

NEW HORIZONS

No. 17 (Newsletter of Voice of Dalit International) Aug / September 2010

LAUNCH OF UK GOVERNMENT'S DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID) PROJECT

Dear Friends,

We are extremely happy to inform you of the launch of our project:

Improving Access of Dalit Children to Primary Education in Bundelkhand through Advocacy and Empowerment by Regional Dalit Rights Platform.

This project will be funded for 5 years from August 1st.2010 until July 31st 2015 through DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund, which aims to lead the British government's fight against world poverty by: providing poor people a voice in government decision processes which affect their lives; develop innovative service delivery methods and /or; deliver services in difficult environments. It also has an important role in helping build awareness of development in the UK and of contributing to its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are 8 specific goals to be met by 2015 which aim to combat extreme poverty across the world. This project contributes to MDG 2: - to achieve universal primary education and 3: - to promote gender equality and empower women.

To implement the project we will be working with our Indian partner, Centre for Alternative Dalit Media (CADAM), based in New Delhi and its network, National Confederation of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR) across 12 districts (7 districts in the state of U P and 5 districts in M P) of the Bundelkhand region.

The goal of the project is to improve the environment for the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) for Dalit children in the Bundelkhand region of India Dalits (Scheduled Castes) are the most and largest socially excluded group in India and have significantly low literacy rates, as compared to the general average. For example, the general literacy rate in U P was 57.36% (2001 Census) but in Dalits (SCs) alone was only 46.27%. The average female literacy rate for U P was 43%, but for the Dalits (SCs) was a meagre 30.5%. The project will benefit the rural poor, especially Dalits, Dalit children - particularly Dalit girls.

Our role in the UK will be to build support for the development of this project and to the problems which it is addressing. We will do this by bringing you regular news, project updates and reports through our quarterly newsletters and by coming to your events where we ask that you provide us an opportunity to address your community.

Why this project

Dalit communities and Dalit children are the largest and most excluded group in the Indian social system. Literacy and education have proven to be important tools to address Dalit poverty and violations of human rights in India. Due to educational access in some areas, some Dalits have succeeded in government jobs and in taking forward their struggle for human rights. Bundelkhand is a vast, underdeveloped and caste-segregated society where Dalits are discriminated against in all walks of life and literacy rates extremely low (Dalit women 30%). In general, the entire rural areas in this region are underdeveloped and 90% of the families are struggling to earn their livelihood. This project aims to mobilise existing resources to make the region's local schools perform better through creating better facilities and a better environment, which is more conducive to the retention of Dalit students/girls, so that they can complete at least their primary education. Their retention in schools is a big problem where they often face discrimination and violence from their teachers and children of other castes are asked to sit in the back rows and are not treated with human dignity in the mid-day meal programme. There is also a lack of motivation amongst Dalit children themselves and their parents for primary education, due to their dis-empowered social status in the area. Children, particularly girls are often abused by their parents for taking an interest in their schooling.

The project also incorporates the empowerment of the poor Dalit communities to raise a collective voice against their poverty and discrimination and to demand for their entitlements and rights. The idea is to generate a strong demand for good schooling at primary level in the villages through awareness building and organisation of the local Dalit communities. Also, to take up effective advocacy efforts with the duty bearers so that they supply the improvements in the government run primary schools. If both the sides are active, then it is easy to make the schools perform.

Our project aims to create lasting long term changes:

Improvement in :

- The functioning of government primary schools in the targeted villages.
- The enrolment and retention ratio of Dalit students/girls in schools.
- The local governance, with respect to primary education .

*** Reduction in the incidences of discrimination against Dalit students in schools.**

*** Strong Dalit voice emerging at the regional level in Bundelkhand.**

- This approach is most effective because it is rights based.
- It does not create physical structures and does not duplicate the government efforts.
- It rather focuses on the improving the performance of the government and in that sense compliments government efforts.
- The approach is based on the direct empowerment measures of the beneficiary Dalit families.

