

# "Leave No Dalit Behind"

## Dalit CSOs Spotlight Report on the Third-Voluntary National Review (VNR) of Nepal



### Submitted By:



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## Acknowledgment

### Abbreviation/Acronyms

CDA	Central Department of Anthropology
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoN	Government of Nepal
ILO	International Labour Organization
LGBTIQA	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual
LGs	Local Governments
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NDHS	Nepal Demographic and Health Survey
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NLFS	Nepal Labour Force Survey
NMICS	Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NSO	National Statistics Office

## SUMMARY

This report represents a joint assessment by major Dalit Civil Society Organizations on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nepal. It has been prepared through an open and participatory process, incorporating provincial and national-level dialogues and consultations. Over 220 Dalit leaders, activists, academicians, researchers, journalists and professionals participated to help shape and finalize this report. Only 9 SDG goals have been assessed in this report. The key issues and messages of the report are as follows:

### **SDG-1: No poverty**

- Around 1.4 million Dalits are compelled to live a life of extremely low quality with a meagre income of less than 1.9 dollar a day.
- No disaggregated data on caste/ethnicity is available, as a result of which estimates must be made regarding the poverty of Dalit individuals.
- There are social protection mechanisms for Dalits, such as old age allowances for those aged 60 and above, and nutrition allowances for children under 5 years of age. However, no study has been conducted to ascertain their contribution to reducing poverty among Dalit individuals.
- No targeted or consolidated effort to eradicate extreme poverty among Dalits.

### **SDG-2: Zero hunger**

- Land is one of the main sources of livelihoods and prosperity, but most of the Dalits do not have sufficient land to support their livelihoods.
- Article 40 (5) of the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 ensures land to be provided to landless Dalits but is not implemented effectively.
- Anecdotal data and evidence suggest that Dalits, particularly Madhesi Dalits, are prone to famine and hunger due to the unavailability of food throughout the year, especially during the months of August and September
- Article 36 of the constitution guarantee the rights to food with sovereignty but the government took no action to address the death of Malar Sada, who died of hunger during the 2020 COVUD-19.

### **SDG-4 Quality education**

- The literacy rate among Dalits is lower than the national average, with Madhesi Dalits at the lowest. Additionally, the dropout rate among Dalits remains high.
- The School Day Meal Program and scholarship programs have contributed to increasing access of Dalit and marginalized children in formal education. However, the scholarship amounts are inadequate, and scholarships for higher education are negligible.

### **SDG-5: Gender equality**

- Dalit women face multiple forms of discrimination including caste-based discrimination and violence, gender-based discrimination, abuse, sexual harassment and atrocities due to their intersecting identities. The government's existing efforts to combat gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls have not fully aligned with intersectional approaches or a gender justice lens.
- Dalit women are disproportionately affected by violence and exploitation, especially those who are into inter-caste marriages.
- The proportion of Dalit women and girls among TIP (Trafficking in Persons) survivors is higher than their proportion in the overall population. The expansion of the adult entertainment sector and increasing migration for foreign employment have introduced new challenges.
- The high number of child marriage among Dalit girls is associated with multiple socio-cultural and economic factors including extreme poverty, and girls' safety and security.
- Dalit women's political participation has increased in number due to the mandatory provision to elect at least a Dalit women in each ward at the local level, they face significant underrepresentation in executive positions where major decisions are made.

### **SDG-8: Decent work and economic growth**

- Underemployment is likely to be high among Dalits, as the majority earn their livelihood from the agricultural sector and unskilled labor in the construction sectors, both of which are seasonal in nature. The national unemployment rate is 11.4%, however, official data on Dalits' unemployment rate is not available. The government must expand reservation in the private sector too.
- Despite possessing traditional skills, many Dalits lack the skills required for employment in the competitive labor market. Entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities are limited by social and financial capitals. Most Dalit raise income from elementary occupations.
- The field implementation of the government's current programme aiming at fulfilling the mandate of Article 40(4) of the Constitution to ensure the rights of Dalits does not fully carry the spirit of the constitution.
- The employment programme like Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP) is crucial for supporting the poorest and underemployed populations, including Dalits. Due to documentation hurdles and limited opportunities, needy Dalits are discouraged from participating in employment programs.
- There is no integrated bill against forced labor, which is required to address all types of forced labor practices existing in different regions of the country.
- The identification and verification of freed bonded laborer including Harawa-Charawa, which is the first step towards the rehabilitation process, has yet to be started.
- Across caste/ethnic groups, the highest prevalence of child labor is found among Dalits (19.4%). The higher rates among Dalits are linked to lower educational attainment and higher poverty levels within these communities.
- The landless and historically marginalized groups, such as Dalits, have lower access to banking services and credits. The poor and landless Dalits often rely on local moneylenders, groups, and relatives for any loans they need.

### **SDG-10: Reduced inequalities**

- Nepal is paying the cost of inequality with loss in potential human development.
- Majority Dalit sub-groups assessed in LNOB frameworks fall in the bottom 40 quantiles in terms of household annual consumption.
- Lack of most recent official data to compare per-capita income of Dalits with national average. However, previous data indicated that Dalits were far behind the national average per-capita income category.
- In comparison to the political empowerment index, the value of the economic empowerment index is far lower, indicating that economic opportunities still need to be equally distributed among traditionally discriminated and marginalized groups.
- Low participation of Dalits in manufacturing sector of the economy. Participation in the agricultural sector is also constrained by low access to productive and adequate land.

### **SDG-13: Climate action**

- The Dalit community in Nepal, already marginalized and economically disadvantaged, faces heightened vulnerabilities due to climate change.
- Even within policies, there is no direct association of Dalits when it comes to building a climate resilient community.
- In the strategies and working policies of agriculture and food security, programs are conceptualized to target poor, marginalized, landless indigenous people, vulnerable households, women, and persons with disabilities. However, these policies fail to secure the rights of the Dalit community through an intersectional lens and to mainstream their rights in this ever-changing climate.
- To respond to this challenge, Nepal is already implementing steps to recalibrate its economy by adopting a Green, resilient, and Inclusive Development (GRID) approach.
- However, representation of the Dalit community, especially Dalit women in decision-making positions, is still nonexistent due to their caste identity. This reflects Nepal's entrenched systemic and conventional approach to development.

- The local adaptation plan preparation was adopted in 350 municipalities of Nepal. However, the critical question is whether these preparation plans were developed involving Dalits, particularly Dalit women.
- The target is for 100% of schools to be covered by climate change education by 2030. However, as of 2022, only 51.68% have been mapped. Due to compounded discrimination, limited access, and economic constraints, Dalit children in rural settings are deprived of even attending primary school. Considering this, it is challenging to envision households incorporating climate change adaptation measures.

### **SDG-16: Peace, justice and strong institutions**

- Despite constitutional protections and dedicated laws against caste discrimination, Dalits continue to face systematic violence and impunity for those committing crimes against them.
- Dalit children face false accusations and unjust imprisonment for early child marriage.
- The perpetrators of crimes against Dalits often go unpunished and access to justice is becoming increasingly difficult.
- There is a significant gap in political, judicial, and administrative inclusion of Dalits- strong enforcement of the law and policies are required.
- Nearly 50% of Dalit children in the Madhesh lack birth registration, denying them access to legal recognition.
- The National Dalit Commission (NDC) needs greater financial and human resource support from the government to fulfill its role effectively.
- Dalit issues must be incorporated into government policies, programs, and budgets at all levels.

### **SDG-17: Partnership for the goals**

- Dalit issues lack attention and resources from international organizations, highlighting the need for advocacy.
- Unavailability of disaggregated data hinders tracking of SDG progress, monitoring inclusivity, and just resource distribution.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The “5 Ps” of SDGs – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships – represent the foundation of Agenda 2030. The SDGs provide a framework for international cooperation and encourage governments, businesses, and civil society to work together to achieve sustainable development. Leave no one behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). LNOB not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor but requires combating discrimination and rising inequalities within and amongst countries, and their root causes<sup>1</sup>.

### • SDG goals and sub-grouping

There are altogether 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are broadly divided into four groups such as Social, Environment, Economic and Law and Governance Pillars. The social pillar includes five Goals viz. Goal-1, Goal-2, Goal-3, Goal-4 and Goal-5 whereas six goals viz. Goal-6, Goal-11, Goal-12, Goal-13, Goal-14 and Goal-15 come under the environment pillar. Likewise, the economic pillar involves five goals viz. Goal-7, Goal-8, Goal-9, Goal-10 and Goal-17, and Goal-16 is related to the law and governance pillar<sup>2</sup>.

