**Joint NGO submission related to the review of Bangladesh at the 30th Universal Periodic Review session in 2018**

# Situation of Dalits in Bangladesh

**Prepared by BDERM and Nagorik Uddyog**


BDERM Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement
বাংলাদেশ দলিত ও বঞ্চিত জনগোষ্ঠী অধিকার আন্দোলন

Email: bdermb@gmail.com
Website: www.bderm.org

নাগরিক উদ্যোগ NAGORIK UDDYOG CITIZEN'S INITIATIVE

8/14, Block-B, Lalmatia,
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: info@nuhr.org
Website: www.nuhr.org


**In association with IDSN**


IDSN International Dalit Solidarity Network
WORKING GLOBALLY AGAINST CASTE-BASED DISCRIMINATION

Vartov
Farvergade 27D, First Floor
Copenhagen K 1463, Denmark
Email: communication@idsn.org

Website: http://idsn.org/

## CONTENT

No table of contents entries found.

# I. INTRODUCTION

1. Bangladesh has completed two cycles of the UPR, in 2009 and 2013. During the first review, in 2009, Bangladesh received 45 recommendations covering minority protection, poverty eradication and access to justice and public services. None of the recommendation directly addressed caste discrimination or protection of Dalit rights.
2. During the second cycle, two recommendations of the 196 addressed Dalit rights and/or caste-based rights violations. Further nine recommendations referred to the rights of vulnerable groups.

3. This joint submission focuses on the second review cycle recommendations concerning caste-based discrimination and the protection of Dalits and minorities in Bangladesh, accepted or considered for further examination by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). The observations are based on the government data and reports, independent studies, and recommendations by the UN, including the Human Rights Committee, which reviewed Bangladesh in March 2017.

This NGO report has been jointly prepared by BDERM and Nagorik Uddyog and in association with IDSN:

**4. BANGLADESH DALIT AND EXCLUDED RIGHTS MOVEMENT (BDERM)** is a national level platform for Dalits in Bangladesh. It has been working on the rights of Dalits through campaigning, networking, and advocacy at the national, regional and international level. Currently 17 Dalit-led civil society organisations and approximately 2000 individual members are involved in the platform.

**5. NAGORIK UDDYOG (CITIZEN'S INITIATIVE)** is a nonprofit national level development and human rights organisation advocating on fundamental human rights for excluded, poor and underprivileged minorities since its establishment in 1995. As an active member of many national and international development forums and networks, Nagorik Uddyog undertakes lobbying and advocacy activities to promote human rights and good governance.

**6. THE INTERNATIONAL DALIT SOLIDARITY NETWORK (IDSN)** is an international network that works on a global level for the elimination of caste discrimination and similar forms of discrimination based on work and descent. Members include national Dalit platforms in caste-affected countries, Dalit Solidarity Networks in seven European countries, and international associates among others. BDERM is a member of IDSN.

# II. BACKGROUND

7. Out of the total population, of approximately 160 million, the estimate number of Dalits in Bangladesh range between 3.5 to 5.5 million[i]. Caste systems and what is broadly referred to as 'untouchability' practices are most commonly associated with Hinduism, but in Bangladesh these traditions and practices have also been adopted by sections of the Muslim majority[ii].

8. Historically, Dalits have been oppressed by dominant groups in society and the majority are under-privileged and struggle for job opportunities. Like other caste affected communities, Dalits in Bangladesh are often forced to undertake specific types of labour as a consequence of their assigned caste status and are most commonly associated with the profession of "Jat sweepers" or "Horijon". As a result of their limited access to employment Dalits are almost exclusively working in 'the service sector' performing unclean jobs in urban areas such as street sweeping, manual scavenging and burying dead bodies. Many Dalits are stigmatised as a result of their profession and experience isolation and social exclusion[iii]. Within the Hindu community, Dalit population remains especially marginalised and subject to discrimination not only by the majority population but also by more affluent, higher-caste Hindus who may, for example, exclude them from certain rituals and from shared spaces such as temples, restaurants and markets[iv].

