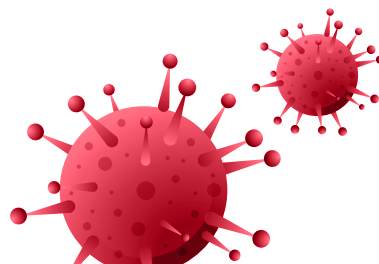
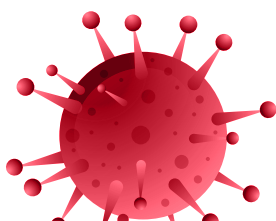


IMPACT AND RESILIENCE IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ANALYSIS ON
DALIT
COMMUNITIES
IN NEPAL



Asia Dalit Rights Forum



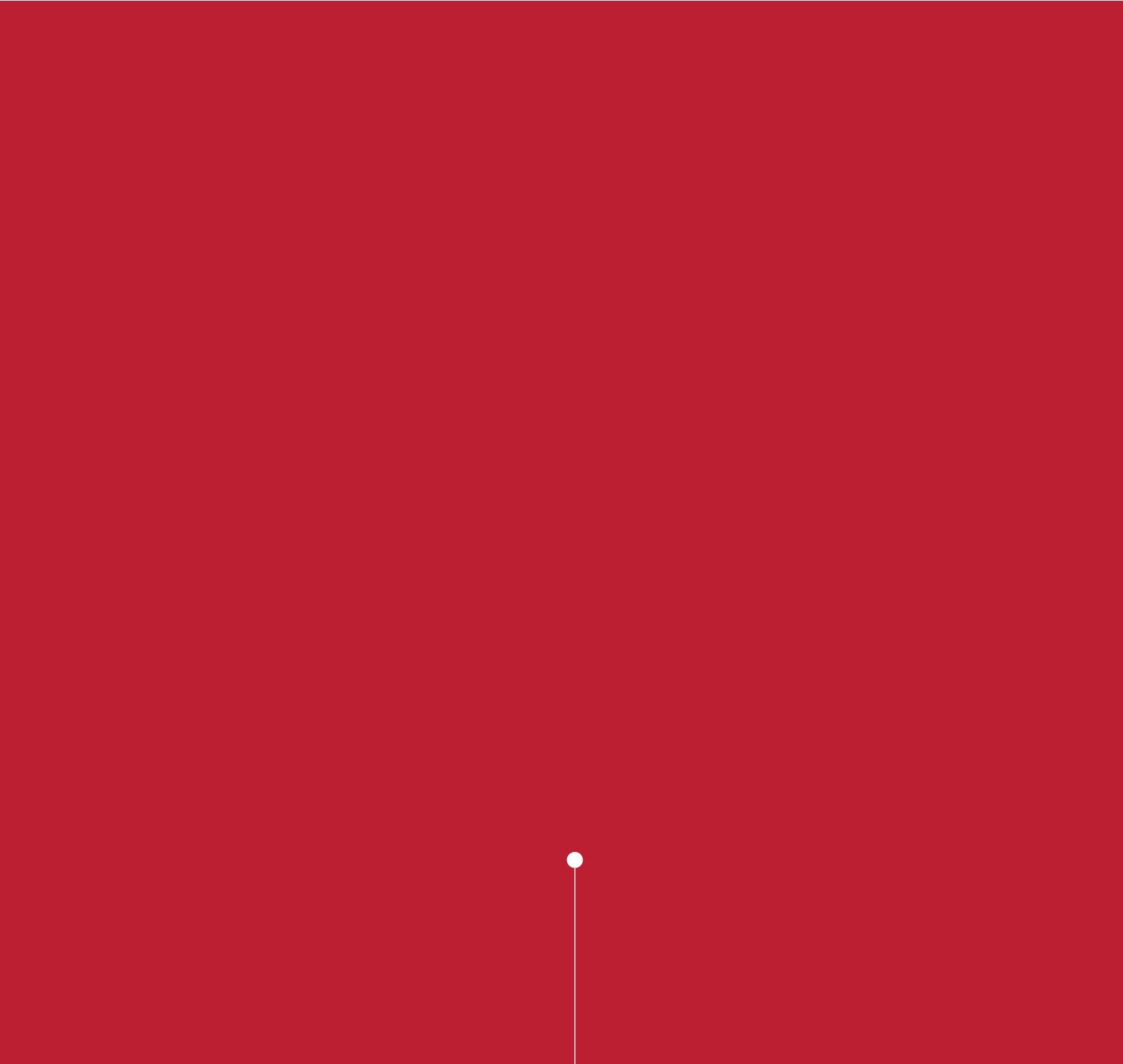
IMPACT AND RESILIENCE IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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COMMUNITIES IN NEPAL



Asia Dalit Rights Forum





January 2021

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ABOUT ASIA DALIT RIGHTS FORUM

Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF) is a platform of Dalits, and those working with Dalits in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka committed to the empowerment and emancipation of communities subjected to descent and work-based (caste-based) discrimination and violence (DWD&V). ADRF aims at addressing violations of the rights and entitlements of these communities, in particular their women and children, in the respective countries as well as worldwide. It focuses on supporting all the communities subjected to DWD&V and systemic discrimination in any part of the world in their noble aspirations and courageous struggles to establish an inclusive society that is marked by equity and equality, dignity and self-governance, justice, and freedom. ADRF is committed to collaborating with all national, regional, and international agencies- civil society organisations and human rights agencies, UN bodies, and state institutions espousing the cause of eliminating DWD and building an inclusive, peaceful and egalitarian society in Asia and elsewhere in the world.

ABOUT FEMINIST DALIT ORGANIZATION

Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) is one of the first Dalit women national organization to begin working in Nepal since 1994. At first, it worked to address the basic needs of Dalit women by directly implementing non-formal education program, awareness raising activities, and formation and mobilization of saving and credit groups from Dalit women. It works at both the national and district level to improve access to resources, social justice, and equity for women belonging to Dalit community.