### • High level political forum

The United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was established in 2012 by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The HLPF is the central United Nations platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level<sup>3</sup>.

### • Voluntary national review (VNR) Process and Nepal

The voluntary national review (VNR) process serves as a vital mechanism for countries to evaluate and showcase their progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Aligned with the principles of inclusivity and national ownership, member states are encouraged to conduct regular and comprehensive reviews at both national and sub-national levels. These reviews, led and driven by each country, provide valuable insights into achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, fostering knowledge sharing and collaboration. The VNRs play a crucial role in enhancing policies, institutions, and partnerships to accelerate SDG implementation, ultimately contributing to sustainable development worldwide.

In South and South-West Asia (SSWA), all countries have completed two VNRs. Nepal is currently in the process of preparing its third VNR, which it plans to present in 2024. The 12<sup>th</sup> session of HLPF is going to be held in July 2024. The meeting of HLPF will be held in two rounds from 8 July to 12 July, and from 15 July to 18 July 2024, under the umbrella of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It will conduct an in-depth review of SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)<sup>4</sup>.

### • CSO spotlight report and rationale for producing it from a Dalit perspective

SDG document envisions CSO participation in VNR process. CSOs can produce independent reports which are normally referred to as “shadow report,” “spotlight report,” and/ or “parallel report”. Civil society involvement is crucial for ensuring inclusive and open implementation, follow-up, and review of SDGs. It helps hold governments accountable to diverse societal needs. Civil society acts as a vital

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>

<sup>2</sup> <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/en/about/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://hlpf.un.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://sdg.iisd.org/events/high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2024/>



link between governments and stakeholders. At the national level, locally focused civil society stakeholders are pivotal in monitoring and reviewing processes<sup>5</sup>.

In Nepal, broader CSO groups under the NGO Federation and other networks for SDGs have been producing and submitting CSO spot reports. While these groups do address some Dalit issues in general, they do not provide sufficient focus on Dalit-specific concerns. Therefore, Dalit CSOs have also decided to prepare their own reports for the VNR processes.

Dalits constitute 13.4 percent of the country's population. Due to customary practices of caste-based discrimination and untouchability in the society, Dalits have faced injustice and exclusion from mainstream development for centuries. They encounter biases and segregation in every aspect of their social, economic, and political lives. Consequently, Dalits lag behind other social groups and the national average in almost all development indicators. Dalit issues are multifaceted and require special attention and emphasis. Therefore, this Dalit-specific report has been developed.

## 1.2 Objectives

The key objectives of preparing this report are:

1. To assess the progress of SDGs' implementation in Nepal from the perspectives of Dalit communities and recommend effective strategies for continued implementation in the remaining period.
2. To bring the development issues of Dalit communities in Nepal to the forefront of the Government of Nepal and the international community's attention, particularly regarding the implementation of SDGs.
3. To contribute to strengthening the spirit of "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) in the implementation of SDGs, ensuring effective localization

## 1.3 SDG Goals assessed in this report:

Considering the time and resource constraints, the following 9 Goals have been assessed in this report.

SDG Goals	Total Global Targets	Total Indicators (Global)
SDG-1: No poverty	7	13
SDG-2: Zero hunger	8	14
SDG-4: Quality Education	10	
SDG-5: Gender equality	9	14
SDG-8: Decent work and economic growth	10	16
SDG-10: Reduced inequalities	10	14
SDG-13: Climate action	5	8
SDG-16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	12	24
SDG-17: Partnership for the goals	19	24

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sdgaccountability.org/working-with-informal-processes/spotlightreporting/>

## 2. METHODOLOGY & APPROACH

The assessment and report development process predominantly applied qualitative methods and approaches. However, both the qualitative and quantitative data were synthesized to provide a representative overview of the current state of the implementation of SDGs and the specific challenges faced by Dalit community.

### **Desk review and use of secondary data.**

The grey literature review was one of the key methods employed in developing this report. Mostly online resources published by government, non-government organizations, UN agencies and research-based organizations have been reviewed. The quantitative analysis relied solely on secondary data.

### **Provincial Consultations with stakeholders**

Provincial consultations were held in a total of five provinces<sup>6</sup>. These dialogues served as a platform for diverse stakeholders to contribute to this spotlight report. The dialogues saw the participation of 150 representatives from Dalit Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), members of provincial assemblies, political leaders, media personnel, and human rights activists. Dignity Initiatives (DI) and Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) cooperated in organizing the provincial consultations. The discussions focused on government policy actions and the current implementation status. These consultations also collected key concerns from the Dalit community regarding SDG implementation at sub-national levels.

### **Collaboration for assessment process and drafting of report:**

The development of this report followed an open and participatory process. The Dignity Initiative, Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF), and the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) jointly collaborated and coordinated with various Dalit civil society organizations (CSOs) throughout the assessment and development of this report. FEDO took the lead in assessing Goal 5 and Goal 13, while DI led the efforts for Goal 16 and Goal 17. ADRF was responsible for Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 4, Goal 8, and Goal 10.

A four-member team assigned by the collaborative partners drafted the report. During the inception phase meetings, team members discussed approaches to data collection and use, coordination, and the timeline, ultimately agreeing on a reporting outline. In these meetings, goal-specific responsibilities were assigned to each team member. Each member gathered data and evidence, which were then compiled into a draft report.

### **Report validation and finalization**

The draft report was presented at a national consultation meeting with CSOs, where a total of 74 participants representing organizer, Dalit CSOs, and experts from the Dalit community provided feedback and input. A member of the National Planning Commission and Members of Parliament (MPs) from the federal parliament also observed the meeting. This national consultation served as a mechanism for validating the data and issues highlighted in the report. Then the team incorporated feedback and suggestions into the subsequent drafts. Finally, the government report was reviewed, and the data and evidence were triangulated before the report was finalized.

### **Limitations**

- Due to time and resource constraints, primary data collection was not feasible for all SDG goals. As a result, the assessment relied heavily on secondary data sources, which may not fully capture the nuances and status of the issues. The limited resources also hindered the ability to reach a wider group of participants at local levels.
- The absence of detailed, disaggregated data posed a significant challenge. This limitation posed challenges in highlighting progress and identifying gaps in the implementation and monitoring of SDG targets and indicators.

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<sup>6</sup> Dignity Initiative held provincial dialogues in Koshi, Madhesh, Bagmati, Gandaki and Karnali provinces.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF SDGS: REVIEW FROM DALIT PERSPECTIVES

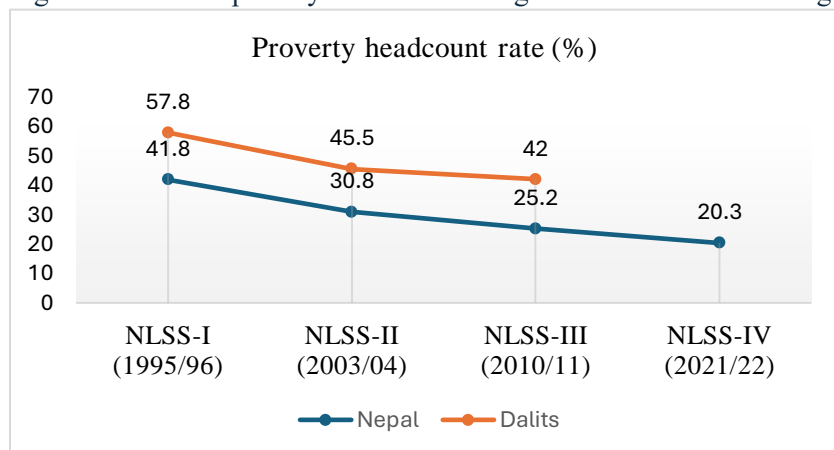


#### SDG-1: No poverty in all its forms everywhere

- **Eradicate extreme poverty (Target 1.1) and people living in poverty in all its dimensions (Target 1.2)**

Nepal has a population of 29.4 million people, with 13.8% belonging to the Dalit community. The CBS/NSO conducted four consecutive Nepal Living Standard Surveys to measure poverty. While the first three surveys included caste-ethnicity disaggregated data, the latest fourth survey does not. According to the previous three surveys, there is a 16 percentage point difference in the poverty gap between the national average and Dalits. Applying the same principle, current poverty among Dalits can be estimated to be around 36%, meaning approximately 1.4 million Dalits live on less than US\$ 1.9 per day. This indicates they have a very low quality of life and are compelled to live in hunger and deprivation.