9. In Bangladesh Dalits also face discrimination in their access to housing and land. They are segregated in colonies and unhygienic slum areas and are often systematically excluded from access to water and sanitation[v]. While most non-Dalit population in the capital of Bangladesh boil or filter their water, the economically deprived and discriminated Dalits often have to do with unsafe water sources. Though numerous measures by the GoB have been made to improve water and sanitation services for the general population in urban as well as rural areas it had little effect on the country's Dalits[vi]. The majority of Dalits are landless and their houses are often located in abandoned fields, on khash (government owned) land near roads or pasture. Dalits face widespread poverty, ostracization and food insecurity and are subjected to land grabbing, violence and forced conversion[vii]. Dalit students face exclusion from many educational institutions along with discriminatory practices such as being forced to clean classrooms, fetch water or compelled to sit on separate benches.

# III. IMPLEMENTATION OF UPR RECOMMENDATIONS

## a) Enjoyment of equal rights and social and economic inclusion

10. During the Bangladesh's 2013 UPR, the Holy See and Slovenia made recommendations pertaining to adopting a plan of action to address the situation of Dalits and improving their living situations, which were partly accepted by the GoB. Nicaragua, Vietnam and Thailand also made more general recommendations concerning equal rights and social integration for marginalised groups, which were also accepted by the GoB for further examination:

- *130.15. Adopt an action plan to address the situation of Dalits and eliminate discrimination against them, including by ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation (Slovenia).*
- *130.23. Continue improving the conditions of children, women, Dalits, indigenous people, refugees and migrants taking into account the special situation and difficulties that those groups have to overcome (Holy See).*
- *129.144. Promote more intercultural education and ensure that marginalized groups enjoy equal rights before the law (Thailand).*
- *129.117. Provide more resources for the enjoyment of social and economic rights of vulnerable groups like women, children, persons with disabilities and minorities (Vietnam).*
  *129.152. Continue working to provide State care to vulnerable and minority groups in the country, to ensure they are fully integrated into society (Nicaragua).*

11. Additionally, in March 2017, Bangladesh was reviewed by the Human Rights Committee (HRC), which in its concluding observations expressed a serious concern over *'the persistence of a caste-based system resulting in limited employment and housing opportunities for people from so-called lower castes who experience extreme poverty, social stigma and marginalization'*[viii]. The HRC recommended to the GoB to adopt the anti-discrimination bill, protecting against direct and indirect discrimination, including caste based, in both, public and private spheres. The Committee also recommended to '*take measures to end the de facto caste systems and ensure that individuals from so-called lower castes are not relegated to caste-based employment and have equal access to all rights guaranteed under the Covenant, without discrimination'*[ix].

**Status of implementation**

**a) Inclusion of Dalits in the national social and economic development plans**

12. In 2012, the Prime Minister issued a Directive calling for special measures to include Bede, Dalit and Harijan communities in the Social Safety Net Programme, enhance food security and allocate funds for housing. The 2014 Bangladesh National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) expressed a commitment to end social and economic discrimination through legislative and other measures, including access to basic services - education, health, nutrition, family planning and water supply and sanitation. In the 2012-13 fiscal year, the GoB allocated over 6 million BDT for scholarships, income generation training and social security, including old age and maternity allowance for Dalit people. In 2013-14, the area of outreach increased from 7 districts to 21, with allocation of around 80 million BDT. Additionally, in 2014-15 around 90 million BDT was allocated to the program, aiming to benefit 14,427 Dalit people. The increasing budget allocations, while not yet sufficient to meet the high needs of Bede, Dalit and Harijan communities, does demonstrate an increasing recognition of the needs of these communities by the State.

13. The GoB has also enacted a National Strategy for Water and Sanitation on Hard to Reach Areas and Hygiene Promotion Strategy aimed at delivering context-specific equitable and inclusive sanitation and hygiene. Regrettably there is no official data regarding the implementation status of the programme on the access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

14. In our view, for all of those initiatives to truly succeed the issues of long standing exclusion of Dalit communities from these protections have to be addressed. Dalits have long been unable to access these programmes due to the lack of knowledge about their rights and stigma that prevented them from seeking and gaining enrollment. Dalit communities complain that non-Dalits benefit from the government programs. For instance, according to a local media report[x], in Bhola district, Department of Social Welfare received 25 lacks 92 thousand taka for educational stipendium for 63 Dalit students and an allowance for 580 elderly Dalits. Although the government officials claim there was an appropriate distribution of the funds, the general secretary of BDERM, stated that only 100 of the 580 elderly receiving allowance were from the Dalit community.

