number of undernourished people in net food-importing countries would increase by 14.4 million to 80.3 million.

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and mobility challenges and restrictions have further entrenched women at the periphery of the production curve. Women are not able to produce food at the required levels and cannot access markets to sell that food, which is often their main if not only source of income. For some countries like Uganda, the only allowable mode of transportation is bicycles, which the majority of women do not own or are unable to ride due to restrictive social customs. Additionally, walking exposes women to violence; for instance, security personnel are beating citizens to enforce COVID-19 lockdown measures in some countries like Uganda. Women tend to be paid less for their produce, particularly when forced to sell for emergency funds to pay for health expenses and for the survival of their household members. Finally, as the contribution of women to the workforce is often hidden, their needs are excluded in analyses which, in turn means they are underserved by policies and government actions.

## SITUATION IN AFRICA

### WOMEN ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED:

WOMEN SMALLSCALE FARMERS WILL BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE CRISIS, PARTLY BECAUSE THEY ARE ALSO OFTEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CARE OF CHILDREN, THE SICK, AND THE ELDERLY. THIS MEANS THEY HAVE INCREASED EXPOSURE TO COVID-19, WHICH HAS KNOCK-ON IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD PRODUCTION, FOOD PREPARATION, AND CHILD NUTRITION. WOMEN PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE IN PROVIDING FOOD FOR THEIR FAMILIES YET HAVE LIMITED OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND FACE CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING CREDIT AND IMPROVED TECHNOLOGIES.



### TRUST AFRICA URGES TO:

1. Provide food and cash grants, ensuring women are able to access and benefit from them. In some regions such as West Africa, the lean season is fast approaching (May to September); if the food assistance provided for in the response plans of countries is not delivered on time, the food and nutritional security of the population will be compromised. These plans must cover the food needs of both rural and urban populations.
2. Response mechanisms on the continent need to be guided by gender analyses to identify and respond to the unique needs of different groups of women and youth who are not homogeneous.
3. Ensure gender data on the contribution of women small scale farmers in different countries on the continent is available, analyzed and actionable. All interventions should consider disaggregation of data by sex, age as well as other key indicators. These should be considered in data collection, analyses and reporting.
4. Strengthen women cooperatives, and ensure their participation in decision-making processes, so that their issues in food systems are represented in the most practical, safe, and meaningful ways possible.
5. Address financial constraints, including for SMEs. Engage financiers to restructure agricultural loans. Think of alternative modalities for women who have limited assets for collateral. Support farming savings groups.

## SITUATION IN ASIA

Gender discrimination intersects with Occupation and Descent, which means women from stigmatised and excluded communities experience extra disadvantage and vulnerability. In many cases, DWD communities are not recognised by their governments, and do not benefit from targeted policies and programmes which could support their welfare and development.

### BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has approximately 6.5 million DWD groups belonging to over 80 communities, identified as such by their occupations. The caste-based system persists despite Bangladesh's constitutional prohibition of discrimination based on caste (articles 27 and 28 establish principles of equality for all citizens).<sup>20</sup> According to a survey by Nagorik Uddyog in June 2020, 179 people (Men-118, Women-56, Children-5) from DWD communities were positive, out of whom nine persons died (Hossain, 2020). As in other countries in the region, DWD communities in Bangladesh undertake the traditionally 'passed-on' unclean jobs in urban areas, such as street sweeping, manual scavenging and burying the dead. They live in congested colonies, slums or informal settlements with limited access to basic services. They lost their livelihoods instantaneously with the imposition of the lockdown. The government announced direct cash assistance to informal sector workers and a direct cash grant of BDT 2,500 (\$30) for 5 million poor families.

However, the number of Dalits beneficiaries is not known, let alone how many Dalit women were reached by this aid. Caste discrimination affects both the Hindu and the Muslim populations in Bangladesh and perpetuates the poverty trap the population is caught in. Dalit girls and women in Bangladesh often fall victim to prostitution and are trafficked as bonded labour. Despite women's 'pre-existing' vulnerabilities and risks caused by poverty and lack of social security, they did not qualify for any special or additional measures.. According to the International Federation of Human Rights, the number of rapes of women and children (i.e. girls below the age of 18) increased during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The Odhikar organisation reports that between January and September 2020, a total of 919 women and children were victims of rape, 325 of whom were women and 569 children. When the government announced a "general holiday" (its term for lockdown), many workers lost their jobs. Consequent economic hardship together with living in cramped accommodation intensified frustrations and tempers which resulted in violence against women and girls.

## SITUATION IN ASIA

### INDIA



India put in place the Disaster Management Act to contain the spread of the virus and provide immediate food and shelter relief from the state and national disaster funds. The inclusion assessment of the COVID-19 relief package study, *DELAYED & DENIED: Injustice in COVID-19 relief, 202* conducted by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in India revealed worrying gaps. For the want of required documents, a sizeable proportion of Dalit and Adivasi (indigenous) communities were not able to access social protection programmes, the conduit for transferring relief assistance to beneficiaries. The assessment covered 21,431 Dalit households and 2,102 Adivasi households spanning eight states. Some of the social protection schemes of the Government of India, such as Jan Dhan Yojana and Ujjawala Yojana were female targeted. However, most of the schemes were universal in nature and did not provide special or additional assistance to the Dalit and Adivasi communities and women, despite availability of government data on multi-dimensional poverty and deprivation among these groups. It is worth mentioning that some states like Delhi did announce enhanced pensions for Dalits and Adivasi pensioners, including for widows, although not many Dalits reside in urban areas like Delhi. To add to the misery of Dalits and Adivasi who did not get government relief, the National Dalit Movement for Justice and All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch, the two movements under the aegis of the NCDHR, recorded a sharp rise in caste crimes against the community and Dalit women during the lockdown. Many other cases and reports were recorded and acted on by the civil society members of Dalit Human Rights Defenders Network.