'Introducing Our Indian Partner CADAM And Its Network NACDOR'

Centre for Alternative Dalit Media (CADAM) is well known for innovation, advocacy, mobilisation, leadership development and empowerment related programmes. In 1995, for the first time, **CADAM** organised All India Dalit Women Writers Conference, which is now organised by Dalit women writers annually. Since this, **CADAM** is deeply involved with the Dalit Women and has represented Dalit Women in World Social Forum 2004 in India and in 2005 in Brazil. In 2005 it represented the Dalit Women Voice in Hong Kong WTO Conference. **CADAM** is currently building a Dalit Women led National Platform.

In 2001, **CADAM** initiated an Economic Awareness Campaign about the Development Planning and Budgetary Process of India. In 2002 it organised a national consultation and submitted a memorandum, which drew the attention of the Prime Minister. Since then, **CADAM** annually organises “Battle for Budget” and carries out Budget analysis from the Dalit perspective. Recently, with the support of Christian Aid, under the DFID supported IPAP programme, **CADAM** has started a project for increasing the Dalit stake in the Economy.

In 2006, with the support of DFID's PACS programme CADAM organised Rozgar Adhikar Yatras and an Assembly of the Poor and Discriminated. **CADAM** pioneered an annual presentation of a Charter of Demands to the Prime Minister of India. **CADAM** is the key constituent member of the Millennium Development Goals campaign in India and **its network – National Confederation of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR)** provides leadership to the Dalit Voice of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan. **NACDOR** will be strengthened through this project to fulfil the aspirations of the poor and socially excluded Dalits. **CADAM** is also the founder of World Dignity Forum. **CADAM'S Chief Executive, Mr Ashok Bharti** has participated in Global advocacy programmes and has addressed the U N General Assembly. In September 2008, as the first Dalit speaker from the civil society and on the invitation of the Secretary General of United Nations has participated in a high level event on Millennium Development Goals. **CADAM** has organised mass mobilisations of Dalits nationally and in UP on Dalit Rights and is actively engaged with the marginalised.

CADAM has set up and runs a Youth Empower Centre in New Delhi. To encourage Dalit Youth for college education and better employment/entrepreneurship, it has initiated Dalit Shiksha Abhiyaan (Dalit Education Campaign) in the colleges and universities. **CADAM** is proactively involved in taking up the human right violations of the Dalits.

CADAM and its network **NACDOR** have broadcast Radio programmes on All India Radio, with the technical support of One World South Asia. **CADAM** runs a community supported Dr. Ambedkar Fellowship for Change and Dignity programme, encouraging leadership amongst Dalits, and other marginalised. **CADAM** has a documentation Centre and are consulted by the Indian and overseas researchers regularly on the Dalit Issue. **CADAM** is active in eight other states of India in similar manner.

What is the problem? What is the Caste System?

It is a primitive form of systemic exploitation of a large mass of people by few, denying their human and developmental, including socio-economic, educational, faith, cultural and political rights aimed to reducing them to subhuman levels, even to the extent of treating them worse than animals with laws of deprivations and restrictions in all walks of life for the victims and undue privileges, benefits and criminal immunity for the perpetrators based on a religiously/ culturally linked notion of birth in certain caste groups which stratifies and grades the society with fictitious status, human and material values.

The Indian Caste System is comprised of four different castes, and out casted social groups. Caste barriers continue to persist, particularly in rural areas of the country, where 72% of India's population resides. Dalits (previously 'Untouchables') are outside the caste system and they work in what is seen as unhealthy, unpleasant or polluting jobs. They suffer from social segregation and restrictions, in addition to extreme poverty. They are not allowed temple worship with others, nor water from the same sources. Persons of other castes would not interact with them. Social discrimination developed even amongst Dalits themselves with sub-castes resulting in outcastes even among outcastes.

Despite the Indian Constitution has outlawed caste-based discrimination, in keeping with the secular, democratic principles that founded the nation, nevertheless, the caste system, in various forms, continues to survive in modern India because of a combination of political factors and social perceptions and behaviour.

