

Monthly Newsletter

February 2025



Gfod

GLOBAL FORUM OF
COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED
ON WORK AND DESCENT



CDWD MATTERS

#DWD recognized at the HRC; Participation in the the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development, FFD4 3rd Preparatory Committee Meeting, Expert Group Meeting In Geneva - and more. Read on to know!

Discrimination based on Work & Descent Recognized at the UN Human Rights Council



In a significant moment for global advocacy, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk acknowledged Discrimination based on Work and Descent (DWD) in his address at the **Global Update to the 58th session of the Human Rights Council** on March 3 in Geneva. Highlighting caste-based discrimination alongside systemic racism and violence against marginalized groups, his remarks signal growing international recognition of these deep-seated injustices.

“Other communities face deep-seated, caste-based discrimination, related to work and descent.” he notes. This mention reflects the persistent efforts of Gfod, which engaged with the High Commissioner during the 2024 UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva, securing his solidarity on the issue. As we push for stronger global action, this recognition marks an important step in ensuring CDWD communities are no longer ignored.

[Read Statement here](#)



GFoD at the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development (CSoCD63)

GFoD's engagement at the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development (CSoCD63) was successful, as it enabled meaningful participation in high-level discussions and reinforced the need for inclusive social policies. Our interventions at key side events, particularly on social justice, misinformation, and youth engagement, highlighted critical gaps in addressing CDWD issues globally. The side event co-hosted with the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations was particularly impactful, offering actionable insights and strengthening our partnerships.



Side event - Moulding Hardened 'Cast(e)-in-Iron' Social Norms into Inclusive Shapes through Social Inclusion and Cohesion

As part of our engagement at the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development (CSoCD63), we co-organised a high-level side event with the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations. The discussion tackled deeply rooted social hierarchies, from caste discrimination and antigypsyism to the enduring legacy of slavery and systemic exclusion. Our panel emphasised that dismantling these 'cast(e)-in-iron' norms requires more than just conversation—it demands bold policies, accountability, and global solidarity.

Key Insights from the Panel

H.E. Bob Rae, UN ECOSOC President, highlighted how structural discrimination limits mobility and opportunity, drawing on historical examples like the Holocaust and the Rohingya crisis to stress the need for systemic change through strong public policy. Mark Kamperhoff outlined Germany's strategy to combat antigypsyism, including policy reforms, data monitoring, and a \$100 million investment in civil society, alongside an independent monitoring agency. Maria Atanasova emphasised the impact of Discrimination based on Work and Descent (DWD) on Roma, Dalits, and Haratin, citing policy gaps and systemic exclusion as key barriers to progress. Bakary Tandia addressed the ongoing marginalisation of the Haratin community in Mauritania, despite legal protections, reflecting broader global struggles against CDWD. Dinesh Jonnakuty underscored the persistence of caste-based discrimination in Asia, where millions face exclusion from education and basic rights, reinforcing deep social inequalities.

Watch Here

From the UN Floor..



Dinesh Jonnakuty's Statement at the 63rd Session of UN CSOCD

Dinesh Jonnakuty, speaking on behalf of the Stakeholder Group of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD), called for the explicit recognition of CDWD in global frameworks, particularly as the world moves towards the Second World Social Summit. His call to action urged Member States to take decisive steps toward inclusion, justice, and equality for CDWD communities worldwide.

Watch Here



Bakary Tandia's Statement at 63rd Session of UN CSOCD

Bakary Tandia, co-founder of the Abolition Institute makes interventions at the UN on behalf of The Inclusivity Project at the. He talked about the gap left in SDGs & Pact For the Future that has been addressed by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) through its groundbreaking Resolution on the Protection & Promotion of Rights of the CDWD.

Watch here

Pre-CSOCD63

Ahead of the official proceedings, Maria Atanasova, representing GFoD, spoke at the Civil Society Induction session in New York. She highlighted the global dimension of social development, particularly for Roma and other communities disadvantaged by discrimination (CDWD), setting the stage for broader conversations on equity and inclusion.



Tackling Misinformation and Youth Engagement

GFoD delegate Maria Atanasova also participated in a side event on misinformation, trust, and youth engagement. The session examined insights from a 1,200-person survey, but it became clear that minority communities had not been specifically targeted in the outreach. Acknowledging this gap, organisers expressed openness to future collaboration, signalling the potential for more inclusive research and policy-making.

Tripartite Solutions for Social Justice: Pathway to the World Social Summit.