## SITUATION IN ASIA

### INDIA



For example, in Vijaywada, a nine-month pregnant Dalit woman who needed to go down 250 steps from her hilltop home to get daily essentials was sent back empty-handed for being a Dalit. A domestic worker in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, was repeatedly beaten up for speaking up when she was denied rations. Several instances of gang rape were reported from across Uttar Pradesh. In one gruesome case, a Dalit woman was kept hostage by five influential people of a village for eight hours on her wedding day and gang-raped several times, while in Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh after being gang raped and murdered by dominant caste men, the body of a 19-year-old girl was cremated by the police without the consent of her family.

16.2% of the population of India is Dalit, and 8.2% are Adivasi. There are 97.9 million Dalit females and 103.5 million males; there are 51.9 million Adivasi females and 52.4 million males (Population Census 2011). India's Constitution outlawed 'untouchability' in 1948, and made it a punishable offence under various subsequent laws. However, despite the existence of targeted policy and programmes of the government and affirmative action in support of the welfare and development of Dalits and Adivasi, practically speaking, those responsible for attacks on Dalits still enjoy impunity, while Dalit and Adivasi poverty has increased alongside newer forms of caste discrimination, the existence of systemic loopholes and tolerance of caste crimes. Meanwhile Dalits and Adivasi remain trapped in historical and intergenerational multifaceted poverty. As for migrants, the migrant crisis was exacerbated by the national lockdown which violated the right to life with dignity of millions of migrant workers. A staggering 77% of India's workforce (three out of four workers) falls under the category of vulnerable employment (World Bank, 2019). Seasonal migrants – workers who migrate temporarily are one of the largest and most vulnerable workforces of India. The figures for seasonal migrants vary from 15.2 million to 55 million.

## INDIA

They are largely driven by poverty and distress, with the majority being landless, or smallscale and marginal farmers who have no livelihood opportunities post-harvest. 23.1% and 18.6% of seasonal migrants come from the Dalit and Adivasi communities respectively. They have little education, and minimal or no assets. The vulnerability of migrants is compounded by their caste identity, as the majority belong to categories such as Other Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes and Adivasi, because caste determines wealth, income and remittance level. (Venugopal, J, Samuel, & Kidwai, 2020) Women are particularly affected as they are often responsible for getting food and water. Some migrant returnees said they wait for hours at the village tap because dominant caste families get access first.

### DID YOU KNOW?

\*65% of single/widow women households (HHs) were not registered under the Ayushman Bharat to access free testing and treatment for COVID-19.

\*68% of single women/widows were not registered under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana ( Free gas refill for 3 months )

\*59% of single/widow women HHs were not registered under the flagship rural employment scheme to receive enhanced wages (of 202 rupees), although 73% of Scheduled Caste (SC) migrant workers are women and 72% of Schedule Tribe (ST) workers are women (Census 2011).

\*83.55% SC workers earn less than INR 5000; and only 11.74% earn between 5,000 and 10,000 rupees.

\*86.53% ST workers earn less than 5,000 rupees.

\*61% of single/widow women HHs are not registered under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, which provided a cash transfer of 500 rupees for three months to female account holders.

\*52% of single/widow women HHs with children aged between 0 and 6 years had not received the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Service) assistance.

\*30% of single/widow women HHs received a partial quota of free food grains under the national food security programme.

\*12% of the SC and 12% ST HHs had widow pensioners but 68% of the SC and 59% of the of ST pension-holders had not received the ex-gratia assistance.

# Hear their stories!

Shakuntala, a former manual scavenger, from Chamari village in Bulandsher district of Uttar Pradesh, India, mother of eight children, is visibly dejected when we approached. With many mouths to feed and an asthmatic husband, her situation is desperate during the COVID-19 lockdown. When asked if she got any public assistance during the lockdown, she said she had not, but acknowledged the food support she received from her kind neighbourhood. "Kuch laabh nahi mila hamein, aur bhooka marr rahein hain". (we are starving as no public relief reached us) she retorts, referring to the acute hunger situation in the house. The support from neighbours could provide occasional meals. Her husband's condition deteriorated, and she could not seek medical care during the lockdown. "Kuch bhi toh nahi socha sarkar ne hamare liye". (the government did not consider us at all) she says. And, despite having the ration card she had not received provisions in the last six months, she adds. "Apni pareshani kisko bata de? Jab Sarkara nahi sunti to garib aadmi kya sunengey hamari samasya." (To whom should we go with our predicament? If the Government does not bother who else would?), she laments.