Common features of caste system:

- Physical Segregation
- Social Segregation
- Work in traditional occupations often associated with death or filth.
- Debt bondage due to poor wages for 'lower caste' occupations
- High levels of illiteracy, poverty and landlessness.
- Caste based humiliation, bullying, harassment, abuse and torture.
- Prejudice based on notions of purity and pollution
- Caste based punishment system.
- Deprivation of opportunities and choices.
- Perpetrators of crimes against Dalit communities rarely punished even when legislation exists to do so.
- Women face triple discrimination on the basis of sex, class and caste. Under the Devadasi system, thousands of Dalit girls in India's southern states are dedicated to a deity or to a temple. They are unable to marry, forced to become prostitutes for caste perpetrators and eventually auctioned into brothels.

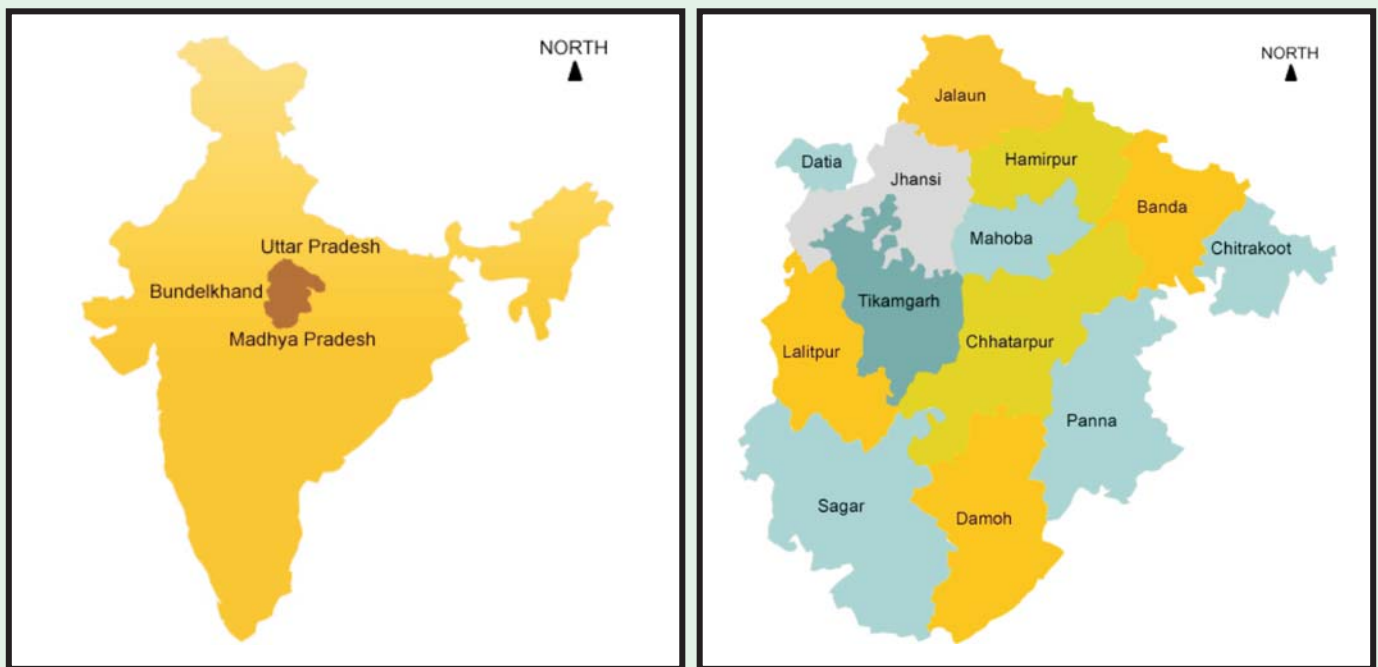
*Every hour...2 Dalits are assaulted,
Every day...3 Dalit women are raped
...2 Dalits are murdered, ...2 Dalit houses are burned.*

The South Asian Diaspora

Caste discrimination has been exported from South Asia by those who have settled elsewhere. There have been statistical surveys of the number of Dalits living in other countries but anecdotal evidence indicates that people from the same caste in a foreign land tend to stick together and to keep their practices and their prejudices in tact.

