



**DALIT SOLIDARITY
NETWORK UK**
A world without caste discrimination



REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2013 - 2014

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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters of Dalit Solidarity Network UK

Caste discrimination remains one of the biggest human rights abuses existing today, which involves the abhorrent practice of untouchability and descent-based social and economic inequality. Caste discrimination still goes unchallenged and often unacknowledged. But the tireless work of activists and supporters continues to raise awareness of this issue.

We are a unique organisation in the UK, aiming to change values and practices through policy changes worldwide. We are making a difference and we add our voice to a growing human rights movement campaigning for change on this issue.

There have been many successes this year that you can read about in this Review, but we also have ongoing challenges – not least one of political will here in the UK. With the help of many thousands of activists and ordinary people throughout the UK, we have achieved something remarkable. We must now strive to ensure that we maintain that engagement at all levels of society and insist that the government provides protection against caste discrimination as they have agreed to do in a timely and effective manner.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Anti-Slavery International, without whose generous support DSN-UK would struggle to survive.

Once again a big thank you to Maya Sethi who stepped in at the last minute to help me get everything ready for this year's AGM, including proofing the Annual Review and preparing everything for on the day.

I will continue to update you on our progress – both our successes and challenges. **We do hope you will be able to continue to support us in the years to come as we fight for a caste free world.**



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Naina Varnus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

REVIEW

Key Activities Include:

- Advocacy, advice and analysis to the UK Parliament and others on discrimination the grounds of caste
- Providing technical advice and analysis to the corporate sector in the UK and internationally on addressing caste-based discrimination and other labour rights abuses
- Promoting international advocacy with the International Dalit Solidarity Network
- Raising Awareness of all aspects of discrimination, exclusion and abuse of human rights on the grounds of caste-based discrimination

UK Parliamentary lobbying

Caste outlawed in the UK

On 23 April 2013, the Government tabled an eleventh-hour amendment in the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill to activate Clause 9(5)(a) of the Equality Act to finally legislate against caste discrimination in the UK. The joy of the 1000s of Dalit protestors in Parliament Square was overwhelming and very emotional. Many of our key supporters came out after the vote to speak to us. Lords Avebury and Hossain. And many MPs from all sides of the House, including Jeremy Corbyn, Richard Fuller, John McDonnell and Pat McFadden



Baroness Thornton and Kate Green MP, Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities

In July 2013, our euphoria was brutally extinguished by the Government's announcement of an unprecedented 2 year consultation period. This was to include further research commissioned by the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and a public consultation to take place after the aforementioned study. The timetable as set out means that the clause would not effectively be implemented before the next General Election of 2015.

DSN-UK has since urged the Government to undertake its consultation without unnecessary delay and implement the legislation – now on the statute books before the next General Election.

However the Government seems determined to kick the issue of caste discrimination into the long grass, despite it now being on the statute books.

In February 2014 the Equality and Human Rights Commission completed their tranche of the timetable by the publication of 2 reports on Caste in Britain – a Socio-Legal Review and a Stakeholders and Experts Consultation.

This EHRC research was tendered out to a consortium of academics led by Dr Meena Dhanda, Professor David Mosse and Dr Annapurna Waughray. Their two reports are 'A socio-legal review' and 'An experts and stakeholder workshop' were published on 28 February 2014.

Both reports confirm that caste discrimination “cannot be tolerated and should be included in the protections against discrimination and harassment provided in the Equality Act 2010”. The reports also question the proposed sunset clause: “for a non-discrimination ground is legally without precedent and goes against this key differential”

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/our-research/research-reports/research-reports-91-100/>

The Government Equalities Office, having received these reports early in January 2014 was to draft the questions for the consultation by February 2014 - followed by a draft Affirmative Order in Autumn 2014.

UK Government response to several other Lords’ questioning the unreasonable delays to implementation of caste discrimination legislation; worried that the next phase proposed “could be seen as intrusive and might have an adverse effect on good relations in the relevant communities”. Which communities do they mean?

More recently, in July 2014 Lord Avebury's Parliamentary Question to the Minister regarding the consultation was answered with a wholly unacceptable further delay of 6 months and more. If this continues this legislation will not see the light of day before 2016, by which time the ‘sunset clause’ will have been active for 3 years.

