Global Report On

Status of Communities Discriminated On Work And Descent

Executive Summary

Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFOD)

2023

The Inclusivity Project

The Inclusivity Project (TIP) is a non-profit organization founded to advocate for the rights of communities discriminated on work and descent (CDWD) and raise awareness of their issues. TIP works towards Capacity Building, Collaboration, and Research to support CDWD communities by enhancing the Social, Economic, and Political Integration and increasing their visibility at the National, Regional and Global platforms. TIP works on the sustainable development goals (SDGs), especially on the monitoring and follow-up/review, and providing data and evidence for the nation-state for effective and inclusive programme implementation.

https://www.theinclusivityproject.org/

Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD), founded in 2019, is a platform to voice the rights and entitlements of the communities in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America discriminated based on work and descent. GFoD aims for full realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent and to ensure access to sustainable development goals (SDGs).

https://www.globalforumcdwd.org

Concept and Advisors: **N. Paul Divakar, Aloysius Irudayam SJ, Naveen Gautam**

Authors: **Deepak S. Nikarthil and Naveen Gautam**

Research Coordinators: **Queen Bisseng, Simona Torotcoi, Carla Forneri, Vercilline Dias, Gyan Kothari, Johannes Butscher, Naveen Gautam.**

Research Contributors: **Bhagwani Devi, Beena Pallical, Joel Guyton Lee, Gabriela Hrabanova, A Ana Rozanova, Alioune S, Vinayraj V.K., Sweta Ghiirey, Pranjali Kureel, Pirbhu Satyani, Prachi Salve, Risa Kimomoto, Salauddin Shihab, Sophiya Lamichhane**

Report Design: **Sajana Jayaraj**

Photographs: **Sudharak Olwe, Martin Jernberg, Sajana Jayaraj, GFOD Teams**

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Last but not the least, we would like to acknowledge the struggle of CDWD across the Globe.

GFoD Team

Preface

Paul Divakar Namala
Convener, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

In an era defined by the pursuit of human rights, justice, and equality, it is with a sense of purpose that we present this Global Report on the status of communities discriminated on work and descent(CDWDs). As the pages unfold, readers will find themselves immersed in a comprehensive exploration of the challenges, narratives, and pathways forward for these often-overlooked communities.

Discrimination on the grounds of work and descent is a pervasive yet frequently unaddressed issue that affects millions around the world. This report delves into the intricate tapestry of historical, cultural, and social factors that contribute to the perpetuation of this form of discrimination. By shedding light on its nuanced dimensions, we hope to provide an informed platform for global discourse and action.

The preface marks the starting point of this journey, inviting readers to embark on a quest for understanding and empathy. It serves as a compass that guides us through the diverse landscapes of discrimination based on work and descent, reminding us that no single narrative can encapsulate the multitude of experiences that these communities endure. Instead, it is a mosaic of stories, struggles, and aspirations that paints a complete picture.

As we navigate through this report, we encounter stories of resilience and courage coming from different part of the word, including Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. We listen to voices that have been silenced for far too long, voices that reveal the harsh realities of systemic inequalities. We also encounter stories of hope, where individuals and communities rise above adversity, challenging discriminatory norms and carving out pathways to progress.

The journey through this report is a call to action against the systemic discrimination and victimisation which Dalits face in South Asia; Burakumins face in Japan; Hratins and other communities face in Africa and Quilumbolas face in Brazil and other parts of the Latin America. It urges policymakers, academics, activists, and individuals from all walks of life to engage in a collective effort to dismantle the barriers that hinder these communities' access to opportunities and dignity. It emphasizes the importance of inclusive policies that address not only the symptoms but also the root causes of discrimination. It compels us to rethink the structures that reinforce these injustices and to challenge our own biases and assumptions.

To read this report is to recognize that discrimination based on work and descent is not an isolated concern—it is an interconnected global issue. The struggles faced by these communities are a reflection of broader societal imbalances that demand our attention and action. As we progress, let us remember that the fight against discrimination is a shared responsibility, transcending borders and backgrounds. It is our hope that this report serves as a catalyst for change—a change rooted in empathy, understanding, and a resolute commitment to justice.

Glossary

Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) are the people directly affected by Discrimination based on Work and Descent. Through the menial kind of occupation (manual scavenging, disposal of dead animals, sewage cleaning, leather-related works, domestic chores, etc.) and forced enslavement, they have been subjected to discrimination in the hierarchical society and due to the generational transmission of such labour and enslavement through descent, these communities have been historically stigmatized to be excluded, discriminated and of 'low caste'. They continue to face extreme forms of isolation and discrimination, even harassment and violence, which act as insurmountable obstacles in their attainment of civil, political, economic, and social rights. This form of stigma has led to their social and physical segregation, enforced endogamy, and discrimination in their socioeconomic, political, religious, and cultural rights and entitlements.