## SITUATION IN ASIA

### NEPAL

In Nepal, Dalits constitute 13% of the country's population, of whom 50% are women. They are further divided into 'Hill Dalits' and 'Madhesi Dalits', mainly based on geographical and cultural factors. The first Commission for Dalits was set up in 1963 and caste-based discrimination has been abolished. Nevertheless women continue to suffer due to caste, gender and patriarchy. In May 2011, the Interim Parliament passed the Castebased Discrimination and Untouchability Crime Elimination and Punishment Act. Despite this, casteism remains prevalent in the Nepalese society and Dalits are considered 'untouchables'.<sup>16</sup> 42% of Dalits in Nepal live below the poverty line (Paudal & Nikarthil, 2020), and most survive on daily wages. The pandemic robbed them of this source of income. A rapid assessment conducted by the Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) revealed that most of the Dalit women had no source of income and were facing problems due to food scarcity. Relief packages could not be easily accessed by the communities due to the distance of their settlements from distribution points and patchy information sharing. Despite knowledge of the pre-existing vulnerabilities of the Dalit communities and women in particular, the government relief packages did little to meet their basic needs during protracted lockdowns. The impact was particularly serious for women with disabilities and families of working women with members living with disabilities. Other socio-economic stimulus packages were introduced, but they made no additional provision for the needs of Dalit women and vulnerable groups who suffered disproportionately as a result. Socio-economically deprived and landless, Dalits with disabilities are at great risk of hunger and starvation owing to the multiple barriers they face in accessing basic services. Due to the lack of disaggregated data on persons with disabilities, local governments did not have concrete plans on how to support them during lockdown. Cases of caste and gender-based violence continued to soar during the pandemic. In a study conducted by the Samata Foundation, 56 cases of caste-based discrimination were reported during the three-month lockdown period. Among them, eight incidents of caste-based discrimination occurred in the quarantine centres. A Dalit woman was beaten up by a ward chairperson during relief collection in Mahottari district in Nepal. Similarly, Kalpana Nagari and Kalawati Audi, two Dalit women from the Godavari Municipality faced discrimination as their relatives tested positive for COVID-19 after returning from India. The KIOS Foundation reported that during lockdown, the police administration offices were negligent in registering the cases of caste-based discrimination and gender-based violence against Dalit women. On 23 May 2020, the body of a 12-year-old Dalit girl was found hanging from a tree, a day after community leaders in Rupandehi district had ordered a 25-year-old man of a different caste, who had raped her, to marry her as his "punishment". Instead of imprisoning the rapist, the community leaders made a decision to let him marry her. Some cases of rape and discrimination have also been registered by Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO).

## SITUATION IN ASIA

### NEPAL

Dalits constitute an estimated 20 percent of Nepal's population and are subjected to over 200 forms of discriminatory practices. They are religiously, culturally, socially, economically and historically oppressed, excluded and treated as 'untouchables'. Almost half of Nepal's Dalits live below the poverty line. They are landless and much poorer than the dominant caste population; they are routinely denied access to religious sites, face resistance to inter-caste marriages, as well as refusal by non-Dalits to handle water touched by them among the many other forms of discrimination.

In the villages, though water resources are common for everyone, Dalit communities find it difficult to access water. Residential areas are separated between Dalits and non-Dalits or so called upper castes. In general, upper caste communities reside in the lowland where more resources are available or easily accessible. Due to Hindu traditional practice which is a social caste-based discrimination, Dalits are often denied to access water resources in the villages. In Vuwan Pokhari of Palpa introduced above, Dalits live in the upland and the so called upper caste communities reside in the lowland with easier accessibility to various resources including water and farmland. Water, like oxygen, is necessary in our life and the most significant determinant of food production as well as health. Although we might have enough food, without safe drinking water, one could die of water borne diseases or be affected by food contaminated by water. As the climate gets drier, food production is considerably affected by shortage of water as many depend on rain for cultivation. Given the fact that women take all responsibility for housework and child care in Nepal, they confront more discrimination and difficulties to manage housework, food, and child care at home.

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## SITUATION IN ASIA

### NEPAL

Similar problems have been faced by the Dalit women living in Koteli village ward no 5, of Dadeldhura district which lies in far eastern region. They have been facing a shortage of drinking water for the past 16 years merely because they are Dalits. In 1995 the government introduced the safe drinking water scheme in Koteli village ward no 7, 5, and 4 where upper caste Brahmin and Dalit communities jointly reside. Brahmin households reside next to the Dalit households. Around 100 Dalits households live in ward no. 5. The administration installed water-pipe and tap for all villagers but the non-Dalit community blocked water from flowing to the Dalit household's tap. The Dalits could not get a single drop of water from their tap. When the Dalit community made a complaint to the district drinking water office, nobody listened to them. They hence have to go to another village to fetch water taking more than 5 hours from their village back and forth with the jar of water, which causes health issues for the Dalit women. The women carry 25-30 liters of water on their head and back at the same time. This result in delays in sending the children to school. They also suffer from different types of diseases. This daily discriminatory practice against the Dalits which causes water scarcity in farming also harms their food production

The government's 9th Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) estimated national urban water supply coverage at 62.5%, and set a target for 100% coverage, with sanitation for 40% of the population, by the end of the plan. This proved to be an ambitious target and Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Department projected early on that by 2002 only 71% would be covered by drinking water quantity and 30% by sanitation. These figures are also questionable, because they do not take into account the poor operational status or the poor quality of water supplies from the facilities that have already been built. As high as 92% of the piped water supplies and 25% of the tube wells are reported to be either out of operation or in need of rehabilitation. The development of the water and sanitation sector remains a high priority of the government, and in this regard the 10th Plan (2003-2007) targetted to supply water to 85 percent of the rural population and 100 percent for the urban population. The policies and commitment of the government have resulted in an extension of this sector under multilateral aid agencies like World Bank(WB), Asian Development Board (ADB), bilaterally assisted projects and International/National Non-Governmental Organizations (I/NGOs) working in this sector. Different approaches are being used by different organizations working with different projects in many parts of Nepal, but the goal is the same: the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation for all.