On Day 1 of the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development (CSoCD63), GFoD's Global UN Advocacy Officer, Johannes Butcher, intervened at a side event co-hosted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDESA, and Qatar. The discussion, titled "*Tripartite Solutions for Social Justice: Pathway to the World Social Summit*," focused on bridging disparities. GFoD emphasised the need to recognise and address CDWD issues globally, including in Colombia, advocating for policies that centre marginalised communities.



Strengthening Civil Society Engagement: 2025 Civil Society Orientation at CSOCD63



As part of our ongoing commitment to inclusive global dialogue, we hosted the 2025 Civil Society Orientation ahead of the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development (CSOCD63). This session served as a vital space for civil society actors to gain a deeper understanding of the Commission's framework, its priority theme, and the critical role that grassroots and advocacy organisations play in shaping policy discussions.

We extend our gratitude to all participants who joined us both in person and online. Their engagement and insights reinforced the importance of civil society mobilisation in addressing key social development challenges.

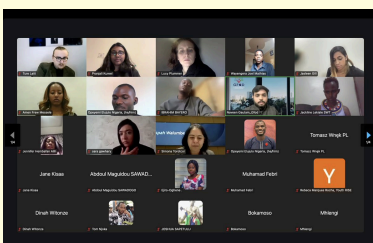
Side event led by Germany Youth Delegates

At the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development (CSOCD63) side event, led by German Youth Delegates, GFoD's Global UN Advocacy Officer, Johannes Bühlbecker was invited to represent civil society as part of discussion on the vision and gaps for the upcoming World Social Summit 2025 (WSSD2). In his intervention, Johannes emphasised the urgent need to address Discrimination based on Work and Descent (CDWD), highlighting the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) resolution on CDWD rights as a key reference point for global action.



The discussion highlighted that, while momentum is building towards WSSD2, CDWD remains a glaring omission in current development agendas. The next outcome document must explicitly recognise and address these structural injustices, ensuring that historically marginalised communities are not left behind.

Demanding Inclusion of CDWD Youth on the Road to the World Social Summit



At the UN Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)'s intergenerational dialogue on youth leadership during CSOCD63, Naveen Gautam from GFoD was on the panel, emphasising the urgent need for member states to take immediate action. His statement reflected the struggles of CDWD youth who are demanding their rights, but continue to face barriers in representing themselves. Naveen stressed that true inclusion means not just recognition but active participation in shaping the future—whether

through anti-discrimination activism, social security, or political and social engagement. *"As we move toward the World Social Summit, it is crucial that these demands are heard and that those with lived experiences of discrimination and exclusion have a seat at the table".*

Social Media Campaign

During the 63rd UN Commission for Social Development (CSoCD63) we amplified grassroots voices from across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, shedding light on the urgent challenges of Caste, Work, and Descent (CWD) discrimination. These testimonies underscored the systemic barriers faced by CDWD communities and the pressing need for their inclusion in global policymaking.

This was more than just a campaign—it was a call to action. As we move forward, it is imperative that global leaders not only acknowledge these realities but take decisive steps to address them.



[Watch here](#)

FFD4 3rd Preparatory Committee Meeting



Advocating for Equitable Public Spending at the UN

On Day 2 of the session, David Saluthuri presented a statement on behalf of the inclusivity project and NGO Committee on Financing and Development from the floor at the UN, calling for equitable public spending to be included in the zero-draft outcome document. His intervention was a key step forward in ensuring that financial policies prioritise social inclusion and justice. This advocacy is a crucial part of our ongoing efforts to influence global development frameworks and ensure that they actively address the needs of the most marginalised communities, particularly those affected by discrimination based on work and descent.

Read the full statement with input on the #FFD4 Zero draft of the outcome document here:

[Watch here](#)



High-Level Advocacy in New York: Progress on CDWD Rights

During our recent advocacy meetings in New York, we had productive discussions with several permanent missions, advancing our agenda for the recognition of Discrimination based on Work and Descent (CDWD) in global development frameworks. A key highlight of these meetings was our successful engagement with the Permanent Mission of Austria. The Austrian delegation expressed genuine interest and were notably impressed by the Africa resolution, which has been gaining momentum in addressing the systemic issues of CDWD. The Mission was particularly intrigued by the importance of this issue and committed to exploring it further within their diplomatic channels. They also pledged to seek African support on the topic, marking a significant step forward in our efforts to build broader international backing.

At the 3rd Preparatory Committee Session for the Fourth Financing for Development Conference (#FFD4), we co-organised a side event focused on eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, and dismantling systems of social stratification, including discrimination based on work and descent. This event highlighted the urgent need to address the structural barriers that perpetuate poverty and exclusion, and the role of financial justice in overcoming these challenges.