Caste: Caste is a system of social stratification. Caste is a social hierarchy system traditionally based on work and descent that is prevalent in many cultures, particularly in India. It divides individuals into distinct social groups based on their birth and assigned roles, with limited mobility. Caste groups are unequal, ranked on a scale of hierarchy based on their ritual status, from pure to impure. Their 'status' or position in the system determines with whom they can interact and with whom they cannot. The idea and practice of untouchability is an integral part of the caste system.

Buraku: Buraku is a Japanese word referring to a village or hamlet. Burakumin are the victims of severe discrimination and ostracism in Japanese society and they live as outcasts in separate villages or ghettos. Based on their birth and their former or current residence in Buraku, they are the most targeted communities because of their status as impure and untouchable within the communities.

Roma: 'Roma', as an umbrella term, encompasses a wide range of different people of Romani origin such as: Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels and Boyash/Rudari. It also encompasses groups such as Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations, including ethnic Travellers or those designated under the administrative term Gens du Voyage and people who identify as Gypsies, Tsiganes or Tziganes, without denying their specificities.

Quilombola: A Quilombo is the denomination for a predominantly black community which resisted the slavery regime that prevailed in Brazil for over 300 years and was abolished in 1888. Quilombos are central to the rural black resistance movement and in Latin America and the Caribbean. The formation of the quilombos represented resistance to slavery, strong territorial ties and relations, and defense and specific ways of life, production, and organization.

A caste within a caste system is a permanent social group into which an individual is considered to be born and embedded within a socially stratified structure.

Photo by Sajana Jayaraj

Photo by GFOD, Niger

Executive Summary

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In the tapestry of our diverse world, the fabric of society is woven with countless threads of culture, heritage, and identity. Among these threads, one enduring pattern persists – the discrimination faced by communities based on their work and descent. A specific community that accounts for roughly four percent of the total population in the world, who face systemic discrimination, segregation, alienation, underdevelopment, and prone to modern slavery. They are commonly known by different names within their respective countries and regions, such as Roma, Quilombola, Haratin, Buraku, and Dalits. Still, together, they are globally known as Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD). This note further delves into the multifaceted realm of assertiveness displayed by these communities, as they navigate the complex landscape of systemic discrimination, stigmatization, and inequality.

Who are CDWD?

Known by different names in different societies, communities facing discrimination based on work and descent deal with a distinctive, caste-like structure of oppression present in many parts of the world. Ascribed a permanent status of devalued personhood inherited from parents (thus 'Descent'), people born into CDWD are expected by their societies to perform stigmatized forms of labor (thus 'Work'). Constituting roughly four percent of the human population, these communities contend with discrimination in multiplespheres of life, as well as exclusion, segregation, underdevelopment, and some forms of modern slavery. Roma, Quilombola, Haratin, Buraku, and Dalits are some of the many communities now collectively identified by the term Communities facing Discrimination based on Work and Descent (CDWD).

Although dispersed globally, these communities have common characteristics like caste-like systems, untouchability, modern slavery, gross atrocities and violence, and low development ratings. In countries, these communities are known based on caste, anti-gypsyism, traditional and contemporary forms of slavery, descent, ancestral occupation, family, community or social origin, name, birthplace, place of residence, dialect, and accent.

Women from the Fulani community in West Africa

Photo by GFOD, Niger

A Dalilt sanitation worker from India works in a septic tank with no protective gear

Photo by Sudharak Olwe

The ideas of Purity and Pollution divides people in a social hierarchy based on their purity of occupation. Thus, the communities (CDWD) at the bottom of this hierarchical pyramid are considered the most impure or polluted.

Purity-Pollution Concept

Untouchability is a core concept associated with CDWD people. This is derived from the ideas of Purity and Pollution. This divides people in a social hierarchy based on their purity of occupation. The communities at the bottom of this hierarchical pyramid—the CDWD—are considered the most impure or polluted. This social division of people has socio-cultural, economic, political, and legal implications. The discrimination of CDWD is so ingrained in the social systems in the countries that there is an underlying powerlessness among them.

CDWD are victims of systemic and structural violence committed by the dominant or 'purer' communities. Violence is used to ensure the subjugation of CDWD compared to others. This violence targets women and children as the soft targets to maintain the social status quo. Any achievement of the community is retaliated with gruesome violence by others. The women from CDWD face gruesome violence due to the multiple marginalization associated with them based on caste, class, gender, and others based on their region and country.

