



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



©Jakob Carlsen/International Dalit Solidarity Network

REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2017/2018

Thomas Clarkson House, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London, SW9 9TL

Tel: +44 (0)20 7501 8323, E-mail: info@dsnuk.org

Web: www.dsnuk.org, Charity No. 1107022

Contents

A Word from the Director	3
Executive Summary	4
1. UK Parliamentarians actively and positively engage into Dalit cause worldwide	
1.1 All Party Parliamentary Group for Dalits (APP)	4
1.2 Caste legislation in the UK	5
1.3 Other Parliamentary Work	6
2. Business operating in caste-affected countries introduce measures to address caste-based discrimination throughout their supply chain	
2.1 The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)	6
2.2 DSN-UK and READ	7
2.3 Other Corporate Work	7
3. Support international advocacy efforts to address caste-based discrimination at the UN, EU and other international institutions	
3.1 At the United Nations	7
3.2 At the European Union	8
4. Increase media attention on all aspects of caste-based discrimination	8
5. DSN-UK seen as an expert and respected voice on caste-based discrimination	8
6. Highlights and Challenges of the Year	9
In Memoriam: Tribute to Rodney Bickerstaffe	10
Accounts at a Glance	11
Thank you	12

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 global human rights movement campaigning for change on caste based discrimination.

Dalit Solidarity Network UK (DSN-UK) has been campaigning alongside other UK human rights and Dalit organisations for the introduction of legislation against caste-based discrimination for many years. As it stands, victims do not have adequate opportunities for legal redress within the existing legislation. Despite claims from the anti-legislation lobby that caste discrimination does not exist in the UK, it was the Government-commissioned report that clearly evidenced that it does.

Believe it or not, DSN-UK is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. It has come a long way from the humble beginnings of a group of firm friends brought together by our Founder/Trustee Revd David Haslam MBE. And while 2017/18 has had its disappointments, notably the government's decision to repeal the caste duty in the Equality Act 2010, it can also claim many successes and achievements. Our network continues to grow and our links with other organisations fighting against caste discrimination across the globe are flourishing.

My special thanks, as always to the trustees and patrons, who give so much of their time and energy; and this year to Hannah Tausz, who has stepped in to the breach to take over from Danni, who is currently on maternity leave. She has been doing an excellent job – keeping me in check and watching over me as needed.

But Danguole (Danni) Kleinaityte deserves here a special mention. She has been a rock and invaluable support to me and DSN-UK for almost three years. We wish her all the best and huge congratulations to her and her husband Sam on the birth of their baby daughter, Ayesha.



Most of all our thanks to you as members and supporters. We couldn't do what we do without you.

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 "Nanna Varnas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Executive Summary

Dalit Solidarity Network (DSN-UK) began in 1998 and now brings together organisations and individuals in the UK, who are concerned with caste-based discrimination and aims to link grassroots priorities with international mechanisms and institutions to make an effective contribution to the liberation of those affected by caste discrimination.

DSN-UK registered as a charity in 2004 and since then has continued to grow as an effective campaigning and advocacy organization working on caste discrimination in the UK. Our membership includes concerned individuals, development agencies, trade unions, journalists and academics.

We are working towards equality and social justice for Dalits both in the UK and worldwide in other caste-affected countries. We are a small pioneering headquarters organization in the UK, working jointly with other likeminded groups, building strategic alliances to maximise advocacy opportunities and build a stronger network of organisations. Our aims are to change values and practices through policy changes worldwide. We raise awareness and support Dalit demands for justice – through an effective advocacy programme.

Our five key objectives are as follows:

1. UK Parliamentarians actively and positively engage with the Dalit cause worldwide;
2. Businesses operating in caste-affected countries introduce measures to address caste-based discrimination throughout their supply chains;
3. Support international advocacy efforts to address caste-based discrimination at the UN, EU and other international institutions;
4. Increase media attention on all aspects of caste-based discrimination;
5. DSN-UK seen as an expert and respected voice on caste-based discrimination.

1. UK Parliamentarians actively and positively engage with the Dalit cause worldwide

1.1 All Party Parliamentary Group for Dalits [APPG]

The announcement of the 2017 General Election meant that all parliamentary activity went into purdah from May until June. Consequently, all APPGs were de-registered and no political work was undertaken during this time. However, at the AGM in July the APPG was successfully reconstituted and the Officers re-elected. The meeting was also attended by Baroness Burt, leading on equalities for the Liberal Democrats; Lord Alton; The Earl of Sandwich; and Lord Young. With the Public Consultation on Caste in Britain running from March to September, a submission was made on behalf of the APPG. The Director of DSN-UK continues to be the Public Enquiry Point for the group, and consequently plays a significant role in accessing political pressure.