DSN-UK continues to urge the Government to proceed without further delay and implement the legislation against caste discrimination to protect hundreds of thousands of its own citizens.



Lord Avebury and Jeremy Corbyn MP, Chair DSN-UK

A separate meeting was called by the Head of Faith and Community engagement at the Communities and Local Government Department with Dalit groups (ACDA, Case Watch, VODI and DSN) and Raj Bhari – Head of Talk for a Change. The UK government has commissioned the latter to run an education programme alongside and during the consultation period. We have had no news regarding this programme since that meeting in September 2013.

In December 2013 an All Party Parliamentary Group for British Hindus was launched with Bob Blackman MP as the Chair. This Group is serviced by the Hindu Lawyers Association – a key member of the Alliance for Hindu Organisations and vocal opponents of the caste legislation.

The **All Party Parliamentary Group for Dalits** chaired by Lord Harries continues to ask questions of the Government with regard to caste legislation in the UK. The Group invited the authors of the EHRC report to present their findings. Lord Avebury is a true champion of the cause and has doggedly pursued the Government with regard to the UK legislation.

Lord Harries has followed up on caste discrimination in the international context and recently wrote to the then Foreign Secretary and Chancellor in advance of their ‘business’ trip to India to meet Narendra Modi – the new Indian PM.

Meena Varma continues to coordinate the All Party Parliamentary Group for Dalits in a personal capacity

Other Parliamentary lobbying and advocacy

International Development (DfID)

There is the ongoing challenge of the withdrawal of DfID funding to India from 2015 which will only serve to leave the poorest and most marginal and socially excluded peoples even more at the fringes of society with little or no access to the benefits of living in the world's second fastest growing economy.

The Director continues to be part of the DfID Roundtable, raising the issue of Pakistan Dalits who are still socially and physically excluded from the mainstream, as they are compelled to live in segregated housing and are denied fundamental social, political and economic rights.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

There is ongoing dialogue with the Foreign Office and DSN Director met with the Nepal Desk Officer, providing her with a brief for the UK Ambassador to Nepal, Andy Sparke.

Later in July 2013 the Director met with the India - Bilateral and Prosperity Team, South Asia Department to give an overview of both India and Bangladesh in regard to Dalits and the names of several organisations to contact. The FCO have also been lobbied by the Dalit Freedom Network and were due to meet them in Bangalore.

The 2nd Secretary James Evans based at the FCO in Delhi has the Human Rights portfolio.

Lobbying the Lords Spiritual

A meeting organised by Trustee, Revd David Haslam at Church House took place the day after the AGM in July 2013, hosted by the Bishop of Derby, Alastair Redfern. DSN Director sent briefing papers to the Interfaith advisors of both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Leicester. It has been a tricky time for Interfaith dialogue, as the Alliance of Hindu Organisations has been very active in its lobbying the Church at the highest levels.

DSN Director alongside Voice of Dalit International (VODI) attended a meeting in December 2013 with the Archbishop of Canterbury's Interfaith Adviser Toby Howarth. There was very constructive dialogue; although the Church's position is very much one of caution due to fractured faith relations with Hindu groups.

Eugene Culas from VODI and Fr. Gerard Mitchell of St Anselm's Church in Southall met with Lord Harries to brief us on an event they were planning. Lord Harries and Lord Alton were asked to be keynote speakers – alongside Bishop Pat Lynch – at the 2-day conference planned for 18 and 19 February 2014 on *Christian Responsibility to Dalits*. The attendance by the many faith-based INGOs that were invited was sadly minimal.

Working With the Corporate Sector

DSN continues to play a significant role within the education of the UK corporate sector with regard to labour rights issues against Dalits in sourcing countries.

The work with ETI and the companies who are members continue apace, especially in the Stone programme. ETI has received funding from the FCO to address the labour and human rights abuses in the stone supply chain in Rajasthan. This programme is designed to reflect company obligations under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

DSN continue to be the main NGO in the programme and will work alongside Centre for Dalit Rights, Gravis, Aajevika and the Centre for Labour Rights – all NGOs in Rajasthan who are friends of DSN-UK.