Difference from other terminologies

CDWD is different from racism or minority communities. The distinction is evident as the CDWD concepts have emerged from the principles of purity-pollution and discrimination within their same ethnicity and religion. At the same time, other exclusionary characters have specific distinctive discriminatory propositions based on their colour or their beliefs, respectively. Further, the CDWD could be characterized based on traits such as untouchability, segregation of housing, enforced endogamy, prohibition of inter-dining, lack of social mobility, prone to violence, and close interlinkages to modern slavery.

Huddle for taking bath: Scenario of the water source in a Dalit neighborhood of Dhaka city, Bangladesh

Photo by Prothom Das

Opposite page: Sanitation workers in Mumbai, India.

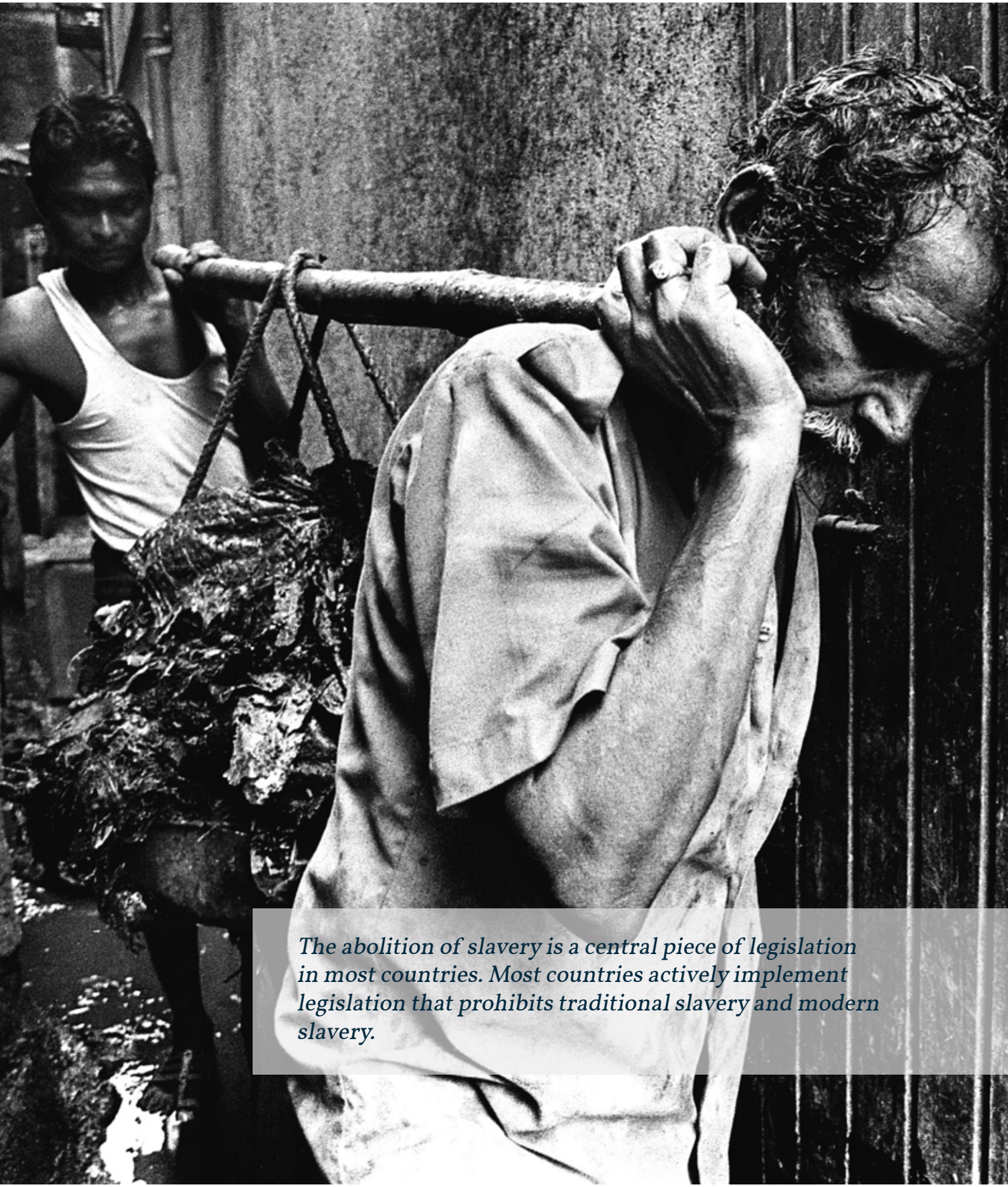
National Mechanisms for CDWD

All the countries where CDWD are present have adopted principle of equality in their constitutions, which guarantees equal rights to people, ensuring equal access to all communities living on their territory. In this upcoming global report, we also profoundly dive into the various development barriers that CDWD face. National constitutions provide equality before the law, but this can be seen as a statutory initiative weakened by common law. Simple features such as freedom of speech and marriage were found in constitutional structures. However, little is known about how successful these constitutional rights are for communities.

