

Looking forward to bigger and better things ahead and  
#LeavingNoOneBehind in

2025



GFOD

GLOBAL FORUM OF  
COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED  
ON WORK AND DESCENT



Monthly  
Newsletter

January 2025

THE INCLUSION  
PROJECT

CDWD MATTERS

*A historic resolution in Africa, participation in the Universal Periodic Review process, UN Forums on Business & Human Rights and Minority Issues, regional interventions - and more. Read on to know!*

## Discrimination based on Work & Descent (DWD) Gains Global Attention at The Gambia's 48th UPR Session 🌍



48th Session of  
THE GAMBIA  
Universal Periodic Review



Discrimination based on Work & Descent, also known as #Caste / #Descent based discrimination, in The Gambia is gaining global attention. Let's see the #Highlights 🇬🇲

On 21st January, in The Gambia's review in the 48th Session of Universal Periodic Review Working Group Session, we witnessed a historic moment for the fight against DWD, also known as caste / Descent based discrimination, as it gained much-needed recognition on the global platform of the United Nations UPR.

In the last UPR cycle and the Working Group Session, there was no mention of this critical issue. But this time, four countries — Mexico, Romania, Sierra Leone, and Colombia — stepped forward to recommend that The Gambia address DWD. Additionally, Spain and the UK have submitted advance questions to Gambia regarding caste and descent-based discrimination.



#### 💡 Some Key Highlights:

- ➡ In total, 6 countries have recommended / asked questions to The Gambia regarding implementation of measures to address this form of discrimination (DWD) in the country.
- ➡ Colombia emphasized on implementing measures outlined in the Africa Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) resolution on promoting and protecting the rights of CDWD.
- ➡ The Gambia, in its opening remarks, expressed its commitment to enforcing the findings of the NHRC study on "Caste and Descent-based discrimination in the country."
- ➡ In its closing statement, The Gambia reaffirmed its dedication to carefully reviewing all recommendations, stating: *"The feedback and recommendations received today are invaluable. They provide us with a clear roadmap to further advancing human rights and governance reforms."*

Watch the Working Group Session



*The success on garnering attention toward this issue in the UPR Working Group Session was also covered by National Media portal, Foroyaa, in The Gambia*

This is a landmark win for the CDWD community and a step toward greater inclusion and equality. We also acknowledge the efforts of our team in Africa and globally whose on-ground advocacy with the Permanent Missions and Human Rights Institutions contributed to a greater impact towards the **resolution passed by the ACHPR on on promoting and protecting the rights of CDWD**, and the strides achieved at the 48th UPR.



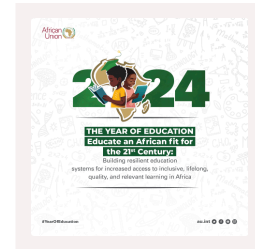
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Home » Adopted Resolutions » RESOLUTION ON THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE RIGHTS OF COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED BY, WORK AND DESCENT (CDWD) IN AFRICA - ACHPR/Res.619 (LXXXI) 2024

#### ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS

## RESOLUTION ON THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE RIGHTS OF COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED BY, WORK AND DESCENT (CDWD) IN AFRICA - ACHPR/Res.619 (LXXXI) 2024



Nov 14, 2024

[Français](#) | [Português](#)

Theme Of The Year

**Read the Joint CSO Report submitted by GfOD and The Gambana International:**

[Read more](#)

**See Factsheets on DWD issue for The Gambia UPR:**

[Read more](#)

The real work starts now. Together, let us ensure these commitments are translated into action.  
Let's keep pushing for a world free from all forms of discrimination. 🌍

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## Bridging the Digital Divide: Digital Empowerment Centers Launched in Cameroon