Meena Varma continues as Board member of the Ethical trading Initiative.

The Ethical Trading Initiative Tamil Nadu Multi Stakeholder Group

Following a period of scoping of the issues and consultation, networking and relationship-building with industry, Government, NGOs and trade unions, ETI developed a framework and indicative budget for the programme. A Coimbatore-based programme team was recruited and an office set up. The team has now completed its orientation and induction period. With all this now in place, ETI called a series of meetings in February 2014 to begin the process of implementing the programme on the ground with local stakeholders.



Representatives of local NGOs, trade unions and other organisations with special expertise and knowledge of the Sumangali and related issues attended the meetings, along with ETI staff from Coimbatore, Delhi and the UK. The purpose of the meetings was to consult with NGOs and trade unions on the TNMS implementation plan, plan the community outreach work, decide on a model for the programme and organise a local working group.

I was asked to be part of the UK team to help facilitate the meetings and to address the concerns of the local NGOs in particular and to bridge the gap between the London-based group and the local stakeholder group

ETIs and DSNs working together in Europe

In December 2013 I spoke at an event hosted by **ETI Denmark in Copenhagen** to present caste discrimination and labour rights and how we have managed to get UK companies through the ETI to begin to address this issue.

A position paper will be prepared by ETI-DK and we will seek signatories from the UK, Norway and NL.

International campaign work

At the United Nations

On June 17 2014 the side event addressing violence against Dalit women took place at the United Nations in Geneva. It was sponsored by Human Rights Watch, International Movement against all forms of Discrimination and Racism, Minority Rights Group, Franciscan International, and Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development and organised in association with International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) and co-sponsored by Denmark and Norway.

The event addressed caste-based sexual and other forms of violence against women and girls in caste-affected countries and explored with United Nations stakeholders how to take comprehensive and urgent action on this issue. Dalit women human rights defenders spoke of the reality on the ground in South Asia and a preview of a documentary on the Dalit women's fight for justice in India was screened.



Ms. Navi Pillay, the outgoing UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, gave the keynote address.

At the European Parliament

A series of meetings took place at the European parliament in September 2013 and Director, Meena Varma, managed to secure individual meetings with the following UK and Irish MEPs Jean Lambert, Michael Cashman, Graham Watson, Martina Anderson, Paul Murphy and Gay Mitchell.

In October 2013 the European Parliament voted with a huge majority to pass a resolution to combat caste based discrimination around the world.

The resolution was supported by UK and Ireland MEPS but action in the UK to change discrimination laws to include Caste has been repeatedly delayed.

Prior to the vote a number of MEPs spoke on caste discrimination including Paul Murphy, Martina Anderson and Jean Lambert, who is a patron of the Dalit Solidarity Network (DSN).

Jean said: 'I am pleased to see this issue being addressed and I condemn the human rights violations committed against the estimated 260 million people worldwide suffering from caste based discrimination.'

MEP Martina Anderson – 'In Britain the disgraceful attempts of the government to block or delay the extension of equality legislation to include caste based discrimination should be condemned.'

The resolution calls for, amongst other things, a "caste-based discrimination clause in all trade and association agreements."

The International Dalit Solidarity Network

Meena Varma continues as the Co-convenor of the Executive Group. The **IDSN EG** met in September in Brussels and was joined for the first time by the Norwegian Human Rights Fund and representing DSN Norway, replacing Dalit Network Netherlands on the EG.

The meeting covered updates from the UN and EU; challenges of finance and funding; the EP Resolution and how to disseminate the information through our media contacts. We were updated about the new publication – Equality in Aid, jointly produced by IDSN, NCDHR and Christian Aid.

IDSN is currently undertaking a comprehensive strategic review in advance of the Council Meeting scheduled for November 2014.