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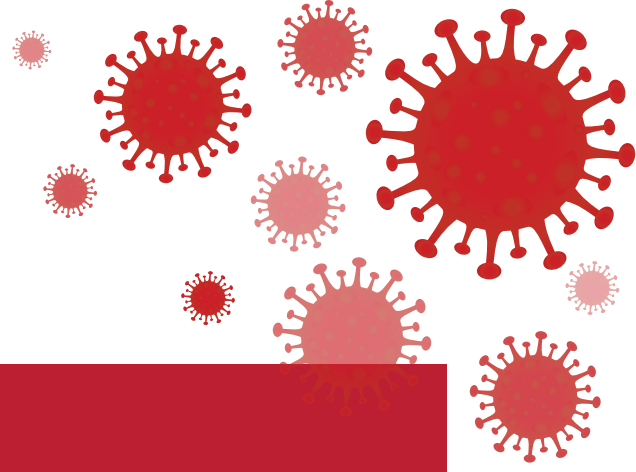
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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic had tremendously shifted the life in the world as we know it. While it was found first in Wuhan province of China, it has effected all the countries around the world and Nepal is not an exception. On the day of revision of this report 2025 deaths have occurred and 270,275 people have been infected in Nepal.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic will undeniably test the capacity for crisis mitigation and the response of governments and will potentially ravage every society. We are concerned, however, of countries and communities where overt caste and descent-based discriminations are present and where economic capacities and social capitals are fragile, making them more vulnerable to the impact of the outbreak, and possibly exacerbating existing discrimination in distributing immediate relief.

All efforts must be expedited to contain the pandemic and find durable solutions to this common problem. An inclusive approach will allow immediate relief to reach the most vulnerable Dalit communities and can provide an opportunity to address the issues and coordination for an emergency response without further delay. Resources

must be directed preventing further damage to those who have already in deprived conditions. In line with this aim, States and other relief providers must ensure that human rights and social justice are at the heart of their response.

Who are the DWD communities in Nepal?

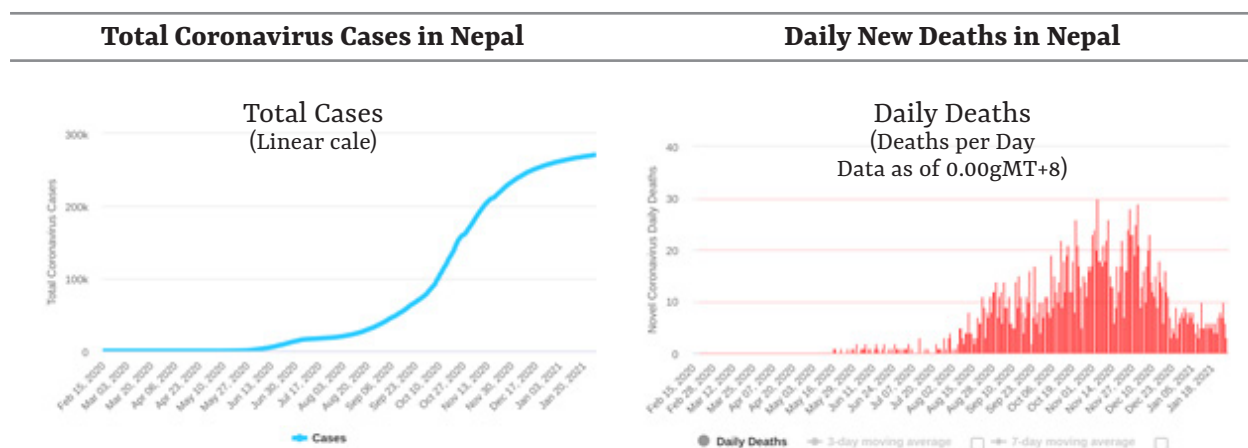
Dalits constitute an estimated 20 percent of Nepal's population and are subjected to over 200 forms of discriminatory practices. They are religiously, culturally, socially, economically and historically oppressed, excluded and treated as 'untouchables'. Almost half of Nepal's Dalits live below the poverty line. They are landless and much poorer than the dominant caste population; they are routinely denied access to religious sites, face resistance to inter-caste marriages, as well as refusal by non-Dalits to handle water touched by them among the many other forms of discrimination.

The Dalit movement has secured some provisions for non-discrimination, equality and protection in Nepal's constitution. In the inter-

¹<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/nepal/>

national arena, the government has expressed support for the UN principles and guidelines to end caste discrimination, thus showing a willingness to involve the international community in addressing the issue and setting an example for other countries with caste systems. Nevertheless, many problems persist. Dalits

The communities representing DWD in Nepal are known as Dalits. Dalits in Nepal too face extreme poverty and exclusion- due to the socially enforced restrictions in education, employment, access to resources, public spaces and the stigma associated with the belief of impurity or untouchability on the basis of their ancestry and



continue to be under-represented at the political level, having secured just eight per cent of the seats in the now dissolved Constitutional Assembly despite an official share of the population which at the time was 13 per cent.

Prevalence of COVID-19 in Nepal

Initial process was started with only 2 reported cases, when the country was declared lockdown on 24 March 2020. While still in lockdown there has been tremendous increase in the cases, still was somewhat controlled due to the less mobility among people. The main spike in cases started increasing during August 2020. In August 2020, the cases were more than 20 thousand to more than 230 thousand by the end of November.

work. The purpose of this report is not to discuss what effect the corona pandemic has made to the whole people, rather to discuss its immediate and possible long-term effects on the lives of Dalits as they constitute 13.8% (CBS 2011) of the population and they are the most marginalized as well.²

The country has adopted new forms of governance with three tiers of government, federal, provincial and local for the last three years. This report is an effort from three of the key Dalit organisations including Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) and Samata Foundation to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on Dalit communities in Nepal. DNF led an immediate assessment survey which was carried out over a period of one month. This report analyzes the data generated through a quick survey and some information gathered from media reporting and presents the situation as it came and reported.

² <https://mohp.gov.np/downloads/Population%20Monograph%20V02.pdf>



SYSTEMIC ISSUES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DWD COMMUNITIES

Basic livelihood needs: Food, health, housing, transport, recreational facilities, education, employment, etc.

The Samata Foundation study found that nearly 82 percent of Dalits who participated in its survey reported financial distress due to the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions imposed to contain its spread.³ The study titled Impact of Covid-19 on the Dalit Community of Nepal was conducted among 1,500 respondents from 753 municipalities in all seven provinces of the country. Likewise, 35 Dalit leaders from local, provincial and the central level and 11 civil society members were also interviewed to assess the effects of the

pandemic on Dalit communities across the country.

In Nepal, 42% of Dalit community live below the national poverty line, mostly depending upon the income of daily wage. But, amid the pandemic Dalit community are unable to work and have no source of income, leaving them vulnerable. A rapid assessment conduct by FEDO also reveals that most of the Dalit women have no source of income and are facing problems due to food security.

