

# HEAR US NOW!

## A FACTSHEET FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CDWD YOUTH



**Discrimination based on Work and Descent (DWD)** is the UN terminology to refer to discrimination against members of communities based on **social stratification such as caste and analogous systems of inherited status which nullify or impair their equal enjoyment of human rights**. Youth from these communities confront systemic barriers from birth, limiting their access to education, employment, and dignity. Yet, they continue to rise as powerful voices demanding justice, recognition, and equal opportunity. Their struggles also extend to financial exclusion and climate injustice, where they are often left out of formal economies and disproportionately affected by environmental degradation **without access to decision-making processes or resources**. Lets look at few regional numbers:



# Regions

## Africa



Across Africa, youth from Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) face deep-rooted exclusion that limits their social, economic, and political participation. **Stigmatized due to ancestral occupations**, these communities inherit systemic inequality. **About 4% live in Africa**. In countries like The Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Niger, and Senegal, CDWD youth are **denied land rights and economic opportunities**. In Mauritania, many live on land they've cultivated for generations but lack legal ownership, facing eviction and legal barriers when asserting their rights.

## Asia

Across Asia, caste-based discrimination remains deeply entrenched, shaping access to education, employment, and justice. **Dalit students** face **exclusion and bias in schools and universities**, while discriminatory hiring practices **limit decent work opportunities**. Even when rights are violated, access to justice is fraught with barriers, including social stigma, police inaction, and delayed legal processes. Youth and communities facing Discrimination based on Work and Descent are **frequent targets of hate crimes, including caste-based violence, lynchings, sexual assault, and public humiliation**.



## Latin America



Quilombola youth in Brazil and Palenquero youth in Colombia face deep-rooted exclusion tied to race, land, and language. **In Brazil, there are over 1.3 million quilombolas, with nearly half under the age of 30**. Most live without legal land titles or basic services—**only 4.3% have titled land, and over 67% lack sewage systems**. Illiteracy among quilombola adults is nearly three times the national average. **In Colombia, the Palenquero population is smaller, with around 6,600 people**, of whom fewer than 3,000 speak the Palenquero language. Youth are at the center of language revitalization efforts through school programs, though stigma and marginalization persist.

## Europe

**Roma youth (15–29) make up around 25–30% of Europe's 10–12 million Roma population, with 35–40% under 18**. They are diverse in gender, language, religion, sexuality, and migration status, and many face multiple forms of discrimination. Educational exclusion is severe—**over 60% leave school early, and less than 1% complete higher education**. In 2021, **62% of Roma youth (16–24) in 9 EU countries were not in education, employment, or training (NEET)**, compared to 10% of non-Roma peers. Roma youth face disproportionately **high rates of early school leaving**, driven by poverty, segregation, and discrimination. **Antigypsyism**—the specific form of racist targeting Roma—remains pervasive, leading to **hate speech, bullying, police violence, hate crimes and institutional racism**. Roma youth remain largely invisible in mainstream youth structures and policies at both national and EU levels.



# Testimonies from the regions

Youth from Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) have endured generations of violence, exclusion, and denial of basic human rights. The Rights Experts Programme has transformed them from silent victims into fierce defenders of justice—equipping them with the tools to document violations, challenge oppressive systems, and expose the truth. Today, they are no longer invisible; they are leading the fight at the United Nations and global platforms, demanding recognition, reparation, and radical change.



“As Dalit youth in India, we face daily discrimination in schools, jobs, and even when seeking justice, denied dignity because of our caste. We demand equal opportunities and a future where every young person is respected and free from caste-based exclusion”.

— **Kalpana Bishwakarma, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), India**

“We have tilled this land for generations, but still, we are not allowed to call it ours. Because of who we are, our caste, our birth, we are denied the right to own land. When we try to farm, we are told to leave. When we try to build homes, we are threatened. When we ask for land to build a place of worship, we are mocked or ignored”.

— **Ali Camara, GFoD Rights Expert, The Gambia**



“Roma youth, in Ukraine and across the diaspora, are actively advancing human rights, asserting their rightful place in Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction, and contributing to a more inclusive society on the path to European Union accession”.

— **Natalii Tomenko, Deputy Director ARCA: Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture, Ukraine**

# Our Call to Action



*Our key demands are centred around amplifying voice and increasing participation of youth from communities discriminated on work and descent Our aim is to enrich the youth focussed human rights dialogue with perspectives that are often overlooked, making human rights measures more responsive to community needs amidst global crises and uncertainty.*

- 1** Integrate **CDWD youth issues into global social development frameworks (e.g., Commission for Social Development, HLPF, WSS) by establishing an annual review on youth focused development indicators**—offering tangible data to evaluate progress and ensuring that future leaders of the post-2030 agenda emerge from all backgrounds.
- 2** Establish a **UN Special Rapporteur on Work and Descent-Based Discrimination to monitor violations, assess progress, and evaluate the effectiveness** of existing review mechanisms—especially concerning intergenerationally marginalized youth.
- 3** Ensure **financial inclusion of youth from Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) by establishing targeted access to financial services, entrepreneurship support, and livelihood schemes**. This should include representation in national and global youth economic initiatives such as youth entrepreneurship programs, digital financial literacy platforms, climate finance dialogues, and UN mechanisms focused on youth and economic justice—including the Youth 2030 strategy, Global Youth Initiative, and Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change.
- 4** **Design and implement gender-responsive programs that support leadership, safety, education, and economic empowerment of girls and young women from CDWD**, ensuring their participation in decision-making spaces.
- 5** Mandate **intersectional reforms and ensure affirmative action for CDWD youth in higher education, public services, and employment schemes** including entrepreneurship. This can be ensured by collecting disaggregated data, followed by targeted action.