

Submission to the Committee of the Rights of the Child in relation to the review of 5th periodic report of Bangladesh

Submitted by
Asia Dalit Rights Forum & South Asia Equity working Group
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Honorable Members of the committee,

We would like to draw your kind attention on the review of the Government of Bangladesh's 5th periodic report to the committee and would like to submit some **key issues affecting 2.25 million Dalit children in Bangladesh, who are subjected to discriminatory and cruel, inhuman, and degrading practices based on Caste.**

There is no desegregated data available on the demographic profile of the Dalits in Bangladesh, it is estimated that there are about 5.5 million Dalits in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh there are diverse kinds of occupational castes who are socially excluded. While the religious and ethnic communities have brought their marginalization to the forefront of the national debate, occupation castes have remained merely opportunities for state services. As the state does not recognize the distinct diversity of their identities, it has done little to redress the causes of their poverty and deprivation. It is generally assumed that the caste system is practised in the Hindu community only, but in reality some occupational castes, such as pig raisers, cobblers, sweepers, palanquin bearers and snake charmers are part of other religion too, including Islam and are treated as social outcasts by their communities.

Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their social location such as caste. Since it is structural in nature, discrimination prevails across each and every aspects of life, such as access to the legal system or education and health services etc. Given the high prevalence of

poverty in Bangladesh with 84% population livings on less than \$ 2 per day, Dalits and their children are among the most vulnerable population in Bangladesh because of their social location.

Literacy rate of the Dalit community was found to be only 30 per cent – half the national literacy rate (UNICEF). A study conducted by the IIDS Delhi in 2006, revealed shocking findings about discrimination in education . The study says *“In education, the Dalits, particularly the Hindus Dalits, are most deprived and discriminated. They are denied participation in school executive committee, discouraged to be teachers, to get their children admitted into schools and also taking up school related employment. **Their children do not have quota in the allocation of scholarships and the selection for scholarships is not fair in most cases.** The school committee shows irregularities for allocating scholarships to the Dalit students. There are also irregularities in selection for sports and games, i.e., in most cases the Dalit students are not given due chances to prove their talent or performances in the schools. The Dalit students are generally teased by the other community students and shown hatred inside the schools or outside. **Therefore, the dropout of Dalits’ children from the schools is high and this led the Dalit children engaging in child labour.*** A study (Parvez, Altaf and Mazharul Islam, (2013), *Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchona O Osprisshota*(Dalits in Bangladesh: Discrimination, Exclusion and Untouchability) NagorikUddyog and BDERM, Dhaka) shows that **around 18% of the dropped out children engage in child labour.**

*All the target respondents were interviewed to know whether they face discrimination in education in terms of overall **difficulty for their children to get admitted into school, opportunity for their community members to be school teachers, chance for joining as school executive or governing body, discrimination in the selection and allocation of scholarship, discrimination in examination result, in case their children are teased by school mates and the school teachers, discrimination over drinking water in the school, discrimination in the use of toilet, discrimination in sitting amongst Dalits and non-Dalits, discrimination in the selection of sports, discrimination to touch things like chalk, duster, tables and chairs etc.** The discrimination in the enrolment of children into school is almost the same for both Hindu and Muslim Dalit groups. About 29 per cent of the Hindu Dalits and 36 per cent of the Muslim Dalits in the Survey reported that *Dalit students are not allowed to stay in the hostels or dormitories”**

The study of NagorikUddyog and BDERM (ibid) also identified that around 30% of Dalit children experienced hatred and negligence behavior by the classmates and teachers for their Dalit identity.

Some other factors prevailing in the society also affect the development of Dalit children. Lack of pure drinking water, gas and electricity, environment remains full of chaos and commotion, filthy and dirty living place with no drainage system, inadequate and out of standard toilet facilities is common feature of Dalit colonies. Dalit children have to live in such unhygienic environment generation after generation. It is found in the study (ibid) **mentioned that 22% of the Dalit population does not have three meals a day.** As a result, almost **half of the children suffer for malnutrition.** Vulnerability of the girl child of the Dalit community is so acute that 76% of them face early marriage before they reach 18.

CRC Concluding Observations – Bangladesh 2003 CRC/C/15/Add.221

“The Committee welcomes the measures undertaken by the State party to enhance the situation of girls, especially in relation to education. It remains deeply concerned about persistent discriminatory attitudes towards girls, which are deeply rooted in traditional stereotypes and limit access to resources and services. The Committee is also concerned about discrimination against children with disabilities, street children, child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, tribal children and other vulnerable groups.”

The Committee recommends that the State party take adequate measures to ensure implementation of the principle of non-discrimination in full compliance with article 2 of the Convention, and strengthen its proactive and comprehensive efforts to eliminate discrimination on any grounds and against all vulnerable groups. The Committee also recommends that the State party undertake an education campaign for boys and men on gender issues and sex discrimination

The Committee is deeply concerned about the poor situation of children of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and other religious, national and ethnic minorities, tribal groups or similar marginalized groups and the lack of respect for their rights, including the rights to food, to health care, to education and to survival and development, to enjoy their own culture and to be protected from discrimination

The Committee urges the State party to gather additional information on all minorities or similar marginalized groups of the population, and to elaborate policies and programmes to ensure the implementation of their rights without discrimination, taking into account the

Committee's recommendations adopted at its day of general discussion on the theme "The rights of indigenous children".

CRC Concluding Observations – Bangladesh 2009 CRC/C/BGD/CO/4

While noting the commitment taken by the State party in its Constitution and "Vision 2021" to create an equitable, just and non-discriminatory society, the Committee is nevertheless concerned that the principle of non-discrimination contained in article 2 of the Convention is not fully respected in practice. Girls continue to face discrimination and disparities, particularly with regard to health care, nutrition and early marriage, as do particular groups of children, including refugee children, children with disabilities, children in slums and rural areas and children of ethnic and religious minorities. The Committee is also concerned that children face discrimination on the basis of social origin, or other status of their parents

The Committee strongly recommends that the principle of nondiscrimination, as provided for under article 2 of the Convention, be fully and vigorously applied by the State party and integrated into the implementation of all other articles to guarantee, without discrimination, the rights set out in the Convention. The Committee further recommends that the State party take the necessary measures to ensure that efforts to address persistent discrimination and 53 reduce disparities are adequate and effective in the family, schools and other settings, and in particular among marginalized and excluded children, including girls, children of ethnic minorities and refugee children.

We are concerned despite all above recommendation by the committee nothing has changed on the ground for the Dalit Children. The Government of Bangladesh failed to recognize discrimination and other prevalent issues even in this report

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