Due to lack of jobs, they have to rely on the relief packages. The packages distributed by the government are not easily accessed by the DWD communities due to the proximity of the settlements of Dalit community and the flow of information around the distribution of relief.

³ <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/10/17/dalit-communities-suffered-financial-hardship-job-loss-discrimination-during-covid-19-pandemic>



The historical prejudice around the caste has already made Dalit community children to sustain them in education. Further, due to poverty they are unable to afford for the education leading to maximum drop outs.

Laxmi Sob, member of FEDO from Achham, Province 7- stated that- “Dalit community live very far from the municipality where government offices are present. The officials reveal the distribution date just a day before, and the information does not reach to the neediest from the community. Therefore, only the ones who have easy access to roads are able to reach the station where packages are distributed. And the neediest ones are left out because they are unable to reach the station on given time.”

The health of a person is very much dependent

on the type of food available and the contents of nutrition on it. The government has a guideline on what must be included in relief packages; however, it is not sufficient to sustain with the little they (might) get. Dalit community and especially women and girls suffer from malnutrition due to feminization of poverty. And the pandemic has made them face nutritional crisis. This crisis will hamper pregnant women and health of children under 5.

There already is an existing inequality in the participation of school education from Dalit and

non-Dalit community. The historical prejudice around the caste has already made Dalit community children to sustain them in education. Further, due to poverty they are unable to afford for the education leading to maximum drop outs. The pandemic is likely to have a negative impact around sustaining Dalit children in the education. The private schools are adapting to the online learning sessions, but most Dalit community children rely on the government school. In adaptation to the pandemic, government is brining plans on broadcasting course classes through TV and radios. However, the presence of televisions and radios in the houses of Dalit community is questionable and this will further make them likely to drop-out.

Status of Work during the lockdown period

The lockdown has stopped the mobility of the people and they have been asked to confined within their homes. Though the lockdown is severe in towns and cities it not to some extent relaxed in villages, especially in the hill area as the houses are quite apart from each other and population is also thin. While interviewing the key informants in province one and Sudurpaschim they stated that in the villages people are enjoying the lockdown as many of the family members have come home and talking to each other including with the neighbors. Those who were seasonal workers including migrant workers are said to be the worst hit.

Around 45 percent of the respondents said they had lost their jobs during the pandemic. The job loss rate (53 percent) was the highest among Dalits of Province 2 and Province Karnali during the Covid-19 induced lockdown, according to the research findings.

The job loss rate (53 percent) was the highest among Dalits of Province 2 and Province Karnali during the Covid-19 induced lockdown



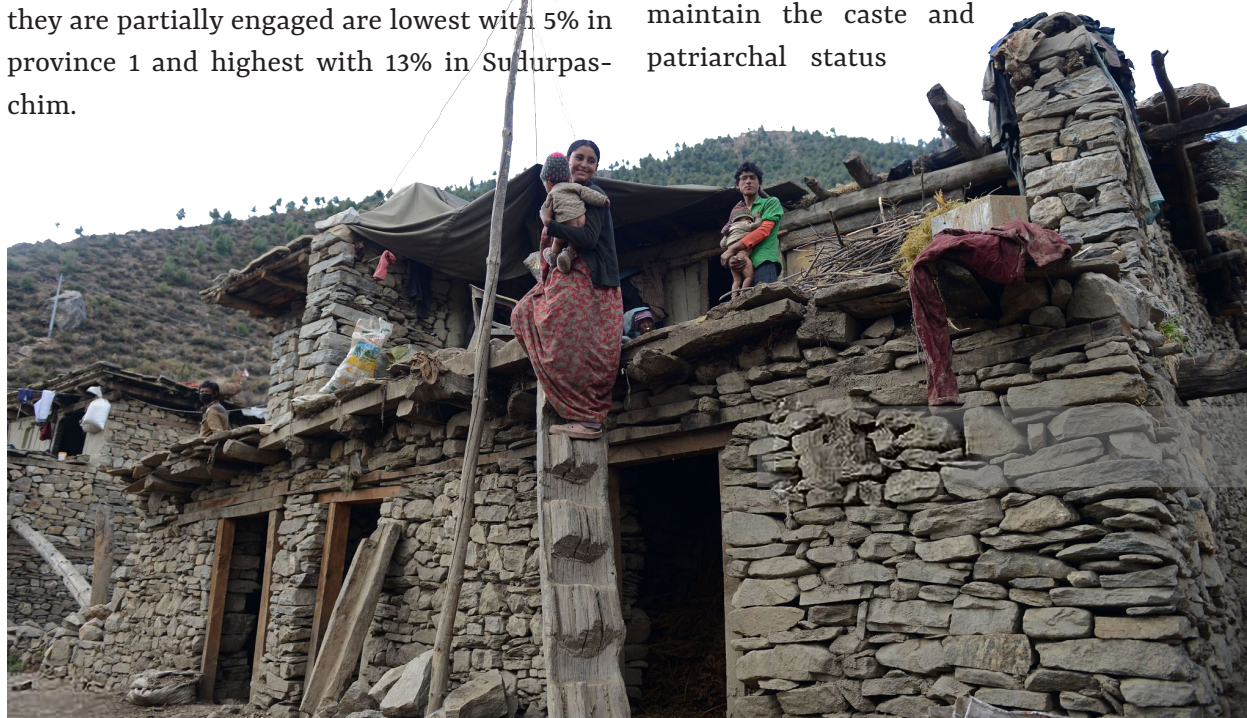
Province	Dalit							Non-Dalit						
	Total	Yes	%	No	%	Partial Y	%	Total	Yes	%	No	%	Partial Y	%
Province:1	21	3	14	17	81	1	5	9	5	56	2	22	2	22
Province: 2	20	3	15	15	75	2	10	10	6	60	2	20	2	20
Bagmati	21	3	14	16	76	2	10	9	6	67	3	33	1	11
Gandaki	20	2	10	16	80	2	10	10	6	60	3	30	1	10
Province:5	20	2	10	16	80	2	10	10	6	60	3	30	1	10
Karnali	21	3	14	16	76	2	10	9	5	56	2	22	2	22
Sudharpachim	23	4	17	16	70	3	13	7	5	71	1	14	1	14
	146	20	14	112	77	14	10	64	39	61	16	25	10	16

In order to know the situation the respondents were asked whether they have regular work and or wage based work. A very large majority with 77% said that they have no work and upon seeing the situation across the provinces it is highest with 81% in province 1 and lowest with 70% in Sudurpaschim and in other provinces it is within 80% which is very high indeed. The assessment further asked whether they are partially engaged and 10% of them said they are. Those who said they are partially engaged are lowest with 5% in province 1 and highest with 13% in Sudurpaschim.