Figure 1: Trend of poverty incidence among Dalit and national average (%)



The Government of Nepal does not have a specific and targeted program to eradicate extreme poverty among Dalits; instead, it employs a blanket approach that is not effectively assisting them. If such targeted measures were implemented, Dalit poverty rates could potentially align with the national average of 20.3%, as no other social or ethnic groups experience poverty rates above this.

Source: Nepal Living Standard Surveys, 1995/96, 2003/2004, 2010/11 and 2021/22 (NSO)

- **Social protection systems and measures (Target 1.3)**

According to the 16th Plan, social protection schemes in Nepal cover 32 percent of the population by FY 2022/23. There are approximately 87 social protection schemes, and the government of Nepal has also designed an integrated social protection framework. These schemes cater to both the general population and Dalits. The eligibility age for receiving old age allowance is 68 years, with a monthly allowance of Rs. 4000 for the general population. However, Dalits are eligible at the age of 60, receiving a monthly allowance of Rs. 2650, which also applies to widows and single women. Additionally, the government provides a nutrition allowance of Rs. 532 per month to Dalit children under the age of five across all 77 districts and to children in selected 25 districts. While this support is particularly beneficial for poor families, no study has been conducted to assess its impact on reducing extreme poverty.

- **Equal rights to economic resources for men and women (Target 1.5)**

Extreme poverty is associated with limited access to financial resources and their effective utilization in productive sectors. Government data shows that access to financial resources, primarily through formal sectors, is at 61% for all Nepali people. However, there is no separate data available for Dalits. The Madhesh province, with the lowest human development index among all seven provinces at 0.510 (Economic Survey 2023/2024, MoF), contrasts with the national average of 0.602. A survey indicates

that 59.2% of Dalits in Madhesh have access (NEMAF, 2023), suggesting lower access in other provinces compared to the national average for Dalits.

- **Resilience and reduce exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters (Target 1.5)**

There is no separate data available for Dalits; however, a rapid survey conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 shows significant disparities. While only 11% of non-Dalits depended on wage labor, the figure was 66% for Dalits. During the pandemic, such work opportunities were scarce, leading to food scarcity for 95% of Dalits, compared to 78% among non-Dalits (Dalit NGO Federation rapid survey, 2020). The same survey highlighted that 66% of Dalits had to take loans to cope with the situation, whereas only 25% of non-Dalits resorted to loans. This suggests that Dalits lacked adequate coping mechanisms during disasters or pandemics.

- **Policy frameworks and investment in poverty eradication actions (Target 1.b)**

Nepal's constitution guarantees 31 fundamental rights along with welfare and socialist state policies and principles. The Government of Nepal consistently advocates for the elimination of all forms of poverty. However, in reality, 20.4% of the total population still falls below the poverty line, with the figure rising to 36% for Dalits. In the past, particularly from the 9th periodic plan through the 11th plan, the government formulated separate plans and programs for Dalits. Unfortunately, from the 12th plan onward to the current 16th plan, there have been no specific plans and programs aimed at reducing poverty among Dalits.



## **SDG-2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

- **Hunger and access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round (Target 2.1)**

The 2015 constitution of Nepal guarantees the right to food under Article 36, which includes three sub-articles affirming that all citizens have the right to protect themselves against food deprivation and asserting the sovereignty of these rights. Despite these constitutional guarantees, Nepal continues to face issues of hunger and food deprivation. Although there is no separate disaggregated data available in this field, anecdotal evidence suggests that Dalits, Muslims, and some other ethnic groups suffer from malnutrition resulting from hunger and other forms of deprivation. Therefore, the challenge lies in ensuring constitutional rights to food, ensuring that no one is deprived of rightful access to food security throughout the year.

Despite constitutional guarantees against hunger and food deprivation, Dalits in Nepal continue to suffer significantly from food scarcity. While there is no comprehensive national data on Dalits, a survey conducted by NEMAF in 2022 among Dalits in the Madhesh province reveals a concerning situation regarding food availability. The following table illustrates the situation.

The severity of the problem occurs during the months of August and September, when new crops are not yet ripe and old stocks are depleted. Additionally, seasonal work is unavailable due to heavy rain and limited mobility

During the COVID-19 pandemic, only one person, Dalit Malar Sada from Saptari district, died of extreme hunger on 19th May 2020. Due to the lockdown, he couldn't find work, and no one could reach him for assistance. The entire Sada family had nothing to eat for the last five days except for a wild herb called Niguro (soft shoots of a fern plant). Similarly, a laborer named Surya Bahadur Tamang was found dead on the streets of Kirtipur, a neighboring town to the capital city of Kathmandu. He had no money to pay rent after being without work for two months due to a government-imposed lockdown and tragically passed away on the street. Mr. Tamang belonged to one of the indigenous groups.

- **Malnutrition- stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age (Target 2.2)**

According to the Global Hunger Index 2023, 5.4% of Nepal's population suffers from undernourishment. Child wasting among children under five years old stands at 7.7%, child stunting at 24.8%, and child mortality under five at 2.7%<sup>7</sup>. There is no separate data available for Dalits, who have the highest incidence of poverty among all castes and ethnic groups. Therefore, their situation regarding child malnutrition, stunting, and wasting cannot be assumed to be better.

- **Access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities (Target 2.3)**

Land remains the primary source of agricultural production and livelihood in Nepal, also serving as a main wealth asset. No one is considered landless in Nepal; those without land often fall into poverty, as poverty and landlessness are closely intertwined. To ensure access to land for all Dalits, sub-article 5 of Article 40 of the constitution stipulates that landless Dalits shall be provided with land as per the law. While there is no government data on Dalit landlessness, a nationwide survey conducted by the Sociology and Anthropology department of Tribhuvan University from 2012 to 2018 revealed that 7.8% of hill Dalits and 24.5% of Madhesi Dalits are landless, compared to 3.1% for all of Nepal.

With regard to employment opportunities, a rapid survey conducted by DNF during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 asked respondents who were staying at home due to the lockdown about their plans post-lockdown. The survey revealed that while 30% of non-Dalit respondents said they would return to their previous jobs, only 15% of Dalits said the same. Furthermore, 50% of Dalits indicated they would be searching for new jobs, compared to just 23% of non-Dalits. Additionally, those working in agriculture comprised only 13.7% of Dalits, whereas it was 30% for non-Dalits.<sup>8</sup> This data clearly reveals that there are fewer employment opportunities available for Dalits compared to their non-Dalit counterparts.



## **SDG-4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

Education is often considered the pathway to prosperity, playing a crucial role in life regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, or place of origin. It directly impacts the health, wealth, and economic well-being of individuals and families. For centuries, Dalits and certain other castes and ethnic groups have been deprived of education, leading to their lagging behind in all aspects of human development. While access to education is not a significant issue for Dalit communities, the challenge lies in retaining quality education that can pave the way to a prosperous life.

The 2015 constitution of Nepal guarantees the right to primary, secondary, and higher education, including technical education, under Article 40, Sub-article 2. It stipulates that Dalits will have the right to primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as technical education, free of cost and with scholarships. However, this provision has never been effectively implemented, and its effective implementation remains another issue.

Quality education, which would equip all students attending community or government-run schools to compete effectively in the job market, is not currently being achieved. There is a significant dropout rate at the higher secondary level of education. Therefore, retaining students with good life skills and employability remains another issue and challenge.

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<sup>7</sup> Global Hunger Index 2023

<sup>8</sup> Rapid Survey conducted by the Dalit NGO Federation (DNF)

Nepal does have some plans, programs, and policies regarding education for Dalits, but they are not consolidated enough to enable them to acquire quality education. These plans and policies are sporadic and not accessible or beneficial to all.