The APPG hosted a meeting 'Behind the Indian Boom' in November 2017, chaired by Baroness Amos. Dr Jens Lerche (SOAS) and Dr Alpa Shah (LSE) presented their research to several INGOs, including ETI and Anti-Slavery: *With India set to become one of the world's largest economies, what does that mean for the 23% of its population who are Tribals or Dalits?* The research presented showed that despite the economic boom, they remain at the bottom of the hierarchy in social, economic and cultural terms – victims of poverty, injustice and slavery.

1.2 Caste legislation in the UK

In April 2017 DSN-UK convened a meeting of Dalit organisations, NGOs and academics to discuss the consultation questionnaire on 'Caste in Great Britain' that was finally launched by the UK Government in March. Several issues were raised, including the language used and the bias of the questions. A guideline for responses was prepared and a plan of action drawn up, including a letter to Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, voicing the groups' concerns. Because of the General Election, the previous deadline of July 2017 for the closure of the consultation was extended to September.

Caste in the UK

The coalition formally launched www.casteintheuk.org, a website to provide help, expertise and some model answers for those wishing to take part, and had 1,041 users from June to September 2017, with 3,187 views and 589 returning visitors. The website and associated twitter handle @casteintheuk are managed by DSN-UK.

As of the end March 2018 there had been no progress on when the Consultation results would finally be published, despite the APPG's best efforts to try and pin down an answer. The Minister for Equalities at the time, Nick Gibb, explained in parliament that over 13,000 responses had been received, compared to the usual 200-300, and thus a longer time for analysis would be required (also hampered by the third change in Secretary of State for Women and Equalities since the process began).

But now HMG has made its position clear – it will repeal the caste duty and therefore NOT provide any protection to those who maybe victims of this form of discrimination, as announced in its carefully released response to the consultation results the eve before parliamentary recess on 23 July 2018.

In the words of Michael Ford QC in his excellent [piece](#): *"We are back where we started, just as we were before the EqA replaced the Race Relations Act 1976."*

1.3 Other Parliamentary Work

In April 2017 the DSN-UK Director spoke at the Asia Pacific Regional Workshop on Modern Slavery in London on bonded labour in India, asking why it is so prevalent and what is being done to stop it. With an estimated 11.7 million people in bonded labour in the region, the session highlighted the issue of caste-based discrimination, as well as poverty, which are key contributing factors to exploitation. The Director's presentation was met with 'some pointed remarks' from Indian MPs present.



2. Businesses operating in caste-affected countries introduce measures to address caste-based discrimination throughout their supply chains

2.1 The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)

The DSN-UK Director has continued to play a role in both the South India textile supply chain work and the Rajasthan Stone Group. As part of this, she has also managed to raise the issues of Dalits, caste and supply chains at a meeting with the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research, the UN Business and Human Rights Forum in Geneva, and regularly attends the ETI NGO Caucus.

As the issue often remains hidden (and is one that few businesses understand or fear to address), DSN-UK has undertaken the design and drafting of the ETI Guidance on caste discrimination in global supply chains.



The ETI organised a Tamil Nadu Multi Stakeholder Co conference 'Good for Workers, Good for Business' in March 2018 to review the Tamil Nadu programme's progress so far. DSN-UK Director was invited to chair a session on 'Freedom of Movement'. There were

more than 100 people present from international business, local mills and trade associations, trade unions, NGOs and workers. A key debate concerned the current state of freedom provided to female workers versus the issue of safety.

2.2 DSN-UK and READ

DSN-UK's programme with READ has now come to an end, following on from TRAIID's decision to fund them directly. However, we made a joint submission to the Special Rapporteur (SR) on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Urmila Bhoola. Her thematic report for 2017 was on access to justice for victims of slavery. The report was presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in September 2017 (see below).

2.3 Other Corporate Work

Following on from the Director's work with ETI, she was approached by an ETI company member to advise them on their 'Contract and Casual Labour Policy' in their North Indian garment factories, in time for their suppliers' conference in Delhi in April 2017. She is also active as an adviser on an ETI Innovation Fund project, which is led by Homeworkers Worldwide.

This year our support was given to the Dalit Solidarity in Deutschland, to advise on corporate sector work and the synergies between the business and human rights agenda and caste discrimination in key sourcing countries.