The same question was asked to non-Dalit respondents then only 25% of them have no work and those who said have partial work is 16% which means 6% point more non-Dalits have partial work.

Gender based violence

The gender-based violence is a strong tool to maintain the caste and patriarchal status



Province	Dalit (Women)						Non-Dalit (Women)					
	Total	Yes	No	DK	% of Yes	%DK	Total	Yes	No	DK	% of Yes	%DK
Province:1	9	6	2	1	67	11	2	1	1	0	50.0	0
Province: 2	10	8	1	1	80	10	3	1	1	1	33.3	33
Bagmati	11	7	2	2	64	18	3	1	1	1	33.3	33
Gandaki	12	6	3	3	50	25	4	1	1	1	25.0	25
Province:5	12	9	2	1	75	8	2	1	1	0	50.0	0
Karnali	10	8	1	1	80	10	3	1	1	0	33.3	0
Sudharpachim	11	8	2	1	73	9	1	0	0	1	0.0	100
	75	52	13	10	69	13	18	6	6	4	33.3	22

Province	Dalit						Non-Dalit					
	Total	Yes	No	DK	% of Yes	%DK	Total	Yes	No	DK	% of Yes	%DK
Province:1	21	15	3	2	71	10	9	2	5	2	22	22
Province: 2	20	14	4	2	70	10	10	2	5	3	20	30
Bagmati	21	16	3	1	76	5	9	1	6	2	11	22
Gandaki	20	16	2	2	80	10	10	2	5	3	20	30
Province:5	20	14	3	3	70	15	10	1	6	3	10	30
Karnali	21	15	4	2	71	10	9	1	5	3	11	33
Sudharpachim	23	17	5	1	74	4	7	2	4	1	29	14
	146	107	24	13	73	9	64	11	36	17	17	27

quo. Some of the most marginalised women face multiple layers of discrimination and barriers to accessing what might be available through government response. For example, Dalit women are unable to access the limited relief that is available, not receiving information or being involved in awareness raising activities.⁴ In the survey, 69% respondents in average said 'yes' to the question on facing gender-based violence, while 13% said don't know. If we see the situation across the provinces then it is highest with 80% in two provinces, 2 and Karnali where CBD

is also quite prevalent. It is lowest with 50% in Gandaki province. The same question was asked to non-Dalit women respondents as well and 33% of them said 'yes' and 22% said 'don't' know which shows that GBV is also common among the non-Dalit groups. The GBV is supposed to be a cross cutting phenomenon and this has been seen in this survey as well.

⁴ <https://www.womankind.org.uk/covid-19-and-womens-rights-in-nepal/>

Domestic Violence during lockdown

The respondents were asked whether they have heard or experienced about the domestic violence during the lockdown period. Those who said heard is 79% and it is highest in province 5 with 90% and lowest in Gandaki with 75% and in other provinces it is more than 80% which

Discrimination to women, children and elderly people during relief distribution

When any pandemic occurs and need of relief distribution emerges then only those who are strong and capable enough try to grab the relief

Province	Dalit								
	Total	Heard	%	Experienced	%	Seen	%	Don't Know	%
Province:1	21	16	76	4	19	4	19	5	24
Province: 2	20	16	80	3	15	4	20	6	30
Bagmati	21	17	81	5	24	5	24	3	14
Gandaki	20	15	75	5	25	7	35	4	20
Province:5	20	18	90	7	35	6	30	6	30
Karnali	21	16	76	8	38	11	52	2	10
Sudharpachim	23	18	78	8	35	14	61	2	9
	146	116	79	40	27	51	35	28	19

means domestic violence could be rampant all over the areas. They were further asked whether they have experienced themselves or not then 27% said 'yes' to the question and if we see the situation across the provinces then it is highest with 38% in Karnali which means there is more domestic violence. The respondents were asked whether they have seen such violence then 35% of them said 'yes' and it is highest with 61% in Sudurpaschim and lowest in province one with 19%. The same question was asked to non-Dalit respondents and if we see their responses then it is not so different than Dalit responses. Those who said heard is 52% and those who said experienced is 30% and those who said seen is 42%.

materials. In such situation weak and vulnerable group of people such as women, children and elderly people are deprived off such facilities. Therefore, this rapid assessment also asked the respondents whether there was such discrimination they felt or seen. A very high majority of the respondents with 73% across the country said there was discrimination in relief distribution to such group of people said by the Dalit respondents. Those who said 'don't' know is 9% and if these two figures are combined then it becomes 82% point which is very high. If we see the situation across the provinces then it is highest with 80% in Gandaki and lowest with 70% in two provinces of 2 and 5 respectively. This clearly indicates that while distributing the relief the

The deep rootedness of the caste discrimination has taken an ugly turn, with three young men including two Dalit youth were killed in the Karnali province and a 15-year-old Dalit girl was murdered in Rupandehi district in Nepal.



need of such vulnerable group of people was not considered. The same question was asked to the non-Dalit respondents as well, those who said 'yes' is 17% and who said don't know is 27%, though the respondents saying yes in this group is significantly low, however, those who said yes depicts that even among them such a vulnerable group was discriminated.

During the Covid-19 crisis, violence against Dalits has increased alarmingly. In 2020, Dalit human rights violation cases have gone up 45 per cent higher than in 2019. Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) reported 62 Dalit human rights violation cases last year. But, in 2020, within six months, the Samata Foundation collected over 90 cases. In them, 31 Dalits have lost their lives, and many have suffered from caste discrimination, physical violence, and rape.⁵

Caste based Violence

In the midst of the greatest disaster in human history, the most marginalized communities are still facing systemic exclusion and systematic violence over and above the pandemic crisis. The

deep rootedness of the caste discrimination has taken an ugly turn, with three young men including two Dalit youth were killed in the Karnali province and a 15-year-old Dalit girl was murdered in Rupandehi district in Nepal.

According to the reports, incident occurred when Navaraj BK, who was in love with Sushma Malla (upper caste girl) of Soti, reached her village of along with his friends for asked her to marry him. Upon knowing that Sushma would elope with Navraj, her family gathered their neighbours to attack Navaraj and friends. The violent mob started beating the young boys and threw them into the Beri River. It was learned that Sushma's family was against her marrying a lower caste man.