### **Complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education (Target 4.1)**

The share of Dalit students to total students in Nepal seems encouraging at early grades; however, it declines as the grade level increases. According to the Flash I Report 2022/23<sup>9</sup>, the share of Dalit students in Grades 1-5 and Grades 6-8 was 18% and 16.3%, respectively. This share declines to 13.75% in Grades 9-10 and further decreases to 11.3% in Grades 11-12. This clearly indicates that the high drop-out rate in upper grades is a critical issue in the access to education for Dalits. According to the current education system in Nepal, Grades 1-8 fall under the basic level, and Grades 9-12 are considered secondary. Previously, Grades 1-5 were categorized as primary level.

Share of Dalit students by grades:

<b>Grades</b>	<b>No. of Students in Nepal</b>	<b>% of Dalit Girls</b>	<b>% of Dalit Boys</b>	<b>% of Dalit Students</b>
Grade 1-5	3610603	19.1	18.6	<b>18.8</b>
Gade 6-8	1827433	16.8	15.9	<b>16.3</b>
Grade 9-10	1082780	14.1	13.3	<b>13.7</b>
Gade 11-12	701581	11.6	11.1	<b>11.3</b>

Access to quality education is another critical concern for Dalits, as most Dalit students are enrolled in community schools, which are managed by the government. As per the Flash Report, of the total students studying from Grades 1-12, 70.6% are in community schools, whereas the share of institutional (private) and religious schools is 27.5% and 1.9%, respectively. There is a clear gap in the quality of education delivered between community schools in rural areas and institutional (private) schools in urban areas.

### **Access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education (Target 4.2)**

Government data indicates that the Dalit population comprises 13.8%. According to a report from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), 16.8% of Dalit children are enrolled in Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) or Pre-primary classes, which is considered commendable. This is largely due to the majority of Dalit children being enrolled in government-run ECED/PPC programs, whereas non-Dalit children attend private nurseries. It is noteworthy that there is greater awareness among Dalit parents about the importance of early schooling. Among Dalit children, 49.1% of those enrolled are girls.

However, the challenge for these early schools lies in improving the quality of the learning environment to ensure that children have a solid foundation for their formal education starting from grade one.

### **Affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university (Target 4.3)**

As stated earlier, Article 40 and Sub-article 2 of the constitution ensure free education with scholarships for Dalits up to higher technical education levels. In fields such as medical and engineering, the government provides scholarships to Dalit students from the Chamar, Mushahar, Dom, Badi, and Gandharva communities. Unfortunately, only a few students from the Chamar, Mushahar, and Dom communities have been able to benefit from these grants, while none from the Badi and Gandharva communities have received them. Such scholarships are intended for all Dalits, but contrary to constitutional mandates, they have been limited to only three communities among Madhesi Dalits and two among hill Dalits.

<sup>9</sup> [https://cehrd.gov.np/file\\_data/mediacenter\\_files/media\\_file-17-1330449615.pdf](https://cehrd.gov.np/file_data/mediacenter_files/media_file-17-1330449615.pdf)

### Youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship (Target 4.4)

Nepal has a dedicated institution called CTEVT (Centre for Technical Education and Vocational Training), which independently provides short- and long-term vocational skills and also oversees other institutions offering vocational training. There is no available data regarding the number of students enrolled or their completion rates.

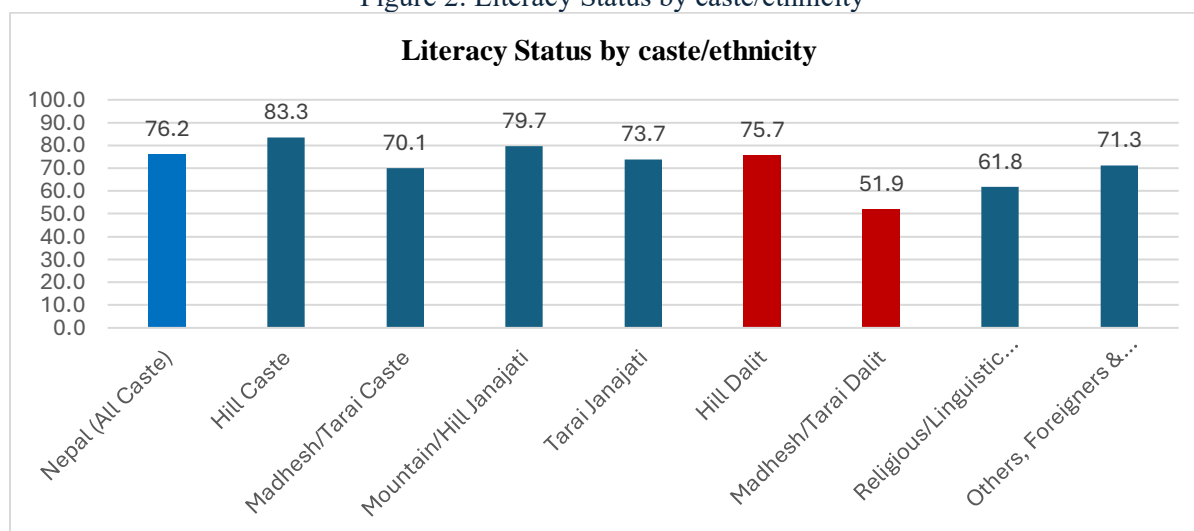
Traditionally, Dalits in Nepal have occupations related to metals, cloth, and leather. However, except for cloth-related occupations, none of these trades have been formally recognized in the curriculum or colleges. Vocational training is offered by both government-run and CTEVT-regulated private schools.

There is significant potential for CTEVT to recognize and incorporate Dalit traditional occupations into its formal education system. This integration could modernize traditional occupations and create thousands of jobs for both Dalits and non-Dalits. Currently, due to discrimination associated with these traditional occupations, few Dalit youths are willing to pursue them.

### Gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training (Target 4.6) and literacy and numeracy (Target 4.6)

While many countries in the world have already achieved 100% literacy, Nepal, despite decades of effort, has not been able to achieve 100% literacy among its population.

Figure 2: Literacy Status by caste/ethnicity



Source: Census-2021 (NSO)

From the graph above one can see that while hill Dalits have literacy of 75.7% near to national average, it is 51.9% for Madhesi Dalits - a matter of concern as it is lowest among all social groups.

### The supply of qualified teachers (Target 4.c)

Out of reported 26,501 community ECED/PPC teachers, 25,471 (96.1 percent) are females while the remaining 1,030 (3.9 percent) are males. In regards to caste/ethnicity, 1,686 teachers (6.4 percent) are from Dalit community, 9,613 (36.2 percent) are Janajatis and 15,202 (57.3 percent) are Brahman/Chhetris and other caste/ethnic groups. These teachers are the foundations of the formal education and they need to be trained and made skillful so that the children who enter into the semi - formal setup of education become curious in learning and excel in their education in the future. It is good to note that 6.4% teachers belong to Dalit community.



## SDG-5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

### Discrimination against all women and girls (Target 5.1) and VAWG including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (Target 5.2)

Despite various laws, policies, and programs, discrimination and violence against Dalit women have not decreased in line with the national average. Dalit women face multiple forms of discrimination, abuse, and atrocities due to their intersecting identities. The government's existing efforts to combat gender discrimination and violence against women and girls have not fully aligned with intersectional approaches or a gender justice lens. For instance, the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policies and gender-responsive budget initiatives by various levels of government do not specifically accommodate Dalit women.

Dalit women are disproportionately affected by violence and exploitation. According to NDHS-2022, 9.7% of Dalit women aged 15 to 49 have faced sexual violence by any perpetrator, compared to the national average of 7.5%. Domestic violence is also prevalent among Dalit women, with 30.3% experiencing physical violence since age 15, significantly higher than the national average of 22.5%. Furthermore, 23.5% of Dalit women aged 15 to 49 who have ever had a husband or intimate partner experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence by a husband or intimate partner in the past 12 months, compared to the national average of 17.2%. According to data of Nepal Police<sup>10</sup>, domestic violence constitutes the largest share (78.8%) of gender-based violence.

Another major group of victims of violence are women who have done inter-caste marriages. According to a study conducted by FEDO in 2023, out of 120 couples surveyed across 7 districts of Nepal, 39.2% of the women had faced violence in their inter-caste marriages. The above statistics underscore the vulnerability of Dalit women to domestic and sexual violence, highlighting a critical area where gender equality efforts must intensify. The high incidence of violence against Dalit women reflects deep-seated social prejudices and systemic failures in protecting and empowering this marginalized group.