15. Furthermore, Dalits inhabiting the so called 'colonies', without adequate water, electricity or sanitation, are facing a threat of eviction as a result of the government's housing projects. In 2013, the government planned to build 1148 flats for sweepers of Dhaka city. Last year the city corporation issued a notice to the dwellers of the colony to shift their house temporarily (with compensation) to allow the construction of the building. Yet, among the 2000 of Dalit families in the colony only 150 work in the Dhaka South City Corporation and, if implemented, the project will leave many of the dwellers homeless.

16. While general schemes to promote enjoyment of equal rights and social and economic inclusion indirectly address the needs of Dalit communities, they must be accompanied by strategies and corresponding budgetary allocations to meet the specific needs of Dalits. For instance, although 20% of Annual Development Programme Funds have been allocated to the local government institutions to improve sanitation[xi], no specific strategy or budgetary allocation has been made to ensure discrimination free access to safe drinking water and sanitation for Dalits.

### b) Water and sanitation

17. Dalits face severe water and sanitation crisis both in urban and rural areas. In urban areas, Dalit colonies are usually found to be situated around unclean locations, on the periphery of main society, with overflowing or choked drains, open sewers, lack of latrines and bathrooms and near the garbage dumping sites. In urban areas, Dalits largely depend on reservoirs for preservation of water, which are not cleaned regularly, thereby making water unsafe for direct consumption and causes vector borne diseases. In rural areas, water crisis is acute due to the lack of water sources but also Dalits are often prohibited from using common water sources. Moreover, the tube wells allotted are more often situated in a non-Dalit locality. As Dalits do not hold land titles for their housing land, often they are considered ineligible for allotment of sanitary latrines by the government. Thus, the lack of developmental assets, coupled with the consistent threat of eviction from government or unauthorised dwellings, makes it an unviable option for Dalits to invest in sanitary latrines. The perceived notions of caste hierarchy have resulted in Dalits' inability to rent or buy their land from other communities to construct houses or sanitary latrines.

18. In the 2015 study[xii], conducted by BDERM and Nagorik Uddyog, we found that 89% of rural Dalits use shared (common) latrines and 43% of their toilets are hanging latrines. 90% of the respondents used latrines without a roof or had a broken roof, which restricted their use during the rainy seasons. The absence of electricity in the latrines raise safety concerns for Dalit women in using the latrines in the night. The latrines constructed of tin shed and plastic besides cause serious privacy issues for girls and women, which are also unhygienic and pose various health hazards.

19. The study also indicates that in rural Dalit settlements 32% of latrines were of ring slab, 25% pit latrines, 43% hanging or open latrines and 89% of Dalits in rural areas used shared latrines. On the average, 16 households or 84 people use one water point in Dalit colonies in Dhaka city, and 8 households or 40 people use one latrine. 21% of Dalit households in rural areas have their own tube wells and 65% share common tube wells. The remaining 14% use surface water for drinking and other purposes. Both in rural and urban areas, many Dalit colonies do not have legal water points and are forced to use unauthorized

connections. Additionally, even the most fortunate Dalits cannot even dream of getting 20 liters of water a day, affecting worst women and children.

20. The national development activities have not yet prioritised the issue of water and sanitation for Dalits. Despite the government's initiatives in place the GoB has a long way to go to ensure dignified life and access to adequate and suitable water and sanitation services to Dalit communities. The lack of gathering of caste disaggregated data on the availability and access to water and sanitation results in the lack of attention to the issue not only form the government but also from civil society, academics and experts.

### c) Health

21. Dalits face discrimination in accessing medical amenities in public, private and even NGO facilitated centers. The study undertaken in 2014[xiii] shows that 21% of Dalits face discrimination in getting medication from hospitals. 15% of the respondents said that doctor and dispensary did not provide them an adequate treatment or medicine due to their caste and professional identity. 26% said that a doctor or a midwife refused to visit a patient in their house.