Similarly, in Badgi Gumbiki, Devdaha municipality 11, Rupandehi district, 15-year-old Angira Pasi was murdered due to her affair with an upper caste boy Bipendra. Both of them had eloped on 22 May and when some people found them, both were sent to Bipendra's home. Unfortunately, Angira was found dead during the day time

⁵ <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/aint-we-women-multiple-marginalisations-of-dalit-women-in-nepal.html>

the same day at home of Birendra. Her clothes were torn and had scratches on the body.

Both these cases are due to caste-based violence is a result of honour killing in the country which has now seen as many deaths on the basis of caste

discrimination as of deaths due to COVID19. We, members of Asia Dalit Rights Forum from Bangladesh, India, Malayasia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; stand in solidarity with the Dalit Civil Society of Nepal in condemning the heinous crimes meted out against Navaraj BK and his friends, and Angira Pasi



Case of Angira Pasi

Cases of the bodies of young girls from poor, marginalized communities are being treated as expendable; raped, mutilated, murdered, is as horrifying as it is commonplace in Nepal. Recently in Devdaha, Rupendehi, a 13-year-old Dalit girl named Angira Pasi was raped by an upper-caste man. The “solution” was to marry the young girl get to her rapist! But even then, the rapist’s family refused to accept her marriage as she was a Dalit. The girl was later found dead, hanging from a tree. It took four days to even register a police complaint.

The “solution” was to marry the young girl get to her rapist! But even then, the rapist’s family refused to accept her marriage as she was a Dalit. The girl was later found dead, hanging from a tree.

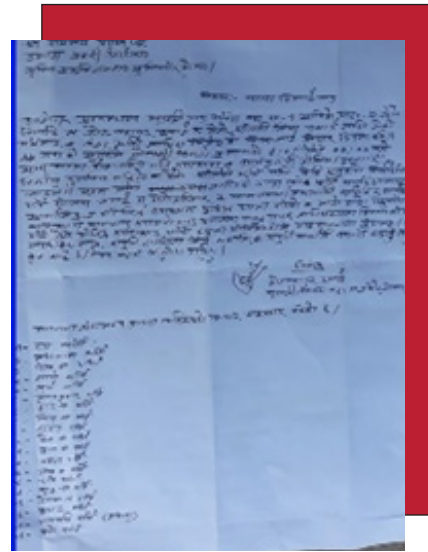
However, many human right activists are calling for fair justice by demanding the decision-makers to take strong action against the perpetrators.

Well, these recent killings have been a fresh reminder to Nepalis that caste-based inequalities remain as pernicious as ever so now we need to hold the community leaders accountable and set a precedent for future cases of caste-based exploitation.

Cases of Dalit and women rights violations during COVID 19 lockdown period:

On 06 June 2020, in Ropla, a group of 25 people broke into the residence of a Dalit couple and physically assaulted them on June 6. The victims Sher Bhadaur Pariyar and his wife, residents of Lungri-1 Pang informed that the group hurled ethnic slurs at them. However, Rupai Gharti Magar, one of the accused, denied such allegations but conceded that they went to Sher Bhadaur's house

Source: <https://thahaonline.com/154627/>



Members of Dalit Musahar Community in Mahottari have accused the Mayor of Bhangaha Municipality, Sanjiv Sah, of beating them while demanding relief package. They have accused the mayor of denying support to those who did not vote for him in the election.

Ramprita Sada of Bhangaha Municipality-3 alleged that a group of a mob led by Mayor's brother Binod Sah beat him when he went to the mayor to ask for relief. He said he lost consciousness because of the beating and his friends picked him up and put tape on his ruptured ear.

Source: <http://annapurnapost.com/news/157548>

Some people of the so-called upper caste have boycotted the food cooked by a Dalit youth in Arghakhanchi. The incident took place at the Social Welfare Primary School quarantine of Malarani Rural Municipality-4.

Krishna Bahadur BK, who has been working as a volunteer through the ward office, has been cooking in the quarantine. Dinesh Ghimire from Shit village, a returnee from Delhi, boycotted the food he cooked on Tuesday. 'He drank water that I fetched but did not eat the food I

cooked' said BK, "After eating food cooked by the Dalits, I get nightmares, shivering and sick, he replied.' According to Ward Chairman Bishnu Prasad Pokharel, Ghimire was shifted to the quarantine of Kalika Nepal National Secondary School after he boycotted the food cooked food.

Source: <https://ekantipur.com/news/2020/06/04/15912697577432392.html>

The Dalits in the quarantine set up in Isma Rural Municipality-3 Ramkot have faced caste-based discrimination. The quarantine management has asked the Dalit members to prepare their food separately while the people from other castes prepare their food separately, said Kamal Nepali of Isma Rural Municipality-6. He along with around thirty other people, on May 31, came back from India, of which around twenty-two people are Dalits. However, all the people in the quarantine sleep in the same place.

Source: <https://ratopati.com/story/132608/2020/6/1/quarantine-news->



Locals have made Shyam Bahadur Pariyar, a Dalit man, pay Rs. 1500 as a fine for entering the house of Netra Kaucha, a Magar, in Kaligandaki Rural Municipality-5 of Gulmi.

The victim shared that he was made to pay the amount for 'cleansing' the house after he entered the house of a non-Dalit. Pariyar sheltered himself from a storm at Kaucha's house on May 4. After the rain stopped, he went back to his house. However, it caused a commotion in the locality and the locals decided that he had to pay Rs 1500 as compensation.

Source: <https://nayapatrikadaily.com/news-details/43433/2020-05-16>

Police have arrested Janak Thapa, Dev Bahadur Thapa and Ram BC of Pokhara Metropolitan-16 on 5 May 2020, accusing them of caste-based discrimination.

They were accused of not allowing the Dalit community to enter the final rituals' house located in Pokhara Metropolitan-16. The complaint was filed by the victim, Mohan Sunar on 30 April 2020 at the Kaski District Police Office.

The group of accused did not let Mohan Sunar complete the final rituals of his elder brother

Sammar Bahadur Sunar and also did not allow him to use the building for the 13 days' rituals. They insulted and verbally abused him. Sunar was prohibited to enter the building.

The accused are arrested and kept in the Ward Police Office, informed DSP Raj Kumar KC.