According to trafficking in person (TIP) reports of Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen (MoWCSC) revealed that the proportion of TIP survivors is also higher among Dalit women (See Table). For instance, the proportion of Dalits in total of TIP survivors was 17 percent in FY 2022/23, which higher to 13.4% Dalit population in Nepal. Moreover, all survivors were Dalit women.

Table-1: Proportion on Dalits among TIP survivors

Sex of survivors	FY 2015/16			FY 2018/19			FY 2022/23		
	Nepal	Dalit	Dalit%	Nepal	Dalit	Dalit%	Nepal	Dalit	Dalit%
<b>Women</b>	350	43	<b>12.3</b>	316	59	<b>18.7</b>	200	34	<b>17.0</b>
<b>Men</b>	2	0	<b>0.0</b>	71	7	<b>9.9</b>	11	0	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16.1</b>

Source: *Trafficking in person reports, MoWCSC.*

Nepal has remained a hotspot for human trafficking. In current years, various studies indicate that with the expansion of adult entertainment sector (AES), the risk of internal trafficking has increased in Nepal. The participation of Dalit and Dalit women is also increasing in these sectors. Moreover, the mounting migration for foreign employment has also brought new issues in human trafficking.

### Harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage (Target 5.3)

Despite government efforts to combat harmful practices, incidents of child marriage and accusations of witchcraft are still widely prevalent across the country. However, these practices are most prevalent

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np>



among Dalit women, with 27.6% of Dalit women in the Hill region and 43% in Madhesh marrying early. Among Dalits, Madheshi Dalit women have the highest rates of early marriage. The adverse impacts of these premature marriages are immeasurable. High rates of child marriage among Dalit girls are linked to multiple socio-cultural and economic factors, including extreme poverty, and concerns for girls' safety and security.

### **Full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership (Target 5.5)**

Dalit women's political participation has increased in number due to reservation at ward levels, however, they face significant underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making roles, which is a crucial aspect of achieving SDG Goal-5. Despite constitutional mandates for inclusion, the stark reality reveals a huge disparity in representation for Dalit women across various political spheres. Merely 1.7% of total deputy mayors in municipalities and sub/metropolitan cities are Dalit women, while only 1.52% of vice chairpersons of rural municipalities belong to this demographic. Shockingly, not a single Dalit woman holds a mayoral or chairperson position at the local level, and they are entirely absent from the National Assembly. Even in the House of Representatives, where women occupy 33.45% of the seats, only 2.9% are Dalit women, with a meager 8.7% among elected women. This data highlights the negligible presence of Dalit women in significant political roles, suggesting that their inclusion is often merely tokenistic rather than substantive.

### **Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (Target 5.6)**

Unpaid care and domestic work (hereafter referred to as unpaid care work) include cleaning the home, cooking, washing and dressing children, caring for sick or disabled family members, and collecting fuel or water. Unpaid care work is disproportionately undertaken by women. Not only is it seen as 'women's work,' but it is also often not recognized as 'real' work. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), women perform unpaid care work four times more than men.

The contribution to subsistence work, by women, is 50.4% and household care is 72% compared to men. Women, on an average spend at least 7.5 hours per day on unpaid care work at home which is 2.5 times higher than men. In addition, Nepali women are increasingly entering the labour market for wages/incomes. Women's participation has increased to 45.5 hours per week in the formal sector and 38.5 hours per week in the informal sector, contributing 47.3% and 42.2% of the work, respectively-disclosed by Bina Pradhan in 2023 news article published in Neplai Times titled "Nepal Care Economy".



## **SDG-8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

SDG-8 is highly relevant for Dalits within the economic pillar, as it addresses decent work and economic growth. There are 10 targets and related indicators under this goal. Key progress and issues pertaining to specific targets, particularly Target 8.5, Target 8.7, and Target 8.10, are discussed below.

### **• Employment , decent work, and equal pay for work of equal value (Target 8.5)**

According to the last labor force survey of 2017/18<sup>11</sup>, the labor force participation rate (LFPR) of women was 26.35%, which was less than half of the male LFPR, which stood at 53.8%. Due to lack of disaggregated data, it is impossible to pinpoint the unemployment rate and LFPR among Dalit communities. However, observations and anecdotal data suggest that **underemployment is high among Dalits, as the majority earn their livelihood from the agricultural sector and unskilled labor in the construction sectors, both of which are seasonal in nature**. It also seems evident that

<sup>11</sup> [https://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Nepal-Labour-Force-Survey-2017\\_18-Report.pdf](https://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Nepal-Labour-Force-Survey-2017_18-Report.pdf)

the proportion of Dalit men and women who are willing and seeking work is likely to be higher than the national average.

For centuries, Dalits have faced struggles in obtaining dignified employment. Traditional occupations, which many rely on to meet their daily needs, are often disregarded by society. Despite possessing traditional skills, many Dalits lack the skills required for employment in the competitive labor market. Additionally, **entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities are limited by social and financial capitals**. The government has been implementing a program in the name of the late Dalit leader Bhagat Sarbajit Bishwakarma through the Department of Cottage and Small Industries, aimed at fulfilling the mandates of Article 40(4) of the Constitution. This constitutional Article ensures the rights of Dalits to utilize, protect, and develop their traditional occupations, knowledge, skills, and technology. However, **the field implementation does not fully reflect the spirit of the constitution**.

The employment programme like Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP) is crucial for supporting the poorest and underemployed populations, including Dalits. The PMEP was launched in line with the right to employment under Article 33 of the Constitution of Nepal and related act i.e. the Right to Employment Act, 2015. As of now, the number of registered unemployed individuals under the PMEP has risen to 885,154, of which 56.5% are women. The total number of beneficiaries of the PMEP is significantly lower than the registered unemployed. For instance, in the fiscal year 2022/23, only 91,685 individuals benefited from the PMEP. However, data does not reveal how many of them are Dalits. It is also unclear what proportion of Dalits have benefitted from the total employment provided by the PMEP. The CSO's observations and monitoring reveal that due to documentation hurdles and limited opportunities, many needy Dalits are discouraged from participating in the employment programme.

#### • **Forced labour, modern slavery, and Child Labour (Target 8.7)**

Nepal has proclaimed several legislations and regulations to combat forced and bonded labor, as well as child labour. These laws collectively provide legal avenues towards ending child labor and protecting vulnerable populations from exploitation in Nepal. However, **there is a lack of an integrated bill on forced labor, which is required to address all types of forced labor practices existing in different regions of the country**. The government drafted the bill in collaboration with civil society actors, and was supposed to be passed, but it is still pending in federal ministries and has not yet entered the parliamentary process.

The Kamaiya, Harawa-Charawa, and Haliya have three major agricultural bonded labor systems which victimized hundreds of thousands of families for centuries. All three groups have now been declared freed. Almost all freed Kamaiyas belong to the Tharu community, whereas the majority of freed Haliya (95%) and over two-thirds of freed Harawa-Charawa belong to Dalit communities. Though there are issues of missing out families in the identification and verification process, the majority of freed Haliya families have been rehabilitated by the government. However, **the identification and verification of freed Harawa-Charawa, which is the first step towards the rehabilitation process, has yet to be started**. The actual official number of affected Harawa Charawa is still unknown; however, an ILO study in 2013<sup>12</sup> estimates that the number is more than 70,000 in seven Tarai district of Nepal.

According to Nepal Child Labor Report-2021<sup>13</sup>, it is estimated that there was 1.1 million child labour in Nepal, which is a significant decline from 1.6 million in 2008. The overall child labor prevalence rate in Nepal was 15.3%, with female children showing a slightly higher engagement rate (17%) compared to male children (14%). Across caste/ethnic groups, the highest prevalence of child labor is found among Dalits (19.4%). It is noteworthy that the decline in the child labor prevalence rate among Dalit children has been significant. In 2008, the prevalence was 28.3%, but it has since decreased to 19.4%. This reduction can be attributed to improvements in educational status and increased awareness within the Dalit community.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/publications/forced-labour-adults-and-children-agriculture-sector-nepal-focusing-haruwa>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/publications/nepal-child-labour-report-2021>

Table-2: Prevalence of Child Labour

Year	Nepal (Pop in million)	Nepal (%)	Dalits (%)
2008	1.6	20.6	28.3
2017/18	1.1	15.3	19.4

Source: Nepal Child Labour Reports 2011 and 2021, ILO Nepal

However, despite this, the vulnerability to child labor remains higher among Dalits. The higher rates among Dalits are linked to lower educational attainment and

higher poverty levels within such communities. Moreover, compared to other social groups, Dalits often earn their livelihoods from agriculture and other elementary occupations. The child labor report also confirms that most child laborers, about 87%, work in the agriculture sector, while 13% are employed in non-agricultural sectors.