22. Currently there is no official recognition that specific groups, like Dalits, are particularly vulnerable to ill-health, and therefore, deserve special protection and access to health entitlements. Health surveys and research programmes on the national public health situation do not pay any special attention to child and maternal health conditions in the colonies and settlements where Dalit communities live. Due to the lack of attention to the specific health needs of Dalits, the issues that they face in accessing affordable health care remain unreported and unattended to.

### d) Political participation and employment

23. Dalit people lack political empowerment, without representation at all levels of political parties, with an exception of the tea garden areas. The 2014 study[xiv] shows that 94% of Dalits have no linkage with any of the political parties and 4% have involvement in their local unit but have no role in the decision making. While 99% of Dalit can exercise their voting rights, 8% have experience harassment in exercising it. 91% shared that they or their family members never contest even in a local government election. What is more, Dalits experienced a deadly, post 2014 election, surge of violence, which resulted in rape, abduction, killing, displacing and vandalising of Dalits' houses and wealth.

24. Political parties in Bangladesh operate under the 'Representation of Peoples Order, 1972'. It sets the rules and regulations for the parties but does not specify membership criteria, other than requiring to reserve 33% quota for women at all committee levels of the political parties by 2020. There are no specific legislative mechanisms, ensuring marginalised communities' participation in political parties, other than the right to vote. The 41 registered political parties have failed to include ethnic minorities or other excluded communities in its membership.

25. Moreover, Dalit communities face discrimination in mainstream employment sectors. The 2014 study[xv] found that 59% of employed Dalits face discrimination in their work place as a result of their caste identity, 30% were deprived of any privileges of the job, paid lowest, and often verbally abused. 24% had to work extra time and 40% had experienced an embargo to not touch others' things in the workplace.

**26. Recommendations:**

1) Include Dalit communities and the principle of non-discrimination in the National Sanitation Strategy and National Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation.
2) Ensure inclusion of Dalit communities in the National Strategy on Water and Sanitation for Hard to Reach Communities by undertaking needs assessments, including through comprehensive surveys of urban Dalit colonies.

3) Ensure special and adequate budget allocations for Dalit colonies with the aim towards closing the gap between them and other communities in their access to basic services and goods necessary for development and improved living conditions.
4) Allocate specific budget for Dalits and other excluded communities in the national social safety net programme and ensure full access for Dalits to the programme.

## b) Empowerment of Dalit communities, particularly women and children

27. During the last UPR review of Bangladesh, while not explicitly mentioning Dalit communities, Cambodia and Sudan both made recommendations on the empowerment of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. Both recommendations were accepted:

- *129.41. Continue to give particular attention to empowerment of women, children, and other vulnerable groups of the populations in the on-going and future agenda of the government (Cambodia).*
- *129.61. Continue with the necessary attention to the empowerment of women and children care and other vulnerable groups of the population (Sudan);*

**Status of implementation**

**a) Discrimination against Dalit women and girls**

28. The Constitution of Bangladesh prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste or sex and establishes equal rights for women in all spheres of state and public life[xvi]. Aimed at activating these constitutional protections, the National Women's Development Policy 2011 calls for the government to pursue the special programmes aimed at advancing the rights of women from marginalised communities, including on the basis of caste[xvii].

29. Facilitating empowerment through access to education, on 29 May 2012, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh issued a directive memo to the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Meherpur District, to take action to promote the status of Dalit and Harijan communities in Bangladesh, by introducing quotas for Dalits and Harijans in schools and higher educational institutions as well as other measures. As a result of the combined efforts of universities, government officials and Dalit human rights defenders, within the first two years of its institution, the newly active quota system confirmed access to higher education for 27 Dalit students from a range of departments.

30. However, despite these advances and protections, Bangladeshi women are still impacted by gender-based discrimination rooted in patriarchal attitudes and biases. At the intersection of gender, caste and class-based discrimination, Dalit women are particularly vulnerable to untouchability practices, and violence. They face multiple forms of discrimination in every sphere of life including family, society and work-place. Inside their own communities, they are inflicted suffering because of their gender identity, whereas from the outside world they face multiple forms of discrimination and violence due to their womanhood and Dalit-hood. Dalit women and girls often face physical and sexual assault, including rape and killing, as well as sexual harassment within their own communities. Dalit women rarely participate in decision making processes, in both internal and external spaces. To date the government has no official data on the status of Dalit women in the country.