Source: <http://inseconline.org/np/news/%e0%a4%9c%e0%a4%be%e0%a4%a4%e0%a4%b-f%e0%a4%af-%e0%a4%b5%e0%a4%bf%e0%a4%ad%e0%a5%87%e0%a4%a6-%e0%a4%98%e0%a4%9f%e0%a4%a8%e0%a4%be%e0%a4%95%e0%a4%be-%e0%a4%86%e0%a4%b0%e0%a5%8b%e0%a4%aa%e0%a4%bf/>

Nawaraj BK a Dalit youth from Bheri Municipality-4 of Jajarkot has been beaten to death by locals of Chaurjahari Municipality-8 Rukum West on Saturday night. Meanwhile, six youths who accompanied Nawaraj are also found dead. According to DSP Kishor Shrestha, Nawaraj had gone to his lover Sushma Malla's house on Saturday night with a group of youths. Sushma's mother called the villagers after discovering the boys. The villagers then beat Nawaraj and his friends chased towards the Bheri river. Sushma's family had been strongly opposing the relationship between Nawaraj and Sushma citing Nawaraj's 'low caste' status and had filed a complaint at Chaurjahari Police Office. Nawaraj's friend Tikaram Nepali who had accompanied him was also found dead on Sunday evening apparently from the villager's beating.

Source: <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2020/05/866991>

<http://inseconline.org/np/news/%e0%a4%85%e0%a4%a8%e0%a5%8d%e0%a4%a4%e0%a4%b0%e0%a4%9c%e0%a4%be%e0%a4%a4%e0%a5%80%e0%a4%af-%e0%a4%b5%e0%a4%bf%e0%a4%b5%e0%a4%be%e0%a4%b9-%e0%a4%97%e0%a4%b0%e0%a5%8d%e0%a4%a8-%e0%a4%96%e0%a5%8b/>



Binod Nepali of Khanikhola Rural Municipality-5 sustained a head injury after being beaten and abused verbally on the grounds of caste. Phanindra Timalisina of the same ward attacked him with an iron pipe and a wrench on Wednesday while he was attending a meeting near his house.

The victim lodged a complaint at Taladhunga Police Post demanding action against Timalisina for verbally abusing and beating him on the grounds of caste.

Source: <https://dalitonline.com/archives/7737>



Dalit community members of Bhokraha Narshing Rural Municipality-7, Khatwe tole have been denied of relief after the news about the delay in relief distribution got published in the national newspaper. The Dalit community members were boycotted in relief after Annapurna Post published the news titled 'Squatters in hunger' on April 17. Ward member Tapeswor Yadav said Rural Municipality chairman Mahendra Prasad Yadav and ward chairman Ram Chandra Yadav took revenge against 100 households of Madhesi Dalits in wards after the news highlighting the slow process of relief distribution in the rural municipality got published.

Source: <http://annapurnapost.com/news/153963>

On Monday, police and non-Dalit youths beat 13-year-old Ramesh Kumar Ram of Siraha Municipality-22 accusing him of mobile theft. According to Ram, the police handcuffed him and kept in custody despite he was minor. Due to beating, his back, chest, and thigh are wounded. In the meantime, police arrested Ramyekwal Yadav of Siraha Municipality-9, Sikandar Yadav of Siraha Municipality-22, and Mukesh Yadav on the charge of beating Ram. DSP Binod Ghimire, District Police Office Siraha, denied of beating Ram.

Source: <https://apandainik.com/news/701>





GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

When the Nepal Government promulgated the annual policies; Policies and Programmes 2077/78 revolved around Covid-19 management measures. One of the major targets included in this year's policies and programs is to make Nepal COVID-19 free. In the process of fighting the coronavirus infection, the value of work with various entities have been made clear with the efforts undertaken to battle the contagion at provincial and local levels, said the President.

Major points included in the policies and programs:

- » Developing a healthy Nepal is the government's main policy. Programs will be implemented to develop immunity and disease-fighting capacity of the Nepali population.
- » Moving forward to develop the sectors of health, education and employment.
- » The health sector will be restructured.
- » Strengthening the role of government in education and health services while encouraging the private sector for investment programs.
- » Management of human resources and administrative structure development at provincial and local levels.
- » Management of necessary concessions for daily wagers and financially marginalized population affected by the pandemic and lockdown.
- » Taking forward social and economic plans with the aim of graduating into a developing country this year.
- » Equal access will be established for quality health, education, and drinking water.
- » If the pandemic goes on unprecedentedly, then additional resources will be mobilized for further effective measures.
- » Additional work-plan will be prepared for post-COVID-19 period and will be implemented region-wise.
- » Domestic travel will be facilitated when situation gets better, and agricultural and industrial development will be taken forward.
- » The government will move ahead with added commitment to make Nepal prosperous and Nepalis happy.

Nepal Response and Implementation Situation

The country lock-down started on 24 March 2020 and continued until 14 June 2020. After 12 June, the Nepal government changed lockdown modalities to a partly flexible one. Flights were suspended until 21 June 2020 and borders with India and China were closed until further notice.⁶ The GoN decided to allow the production and sale of agriculture goods, food items, fishery, meat and poultry items, medicines and construction materials for development projects. Basic banking services and industries remained open.

The Hotel Association Nepal, an umbrella organization of Nepalese hoteliers, decided to keep all the hotels affiliated to it shut until mid-October of 2020, owing to the impact of COVID-19 on the country's tourism industry. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology instructed the educational institutions not to announce admissions for any level until further notice and also asked the institutions not to charge any fees in the name of online classes. The Foreign Ministry coordinated with the concerned authorities of various countries and asked them to facilitate the process of bringing back, estimated 35,000 Nepalese migrants who had been staying there illegally.

Preventative measures to contain the coronavirus are having a slow but steady impact on mental health. People are restless, sad, fearful, anxious, and worried for themselves and their families, a study has shown. Including the National Public Health Laboratory (NPHL), Teku, COVID-19 lab test services through Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) has been expanded to 19 other institutions

across the country, with at least one laboratory in each Province.⁷ The budget for the new fiscal year will prioritise programs that generate large-scale employment to account for the loss of jobs and return of migrants. The Finance Minister announced the plan for the fiscal year beginning mid-July in Parliament on 28 May. Nepal Red Cross Society is responding to this pandemic through ambulance service, blood transfusion service, ensuring the availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to the front-line workers, providing the psychological support to people in need through various channels and mobilization of Red Cross Emergency Clinic (RCEC) as per necessity among others. Nepal Government has been providing the relief package through the local government and government has provided the relief package only one time. Other support plan has not declared.