Ending the Sumangali Scheme in Tamil Nadu

DSN-UK delighted to partner READ – Rights Education and Development Centre

In Tamil Nadu, South India, textile and garment products for big brands and retailers are being made by girls and young women from low caste backgrounds under exploitative working conditions. Workers are recruited from poverty-stricken areas within as well outside of the state of Tamil Nadu. They are recruited under the so-called ‘Sumangali Thittam’ or ‘Marriage Scheme’, whereby workers are recruited with the promise that they will receive a considerable amount of money after completion of three to five years of employment. This exploitative scheme is tantamount to bonded labour, because employers withhold part of the workers’ wages until the end of the ‘contract’. Workers are severely restricted in their freedom of movement and privacy. The majority of the workers are Dalit (outcaste) girls younger than 18 from poor families who are lured with the promises of a decent wage and the lump sum payment upon completion of the contract that may be used for their dowry.



Inspired by the work of grassroots organisation READ – Rights Development and Education Centre, we applied for funding to TRaid - I am pleased to announce that application was successful. And so in October 2013 we started a programme to last over 3 years to address the forced labour of girls and young women in mills.

Meet Manju, an ex-Sumangali worker. She was still only 13 at the time of her rescue. She had been working at a mill for over two years, but ‘escaped’ in October 2013 and with READ’s help, she and others are now back at regular school.



Raising Awareness and Strengthening the Network

DSN Patron Rodney Bickerstaffe and Director Meena met with the TUC Equalities and Race Relations Officers to discuss what they could do to raise more awareness of Dalits here and abroad throughout the TUC. These discussions and ideas are on-going.

In November 2013, Trustee, Revd. David Haslam attended a meeting in the House of Lords with Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, chaired by Lord Avebury. The meeting was organised by the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance.

In September, as a result of the long drawn out timetable proposed by the Government, ACDA organised a further protest in Parliament Square.

On October 12 2013 CasteWatch was the driving force behind a march from Hyde Park to Downing Street. A petition with over 20,000 signatures was presented to Prime Minister David Cameron; handed in to 10 Downing Street on the day. Thousands of Dalits and activists across the country marched in support.



US News

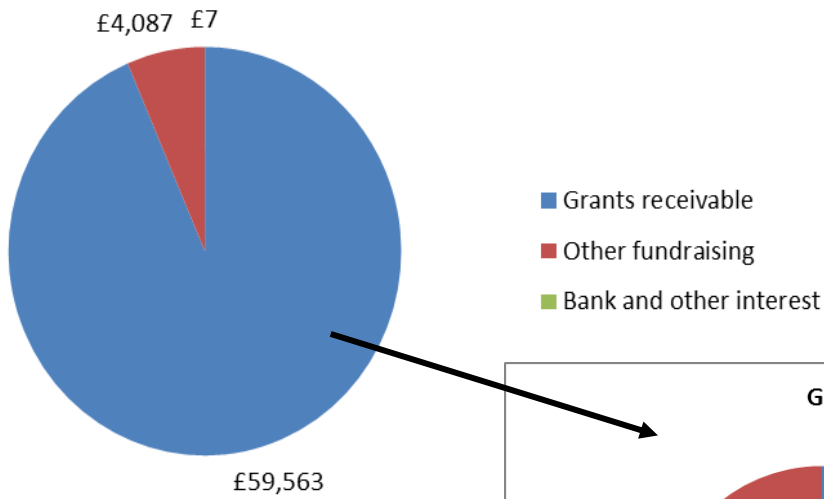
WASHINGTON, DC – In advance of the April 14 birthday of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a freedom fighter for the Dalit people, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) announced that she will introduce a resolution when Congress returns from recess. This resolution will condemn Dalit untouchability, the practice of birth-descent discrimination against Dalit people, which is still widely practiced in India, Nepal, the Asian diaspora and other South Asian nations, and will call on these countries to recognise the human rights of the Dalit people and end all forms of untouchability within their borders.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