## *Hear their stories!*

In the small Dalit settlement on the banks of the Tinau river of the Satyawati area. Tara Pariyar lives in a oneroom cottage with her five family members. She has been worrying more about her daughters than herself during lockdown. Ms. Pariyar used to do tailoring and her husband got his daily wages in the construction sector, but now, they have both lost their incomes due to lockdown. Ms. Pariyar is pregnant and they worry about putting food on the table. Ms. Pariyar has a daughter with an intellectual disability who needs continual personal assistance. It has been very challenging when she asks for food. Ms. Pariyar, with tears in her eyes, says that her daughter asks for food the whole day: she doesn't know there is lockdown. Nine months pregnant Ms. Pariyar is also suffers from asthma. She has also been diagnosed as deficient in necessary nutrients along with pneumonia. The precariousness caused by lockdown has meant that hunger poses a greater threat to their lives than COVID-19 itself.

## SITUATION IN EUROPE



The situation during the pandemic of the Roma people, the DWD communities in Europe, is of real concern. They experience discrimination and stigmatisation that is largely unrecognised by global human rights discourse and practice. The Roma people are subjected to antigypsyism which can be manifested in anti-Roma attitudes, prevalent negative stereotyping in the public sphere and hate speech (Nikarthil, 2019). The situation of vulnerability and inequality affecting the Roma population was already alarming before the COVID-19 crisis. A study of the Roma population in Spain in 2018 on their employment and poverty found that poverty and social exclusion affected more than 80% of Roma people, with 46% living in extreme poverty. More than 9,000 Roma families in Spain were found to live in substandard housing which does not meet basic standards of habitability. The unemployment rate was as high as 52% (more than three times the rate of 14.5% found in the general population). Roma women were at a clear disadvantage, with an employment rate of only 16%. As street vending is the most prevalent form of work for Roma people, and 47% are self-employed, they have been very hard hit by lockdowns. Only 32% of very poor Roma households receive social welfare payments (Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Roma Population, 2020). It has not been possible accurately to gauge the burden of COVID 19 impacts on Roma men and women and their access to health services as these data are unavailable. A European Union study on the gendered impact of COVID-19 observed that disruption and restrictions to reproductive health services would affect some communities more than others, including women living in poverty, women with disabilities, Roma women, undocumented migrant women, adolescents, transgender people, and women at risk of or who are survivors of domestic and sexual violence. For example, in Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia, projects supporting the sexual and reproductive health of Roma girls and women have been suspended (WENHAM, 2020). A report of the Council of Europe (2020) noted the continuing hate speech, discrimination, and stigmatization against minority groups, especially Roma communities, throughout the pandemic (Marsal, Ahlund, & Wilson, 2020).

## SITUATION IN LATIN AMERICA

In Brazil, South America, COVID-19 has ravaged the Quilombola communities, exacerbating the ongoing impacts on them of pollution, encroachment and lack of public health services. Quilombolas are the descendants of African slaves who settled in remote parts of Brazil to flee their oppressors in the 1500s. Quilombolas are found throughout Brazil, including vast stretches of the Amazon basin. Their geographical and historical vulnerabilities are not included in government statistics, a failure which has led to the absence of targeted policy and programmes to address their rights and needs. Lack of recognition has deprived them of basic human amenities of transport road, water, electricity, telephone or health services, while at the same time they face existential threats from ranchers, miners and loggers. In July 2020, the federal government passed a law intended to protect indigenous and Quilombola communities during the pandemic, but it did not guarantee them access to drinking water, hygiene materials, hospital beds and mechanical ventilators. 30 Despite the urgency, this delay and failure by the state to take action resulted in a thousand Quilombola deaths. There are few official data on COVID-19 infections and deaths but some estimates put the mortality rate among the Quilombolas at four times the national average. This has resulted in the Quilombolas being made a priority for vaccination, a topic which is part of the larger struggle to manage Covid 19 in Brazil.



Non availability of Medicare for COVID patients

Sonia Castro says her family stayed in self-isolation for two months in the Jambuaçu territory in Brazil's Pará state. She recounts how they eventually fell ill, their condition worsening bit by bit without proper medical attention. "We were staying in our house in isolation. As their health condition got worse, I had to call an ambulance, and we were shifted to Belém, the state capital," explains Castro. The other residents of her community feared they would be infected with COVID-19. Because of that, Castro says, she had to collect her children by motorboat – they were waiting on a bridge apart from the community. This daunting journey was meant to prevent interaction with others. "I was desperate, because I thought that I would lose my children and I felt I was being discriminated against because of the virus. The worst part is there was no hospital bed available for a positive patient, nor an ambulance, and as a result people died. We live in a rural place, it's easy to get fruit, get some açai and prepare some tapioca flour in the place where it's made, and that way we can survive. But with the virus, if we don't get government help, we won't survive." Said Castro

## NEWS FROM LAST MONTH

### WORLD WATER ALTERNATIVE FORUM 2022 & ANDS/ GFOD WORKSHOP IN DAKAR, SENEGAL, 22 TO 25 MARCH 2022

From 21 to 25 March 2022, the World Water Alternative Forum (WWAF) was held in Dakar, Senegal, to provide a space for civic groups to discuss community and national challenges in realising the human right to water. The forum aims to develop proposals that ensure inclusive management and governance of water systems.