Nepal Response and Implementation Situation Targeting to Dalits:

Nepal Government has been providing the relief package through the local government but there has been not specific plan of response to vulnerable Dalit and other marginalized community. There has not been any specific plan to address the issues of Dalit Women during the pandemic.

Budgetary Provisions of the State

Governments have taken several initiatives and adopted several mechanisms to systematize relief distribution. These included establishing funds at each tier of government to fight against the coronavirus, setting up grain banks

⁶ <https://covid19.mohp.gov.np/>

⁷ ITREP #92_MoHP_11 May, 2020 <https://covid19.mohp.gov.np/#/>

, establish a selection procedure for identifying needy families, distributing relief packages using a “one-door policy”, maintaining the privacy of COVID-19 suspected and infected people and drafting legal provisions to serve affected people. Established a fund to fight against the coronavirus COVID-19 fund at federal level the federal government has set up a COVID-19 fund to muster and distribute relief to needy families. The fund is expected to help to combat the spread of the corona virus and manage the unfavorable environment resulting from the pandemic. At the federal level, as of March 2020, NPR 1.98 billion had been collected in this fund. The majority of the contributions were from government agencies, but insurance companies and telecommunication firms also contributed. Instead of depositing cash in this fund, some corporate houses and private-sector firms have provided medical equipment and personal protective equipment to the government directly. Not all corporate houses are willing to extend financial support wholeheartedly because they have reservations about the accountability and transparency of the operation of this fund based on learning from the 2015 earthquake, 2017 floods and 2019 tornado. 2 People usually collects rice and lentil in the grain bank to help disaster survivors. It is a community led approach. Some members of the private sector would like to see the benefits of their charity accrue to their own brand and business than to contribute toward fulfilling humanitarian imperatives and corporate philanthropy during this national and international crisis induced by COVID-19. COVID-19

Fund at province level

Province 1

- » Announced a NPR 5 million COVID-19 fund as part of compensation to the families of frontline workers who die on duty while fighting COVID-19.

- » Agreed to provide “encouragement allowance” from this fund to health workers, security personnel, ambulance drivers, employees of local units and other individuals deployed to fight COVID-19.

Province 2

- » Established a Coronavirus Infection Prevention, Control and Treatment Fund, allocating NPR 250 million to control the impacts of the pandemic.
- » Each provincial minister contributed one month’s salary to this fund to mitigate the risk and to provide relief to those affected by the pandemic.
- » Provided NPR 2.5 million to each metropolitan city, while sub-metropolitan cities, municipalities and rural municipalities received NPR 2 million, NPR 1.5 million and NPR 1 million respectively for COVID-19 response.

Bagmati Province

- » Established a NPR 500 million COVID-19 Control Fund.
- » Formulated working guidelines on how to control the COVID-19 outbreak.
- » Provided needed support to the disaster management committees of each local government to mobilize them in the prevention of and response to COVID-19.
- » Provided NPR 2 million to each metropolitan city, while sub-metropolitan cities, municipalities and rural municipalities received NPR 1.5 million, NPR 1.2 million and NPR 1 million respectively for the prevention of and response to COVID-19.

Sudurpachhim Province

- » Allocated NPR160 million to a fund for the distribution of relief packages to needy families.
- » Provided relief packages worth NPR 3,000 to

each needy family.

- » Agreed to provide an incentive allowance to all health workers at nine government hospitals.
- » Initiated a life insurance program for medical personnel, security personnel and media persons working on the frontline against coronavirus by allocating insurance coverage worth NPR 1.5 million.

Funds at the local level

Some local governments have responded aggressively to the impacts of COVID-19. They established funds and developed relief standards and protocols. For instance, Baglung Municipality of Gandaki Province established a Corona Virus Prevention and Management Fund and purchased essential medical kits, medicine, and food items using it. Likewise, local governments like Suklagandaki Municipality of Tanahun (Gandaki Province) established a Corona Virus Emergency Relief Fund and started to buy agricultural products from farmers Dhruba Gautam Page 5 of 27 and distribute them to needy families. Its relief packages included rice, vegetables, bars of soap, and hand-washing liquids Moreover, the local governments of Jhapa District, Province 1, established what they called a “separate fund” for the management and distribution of relief materials to combat the coronavirus pandemic. They prepared relief packages to meet household require-

ments for between one week and one month on the basis of family size and available resources. The majority of local governments in Province 5 have set up relief funds and begun managing and distributing relief. For instance, Gadawa Rural Municipality of Dang, following the relief distribution guideline of the provincial government, set up a relief fund of NPR 5 million. Airawati Rural Municipality of Pyuthan District donated one month’s allowance to the fund and provided relief materials.

Kathmandu Metropolitan City promulgated “Coronavirus Relief Distribution Standards, 2076 BS”, allocating NPR 100 million for the prevention and control of COVID-19. It has released NPR10.4 million to ward councils to run relief programs. The amount of money provided was based on the area of the wards: NPR 4 million was given to large wards, NPR 3 million to medium-sized wards, and NPR 2 million to small wards. An inter-municipal forum (a coordination and cooperation mechanism) was set up in Kathmandu valley to extend local governments’ support for and resource mobilization towards combating the COVID crisis. It covers both the core cities and the peri-urban areas within the valley. In general, the establishment of COVID-19 funds and resource management at the federal, province and local government levels has been satisfactory, but the management and distribution of relief to needy families has been dilatory. Indeed, many needy families have still not received even the first round of relief from local governments.



CSO RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

When the coronavirus pandemic started affecting and lockdowns were imposed, confusions and a kind of vacuum ensued. The internal migrants who wanted to go back to their villages or homes had to walk for days and hours and they suffered a lot. NGOs responded by providing food to such people. Likewise, daily wage laborers and the very poor suddenly lost their income. There are many cases of the NGOs/CSOs distributing food and non-food items. During the initial days, PPEs, face masks and hand sanitizers were scarce even to the frontline health workers. At that time, some CSOs were able to secure these items and distribute.

Awareness about Covid-19 and about the precautionary measures were other actions. For instance, Accountability Lab gathers rumors, concerns, and questions from communities and ensures a better understanding of the coronavirus needs and debunks rumors before they can do more harm.