3. Support international advocacy efforts to address caste-based discrimination at the UN, EU and other international institutions

3.1 At the United Nations

The new UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on Minority Issues, Fernand de Varennes pledged to maintain a focus on Dalits and caste discrimination, building on the fine work done by his two predecessors. The theme of the 2017 Forum on Minority Issues was 'Minority Youth – Towards Diverse and Inclusive Societies'. Two young Dalit women were part of the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) delegation and actively participated.



At the 36th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, the SR on Contemporary Forms of Slavery presented her annual thematic report. DSN-UK and its partner READ made a joint submission that was directly referenced as part of the theme on access to justice for young Dalit women and girls subjected to forced labour schemes in the garment industry in South India.

The Director also attended the pre-session meetings in April 2017 for the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) for both the UK and India, but was disappointed that the UK had failed to mention caste-based discrimination in the report, despite the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial

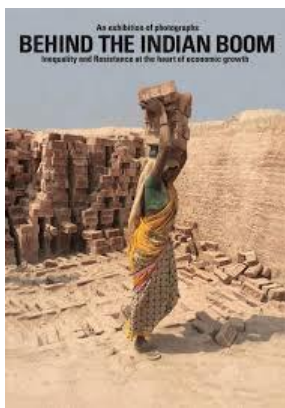
Discrimination (CERD) having recommended the immediate implementation of the caste clause in the Equality Act 2010.

3.2 At the European Union

The Director visited Brussels in June 2017 and held meetings with the European External Action Service (EEAS), the International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) and key Members of the European Parliaments and assistants to inform them of developments in caste-affected countries and look to future avenues for engagement.

In December the European Parliament's 'Annual Report on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter' was also adopted. The report contained a number of references to caste discrimination. MEPs repeated their calling for the development of an EU policy on caste discrimination and urged the EU and its member states to intensify efforts and support related initiatives at UN and delegation level by 'implementing and monitoring the 2030 SDGs, monitoring the new UN Guidance Tool on descent-based discrimination and supporting states' implementation of recommendations by UN human rights mechanisms on the topic of caste discrimination'.

4. Increase media attention on all aspects of caste-based discrimination



DSN-UK is committed to a close relationship with the media. Several articles in *The Wire*, *First Post*, *Open Democracy*, *The Sunday Times*, *Little India*, *Daily Mail*, *The Diplomat* and *The News Pakistan* have featured the DSN-UK Director this year. DSN-UK was proud to support an exhibition of photographs in conjunction with the event 'Behind the Indian Boom: Inequality and Resistance at the Heart of Economic Growth', which was held at SOAS Brunei Gallery between October and December 2017.

With Curators: Simon Chambers and Alpa Shah, *Behind The Indian Boom* explores the precarious conditions of work and everyday struggles of the Dalits and Adivasis spanning the production of different commodities from tea to cotton, exploring the building of the infrastructure sustaining Indian economic growth from construction to dams, investigating the extraction of mineral resources. Importantly, it also highlights their fight back against the situations they find themselves in.

5. DSN-UK seen as an expert and respected voice on caste-based discrimination

DSN-UK has been represented at a large number of events this year, including: Christian Network against Caste Discrimination, organised by VODI, where the director appeared on a discussion panel at the two-day event; and at the Freedom Fund NGO Forum to discuss strategies to address bonded labour and trafficking in India and Pakistan. Meetings include those with Bright Blue, a professional 'left' Conservative Think Tank with over 140 Conservative MPs and a focus on the UK legal rights and human rights agenda; Karuna Trust partner ADWAN.ORG, which aims to empower women and children in Nepal; Christian Aid, to discuss caste and labour rights, focusing

on the Tata group; and the London-based Sisters for Change, who have several projects in India and recently organised a National Convention on Violence against Women in Delhi. Perhaps most exciting is that the Director was part of a SOAS screening of the documentary *Caste Aside* (she also featured in the film).

During the last year DSN-UK has sent news updates and invested time in developing and strengthening relationships with supportive organisations, individuals and networks – including with Dalit Solidarity Networks in Europe such as Germany, Norway, Finland and the Netherlands – and continue to take part in the Bond Group on Caste and Development meetings.

Often approached by journalists for an expert opinion, the DSN-UK Director has contributed to or been quoted in many articles and broadcasts, and we often provide briefings prior to visits to South Asia to cover Caste and other human rights issues.