- The 21st of March 2022, started with a big popular march for the right to water and to show our rejection of the privatisation and despoliation policies of the Senegalese city and country.
- On 22 March, there is an official grand opening and press conference at the CICES in Dakar, Senegal on the right to water and sanitation in the presence of the representative of the Mayor of Dakar, TBC Forum Social Sénégalais, Coumba Touré, Africans Raising, Ebrima Sall, Trust Africa, Paul Divakar, Executive Director of The Inclusivity Project, ANDS members Ibrahim Ag IB Altana, Brahim Ramdane, Rhaichatou Altana, Aboubekrine El Jera, Abda Wone and Johannes Butscher, UN Advocacy Officer at the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD). Water is a common good. Given the circumstances of the pandemic, FAME 2022 in Dakar had a hybrid format to allow for virtual participation.
- In conjunction with our participation in the World Water Forum (WWF), a panel on DWD communities and water was organized by TrustAfrica on March 22, 2022 at 15:00 GMT at the CICES in Dakar. The panelists were Penda Mbow, Ebrima Sall, Paul Divakar, Raichatou, Rita Ndiaye, and Ingo.
- On 23 and 24 March, a meeting of the Network was organised in the premises of the CICES which was chaired by Paul Divakar and Ebrima Sall who highlighted the interest of holding a meeting where all the representatives of our organisation were present to discuss the perspectives. The meeting was attended by members of the network, Ms Rita, Ingo RITZ, President of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), Amnesty Senegal and the AFRICAJOM Centre. The presence of the members was interactive and beneficial. At the end of the days an action plan was finalised.

During the course of the project, the ANDS created a steering committee to define the orientations, develop an action plan and define the tasks of this committee and establish the texts of the network to formalise it.  
Done at Dakar, 25 March 2022



**African Network on  
Discrimination based on Work,  
Descent and Contemporary  
Forms of Slavery  
(ANDS)**

**Network  
Strategy Workshop  
Dakar, Senegal  
21 - 25 March 2022**





## ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION FOR COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED ON WORK AND DESCENT IN AFRICA AND BEYOND

**22 March 2022 at 15:00 GMT**

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88675290897>  
or join us in person at the CICES in Dakar, Senegal



**Dr. Ebrima Sall, Executive Director of TrustAfrica**



**Rita Izsák-Ndiaye  
Former UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues**



**Ingo Ritz, Director  
Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)**



**Raichatou Wallet, Vice President of l'Association TEMEDT**



**Paul Divakar  
Executive Director TIP  
Convenor GFOD**



**Moderation  
Professor Penda Mbow**



Mr. Paul Divakar, Executive Director of The Inclusivity Project and Convenor of Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, speaks about the severe discrimination against Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent in accessing the right to water and sanitation at the Alternate World Water Forum held in Dakar, Senegal on 22 March 2022.



Dr. Ebrima Sall, Executive Director of Trust Africa, speaks about the importance on access to water to all. He invites all to attend the Alternate World Water Forum held in Dakar, Senegal on 22 March 2022.

## Declaration for the Rights of the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

### Preamble:

The Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD) is the global platform to voice the rights and entitlements of the communities in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America discriminated against on the basis of work and descent. The objective of GFoD and its regional networks such as The African Network on Discrimination based on Work, Descent and Contemporary Forms of Slavery (ANDS), is to eliminate the practice of discrimination based on work and descent, addressing issues of Casteism, Untouchability, traditional or modern slavery and Anti- Gypsism through strengthening national, regional and UN mechanisms and beyond.

- The African Network on Discrimination based on Work, Descent and Contemporary Forms of Slavery (ANDS) fights for the full realisation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the Communities Discriminated against on the basis of Work and Descent (CDWD) and to ensure their access to sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) are excluded, discriminated and their rights violated through caste-like structures and forced into conditions of traditional or modern slavery.

### Introduction:

The Alternative World Water Forum 2022 took place in Dakar, Senegal from 21 to 25 March 2022. More than 500 persons and about 1000 online participants from more than 15 countries gathered to create, strengthen and imagine a more just, equal and sustainable world focusing on the access to water as it is the basis for all life on earth. The commodification of natural resources, especially water, represents a rapture and ongoing conflict which leaves the most vulnerable communities behind, especially Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD).

Modern and traditional forms of slavery are still common in several African countries and are pre-colonial phenomena.

- Recalling the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that „Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’ and that everyone are entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as to race, colour, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status’ while at the same time stop the heinous crimes committed against DWD communities thereby infringing the fundamental principles of UDHR;

- Recognising the ‘Draft Principles and Guidelines for Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work & Descent’ and the comprehensive recommendations by UpN human rights Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures Mechanisms, to address and eliminate these forms of discrimination and violence while at the same time being concerned why the States Parties reluctant to implement them;

We call on all members of the African Union and the United Nations and its Member States, civil society in Africa and globally:

- We call upon the African Union and in particular upon the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to recognise, document, design and implement effective measures toward ending all forms of discrimination and violence based on work and descent.
- We call upon the United Nations and States Parties to adopt an UN Declaration on the Rights of the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, establishing legally binding review, monitoring and implementation mechanisms.
- To establish a Special United Nations Fund to support the effective participation of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) in all national, regional and international processes geared towards eliminating discrimination and violence based on work and descent, casteism, antigypsyism, traditional and contemporary forms of slavery and other analogous forms of discrimination;



We call on the State Parties where the practice of discrimination and violence based on work and descent, casteism, antigypsyism, traditional and contemporary forms of slavery and other analogous forms of discrimination exist:

- To officially recognize the people, culture and the rich heritage of communities discriminated on work & descent
- To establish and implement various legal and policy frameworks, administrative and judicial instruments in order to accelerate equality and justice for all:
- To ensure that there is no direct or indirect discrimination against women in all its forms;
- To enact and strengthen national laws and policies that promote gender equality and prevent gender-based discrimination and violence;
- To ensure accountability of all crimes against women and to end the culture of impunity;
- To promote rights and entitlements of children and youth of DWD communities in order to develop their potential to grow as full-fledged citizens;
- To ensure equitable and proportional representation in governance to members of DWD communities especially the women;
- To evolve and implement plans, policies and programs in public and private sectors aimed towards sustainable economic empowerment of DWD communities;
- To end all forms of state sponsored violence and repression against DWD communities to ensure they live a secured life of equality and dignity;
- To establish an independent body of members of DWD communities in order to monitor and review the implementation process of Sustainable Development Goals, 2030.
- We call on the NGOs, INGOs and other Civil Society Organizations working on human rights issues:
- to support & strengthen the Global Forum of Communities on Work & Descent the Americas to address the issue of discrimination and violence based on work and descent, casteism, untouchability, antigypsyism, traditional and contemporary forms of slavery and other analogous forms of discrimination in Asia, Europe and the Americas;
- To organise a country level expert group and a civil society caucus to advocate for the rights of DWD communities;
- To engage with stakeholders including academia and think tanks to collect disaggregated data to produce evidence-based research;
- To develop a comprehensive strategy for engaging with the UN and international bodies to call for adoption of a Declaration recognizing DWD as a global issue;
- To initiate a process of undoing discrimination on work and descent in all public and private institutions & spheres including family, habitation and wider society.



ASIA DALIT RIGHTS FORUM OFFICIAL SIDE EVENT AT THE UN-  
ESCAP ASIA PACIFIC FORUM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Asia Dalit Rights Forum

# BUILDING FORWARD: COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY MODERN SLAVERY IN ASIA

Asia Dalit Rights Forum  
Side Event at  
Asia Pacific Forum on  
Sustainable Development

“

25 March 2022  
4am GMT, 9:30am IST, 11am BKK

”

Click to register:  
<https://bit.ly/CDWDModernSlavery>



Asia Dalit Rights Forum organised an official side event under the UN ESCAP Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on 25 March 2022, discussing the issues of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) affected by Modern Slavery in South Asia. The event had panelists from 4 countries; Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and had more than 40 participants. The discussion focused on the issue of persistent caste-based discrimination which eventually increases the vulnerability of CDWD to modern slavery and slavery-like practices. It was also discussed how the pandemic exposed pre-existing systemic gaps in social protection and justice systems, including with regard to identification and prosecution of contemporary forms of slavery, despite commitments made by States to meet target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and how the process of Building Forward initiated with the inclusion of the most marginalised groups.

Key recommendations:

- A. There is a need to recognise the link between modern slavery and slavery like practices with caste and discrimination based on work and descent affecting Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent.
- B. To address the coalition of state and its officials with industries and introduce Anti Discrimination Law.
- C. Strengthen trade unions among CDWDs, especially CDWD women.
- D. Brands to adopt zero discrimination policies.

## ASIA DALIT RIGHTS FORUM SIDE EVENT AT THE APRCEM ASIA PACIFIC PEOPLE'S FORUM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



28 - 31 MARCH 2022 —  
**ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**SAVE THE DATE**

# **DALIT AND CDWD YOUTH: MOVEMENTS OF PAST AND BUILDING FORWARD**

A WORKSHOP UNDER APFSD PEOPLE'S FORUM

**24 MARCH 2022**

9:30 am GMT, 3:00 pm IST, 4:30 pm BKK

**LINK TO REGISTER:**

<https://bit.ly/DalitYouth>



Asia Dalit Rights Forum



INCLUSIVITY  
PROJECT



GFOD  
GLOBAL PROJECT OF  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Asia Dalit Rights Forum organised a side event under the APRCEM Asia Pacific People's Forum on Sustainable Development on 24 March 2022. The event had panelists from 3 countries in South Asia; Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. About 50 participants joined the event which discussed the issues of Dalit movements in past and the social prejudice they face even today specifically with regards to SDGs.

Key recommendations: Even though, all three countries are different and diverse in many ways, there are a few common threads when it comes to the marginalised communities including CDWD, especially the youths. The communities are mostly located in rural areas in all these countries. Cases of violence, situations of job insecurities because of the sectoral works they are involved in, mostly informal sectors are common. Respective Governments should initiate efforts in improving the conditions of the communities who are most impacted and also the worst affected due to COVID. Civic spaces should emerge as critical contextual dimension to shape rights-based advocacy and risk reduction due to pandemics. CSOs should play the crucial role in addressing the issues effectively through representation, collaboration, and interactions.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO MS. BEENA PALLICAL ON HER TED TALK ON 'HOW CASTEISM OPERATES IN MODERN INDIA



Ms. Beena Pallical, General Secretary of NCDHR and Executive Director of Asia Dalit Rights Forum gives a Ted Talk on 'How casteism operates in Modern India'. To watch click on the picture above.