• Access to banking, insurance and financial services (Target 8.10)

In recent years, the government's policy to expand bank branches to every local level has significantly increased access to banking across Nepal. As of mid-March 2024, the average population served per banking branch (including micro-finance) is 2,515. Additionally, the government's policy of transferring social security allowances through bank accounts and civil society's cash transfer schemes in humanitarian relief via bank accounts have also contributed to the increase in the population with bank accounts.

Despite this progress, the National Population and Housing Census 2021 revealed that 39% of families still lack access to banking services. Currently, 61.9% of families have at least one bank account, while only 25.6% of the overall population possesses bank accounts. The proportion of men (26.4%) with bank accounts is slightly higher than that of women (24.7%).

There is gap in disaggregated data to identify which social groups have lower access to banking. However, some studies by non-governmental organizations indicate that landless and traditionally marginalized groups, such as Dalits, have lower access to banking services and credits. The poor and landless Dalits often rely on local moneylenders, groups, and relatives for any loans they need. Since banks require collateral and documentation, the poor and marginalized are compelled to avoid these hurdles in the loan process. For instance, according to a 2022 survey conducted by the Nepal Madhesh Foundation in Madhesh province, only 7.8% of Dalits go to banks for loans, while the largest share (52%) approach local moneylenders.



**SDG-10: Reduce inequality within and among countries**

SDG-10 is another key goal within the economic pillar. It intends to reduce inequalities within and among countries. This goal also includes 10 targets and related indicators. Key progress and issues pertaining to relevant targets, particularly Target 10.1, and Target 10.2 are reviewed below.

• Income growth of the bottom 40 per cent (Target 10.1)

According to the 16<sup>th</sup> plan (NPC, 2024), Nepal's per capita income has increased to \$1456 USD by FY 2022/23. Despite this increase, it remains one of the lowest in South Asia, after Afghanistan. Low GDP growth is a major propelling factor to Nepal's low per capita income. **There's a significant gap in per capita income between the national average and Dalits, although the latest caste/ethnicity data isn't available. The Covid-19 pandemic has likely widened this gap, disproportionately impacting the poorest and most marginalized groups, including Dalits.**

Despite a decrease in the Gini Coefficient, a measure of income inequality, the Palma ratio remains high at 1.34. This indicates a substantial income gap between the top 10% and the bottom 40% of the population. Available data suggests this gap is wider among Dalits. **Most Dalits are concentrated in elementary occupations, typically receiving low wages, which contributes to their lower household**

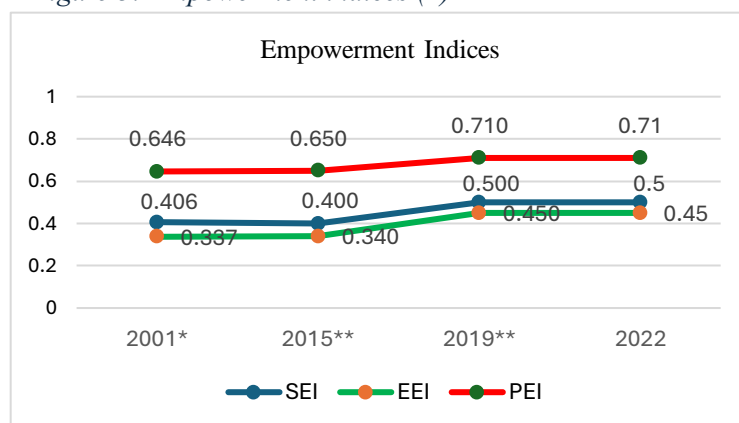
**consumption expenditure and overall economic marginalization.** For example, the report on Nepal's Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Framework (NPC, 2023) found that nine<sup>14</sup> out of 14 Dalit sub-groups included in the assessment, representing over two-thirds (68.4%) of the total Dalit population (or 9.2% of the national population), fall within the "most excluded" category based on annual household consumption expenditure. This implies limited income capacity of Dalits.

• **Social, economic and political inclusion (Target 10.2)**

Article 40 of the Constitution of Nepal, through its seven sub-clauses, establishes social, economic, and political inclusion as fundamental rights for Dalits. **Despite constitutional safeguards and various targeted policies and program interventions including social protection schemes, Dalit groups remain significantly behind on socio-economic indicators.** According to the LNOB framework, a composite index developed using 30 socio-economic indicators categorized eight Dalit sub-groups<sup>15</sup> out of 14 as "most excluded" highlighting their significant social and economic marginalization. Most of these sub-groups are Madheshi Dalits. Additionally, four sub-groups<sup>16</sup> are categorized as "middle," and only two sub-groups<sup>17</sup> are categorized as "included". None of them were "most included".

The government's VNR report on SDG<sup>18</sup> shows that Political Empowerment Index (PEI) in Nepal is higher than the Social Empowerment Index (SEI) and Economic Empowerment Index (EEI). The value of EEI (0.45) is still less than 0.5, and below SEI (0.5) and far below PEI (0.71). It means that **existing efforts to expand economic opportunities are less effective or inadequate to address the economic needs of the traditionally discriminate and marginalized population like Dalits.**

Figure 3: Empowerment indices (\*)



Notably, due to proportional representation system in election and reservation in public services, though not in the proportionate to population, **the numeric participation of Dalits has increased in state institutions. However, the present participation of Dalits is not adequate to influence the social and economic policies and political decision of the state.**

Article 281 of the Constitution links the rights of Dalit and women with the human development index (HDI) and obligates government to review progress based on HDI. The latest, Nepal Human Development Report (NHDR)-2020 did not produce HDI value by caste/ethnicity: this breached a practice followed in the two preceding NHDRs in 2009 and 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Musahar, Halkhor, Dom, Dushad/Paswan, Tatma, Badi, Khatwe, Chamar/Harijan and Bishwakarma (Kami)

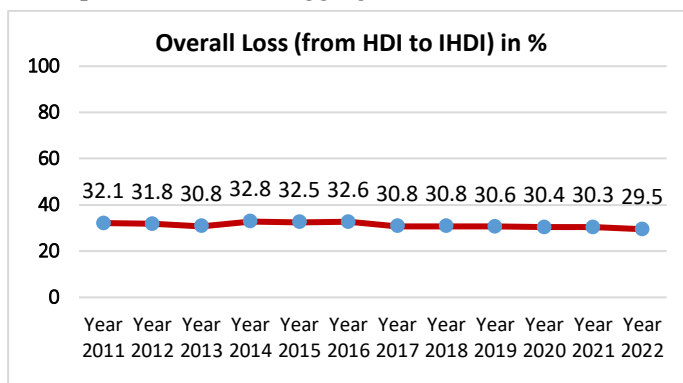
<sup>15</sup> Musahar, Halkhor, Dom, Dushad/Paswan, Chamar/Harijan, Tatma, Khatwe, Chamar/Harijan and Dhobi

<sup>16</sup> Bishwakarma (Kami), Bantar, Mijar (Sarki) and Badi.

<sup>17</sup> Pariyar (Damai/Dholi) and Gandarbha (Gaine)

<sup>18</sup> \*

According to NHDR-2014, the HDI vale of all Dalit was 0.434 whereas the national average was 0.490. Madhesi Dalits were on the bottom with HDI value of 0.400, clearly indicating the unequal human development. Due to lagging behind social indicators (both education and health) and income



opportunities, the human development of Dalits is far below the national average. The Inequality-adjusted Human Development index (IHDI) is also evident that country is paying the cost of inequalities with higher losses in potential human development. The overall loss from HDI to IHDI has remained around 30 percent from 2011 to 2022<sup>19</sup>. This implies that human development efforts must account for inequalities and underlying structural discrimination.



## SDG-13: Take urgent action to combat Climate change and its impacts

The Dalit community in Nepal, already marginalized and economically disadvantaged, faces heightened vulnerabilities due to climate change. Therefore, the community requires special attention to address the unique challenges faced by Dalit communities.

### • Climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning (Target 13.2)

Local adaptation plans are crucial for building climate resilience, they should be prepared by all local governments. However, it also notable that the effectiveness of such plans depend on the full participation of local communities, including Dalit and Dalit women. Unfortunately, their involvement is often overlooked. Additionally, fostering local capacity development among both officials and communities is crucial for the effective implementation of these plans, ensuring a lens of climate justice. The support for Dalit leaders and organizations working on climate change issues within their communities could be instrumental for overcoming the challenges collectively.

While national policies like Green, Inclusive, and Resilient Development (GRID) promote an inclusive approach, existing programs aimed at marginalized groups frequently fail to address the specific needs of Dalits. This creates an intersectional gap that hinders their ability to adapt to climate hazards and build resilience. Furthermore, the absence of Dalit representation in final decision-making positions is a challenge to mainstream their rights in climate action plans.

### • Education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity (Target 13.3)

The government's initiative to promote climate change education in schools is appropriate for its long-term impact. However, it is crucial to extend awareness beyond school premises, especially considering that many girls and boys, including those from Dalit communities, are either out of school, have dropped out, or were never enrolled in the schools. Therefore, the collaboration between local governments and CSOs for knowledge sharing and raising awareness could expand outreach and better prepare communities for immediate climate challenges.

Awareness programs must be tailored to the specific constraints faced by local communities. For instance, the lack of access to smartphones and the internet among marginalized groups, such as Dalit families, makes it challenging for them to benefit from conventional early warning systems. Hence, there is need to innovate by leveraging traditional methods of early warning that are more accessible to impacted communities.

<sup>19</sup> \* <https://hdr.undp.org/inequality-adjusted-human-development-index#/indicies/IHDI>



## SDG-16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all

SDG 16 seeks to foster peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. It aims to ensure equal access to justice for all and build inclusive institutions at all levels. This goal highlights the significance of participatory decision-making, reducing violence, putting an end to exploitation, and guaranteeing equal access to justice. It further stresses the importance of transparent, responsive governance and safeguarding fundamental freedoms. It creates an environment where all individuals can thrive and actively participate in society. This goal is assessed through the analysis, data, and evidence concerning the implementation of SDG 16.

### Target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

The constitution of the country has recognized (Clause 5 of the Article 24) caste discrimination as a serious social crime. Dalit rights are protected under fundamental rights in the constitution, and there are dedicated laws against caste discrimination. 45<sup>20</sup> Dalits have been killed since the implementation of the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act 2011. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a Dalit youth named Sundar Harijan<sup>21</sup> was murdered in police custody. Similarly, a young Dalit<sup>22</sup> from Kavre district was killed in July 2016, by the family of his girlfriend, due to intolerance of inter-caste marriage. His corpse has been lying in a morgue awaiting justice even after the 8 years of his murder.

In 2019, Nepal's Human Rights Commission<sup>23</sup> recorded 49 cases of discrimination against Dalits, but this number represents only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the actual extent of discrimination. The following year, during the COVID lockdown, there was a significant increase in violence against Dalits, most of which were wrongly blamed for the pandemic. During the time, the Human Rights Commission received reports of over 753 cases of discrimination against Dalits, which included 34 murders.

In 2020, a 13-year-old Dalit girl named Angira Pasi tragically took her own life in a village in western Nepal. The day before, she had been raped by a 25-year-old man named Birendra Bhar. Shockingly, instead of reporting the crime to the police, the locals decided that Pasi should be forced to marry Bhar. When Pasi was sent to Bhar's home for the marriage, she was subjected to physical abuse by his mother. Feeling utterly desperate, she was found hanging in a tree. It was only after the public expressed their outrage that the police finally took action.

According to the Demographics and Health Survey 2023, 28% of women aged between 15 to 49 sought help to stop the violence. Of the Dalit women who have experienced violence and sought help, 7.2% have approached to the police. <sup>24</sup> The report further concludes that discrimination against Dalit is still systematic and widespread and has concrete impacts on the lives and human rights of the Dalits, despite the constitutional and legal reforms.

The recent report<sup>25</sup> published by the Amnesty International also pointed out the need for urgent action towards the caste-based discrimination cases. Since 2011, there have been at least 5 dozen recorded

<sup>20</sup> Unpublished report of the Dignity Initiative

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/12/nepal-impunity-reigns-fueling-new-rights-violations>

<sup>22</sup> <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2024/01/08/silence-and-shame-in-ajit-mijar-s-killing#:~:text=A%20young%20Dalit%20from%20Kavre,triumphed%20over%20modern%20secular%20laws.>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.nhrcnepal.org/uploads/publication/Dalit\\_HR\\_status\\_report\\_for\\_webpage\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.nhrcnepal.org/uploads/publication/Dalit_HR_status_report_for_webpage_compressed.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> "Non-One Cares: Descent-Based Discrimination against Dalits in Nepal, published by the Amnesty International, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> "No One Cares": Descent-Based Discrimination against Dalits:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/descent-based-discrimination-against-dalits-in-nepal/>

cases of Dalit deaths involving issues of caste violence and discrimination. This shows that there is a high degree of impunity and violence against Dalit, and perpetrators often go unpunished.

**Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.**

Although progress has been made in preventing of certain forms of violence against children, it is important to recognize that Dalit children continue to experience various forms of discrimination, particularly in areas such as child labor and child marriage. One prevalent issue is early marriage in Dalit community, which is especially widespread in rural areas. When Dalit children marry individuals from the so-called higher castes, it creates both societal and administrative challenges<sup>26</sup>. Unfortunately, a concerning trend has emerged wherein Dalit youths are frequently and falsely accused of crimes such as kidnapping, trafficking, and sexual rape<sup>27</sup>. Consequently, many innocent individuals from this community are unjustly imprisoned.

**Case study:** Manoj Ram, a resident of Saptari of Dalit heritage, was imprisoned on charges of kidnapping following a complaint lodged by Lalit Kumar Isar, a so-called upper caste person, of Agnisair Krishnasavaran rural municipality 4. However, after a review, the court found that Ram was in a consensual relationship with Isar's daughter, Babita. When Isar refused to give his consent to their marriage due to Ram's background, the couple decided to elope. In response, Isar filed a kidnapping case against Ram.

**16.3 promote the rule of law at the national and international level and ensure equal access to justice**

The Nepalese constitution guarantees fundamental rights to the Dalit Community under articles 24 and 40. In 2011, the government enacted the Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, which was further strengthened by the National Civil Code of 2017. Despite these laws, crimes against Dalits are widespread and the perpetrators often go unpunished, causing a high degree of impunity.

Access to justice for Dalits has become increasingly difficult. A study<sup>28</sup> conducted in 2018 reveals that a total of 72 cases of caste-based-discrimination were registered in court from 2011 to 2016. Of these, 40 were dismissed by the court. It is very challenging for Dalits to go to court, file police reports, and navigate law enforcement processes. Once entangled in the criminal justice system, they often face arbitrary and extended pretrial detention, torture, coerced confessions, discrimination, wrongful convictions, stigma, and negative health and livelihood impacts, among other abuses.

The law enforcement must be held accountable to the constitutional commitments and international obligations. Victims of caste-based discrimination and violence experience lack of justice, inadequate legal protections, and inability to resolve grievances. The justice system must function fairly and effectively, fostering good governance and responsive institutions. Concerted efforts must be made to align with international human rights norms and standards.

The government has established 86 police cells specifically for Dalits across the country. Each of these cells is responsible for reporting, investigating, and coordinating with victims of caste-based discrimination and untouchability. It is important for this initiative to be implemented nationwide.

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<sup>26</sup> Manoj Ram from Saptari district was sent to jail for falsely being accused of kidnaping his own wife.

<sup>27</sup> Violence Against Dalit Women in Inter-caste Marriage, published by Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), 2024

<sup>28</sup> Study conducted by Shiva Hari Gywaali, 2018.

**Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels**

Nepal has accorded National Dalit Commission (NDC) a constitutional status. However, it seriously lacks financial and human resources to function properly. NDC must be equipped and strengthened in accordance with the Paris Principle. A team of competent, qualified and independent members must be appointed to function effectively. Moreover, according to the constitution, provincial-level offices of the NDC can be established. However, the state has not taken any steps to establish these offices.