Highlights of the Year

- In April 2017 DSN-UK convened the **first key stakeholders’ meeting** to agree on a plan to mobilise and co-ordinate responses for the government’s Public Consultation on Caste in the UK.
- This coalition formally launched www.casteintheuk.org to provide help, expertise and some model answers.
- On the same note, we managed to have the **Consultation extended** until September 2017, allowing more people the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire.
- DSN-UK supported the setting up and monitoring of a new website **www.casteintheuk.org**, to help give direction on the Consultation to the public.
- The DSN-UK Director took part in the documentary **‘Caste Aside’** by Priyanka Mogul and Damiano Petrucci, a film that examines both sides of the argument, originally screened in December 2017.
- DSN-UK Director was one of 7 shortlisted for the 2018 Secularist of the Year Award
- **DSN-UK Facebook** page reached over 2,525 followers and **@DSNUK Twitter** followers reached over 11,800.

In Memoriam: Tribute to Rodney Bickerstaffe



*Rodney Bickerstaffe
(6 April 1945 – 3 October 2017)*

The world is a sadder place with the passing of the great Rodney Bickerstaffe. To most people he was a giant of the trade unions movement, without whom there would be no Minimum Wage. Without him, workers' rights would not have been front and centre in this country.

But to us all here at the Dalit Solidarity Network UK, he was – along with his old friends Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP, leader of the Labour Party, and Revd David Haslam MBE – a founding member of a unique organisation in the UK that fights for the rights of Dalits across the world.

Their plight touched him profoundly and his fierce will to stand up for them against seemingly more powerful forces gave us all the strength to continue the struggle and made us even more determined to win.

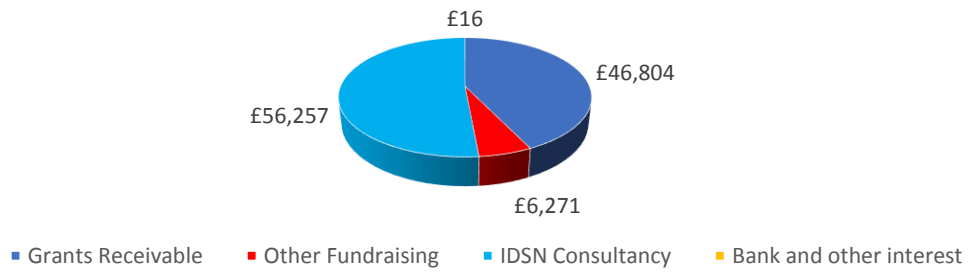
Rodney was involved in fighting discrimination of all kinds/ He was a champion of the most marginalised and always stood up for the rights of what many would see as lost causes.

In true democratic fashion (being a real man of the people), he had no qualms in turning down both a Knighthood and Lordship. Not many others have so firmly stood by their principles. And echoing David Haslam's book title, and something that I know Rodney would remind us of: A LUTA CONTINUA.....

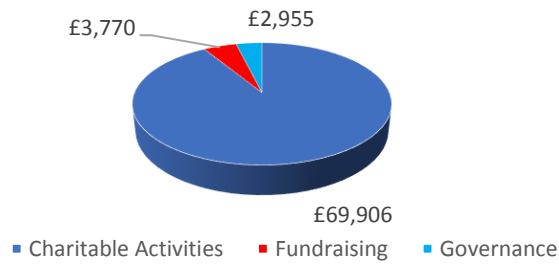
We have lost someone very special, but he will live in our hearts for a long time.

Accounts at a Glance

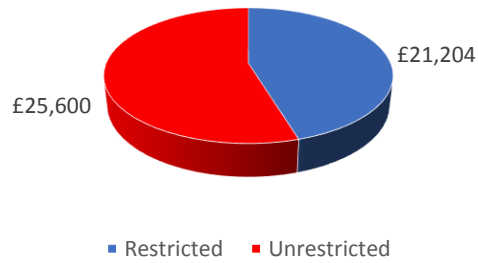
Income 2017/18



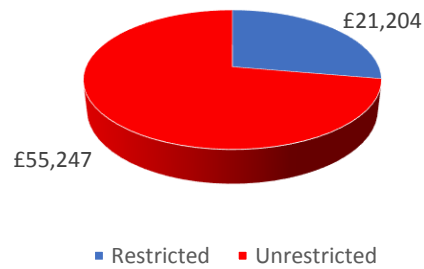
Expenditure 2017/18



Grants Receivable



Charitable Activities



Thank you

Anti-Slavery International

CasteWatch UK

Ethical Trading Initiative

Evan Cornish Foundation

Farthing Trust

International Dalit Solidarity Network

Karuna Trust

Methodist Church in Britain

St Clare and St Francis Trust

Three Oaks Trust

Village Services Trust

Wyndham Trust

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