Source : New Internationalist. July 2005

Where is this project? Bundelkhand District of UP and MP - India



Bundelkhand remains administratively divided between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The seven districts of U.P. (Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Lalitpur, Banda, Chitrakoot and Mahoba) and the six districts of M.P. (Datia, Tikamgarh, Panna, Damoh, Chhatarpur and Sagar) spread over an area of 70,000 square kilometres form the Bundelkhand region. It has a population of 15.5 million people. The region is famous for the reign of Bundela (16th to 18th century A.D) and Chandela (10th to 13th century A.D.) kingdoms, the Rani of Jhansi and the legendary king Chhatrasal, the temples of Khajuraho, the tiger sanctuary and the diamond mines of Panna. There are more than 11,000 villages in Bundelkhand. The total population of UP Bundelkhand districts was around 8.2 million and the population of MP Bundelkhand districts was around 7.3 million

By Indian standards, the region is marked by a low population density and low levels of urbanisation. According to the Census 2001, in all districts of Bundelkhand, except Jhansi and Sagar, over three-quarters of the population were living in rural areas; in Chitrakoot district, less than 10% of the population resided in urban areas. However, in recent years Bundelkhand has witnessed a high population growth, as can be seen from the population growth trends.

Towns of Bundelkhand:

Jhansi is the largest town with a population of around 420,000 and Sagar the second largest with over 250,000 populations. All other 'urban' areas of the region are small towns that have grown as administrative centres. Many small towns are overgrown or extended villages. The one urban feature they all do share is high population density, much higher than the region's average.

According to Census 2001 data, there were 90 such towns with a population of over 10,000 persons in Bundelkhand. The majority of Bundelkhand's population continues to live in rural areas.

Castes in Bundelkhand:

A significant feature of the region is high percentage of population belonging to Dalits Schedule caste (SCs). Brahmins, who traditionally enjoyed highest ritual status, are subdivided as Jajhotias and Kanyakubjas (Kanujias). Both groups are claimed to have come from the ancient city of Kannauj, located along the Ganga in Kanpur division.

Traditionally, in caste hierarchal order, ranked below the Brahmins are groups that claim Rajput and Kshatriya lineage. Also known as Thakurs, their main subdivisions include Dikhit, Bais, Bundela, Panwar, Chauhan and Dhundera. Historically Dhunderas and Panwars were linked to Bundelas by marriage ties. Rajputs, or Thakurs, were the biggest landlords of Bundelkhand. Vaishyas, who traditionally formed the third-ranking caste group, are subdivided as Agarwals, Gahois, Parwars, Agraharis, and other groups. Traditionally these groups did not own much land; their principal occupations were trading and money lending. With increased agriculture distress, many moneylenders became large landlords. Kayasths, traditionally scribes, were also in a good position to acquire land, as they were the first social group to understand the intricacies of the land ownership regime. Of the 12 traditional subdivisions of Kayasths, Srivastavas form the majority. All these caste groups come under the 'general' category of castes and constitute around 10-15% of the rural population of Bundelkhand. Traditionally ranked below the general category are a large number of groups, often named after their traditional occupation, which come under the Other Backward Class (OBC) category.

Amongst major OBC groups in Bundelkhand are Ahirs (Yadavs), traditionally cattle-breeders and milkmen; Gadariyas, who traditionally reared sheep; Koris (weavers), Kurmis (cultivators), Kachis (vegetable cultivators); Lodhis, who were traditionally landowners and cultivators aligned to ruling families; Arakhs, a martial tribe known for its hunting prowess, Telis (oil-pressers), Sonars (goldsmiths), Nais (barbers), Darjis (tailors), Dhobis (washermen) and Kumhars, or potters.

Bundelkhand's Dalits

Compared to the rest of UP, MP and India, Bundelkhand has a relatively high Dalit population. Generally, compared to other castes, Dalit households possess less land, of lower quality and incidence of landlessness amongst them is higher.

Traditionally Dalits are deprived of education, and other economical resources. Dalit households fall easily into a trap of never-ending, highly exploitative manual labour. Oppressive, feudal relations remain the norm in Bundelkhand and Dalits claim to better social or economic status are often met with violence. The relatively high Dalit population also has political implications: Bundelkhand is of particular interest to political parties on a Dalit vote'.