Financing for Sustainable Development

Rising to the Challenge: How FFD4 Addresses the Social Dimension Effectively Safeguarding the Most Vulnerable

Side event on the margins of the Third Preparatory Committee for the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development

Concept note	February 13 2025 1:15 - 2:30 pm EST	Conf. Room A UN Headquarters
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To join by Zoom register: [HERE](#)
By 1PM, February 12 2025

- Dr. Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development
- Mr. Tim Strawson, SDG Finance Advisor and INFF Team Lead, UNDP
- Mr. Umberto Cettaneo Public Finance Specialist, International Labour Organization
- Ms. Natalia Gorog, Managing Director, Centre for Financial Inclusion
- Ms. Brianna E. Fitzpatrick, Liaison to the UN, Caritas Internationalis
- Representative from the Permanent Mission of Mauritius to the UN (TBC)
- Representative from the Group of Friends of Children (Invited)
- Interventions from the floor

Moderator: Ms. Anita Thomas, Chair, NGO Committee on Financing for Development; Representative to the UN, Women First International Fund

Co-sponsors:

Expert Group Meeting In Geneva



On 12th February, Simona Torotcoi participated in the SDG3 Expert Group Meeting at the WHO headquarters in Geneva in preparation for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2025. Simona was representing the Stakeholder Group of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (as part of the MGOs), and she was a lead discussant in the session titled “Tackling priority data gaps in SDG3 and health equity”. During her intervention, she shed light on the critical issue of how certain communities are socially and structurally forced into work rejected by others—often labelled as “dirty” or “indecent”. These roles are imposed through a combination of force and socio-cultural factors, reflecting deep-rooted inequalities within society.

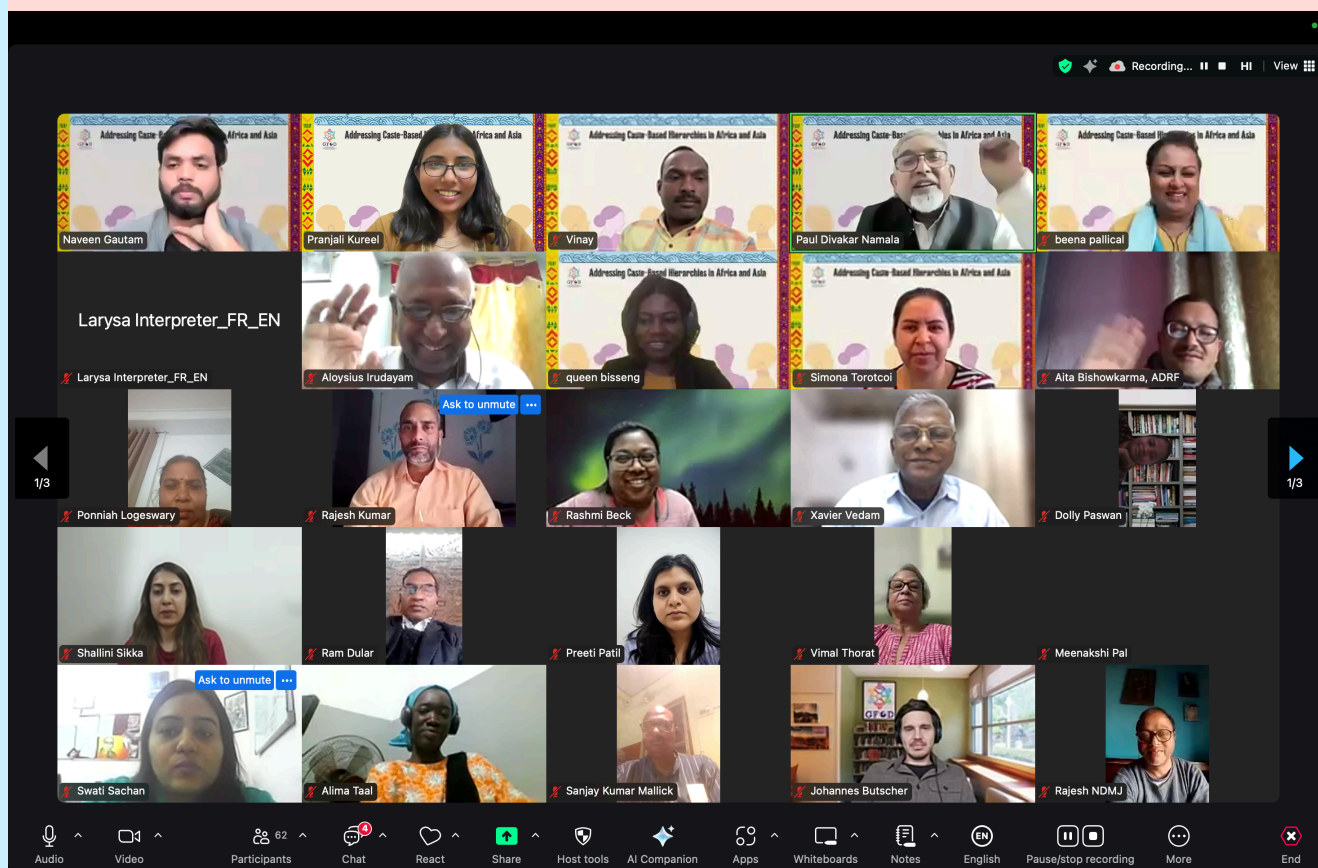
Simona emphasised that CDWDs across the world experience significantly poorer health outcomes compared to the general population. She stated:

“CDWD has a lower life expectancy than the national average. They also lag in infant mortality rates (IMR) and maternal mortality rates (MMR). India is among the few countries with disaggregated data on CDWD, and this data shows that there is a 27% increase among the Dalit communities on MMR compared to the national average.”

Meeting the secretariat of the United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls

During her Geneva field work Torotcoi Simona, had the opportunity to meet with the Secretariat of the United Nations [Working Group](#) on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (WG DAWG) led by Ilona Alexander, a key body that focuses on addressing and eliminating gender-based discrimination worldwide. The main focus of the meeting was on strategies for addressing the widespread and systemic discrimination that CDWD women and girls face in different parts of the world. This includes challenges like unequal access to education, violence, and discrimination in the workplace. The WG DAWG representative shared information and specific documents that can help GFoD and others who want to report human rights violations, and discussed how to ensure that CDWD women are better represented in international human rights discussions. The Working Group will continue to push for greater attention to CDWD women's and girls' rights at the United Nations and other international platforms. The team also plans to share updates and stay engaged with stakeholders, especially in preparation for future discussions at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York.

Addressing Caste-Based Hierarchies: A Global Dialogue on Africa & Asia



The Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD) recently hosted an impactful online discussion on “Addressing Caste-Based Hierarchies in Africa and Asia”. The session focused on the ACHPR resolution (African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights), which formally recognises caste-based discrimination in Africa and explored its wider implications for Asia and beyond.

Ms. Queen Bisseng, Regional Coordinator for Africa at GFoD, talked about the existing structures of caste-based hierarchy in Africa, and highlighted the importance of the ACHPR resolution in addressing caste discrimination in Africa. Mr. Paul Divakar Namala, Convener of GFoD, shared insights from his work advocating for Dalit rights and combating systemic exclusion in South Asia. The session was moderated by Beena Pallical, Chair, Asia Dalit Rights Forum. The conversation highlighted the need for a UN Declaration to address descent-based discrimination and the systemic barriers faced by affected communities, while discussing pathways toward greater social inclusion and justice globally.

[Watch here](#)

Engagements in Asia for SDG Progress



Beena Pallical Addresses the Opening of 12th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) 2025

“We are living in a world where inequality is growing, the debt crisis is deepening, and the triple planetary crisis endangers our existence. The most marginalised communities — indigenous people with disabilities, CDWDs, Dalits, women, and LGBTQI individuals—among many others left furthest behind.” — Beena J Pallical, Chair, Asia Dalit Rights Forum, representing Asia Pacific People’s Forum

Speaking at the 12th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2025, Beena addressed the forum in its Opening Plenary on the behalf of Asia Pacific Peoples' Assembly and puts forth recommendations to realise Developmental Justice to all. She highlighted the urgent need for transformative action to get back on track with the SDGs. Alongside Beena, the opening plenary was also addressed by H.E. Ms. Sabeeda Thaised, Deputy Minister of Interior, Thailand; H.E. Mr. Bob Rae, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (Video message); Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (video message); and Ms. Shayal Nand, Representative from the APFSD Youth Forum.

[Watch Here](#)



GCAP's side event at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) 2025 in Bangkok!

GFoD and partner, Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF) were co-organizers to a side-event by Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP). The side event, that took place on 28th February explored - What Makes Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Truly Inclusive? Representing ADRF, Dr. Aita Bishwakarma highlighted the issues of Dalits in South Asia, spotlighting the findings from the research done on the situation of Dalits wrt UHC in Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Watch Here

2025 APFSD (Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development) Youth Forum: **Amplifying CDWD, including Dalits, Youth Voices**

The 2025 APFSD Youth Forum took place in Bangkok, with our Senior Rights Expert Himani Singh attending online as a Youth Fellow, while Kunjani Pariyar was selected as an “observer” during the forum on the ground.