## ERGO'S JOINT STATEMENT "END THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE!" #STANDWITHUKRAINE



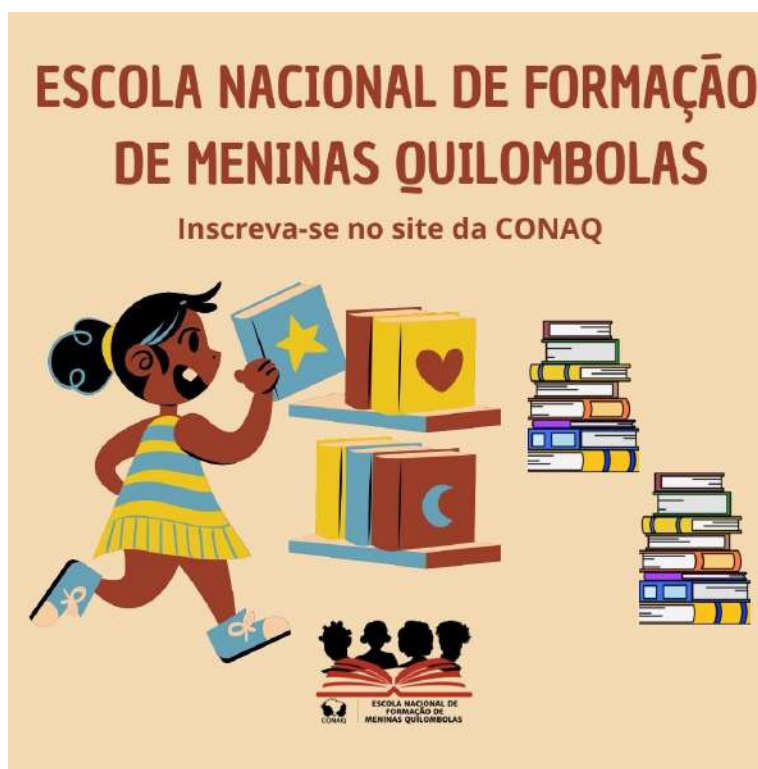
"From the Second World War to the Balkan Wars of the late 1990s, history has shown us that in times of war or conflict, the plight of Roma as well as other minorities is continuously ignored. Ethnic minorities are often rendered invisible and further victimised instead of being provided equal protection. Amid bomb and missile assaults upon Ukrainian cities, let us not yet again forget that among the stranded families (who are increasingly living without supplies, electricity, or medical equipment) are Roma, people of African descent, stateless people, migrants, women, elderly, sick people, differently-abled human beings, children, including those in state care. Let us not forget that amongst those joining the resistance to fight for the freedom and security of Ukraine, and all its residents, are those same people". Read the full statement by clicking the picture above

## JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN CARE STRATEGY REGARDING MIGRANT CARE PROVIDERS AND SERVICE USERS



Together with other human rights organisations, ERGO endorsed Joint recommendations for the European Care Strategy regarding migrant care providers and service users. With a view to supporting the full inclusion of people who are non-nationals in every part of the strategy, the document is organised around key aspects that the strategy is expected to address, namely: access to care, affordability, sustainability, quality of care, workforce, and gender aspects of care. [Read more..](#)

## CONAQ, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE MALALA FUND, OPENS A CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOL FOR THE TRAINING OF QUILOMBOLA GIRLS



The Education Collective of the National Coordination for the Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities (CONAQ) publishes this Wednesday (6th) a public notice to select students for the National School for the Training of Quilombola Girls.

Supported by the Malala Fund, the project offers 50 places for quilombola students, 37 for girls and 13 for boys. Another 50 vacancies are exclusive to teachers who will be able to apply together with interested quilombola youngsters.

The objective of the training is to strengthen the identity of quilombola adolescents from different regions of Brazil on issues that are ignored by the formal curriculum of schools. Topics will be discussed on the history of quilombola communities, guaranteeing rights and access to education, gender, race and territory issues, combating racism, engagement in the political struggle of the quilombola movement, among others. Those selected will receive a tablet and support to obtain teaching materials and internet access.

*The selected girls will have access to virtual meetings and workshops on the identity and history of quilombola communities in Brazil. The National School will prepare students to act in defense of the right to quality quilombola education and will address issues of territory, gender and the fight against racism and sexism.*



On March 29, the Federal Public Ministry (MPF) and the Federal Public Defender's Office (DPU) held a public hearing to address the impacts of eucalyptus monoculture on quilombola communities in the Far South of Bahia, Brazil.

The hearing is the result of the struggle of quilombola communities in the region, which for years has been demanding from public institutions respect for environmental licensing regulations, which should protect the interests and rights of the community, preventing the profound impacts resulting from the exploitation of eucalyptus, which involve threats against natural resources, access to land, memory, health and the daily activities of the remaining quilombolas.

Eucalyptus monoculture is based on discriminatory environmental public policies that highlight environmental racism, making the demands of quilombola communities in the extreme south of Bahia invisible and threatening their memory and rights.