Hunger and malnutrition is a big issue in Bundelkhand which has attracted national and international attention. In Bundelkhand people eat roti with namak and chatni for survival. Many families are unable to store rations; they eat out of their daily earnings and if they cannot earn on any particular day, they sleep without food. Arrangement of food is possible only for those, who are able to work as labourers and if they are able to get work. The disabled, elderly and infirmed are unable to do hard work and are particularly vulnerable.

Poverty amongst Dalits in Bundelkhand

It is generally said that a high proportion of Dalit (Scheduled castes/Scheduled Tribes) households is a determinant of poverty and this proportion is used as an indicator in some methods of determining the 'backwardness' of a district. It is a fact that generally Dalit households are poorer than households belonging to other social categories. This is clearly reflected in the 2002 Below Poverty Line (BPL) Survey data for Banda SC and Panna ST households, when compared with data for all rural households in these districts.

About DFID (Visit their website for more information: www.dfid.gov.uk)'

‘ The Department For International Development (DFID) are funding this project -Who are they? and What do they in their fight against Global Poverty?’

- **DFID** is the part of the UK government that manages Britain's aid to poor countries and works to get rid of extreme poverty. As well as headquarters in London and East Kilbride, near Glasgow, **DFID** has offices in around 40 developing countries and provides aid to around 90 countries.
- **DFID** are working to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international targets agreed by the United Nations (UN) to halve world poverty by 2015.
- **DFID** works with governments of developing countries as well as charities, businesses and international bodies, including the World Bank, UN agencies and the European Commission. All partners share DFID's ambition to achieve the MDGs.
- In 2008/09 **DFID** provided £5.5 billion of aid to poorer countries. Their budget will increase to £7.8 billion by 2010/11. By 2013, the equivalent of 0.7% of the UK's gross national income will be dedicated to development assistance, from 0.36% in 2007/08.

Introduction to MDGs

- The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) lie at the heart of DFID's work.
- The Millennium Development Goals are eight specific goals to be met by 2015 that aim to combat extreme poverty across the world.
- These goals were created at the UN Millennium Summit in New York in 2000. The largest gathering of world leaders in history.
- The Millennium Declaration, adopted by the world leaders, promised to: "free all men, women, and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty."
- The MDGs are drawn from the [Millennium Declaration](#).
- The declaration was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state.

The 8 Millennium Development Goals MDGs are :

- **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
- **Achieve universal primary education**
- **Promote gender equality and empower women**
- **Reduce child mortality**
- **Improve maternal health**
- **Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
- **Ensure environmental sustainability**
- **Develop a global partnership for development**

Our project addresses Millennium Development Goal 2 and 3:

MDG 2 :- Achieve universal primary education

Target: Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

- The world is edging closer to universal primary education, but too slowly to meet the 2015 target. In the developing world as a whole, 88% of children of official primary school age were enrolled in primary education in 2007, up from 83% in 2000.
- 72 million children worldwide were denied the right to education in 2007.
- Enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa has increased by 15 percentage points between 2000 and 2007. However, despite this breakthrough, almost half of all children not attending primary school live in this region.
- One quarter of the children in the world who are not attending primary school live in southwest Asia. In Pakistan more than a third of children are out of school.
- 95% of primary age children in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 94% in South Eastern Asia, are in school.

MDG 3 :- Promote gender equality and empower women

Target: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

- The gender gap is slowly closing in school enrolment in the developing world - 95 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 2007, compared to 91 in 1999. However the target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 was missed.
- Girls' net enrolment ratio (NER) in primary school (as a proportion of boys' NER) has improved from a global average of 88% in 1991 to 97% in 2006.
- The largest gender gaps in school enrolment are in West Asia, Oceania and Sub-Saharan Africa where respectively 90, 89 and 90 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 2007.
- Girls still account for 54% of the out-of-school population and girls in rural areas and from the poorest households are less likely to enrol and stay in school.
- Violence affects at least one in three women world wide; one in five women will suffer rape or "attempted rape in the course of their lifetime."

- Indian girls are 61% more likely than boys to die between the ages of 1 and 5, due to neglect.
- In Kenya, women own nearly half of all micro-, small and medium enterprises, but they receive less than 10% of the available credit.
- The proportion of seats held by women in national parliament continues to rise slowly, “averaging 18% across all chambers of parliament as of January 2009.