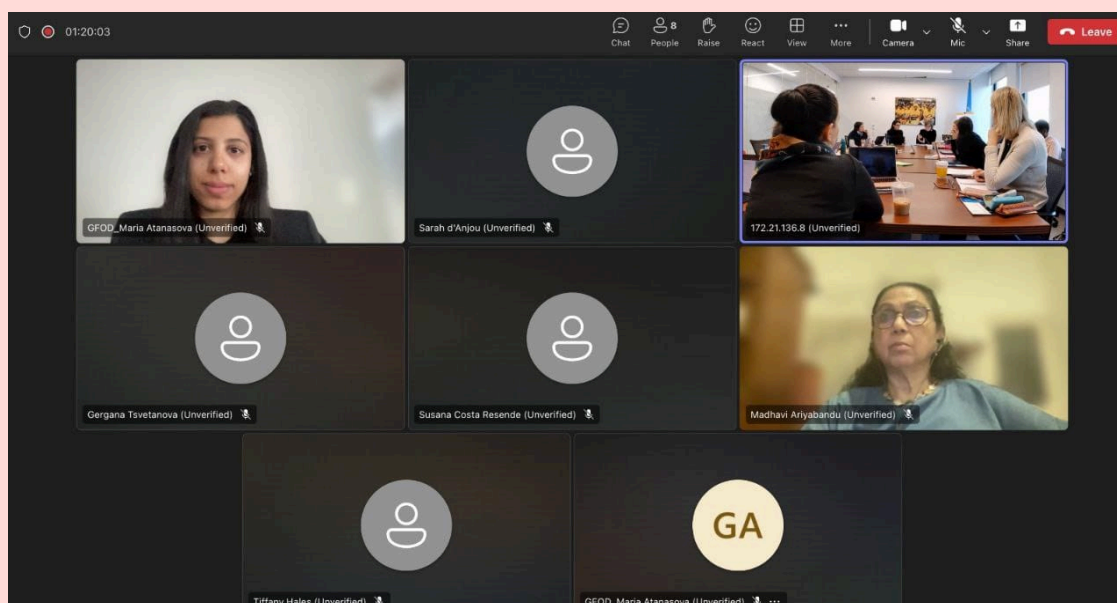




In collaboration with Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) and Assistance Aux Laisses Pour Compte (ALPC), GfOD has launch the first phase of Digital Empowerment Centers in 3 regions of Cameroon, i.e., Maroua, Bertoua and Douala. These Digital Empowerment Centers aim to bring digital services closer to Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent in Cameroon, such as the Bororos, Baka Bageli, Ngoda, and Mandara through social entrepreneurship, notably capacity building in digital literacy ,digital awareness, access to information , online opportunities , empowerment and development for young girls and women. Some of the outcomes that we aim to achieve through this project are digital literacy among CDWD women, improved livelihood, economic security and resilience of the CDWD in the country.

The first center has been set up in the Far North Region of the country that will lead to the implementation in several areas across the Cameroonian territory and expand to other countries in Africa.

## Representing CDWD concerns in Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Development (SDG 5) ahead of HLPF'25



From 23–26 January 2025, Maria Atanasova, Senior Research Expert, attended the **Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) – Gender Equality**. The event focused on advancing gender equality globally, with a specific emphasis on women's political and economic leadership. During Breakout Session 6, Maria contributed to discussions on developing recommendations and was given the floor to intervene virtually. Her intervention emphasised addressing the barriers these groups face in participating effectively. "I brought up the importance of accessibility to these discussions, particularly for marginalized and CDWD women, in response to the barriers they face in participating effectively."

## Inputs to the United Nation Human Rights Council



## **GFoD Contributes to the CESCR General Comment on ESCR and Sustainable Development**

GFoD has submitted its contribution to the **CESCR's General Comment on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR)** and the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Our submission highlights the unique challenges faced by Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent globally, emphasizing environmental justice, labor rights, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. **Read the full submission here:**

[Read here](#)

## **Input to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women & Girls on Sex-based Violence faced by CDWD women**

In our recent submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on VAWG, GFoD highlighted how CDWD women face intersecting layers of violence—not just sex-based, but also caste- and descent-based, economic, and digital abuse. Emerging forms of violence, such as corporate-enabled exploitation, online casteist abuse, and restricted access to resources, further entrench their marginalization. While some of these forms are acknowledged individually, they are rarely seen as part of a systemic issue that demands urgent attention. Our submission calls for an intersectional approach in policy and advocacy, including stronger data collection, corporate accountability, and better access to justice. It's time to bring CDWD women's realities into global discussions and ensure they are no longer invisible.