During the forum, Himani called for urgent reforms in data systems, emphasising the need for caste and gender inclusion in national and international data collection. She made a strong case for the importance of disaggregated data, particularly for Dalit women and girls, whose reproductive rights she urged to be safeguarded under the MTP Act and beyond. Himani and Kunjani also engaged with the process of drafting regional Calls to Action in respective capacities.



2025 Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development APFSD 2025 took place in Bangkok, where our very own Beena Pallical addressed the Opening Plenary on behalf of the Asia Pacific Peoples' Assembly.

During her address, Beena Pallical emphasised the urgent need for bold, transformative actions to realise Development Justice for all. She put forward essential recommendations aimed at dismantling the systemic barriers that hinder marginalised communities from fully engaging in and benefitting from sustainable development. Her intervention played a key role in amplifying the voices of communities often sidelined in global policy discussions.



Call to Action

The 2025 APFSD Youth Forum Call to Action, drafted by an intersectional group of over 5491 young people, activists, and advocates from 34 countries and territories across Asia and the Pacific region brought forth situational analysis and recommendations around the SDGs under review this year i.e., 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17. It also brought attention to caste-based discrimination and its impact on achieving SDGs 5 and 8, particularly regarding

gender equality and decent work. The declaration also integrated the community knowledge of Communities Discriminated on Work & Descent (CDWD) within SDG 14, marking an important victory for CDWD youth rights on the global stage.



[You can read the full Call to Action here](#)

Strengthening advocacy in Sri Lanka

In his recent country visit to Sri Lanka in Asia, GFoD Global Convener, Paul Divakar had in-depth engagements with the network partners and community in the country. He met with the team of Human Development Organization, Sri Lanka - a member of the Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF), which has been doing great work with DWD communities in the country. These communities are largely involved as Plantation workers, often as forced work, facing systemic barriers due to their descent and work status, as well as lack of any forms of social protection. Paul met with the CDWD families and women's action groups in the plantations, in addition to deepening regional and country strategy with HDO and partners.



Upcoming Events: 69th Commission on The Status of Women

**WEBINAR
OPEN TO
ALL!**

**CDWD Women and
Engagement with the
Commission on the Status of
Women (CSW) & Beijing-30
Declaration**

📅 5th Mar 2025
🕒 14:30 - 15:30 GMT

Interpretation
available in
French and
Portuguese!



We are pleased to invite you to a webinar on CDWD Women and their planned engagement with the upcoming Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 2025 and the Beijing+30 Declaration.


📢 Webinar Title:

Commission on the Status of Women:
Anchor Group on CDWD Women's
Concerns




📅 Date: 5th March 2025

🕒 Time: 16:30 - 17:30 GMT

Here is the Joining Link!





Save the Dates #CSW69

13/03	19/03	19/03
🕒 12:30- 14:30 PM EDT 📍 Virtual event (Zoom live-stream)	🕒 14:30-16:00 PM 📍 8th Floor, UN Church Center	🕒 16:30-18:00 PM 📍 UN Women
Empowering Grassroots Women Discriminated on Work and Descent: Advancing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)	Empowering Women, Ending Work and Descent-Based Discrimination: Pathways to Equality and Inclusion	Breaking Barriers: Women from Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) - A Policy Imperative
		
Register here: https://shorturl.at/LIiDj	Register here: https://shorturl.at/aSybN	More details here SOON! https://shorturl.at/RCRRJ

Save the Dates for #CSW69!



Join us for impactful discussions on **empowering women** and **ending discrimination based on work and descent**. Mark your calendars and register now!

 **March 13 | 12:30-14:30 PM EDT (Virtual)**
 *Empowering Grassroots Women: Advancing the Beijing Declaration*

[Register here](#)

 **March 19 | 14:30-16:00 PM (UN Church Center)**
 *Ending Work & Descent-Based Discrimination: Pathways to Inclusion*

[Register here](#)

 **March 19 | 16:30-18:00 PM (UN Women)**
 *Breaking Barriers: A Policy Imperative*

[Register here](#)

News from Partners



Join Us for Roma Week 2025

Our members are co-organizing key events at Roma Week 2025, a crucial platform dedicated to strengthening Roma inclusion and leadership within the EU's political framework.

As the EU transitions into a new political era—without any Romani-origin MEPs—this event seeks to refocus attention on Roma rights, ensuring their voices are heard and their inclusion remains a priority in EU policies.

[Visit the Roma Week 2025 Website](#)



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