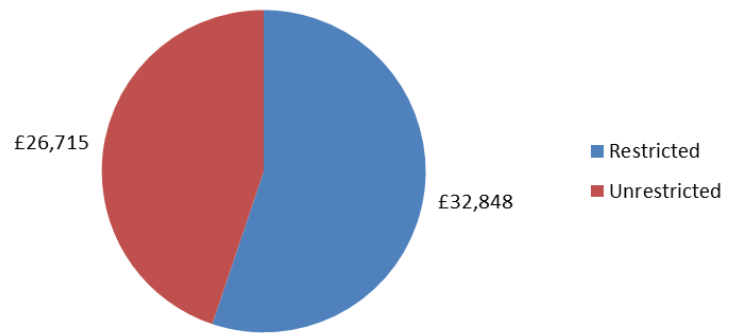
- UK Government agrees to activate Clause 9(5) effectively outlawing caste discrimination in this country
- The European parliament passes a resolution to protect the rights of Dalits worldwide
- DSN successfully applies to TRAIID to partner grassroots organisation READ in Tamil Nadu with a programmes aimed at eliminating forced labour of young Dalit women and girls in textile mills
- ETI programme brings together global companies, trades unions and NGOS to work alongside local counterpoints to address same issue as above in their own supply chains
- DSN is the leading NGO in the ETI programmes in India
- DSN/DSN Director has more than 75 mentions in local, national and international published and broadcast media
- DSN Twitter followers at nearly 500 – growing more than three times in the last year
- ETIs in Europe show an increased interest in addressing labour rights abuses and caste-based discrimination. New upsurge in 'The Ambedkar Principles'
- DSN's partner in India READ rescues and ensures education for young 13 year old Dalit girl

ACCOUNTS AT A GLANCE

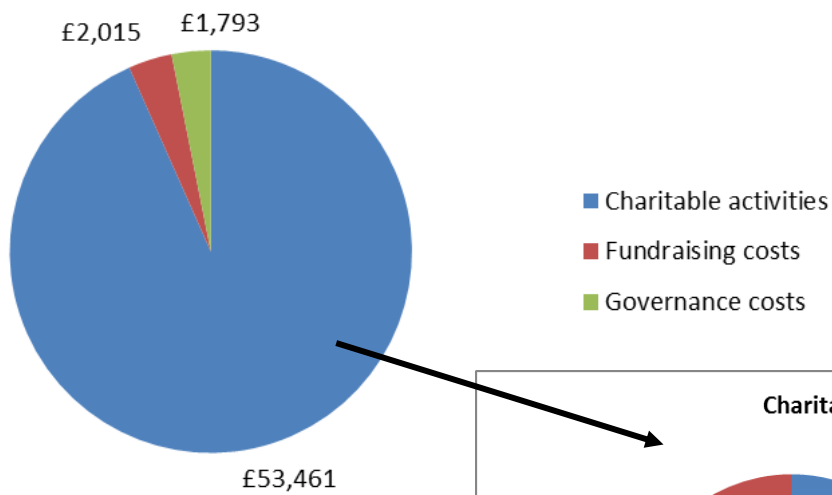
Income 2013/14



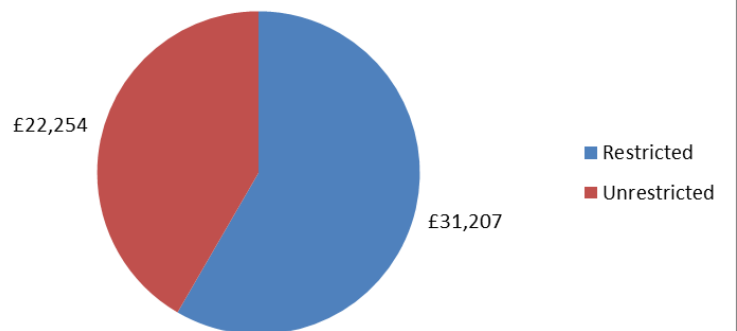
Grants receivable



Expenditure



Charitable activities



THANK YOU

A K and MM Hanton Trust

Anti Slavery International

CasteWatch UK

Ethical Trading Initiative

Evan Cornish Foundation

Farthing Trust

Green Belt Trust

Institute of Commonwealth Studies

International Dalit Solidarity Network

Minority Rights Group International

Notting Hill Methodist Church

Silbury Trust

St Clare and St Francis Trust

Three Oaks Trust

TRAID

WaterAid

Wyndham Trust

And a special thanks to all the members and supporters of the Network who give up their time to attend meetings, rallies and other events.