[Read here](#)

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## **Supreme Court Upholds CDWD Rights In India – Read this interview with the Researchers Behind a landmark Ruling**

In a landmark ruling, India's Supreme Court upheld the Bombay High Court's decision recognizing intellectual property damage as compensable under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, dismissing a challenge from one of the state governments - Maharashtra government. This verdict marks a crucial step in protecting CDWD rights in the modern economy. GFoD has been closely following the case and spoke with the petitioners, Dr. Kshipra Kamlesh Uke and Dr. Shiv Shankar Das, on what this decision means for marginalized communities. Read the full interview:

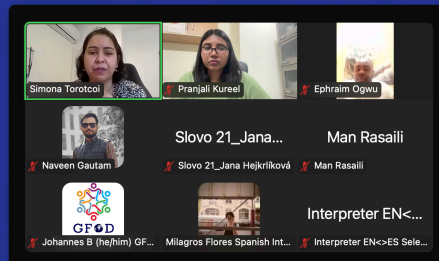
[Read here](#)

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## **Building Capacity: Kickstarting Webinars for VNRs**

## Outline:

1. What is the High Level Political Forum?
2. What are Voluntary National Reviews?
3. How you can get engaged?
4. Advocacy opportunities
5. Ways forward



29th January, 2025 | For the last few years, GfOD, as part of the UN Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, has been engaging in the National Voluntary Reviews (VNRs), presenting the viewpoint of our communities across the world (i.e., Roma, Haratins, Buraku, Dalits, Quilombola, etc.). The Major Groups and Other Stakeholders provide the space for stakeholder engagement around the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) where stakeholders engage by providing inputs to and reviewing drafts of VNRs of their respective countries; representing their constituents as part of government delegations; and participating in the presentation of the VNR to the HLPF.

Building on last year's initiative, GfOD is organizing a series of informative webinars on VNRs. The first session of the series was held on 29th January, bringing together CSO representatives from Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. This webinar set the stage by covering the basics of the CDWD framework, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), VNRs, and the related processes, ensuring that participants gained a solid understanding of these key mechanisms. The session concluded with an interactive Q&A round, building dialogue and clarifying critical aspects of CDWD engagement in the VNR process.

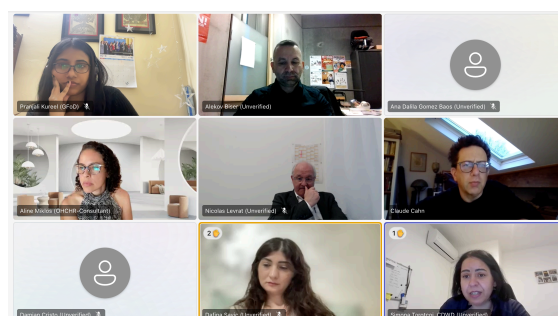


## International Roma Feminist Conference

23 - 26 January, 2025 | GfOD's Simona Torotcoi participated in the International Roma Feminist Conference in Bucharest, Romania, co-organized by E-Romnja and the Romnja Feminist Library. The conference explored the challenges faced by Roma women, both within Roma communities and beyond; how we ensure that Roma women's voices and experiences are represented in the most intersectional way possible, taking into account the diversity of identities; how to strengthen alliances with other marginalized groups to create a strong and united opposition to systems of oppression.

## A Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

On January 28, 2025, GfOD participated in the OHCHR-organized event, "Engaging Romani Civil Society: A Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues." This discussion, held in commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, brought together Romani civil society and Prof. Nicolas Levrat, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. During the open discussion, Simona Torotcoi (GfOD) raised a critical question on whether there is a common approach among UN Special Rapporteurs to address Roma and other CDWD concerns, given their intersecting



struggles. Prof. Levrat positively acknowledged the issue and welcomed the suggestion, signaling potential future engagement on CDWD concerns.