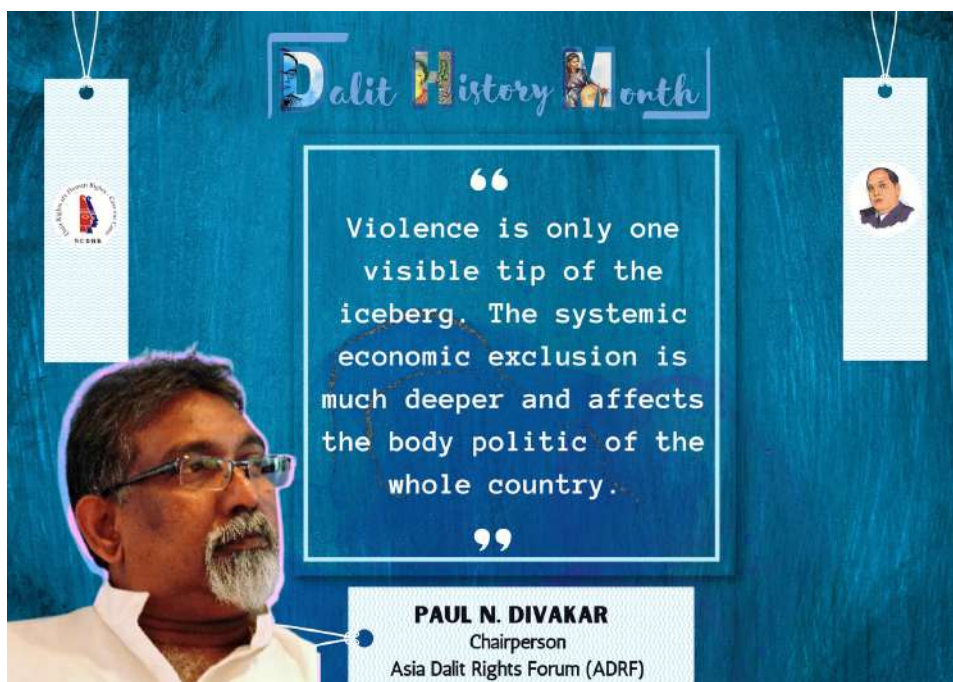
The struggle of quilombola communities in the extreme south of Bahia is in everyone's interest, to enforce respect for Human Rights, our Constitution, laws protecting the environment, health and the history of our country's traditional communities.

**SPECIAL EDITION: DALIT HISTORY MONTH  
CELEBRATING THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF ONE OF THE GREATEST LEADERS THE  
WORLD PRODUCED, DR. BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR**

**APRIL 1, MARKS THE BEGINNING OF DALIT HISTORY MONTH WHEN DALITS AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES CHERISH AND WRITE THEIR HISTORIES OF RESISTANCE, ART, CULTURE AND LITERATURE. IT IS A MONTH OF RECLAIMING THE AGENCY OF THE MARGINALISED AND CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR.**



**WE CAPTURE THE MONTH LONG CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ON DALIT HUMAN RIGHTS, INDIA. #JAIBHIM**





## AMAZING FACTS ABOUT DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

*Dr Ambedkar was not allowed to sit inside his classroom or drink the water at school by upper castes because he was a Dalit. Despite all this, he passed his school & became the first-ever 'Mahar' to go to college at a time when no Dalits were even allowed to enter or study in schools.*

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the first Indian to get a Doctorate (Ph.D.) degree in Economics from abroad.

Babasaheb was the first lawyer from the depressed classes called 'Dalits'.

Dr Ambedkar fought for three years to get the comprehensive Hindu Code Bill passed which gave several important rights to women.

In the London School of Economics, Babasaheb completed 8 years of studies in just 2 years 3 months. For this, he studied 21 hours a day.

Babasaheb's personal library "Rajgruha" consisted of more than 50,000 books and it was the world's largest private library.

Worldwide, the highest number of songs and books written in the name of the leader is Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The book "Waiting for a visa" written by Dr. Babasaheb which is also his autobiography, is a textbook at Columbia University.

Columbia University made a list of the world's top 100 scholars in 2004 and the first name on that list was Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar.

His thesis "The Problem of Rupee-Its Origin & its solution" led to formulation of Reserve Bank of India.

Dr. Ambedkar is the only Indian whose statue is attached next to Karl Marx in the London Museum.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a master in 64 subjects. He had knowledge of 9 languages like Hindi, Pali, Sanskrit, English, French, German, Marathi, Persian, and Gujarati.

Babasaheb studied all the religions of the world in a comparative way for almost 21 years.

Nobel Prize winner Prof. Amartya Sen considered Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as his father in economics.

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was conferred with the title of "Bodhisattva", the highest title in Buddhism, that too while alive.

Dr Ambedkar lead the world's biggest mass conversion in 1956, where more than half a million Dalits embraced Buddhism.

SOME FAMOUS AND RELEVANT QUOTES OF DR.  
BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

"I strongly believe in the movements run by women. If they are truly taken in to confidence, they may change the present picture of society which is very miserable. In the past, they have played a significant role in improving the condition of weaker sections and classes."

"Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence"

"Every man who repeats the dogma of Mill that one country is no fit to rule another country must admit that one class is not fit to rule another class."

"Political tyranny is nothing compared to the social tyranny and a reformer who defies society is a more courageous man than a politician who defies Government."

"I like the religion that teaches liberty, equality and fraternity"

If you ask me, my ideal would be the society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. An ideal society should be mobile and full of channels of conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts.

You must abolish your slavery yourselves. Do not depend for its abolition upon god or a superman. Remember that it is not enough that a people are numerically in the majority.

My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organize; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side I do not see how we can loose our battle.

## CELEBRATING AMBEDKAR'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY



**Mr. Paul Divakar, Convenor, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, GFoD secretariat members along with partners Ms. Beena Pallical, Gen Sec NCDHR, Ms. Abirami Jothee, Gen Sec AIDMAM and Mr. Rahul Singh, Gen Sec, NDMJ celebrated Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar's birth anniversary.**

***Opra Roma! Salve! Jai Bhim!***