The abolition of slavery is a central piece of legislation in most countries. Most countries actively implement legislation that prohibits traditional slavery and modern slavery. However, as discussed in the chapters, CDWD have many manifestations of slavery. The challenge is the implementation of these policies. Sociocultural stigma extends to implementing policies that alienate CDWD from understanding their development needs.

Development Status among CDWD

The development status of the CDWD is a byproduct of the socio-cultural stigmas and discrimination the communities face. The developmental status of CDWD in consideration of poverty, health, education, employment, housing, gender, climate justice, and holistic sustainable development is poor. The inherent discrimination and segregation from accessing resources played a crucial role in this underdeveloped status. A critical pattern that emerges from the earlier discussion is that CDWD from all the countries (where studies have been conducted) have poorer status than the general population.



The abolition of slavery is a central piece of legislation in most countries. Most countries actively implement legislation that prohibits traditional slavery and modern slavery.

Photo by Sudharak Olwe

A Bororo woman in the protection and restoration of the ARDJANIRE ecosystem in Bogo.

Photo by GFOD, Cameroon

Opposite page: A Haratin man from Niger

Impact of Discrimination on the Development of CDWD

Discrimination and development are inversely proportional to each other, evident in the case of CDWDs, where they are at the bottom of the development indicators because of the rampant discrimination they face. The bias has contributed to their poverty, lack of health and education, lack of gender development, access to water, electricity, sanitation, decent work (including the prominence of modern slavery), income inequalities, housing, climate justice, and access to justice. The lack of accessibility, availability, acceptability, and quality of services has further contributed to their underdevelopment per all the SDG indicators.

The impact of socio-cultural discrimination based on work and descent has resulted in low development among the CDWDs. In discussing the ramifications of discrimination on the development of the community, there is a need to focus on discrimination from the point of view of accessibility, availability, acceptability, and quality framework (AAAQ) for development.

The AAAQ methodology indicates that CDWD fail to receive positive ratings on all four accounts. The accessibility in terms of physical, information, and financial accessibility, the communities are well behind in development indicators and access to services. The lack of affordability creates a significant disadvantage for their development. Availability is restricted by the lack of targeted policies and budgets, which impacts their growth and development. Due to the socio-hierarchy-based discrimination, the CDWD faces challenges in their acceptability within the society. Such vulnerabilities produce a distinct disadvantage in accessing services, as they often get ignored in service delivery. The quality of services is another concern for CDWD as there is a tendency to discriminate against this community from accessing services.

The impact of socio-cultural discrimination based on work and descent has contributed to their poverty, lack of health and education, lack of gender development, access to water, electricity, sanitation, decent work, income inequalities, housing, climate justice, and access to justice.

Photo by GFOD, Niger

Key Recommendations

1. Formally recognize and acknowledge existence of Discrimination based on Work and Descent at the national, regional and global level, taking into account the continuing relevance of ancestry and occupation to practices of modern slavery and caste, with a view to ensuring meaningful policymaking that reaches affected communities.

2. States shall take all necessary constitutional, legislative, administrative, budgetary, judicial, educational, and social measures to eliminate discrimination based on work and descent in their respective states and to respect, protect, promote, restitute, implement and monitor the human rights of those facing this discrimination including through robust disaggregated data collection in line with data protection and data privacy principles

3. States, in collaboration with National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organizations and human rights defenders belonging to communities discriminated based on work and descent to combat prejudicial beliefs and practices in all their forms, including notions of untouchability, pollution and caste superiority or inferiority, as well as to prevent human rights violations taken on the basis of such beliefs. A working group on DWD shall also be composed.

4. Ensure adequate budgetary allocations across all levels of the federal Government and at the state level for the implementation of protection and welfare measures for communities Discriminated based on Work and Descent, and allocate specific funds to awareness-raising campaigns aimed at combatting discrimination and prejudice.

5. A Working Group on Discrimination Based on Work and Descent, composed of Members of the National Human Rights Commissions,civil society organisation with the participation of representatives of communities discriminated on the basis of work and descent, to study further the practices of discrimination based on work and descent in the Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe region .

Members of the Roma Community
near a wall depicting the Romani flag

Discrimination and development are inversely proportional to each other, evident in the case of CDWDs, where they are at the bottom of the development indicators because of the rampant discrimination they face.

Photo by ERGO Network

INTERNATIONAL EVOLUTION OF CDWD

Significant milestones in addressing communities discriminated on work and descent in the international arena.

Discrimination based on Work and Descent (DWD) is the UN terminology used for communities who are traditionally and intergenerationally discriminated based on their identity, social-hierarchical positions, the work associated with their positions, and their lineage and descendants.

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