31. While the GoB has initiated programs for the improvement of Dalit living conditions, there are few legal, policy, budgetary or programmatic interventions designed to meet the particular needs of Dalit women. There is little understanding of the additional vulnerabilities of Dalit women, including gender-based violence and exploitation, resulting of the caste and gender identities. The rights and entitlements

of Dalit women are not specifically addressed by any of the government mechanisms to ensure their development and empowerment.

### b) Education

32. Literacy and access to quality education remains a significant concern in Bangladesh. Although primary education is compulsory, school enrollment has not reached a satisfactory level yet, especially among Dalit children. School dropout rates are very high among Dalit children and Dalit boys and girls rarely continue their education beyond primary school. Caste-based discrimination is a significant cause of low school admission and retention of the Dalit children[xviii].

33. Dalit children study in a hostile environment, regularly facing abusive words, teasing and taunting on the basis of their caste identity. It has a significant impact on the impressionable minds of Dalit children, leading to drop outs from the primary level of education. The study undertaken in 2014[xix] found that around 26% of the respondents face obstacles in getting admission in the non-community schools due to their family and caste identity. In many cases Dalit children have to hide their identity to get admission to schools. The study found that 30% of Dalit students experienced abuse or hatred from their classmates and others, including teachers. Moreover, 6.5% of the respondents said they still had to sit on separate benches in school.

34. Dalit students are also deprived of educational privileges and entitlement like scholarships/stipend and an opportunity to participate in cultural programs, sports and other recreational activities. Additionally, an early marriage is a significant factor to Dalit girls' backwardness in education. A study from 2014[xx] indicates that 76% of the respondents said that child marriage is prevailing in their community and girls get married before reaching 18 years of age. Dalit girls also often face sexual and psychological harassment in educational institutions, which discourage them from attending schools or colleges. The recent study[xxi] shows that only 5.9% of Dalit girls complete secondary level education and no Dalit girl completed Higher Secondary Certificate.

35. The Government's education programme is supposed to focus on marginalised communities' education, yet it does not have any specific programmes for Dalit children[xxii]. According to the Dakar Framework for Action[xxiii], the state has a serious commitment to include the excluded, or if not so, clearer analyses must be made to ensure full inclusion. However, challenges in education faced by Dalits are not considered a serious issue in comparison with other ethnic minorities. No innovative or special measures have been initiated by the government in accordance with the Dakar Framework for Action.

36. Although an affirmative action quota was introduced for Dalit students in public universities, the lack of legal recognition of their identity prevents them from taking this privilege. In 2014-15 academic year, many Dalit students were refused a certificate from the Deputy Commissioner as there was no official gazette published recognising Dalit as a separate identity. Consequently, in 2015-16 academic year, the number of Dalits seeking admission under the quota privilege has significantly reduced.

**37. Recommendations**

5) Collect official disaggregated data on the status of Dalit women in terms of their access/enjoyment of education, employment, reproductive health, land, etc.
6) Initiate programmes designed to meet the particular needs of Dalit women along the lines of trainings on Income Generating Activities provided under the Social Safety Net Programme as well as business initiative training with capital fund as provided by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.
7) Take immediate action to end discrimination and 'untouchability' practice in schools. These actions should include a directive from the Ministry of Education prohibiting discrimination based on any

social identity including caste, in educational institutions, trainings teachers about caste-based discrimination, and including information on Dalits in school textbooks.

8) GoB should pay adequate attention to the human rights situation of marginalised groups, including Dalit women and children, in all assessments, including in the planning, and implementation of any human rights, development and humanitarian programmes.

9) GoB should establish a special cell at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to prevent and monitor violations against Dalit women and children.

## c) Protection against discrimination and violence

38. The following four recommendations, made in the second review cycle, address non-discrimination of the most vulnerable groups, which in Bangladesh include Dalits. The recommendations were accepted by the GoB:

- *129.24. Consider the possibility of enacting laws for the protection of the most vulnerable groups from social discrimination (Ecuador).*
- *129.93. Ensure the effective investigation and sanctioning of all cases of violence against religious minorities (Austria).*
- *129.100. Employ further measures to ensure the security of religious minorities, including Buddhists and Hindus (Japan).*
- *131.22. Ensure protection of minorities, including indigenous minorities, in conformity with its international obligations (Switzerland).*

**Status of implementation**

39. The Constitution of Bangladesh declares equal rights for all citizens and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth[xxiv]. However, Bangladesh has no laws addressing 'untouchability' and caste-based discrimination. Responding to the persistent and widespread discrimination against Dalits in Bangladesh, in 2013 the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRC) and Bangladesh Law Commissions engaged with Dalit human rights defenders to introduce a draft Anti-discrimination legislation. The draft act (Anti-discrimination Act) was submitted to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in April 2013 but returned to the NHRC, four years later, for further review.