This Project is part of DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund. What is the Civil Society according to DFID and how is it related to their work?

- Civil society broadly means the groups and organisations that occupy a position between the household, the state and the private sector.
- They include non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as think tanks, trade unions, faith and diaspora groups, social movements and community groups.
- Working with civil society forms an integral part of DFID's approach to dealing with the challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) along with: addressing wealth creation; tackling climate change; dealing with conflict and security; and strengthening global partnerships.
- It's also one of the key ways in which DFID contributes to cross cutting issues such as gender equality and getting value for money.
- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can help relieve poverty by reaching disadvantaged groups and neglected areas that governments often fail to reach.
- ‘DFID works with over 500 international and UK CSOs and has direct or indirect links with many more CSOs in developing countries.’

The five objectives underpinning DFID's work with civil society are to:

- Deliver goods and services effectively and efficiently to improve the lives of poor and marginalised people in developing countries
- Empower citizens in developing countries to be more effective participants in development decisions and policies that affect their lives
- Enable CSOs to influence, advocate and hold to account national, regional and international institutions and increase aid effectiveness .
- Work in partnership with other UK Government departments to build support for development.
- build and maintain the capacity and space for an active civil society.

Caste discrimination Globally

Caste is practiced by people from South Asia including those who migrate and live in Western countries. Although it was originally linked with a particular religion, it has become more of a cultural phenomenon and it is neither faith nor country specific.

Caste in the UK

Due to the arduous campaigning of the Dalit Diaspora in UK, their community organisations and with the support of House of Lords members, certain MPs and like minded organisations, friends, well wishers and sympathisers, caste discrimination has been included under race, as an

amendment to the Single Equality Act. Currently the Government is undertaking research to examine the levels of caste discrimination in the UK. If evidence is strong and shows its impact on service provision and delivery, then a power will be triggered by the Minister, making caste discrimination illegal, as in the case of race.

Making caste discrimination illegal will not wipe it out but it will act as a deterrent and make the perpetrator think twice. They, particularly faith communities, should understand the effects caste discrimination has and work amongst their community and with other faiths to remove it. The new Single Equalities legislation has to be implemented by all Local Councils and in order to include caste discrimination into their policies and to implement them, they will have to understand it and recognise it. During the coming Inter Faith Week in October 2010, we are conducting such an awareness raising event. Please see the invitation on page 12. Everyone is welcome, please come.

List of Countries Practicing Caste Discrimination

1	India	14	Nigeria
2	Nepal	15	Cameroon
3	Pakistan	16	Chad
4	Bangladesh	17	Mauritania
5	Sri Lanka	18	Ethiopia
6	Malaysia	19	Yemen
7	Japan	20	Rwanda
8	Senegal	21	Burundi
9	Burkina Faso	22	D.R of Congo
10	Mali	23	Uganda
11	Niger	24	Kenya
12	Algeria	25	Somalia
13	Libya	26	United Kingdom

- **Additionally, 24 Million Indians living in 110 countries practice Caste discrimination**

“IMPACTS OF CASTE ON POVERTY”

- Caste 'causes poverty and gets into the way of poverty reduction'.
- It 'causes the poverty of a particular people, leading to higher rates of poverty among the affected groups'.
- It 'reduces the productive capacity and poverty reduction of a society as a whole'. It deprives people of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them voice to claim their rights'.
- 'Poverty reduction policies often fail to reach socially excluded groups'– Dalits- unless 'they are specifically designed to do so.'

(Source: Policy Paper on 'Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion', Department for International Development DFID, 2004)

DALIT QUOTA OF GLOBAL POOR

(A discussion paper for straightening statistics)

There are 1000+ million (one billion) people globally living in extreme poverty. Although indications of extreme poverty situation or below poverty line change according to different definitions and times, those who earn less than \$1 a day is generally accepted indicator. In India more than 400 million people earn less than \$1 a day and 800 million earning less than \$2 a day. This is a conservative estimate. According to some findings half of Indian population (over 500 million) live below poverty line and every year 1 million people have been added to the category of poor in India during the last 10 years.