### Deliberations on Access to Justice for CDWD (Dalit) Women in India

Naveen Gautam, Sr. Legal Researcher at GfOD was invited to a Consultation on Access to Justice in Punjab, as a panelist during a session that focused on deliberating the findings on Access to Justice for Dalit Women in Punjab. This important study was conducted by the Centre for Justice Law and Society, OP Jindal Global Law University, in collaboration with Seattle University. Naveen also incorporated a global perspective in his engagements to highlight the issue of Discrimination based on Work & Descent that spans across continents.

## Upcoming Events

### Side-event to the 63rd Session of the Commission For Social Development

Upcoming in-person side event (Will be streamed live on Zoom): **Turning Up the Heat: Moulding Hardened 'Cast(e)-in-Iron' Social Norms into Inclusive Shapes through Social Inclusion and Cohesion** – Advancing the Copenhagen Declaration and the World Social Summit. This event is co-organized by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, with a keynote intervention from ECOSOC President, Ambassador Bob Rae, in collaboration with the NGO Committee for Social Development.

**Date & Time:** February 13, 2025, from 1:15 PM – 2:30 PM

**Location:** Conference Room E, United Nations Headquarters

**RSVP (for in-person & online participation):**

Co-organised by: Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations, GfOD, and partners: CONAQ, ERGO, African Network on Discrimination based on Work, Descent and Contemporary Form of Slavery, COMSODEV, and the Commission for Social Development.

**TURNING UP THE HEAT: MOULDING HARDENED 'CAST(E)-IN-IRON' SOCIAL NORMS INTO INCLUSIVE SHAPES THROUGH SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COHESION**  
as we look towards the achievement of the Copenhagen Declaration and the World Social Summit

13th February 2025 13:15 - 14:30 ET | Conference Room E, UNHQ (+Zoom Live Stream)

Interpretation available in Spanish, French and Portuguese

**Keynote Speaker:** H.E. Bob Rae, ECOSOC President, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

**Moderator:** Johannes Butscher, Global UN Advocacy Officer, Global Forum of CDWD (GfOD)

**Speakers:** Mark Kamperhoff, Head of the GfOD Delegation to the Commission for Social Development; Ephraim Ogwe, Human Rights Defender, GfOD Rights Expert; Maria Atanasiu, Fulbright scholar, Roma activist, and GfOD Rights Expert; Dinesh Jonsakuly, Advocate and Policy Officer at Global Forum of CDWD (GfOD)

RSVP on Zoom registration page for both IN-PERSON / ONLINE participation → [https://bit.ly/GfOD\\_CSocD](https://bit.ly/GfOD_CSocD)

Register here

### GfOD Dialogue: Addressing Caste-Based Hierarchies in Africa and Asia

In the aftermath of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) passing a Resolution to Protect & Promote the Rights of CDWD in Africa, GfOD is organizing a dialogue: **Addressing Caste-Based Hierarchies in Africa and Asia** in New Delhi, India. This dialogue aims to critically examine the ACHPR resolution and the presence of caste-based hierarchies across Asia, Africa, and globally. It will further explore diverse manifestations of descent-based historic and continuing discrimination, in wealth and asset ownership, formal and informal jobs, access to quality education and skill enhancement among other such means of social mobility and assess how this resolution can serve as a model for other regions—particularly in Asia, Africa, and globally—and identify strategies for advancing a UN Declaration to eradicate the present effects of historic and continuing discrimination.

If you wish to join us at the event, please write to us at [gford@globalforumcdwd.org](mailto:gford@globalforumcdwd.org).

## News from Partners





## **National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in India releases its “Dalit-Adivasi Budget Analysis 2025-26” (DABA)**

On 2nd February, 2025 - a day after the Indian Government presented the Union Budget for FY 2025-26 in the Indian Parliament, NCDHR released its DABA report analyzing the budget from the perspective of CDWD and indigenous communities in India - Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), for whose development, a portion of the budget is to be earmarked each year. However, the analysis shows that the practice of budget allocation for these communities falls far short of what is presented on paper. The report notes that, “Analysing the nature of schemes only a portion of these allocations are targeted schemes. Out of the total allocations towards SC welfare only Rs. 62,150 Cr and Rs. 51,491.59 Cr under ST welfare are targeted schemes, accounting for 3.9% and 3.3% of the total Central Sector (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) funds, respectively,” among other major highlights.

Watch here



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