40. In some cases, local government officials have collaborated with civil society organisations to activate the existing state mechanisms to end discrimination and 'untouchability' practice. For instance, in Jessore District, Bangladesh, local officials, police and civil society organisations took action to end discrimination and 'untouchability' practices in Dhalgram Bazar faced by the Dalit (Rishi) community.

41. However, despite these emerging initiatives, approximately 5.5 million Dalits in Bangladesh continue to suffer from multiple forms of discrimination and 'untouchability' practices due to the lack of sufficient protection. They face discrimination in housing, exclusion from community religious and cultural functions, denial of access to restaurants and communal water sources, 'untouchability' in schools, difficulties in accessing legal protections and are limited to some of the most menial, low wage and dangerous jobs in Bangladesh[xxv].

42. GoB has no specific strategy for effective investigation and prosecution of violence against religious minorities. Since the second UPR cycle the country experienced widespread violence and discrimination against religious minorities, of which Dalit community is the worst affected[xxvi]. More than 30 cases of violence were reported in the media, more than 500 houses, crops, shops and businesses were destroyed

through arson and other means, and due to looting and intimidation many were forced to flee their homes and communities. While the GoB did investigate and took action in response to the attacks on the Dalit Community in Malopara, Chapatala Village, Ayoynagar Upazila, Jessore District, the Government did not respond to other cases. For instance, no action was taken in response to a gang rape triggered by post-election violence in Monirampur Upazila, Jessore District or the attack on 35 Dalit families in Palpara Village, Bogra District, which had devastating effects on the livelihoods of these families.

43. Also, Paralo Rishipolli of Manirampur Upazila, Jessore district, faced a communal attack[xxvii] on 31 January 2016, which left 15 Dalits injured and under a threat of eviction and 19 houses of Horijan families in Bonchaganj, Panchagar district destroyed by arson. Such communal attacks were unabated in different parts of the country lacking appropriate legal actions by the State. Even when the perpetrators were arrested with the help of Dalit organisations, soon they were bailed and freed. For example, the case of Arpita Das, a 12 years old Dalit girl, who was raped and murdered on 28 June 2013, has not yet been settled and the accused have threatened the victim's family to face the same if they do not withdraw the complaint.

44. A study from 2014[xxviii] reveals that caste and professional identity were the major reasons for the lack of access to justice for Dalit communities. 39% of the respondent shared that they face violence due their caste and professional identity, yet, they rarely register it with police or judicial sector. 66% of the Dalit respondents stated that they do not seek assistance from police at all and 47% of the respondent who sought police assistance did not get justice.

45. The prevailing facts demand for special interventions for Dalits and other excluded communities. The fate of long waited 'Anti-discrimination Act-2013' remains uncertain as it was sent back to the NHRC early this year, for further review. The draft act was expected to be a safeguard for Dalits as it termed discriminatory and 'untouchability' practices a criminal offence.

**46. Recommendations**

10) Take immediate action to pass and ensure an effective implementation of the draft Anti-discrimination Act.
11) Take immediate action to establish a National Dalit Rights Commission tasked to monitor the situation of Dalits in all areas, including employment and access to any of the government measures intended to protect and promote their rights.
12) Establish clear and effective strategies to prevent and investigate violence against religious minorities and Dalits, and prosecute the perpetrators as required by the laws.