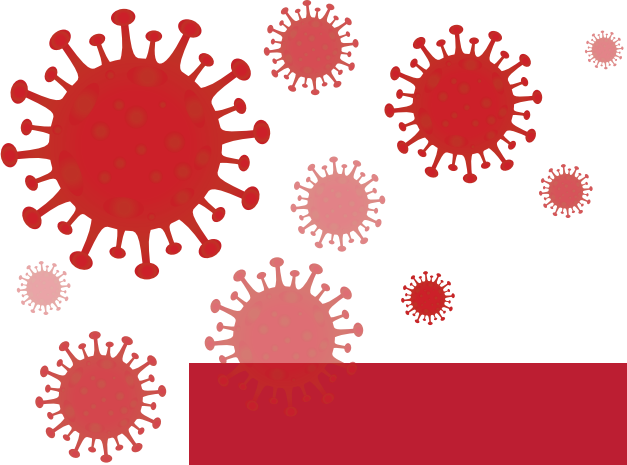
Civil society networks have been working on the advocacy and lobby to draw the attention of the government and protect the life and livelihood of the vulnerable people. Led by NGO Federation of Nepal there have been meetings and coordination with government, mainly National Planning Commission, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MWCSC), Social Welfare

Council (SWC), province governments. The government has been suggested to assess the impact of Covid-19 and integrate the response and recovery in the five-year plan.

The Dalit NGO Federation and Dalit Civil Society organisation in Nepal have launched A Rapid Assessment Survey Report documenting the status of Dalits in Nepal under the Covid-19 lockdown. The report also offers recommendations for addressing the situation. In addition to the survey the webinar “An Effect of Corona Pandemic (Covid-19) to Dalits in Nepal” was held on 1 July 2020 hosted by the Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF) an Asian level Dalit platform. The event was led by ADRF Nepalese members. The webinar discussed and highlighted the impact and effects of Covid-19 on Dalits in Nepal.

The Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO) has released a newsletter documenting their work in awareness raising and relief, targeting Dalits during the Covid-19 lockdown. The newsletter also looks at caste and gender violence under the lockdown and the results of a rapid assessment survey on the situation of Dalits.

Samata Foundation has worked towards creating awareness among Dalit communities as well as acting as one stop for support the community for COVID-19 related assistance.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Caste-based discrimination, untouchability, deprivation, poverty, etc., are the root cause of the problems Dalits face. Dalits in Nepal have been a socio-economically, culturally, and politically excluded and marginalized community for centuries, although they have large about 13.6 percent of the total population (CBS, 2014). Dalits are not homogenous; they have a wide range of diversity based on religion, geography, impairments, and other characteristics. The degree of impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic also varies with these intersections. During the COVID-19 pandemic, few Dalits provided with some food items as part of relief packages. However, many more left behind in accessing these benefits due to the lack of information, and formal documents (Gahatraj, 2020).

Dalits have been facing the problems of health facilities, quarantine and isolation in the pandemic. There are lots of discrimination events during the pandemic. A study conducted by Samata Foundation, 56 caste-based discrimination cases reported during the three-month lockdown period. Among them, eight caste-based discriminatory behaviors happened in the quarantine centers. A Dalit woman was beaten up by a

Ward Chairperson during relief material collection in Mahottari district (Bishwakarma, 2020). Similarly, Kalpana Nagari and Kalawati Audi from Godavari Municipality face double discrimination from society for being Dalit and because their relatives tested positive for COVID-19 after returning from India (Chaudhary, 2020).

Two recent cases, the killings of six men in Rukum (West), and Angira Pasi in Rupandehi (Shrestha & Aryal, 2020) are crueler, exposed, and politicized issues, and it proved the government incapability to control the discrimination.

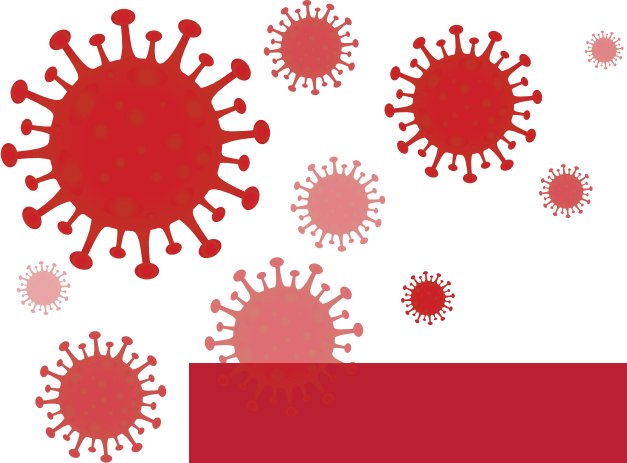
On this background, the Nepalese CSOs demanded from the states, CSOs and other multilateral bodies:

1. Provide immediate special relief package to the most disadvantaged Dalit community who are in dire need of relief due to continuous lockdown in several South Asian countries like Nepal and India. Mostly the Dalits are engaged in the informal service sector and rely on daily wages work and employment and their living condition has become worst of all due to the lockdowns.
2. Immediately stop police brutality and take



legal actions against those who committed violence against Dalits and gender-based violence against Dalit women during the pandemic.

3. Ensure human rights friendly environment at the quarantine sites and centres. The support will require to avoid any forms of discriminations and stigmatization.
4. 4. Allocate adequate resources to ensure human rights-based approach, non-discrimination, transparency, and respect for human dignity in the delivery of health services and relief, regardless of caste and economic statuses. Budgeting with specific amounts being allocated to more vulnerable groups like Dalits.
5. Provide utmost attention to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable Dalits such as their access to health services, protective equipment like face masks, and to immediate testing, quality medical care, and social protection.
6. Ensure that Dalit issues are included while developing long-term strategies and early recovery package to respond to socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. We urge to adopt inclusive measures mainly to include Dalit representative in any local to national level crisis response mechanisms including similar mechanism of civil society and other relief providers.
8. Provide access to authentic and easy access to information on the COVID-19 virus considering the immediate needs of raising community sensitization among vulnerable Dalits. Coordinate and engage gender actors, women's groups (Women Friendly Disaster Management Group), excluded groups (e.g.: gender and sexual minorities, people living with disabilities, Dalit, ethnic and Madhesi minorities, etc.) and networks
9. Ensure that declarations of state of emergencies, community-quarantines, lockdowns, and restriction of freedom of movement do not come at the expense of the right to freedom of expression.
10. Ensure that the crisis response abides by the existing standards and principles of international human rights.



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