The word 'Dalit' is a generic word. In international development parlance, 'Dalits' is used to indicate all those category of caste victim communities who are 'historically broken people' - excluded, exploited, discriminated, oppressed, marginalised and impoverished intergenerationally. In India, first, they include communities, who are categorised as Scheduled castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) totalling 25% or 250 million; second, all those Dalits, who converted to different faiths like Islam (14%), Christianity (2.4%), Buddhism (0.1%), Sikhism (2%) etc. For practical reasons, converted Dalits also share more or less the same socio- economic condition as their SC/ST counterparts. A conservative estimate shows that over 70% of Muslims, 60% of Christians, majority of Buddhists and 1/3rd of Sikhs in India are converted Dalits. A rough translation of these figures adds to 98m + 14.4m + 13.12m + 10m = 135.52million. Adding to 250m (SC/ST as above), it amounts to 385.52 million Dalits. It is found that 90% of Dalits in India / South Asia live in extreme poverty situations. This means that in India alone a conservative figure of 347 million Dalits come under the global poor category.

In South Asia, Nepal, with 5 million, Pakistan 2 million, Bangladesh 2 million, Sri Lanka 5 million, Malaysia 5 million Dalits population are only few other countries infected with caste discrimination. 90% of this 19 million (5+2+2+5+5=19-90% of 19m = 17m) thus added to 347 (347+17), it comes to 364 million Dalits from South Asia alone, forming 1/3rd share of 1000 million global poor. Further, in almost 125 countries, as in the UK, South Asians have migrated and practicing Caste system. 90 % of the caste victim communities in countries of Asia and Africa are from the ranks of global poor thus swelling the Dalit share of global poor.

In India, Mandal Commission's scientific research finds that socio-economic educational position of a community is correlated to its caste position in the society. Majority of the Backward Communities (BC) in India, 450 million (45% of Indian population) also are a set of 'historically broken people', facing caste discrimination and intergenerational poverty as the SC/ST communities. Following this approach, it will not be difficult for a student of International Development to find that a minimum 33% ie. 148 million of BC population falling within or very closer to the global poor category and that they are made poor due to caste reasons; thereby (364+ 148 = 512m) over half of Indian population live below poverty line whether or not they are officially included under global poor; and further taking the quota of caste victim communities – 'Dalits' among global poor to 45- 50%.

(Position Paper of Voice of Dalit International)

Interfaith Conference on 'Faith, Caste and Community Cohesion' - 23/10/2010

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Voice of Dalit International. Along with many individuals and organisations who worked tirelessly, we are happy to inform you that caste discrimination is made illegal through the Single Equalities Act 2010. Once believed to be an Indian phenomenon, caste discrimination is no more country or faith specific. Apart from affecting the psyche, body and well being of the victims/communities, caste practices threaten the democratic fabric of UK and works against all norms of equality and community cohesion.

The London Borough of Ealing is the fourth most ethnically diverse Borough in England, with 55% minority ethnic background and over 100 languages spoken. With the new Act in place, it becomes incumbent for all, to understand the implications of how caste works in the fields of employment, education, health, housing, welfare, policing, etcetera.

As part of our local work, VODI works in the Borough with the affected, marginalised and excluded communities. 9 years of local involvement has taught us the need for addressing the problem of caste discrimination and resulted in the formation of community-led organisations, an Interfaith Coalition Against Caste Discrimination and the inclusion of 'caste as an aspect of race' in the Single Equalities Act. In this respect, we value the importance of interfaith working through local Faith Forums and the Interfaith Network of UK.

Along with different Faith Communities, on **Saturday 23rd October 2010** – during Interfaith Week, we are holding a **'Question Time' Style Conference, from 1.30 - 6pm**, at the **Dominion Arts Education Centre, 112 The Green, Southall UB2 4BQ**.

The Conference is organised with a view to making Ealing and other Council/s, their various Departments and those delivering services aware of what caste is and how it impacts on their Equal Opportunities, Strategies, Plans and Policies. We invite you /delegates from your organisation to take part in this Conference and the Question Time.

As participation is limited to 200, we request you to book your seat in advance. Priority will be on the basis of 'first come first served'. Email us or follow our Website for registration

Thanking you,

Eugene Culas,
Director

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