# IV. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

13) In order to respect and guarantee the constitutional rights of Dalits, the Government of Bangladesh should enact a law against "untouchability practices" recognizing it as a criminal offence, using model legal acts from other caste affected countries (e.g. India and Nepal), and on the basis of existing human rights frameworks, such as the CERD General Recommendation No. 29 on descent-based discrimination (2002);
14) GoB should develop and implement a national action plan to eliminate work and descent based discrimination, with a particular emphasis on Dalit women and children and other severely marginalised groups, seeking guidance from the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent as a guiding framework for such an action plan;

15) GoB should include disaggregated data on caste in the next census and other data collection, and ensure advance categorization of affected communities in all data collection;

16) GoB should undertake a comprehensive study on the human rights situation of Dalits.

17) GoB should give special attention to the primary and tertiary level education of Dalits, incuding discrimination free access and equal employment opportunities post education.

18) GoB should address the situation of Dalits in their access to a good standard of housing and land ownership – provide improved housing facilities to Dalits in the urban areas and stop forceful evictions without an adequate rehabilitation.

## Notes

[i] Iftekhar Uddin Chowdhury, "Caste-based discrimination in South Asia: a study of Bangladesh", working paper series, vol. III, No. 07 (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2009), p. 2.

[ii] IDSN Briefing note on Bangladesh, 2015: http://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/IDSN-briefing-note-Bangladesh-2015.pdf (accessed February 2017)

[iii] A/HRC/31/56 (pp. 14)

[iv] Minority Rights Group: Under threat: The challenges facing religious minorities in Bangladesh (2016). Available at: http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MRG_Rep_Ban_Oct16_ONLINE.pdf (p. 9)

[v] A/HRC/31/56 (pp. 16)

[vi] Equity Watch: Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for Dalits in Bangladesh: Challenges and Ways Forward. (2015) (p. 27).

[vii] Minority Rights Group: Under threat: The challenges facing religious minorities in Bangladesh (2016). http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MRG_Rep_Ban_Oct16_ONLINE.pdf (p. 9)

[viii] Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, Non-discrimination section, paragraph 11(d), page 3. Available here: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fBGD%2fCO%2f1&Lang=en

[ix] Ibid., 12(d).

[x] The weekly Dipbani, January 27, 2016

[xi] Bangladesh Coutry Paper, Fifth South Asian Conference on Sanitation, http://www.sacosanv.gov.np/sacosan, Access date 23 March 2015

[xii] Equity Watch 2015, Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for Dalits in Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward, Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM

[xiii] Parvez, Altaf and Mazharul Islam, 2014, Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchona o Osprisshota (Dalit Communities in Bangladesh: Situation of Discrimination, Exclusion and Untouchability).

[xiv] Parvez, Altaf and Mazharul Islam (Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM), 2014, Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchona o Osprisshota (Dalit Communities in Bangladesh: Situation of Discrimination, Exclusion and Untouchability).

[xv] Ibid.

[xvi] Article 28. Constitution of Bangladesh, http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print_sections_all.php?id=367

[xvii] Paragraph 38.1, Constitution of Bangladesh, http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print_sections_all.php?id=367

[xviii] Parvez, Altaf and Mazharul Islam, 2014, Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchona o Osprisshota *(*Dalit Communities in Bangladesh: Situation of Discrimination, Exclusion and Untouchability).

[xix] Ibid.

[xx] Parvez, Altaf and Mazharul Islam, 2014, Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchona o Osprisshota *(*Dalit Communities in Bangladesh: Situation of Discrimination, Exclusion and Untouchability).

[xxi] Rowshan, Rabeya, Riazuddin Khan (2016), Bringing Dalit Women to the Forefront: Realities and Challenges, Nagorik Uddyog & BDERM

[xxii] Equity Watch 2014, Challenges and Prospects for Dalits Securing their Rights to Education in Bangladesh, Nagorik Uddyog, BDERM

[xxiii] See here: http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/dakarframework-action-education-all-meeting-our-collectivecommitments (Accessed 5 September 2014).

[xxiv] Article 28(1)

[xxv] Parvez, Altaf and Mazharul Islam, 2014, Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchona O Osprisshota (Dalits in Bangladesh: Discrimination, Exclusion and Untouchability').

[xxvi] See here: http://www.thedailystar.net/attack-on-hindus-in-jessore-was-planned-6783

[xxvii] See here: http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/756043

[xxviii] Parvez, Altaf and Mazharul Islam, 2014, Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchona o Osprisshota (Dalit Communities in Bangladesh: Situation of Discrimination, Exclusion and Untouchability).