There are dedicated institutions established for the Dalit community, and the government has implemented a budget code system in relation to the SDGs. However, there is a lack of mechanisms to connect these budgets with all relevant indicators and to ensure effective implementation. The delivery of critical services necessary for the effective functioning of these institutions is often compromised by insufficient financial and human resources. Effective allocation and implementation of national resources through the government budget is essential.

The constitutional commission established to strengthen the process of federalism is working against the spirit of inclusion. A recent report<sup>29</sup> by the National Inclusion Commission urged the government to end the reservation system, raising questions and receiving criticism from minority rights groups. This is an example of an irresponsible and unaccountable institution. Recently, the inclusion commission's recommendation to end reservations for Dalits has raised concerns, as this could undermine efforts to address systemic inequalities and support the Dalit community.

**Target 16.7: Ensure responsible, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels.**

The constitution stipulates ending all forms of discrimination and ensuring social justice through a proportional representation system across all state mechanisms. Article 42 of the Constitution, which pertains to social justice, provides the right for every community to participate in state organs based on the principle of proportional representation (PR). This principle was adopted to rectify historical injustices and establish an inclusive democratic state structure. However, recent election of 2022 results<sup>30</sup> shows that Dalit's representation is diminishing.

Among the 601 representatives elected in the first Constituent Assembly in 2008, there were 50 (8.32%) Dalit members. In the second Constituent Assembly election in 2013, Dalit representation decreased to 40 (6.66%). After the promulgation of the 2015 Constitution, Dalits won 19 seats (6.91%) in the 2017 election, but this number was reduced to 16 (5.82%) in 2022. Nepal has adopted the principle of proportional representation; however, Dalit representation has been steadily decreasing since the first constituent assembly election.

At the existing House of Representatives, candidates from Dalit community, which has been historically and systematically excluded from the state's lawmaking and policymaking spaces, make up 5.82% of all representatives — a single member was elected from First Past the Post and 15 from proportional representation. When viewed from a gender perspective, of the 91 female house of representatives (HoR) members, 8.79% are Dalit women. This shows that the inclusion of historically marginalized communities at the federal level is diminishing and representation of dominant group has been rising with each election.

According the election analysis report of Dignity Initiative, a total of 550 members are elected from all seven provinces – 330 from First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) and 220 from proportional representation

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<sup>29</sup> <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/08/23/furore-among-minorities-as-inclusion-body-advises-ending-reservations>

<sup>30</sup> Policy brief entitled “Contradiction Between the Principle of Proportional Representation and Election Results: An Analysis of the Representation of Dalit and Marginalised Communities in Nepal's 2022 Elections” published by Dignity Initiative (2022)



System. Replicating the federal-level dynamic, Dalit's representation at the province level is 5.64%. Altogether there are 31 Dalit representatives — six are men and 25 women. Of them, one woman and two men have been elected under FPTP system.

While historically excluded groups have made modest gains in parliamentary representation, it is important to note that dominant groups, despite their lack of success in the FPTP system, have slightly benefited from the constitutional arrangement of PR seats.

The Local Level Election Act via Article 6 (2) also demands a mandatory representation of two female ward members, including one Dalit woman, in each ward. Furthermore, the Act also has a provision requiring representation from Dalit or marginalized communities at municipal and rural municipal executive level. These provisions have increased representation of women and Dalit women in the wards, as well as in municipal and rural municipal executive level of local government. In 2022, a total of 35,097 people's representatives were elected through local elections, of whom Dalit community shares 21.99% of the population. The percentage of the elected Dalit candidates is 8% more than the total Dalit population. The surprise results is primarily due to the constitutionally guaranteed quota requiring Dalit women ward members. However, a focus on leadership positions reveals a less positive picture in terms of inclusion. Only 2.8% Dalits have been elected in the key the key positions in the local level.

A study that was undertaken by Dignity Initiative found that there are of 200 Dalit lawyers out 20,552. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a very few of them are practicing. Consequentially, as shocking as it is, it is not surprising that the number of judges is awfully low. Over 75 years of history, the Supreme Court never saw a judge from the Dalit Community. At the High Courts, there are only 3 out of 127 while in the District Courts, there are only 3 out of 262. To better understand the context, we should not forget that Dalits represent around 13.8% of the national population. An exclusionary justice system cannot deliver justice for Dalit and marginalized communities.

The constitution guarantees proportional representation of Dalits and other traditionally marginalized groups in the state mechanism. However, Dalit's overall representation in the judiciary is less than 2%, 2.22% in the state bureaucracy , 9.6% in Nepal police, and 8.14% in the Nepal army. In security agencies, Dalits mainly hold positions at the lower ranks. To conclude, the principle of proportional representation has had limited benefits for the excluded groups and has only served to further strengthen the representation of the dominant communities.

There is a notable absence of Dalit representation in the federal cabinet, with only one minister among the seven provincial governments. Furthermore, Dalits are not represented in the National Planning Commission at the federal level. However, it is encouraging to see that the planning commission in the Sudur Paschim province is led by a Dalit. The government must enact necessary laws and formulate policies to ensure that the Dalit's constitutionally guaranteed rights at the federal, province and local level are upheld.

**Target 16.8- Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institution of global governance.**

This aims to broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance. At the country level, the representation of Dalits in international institutions remains largely tokenistic. Civil society engagement with international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Asian Development Bank (ADB) is crucial. However, the participation of CSOs in official delegations and international meetings, including those related to the implementation of Agenda 2030, is often limited. The inclusion of national human rights institutions is essential to bolster these partnerships. Budget constraints and visa issues further restrict attendance at meetings like the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and other regional and global platforms. Enhancing the participation of developing countries, particularly marginalized groups like Dalits, requires addressing these financial and logistical barriers to ensure genuine and effective representation.

**Target 16.9: By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.**

Despite legal provisions, the births of many Dalit children in the Madhes are not registered, mostly due to a lack of documentation on the part of the parents. Article 39 (1) of the Constitution has enshrined the right of every child to a birth certificate, as has Clause 4 (1) of the Act Relating to Children. Under Nepal's international obligations, several conventions, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, have also ensured the right to registration and recognition before the law.

Despite the national and international commitments made, there is a concerning lack of birth registration among Dalit children from the Madhes region. Shockingly, almost 50 percent of these children are not registered<sup>31</sup>. As a result, they become highly vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, such as child labor, child marriage, and child trafficking. In addition, they are denied access to essential services, including obtaining a citizenship certificate when they reach adulthood.

**Target 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreement.**

In Nepal, there are ongoing issues with respect to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Despite constitutional provisions that guarantee these rights, they are frequently restricted in practice, particularly for political dissidents, human rights activists, and journalists. The government has been criticized for using legal means to restrict these rights, including the imposition of penalties for online hate speech and criminalizing dissent. Further, peaceful protests and demonstrations have often been met with violence and repression by security forces, which has created an adverse effect on freedom of expression and assembly. This is a barrier to meaningful political participation and democratic development, as well as an obstacle to the effective functioning of the civil society organizations. The provisions have had a greater impact on CSOs representing traditionally marginalized groups. To address these challenges and improve the situation of civic space in Nepal, it is necessary to uphold and protect the rights of citizens to ensure their freedom of expression and peaceful assembly without fear of repression.

Nepal is a party to several international human rights mechanisms such as Universal Periodic Review, Covenant on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Covenant on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) etc. However, the government has failed to implement the recommendations and concluding observations received from different human rights mechanisms.

The CSOs experiencing unprecedented funding constrains and the one led by the traditionally marginalized groups have become the victim as the consequences. Many CSOs working on Dalit issues are on the verge of closure due to the funding constrains.

**Target 16.a: strengthen relevant national institutions, including through the international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.**

The National Dalit Commission (NDC) can play a crucial role in ensuring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the Dalit community. It can actively advocate for policies and programs that combat discrimination, enhance educational and healthcare access, and foster economic opportunities. Through monitoring the implementation of laws, the Commission can promote social inclusion. However, this institution is largely isolated both by the government and development partners. The government support NDC with the required financial and human resources to engage in international human rights mechanisms related to caste.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.recordnepal.com/marginalized-since-birth>

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved without strong and independent National Human Rights Institutions like the National Dalit Commission (NDC). Therefore, the NDC must be strengthened with the necessary support and resources to help translate constitutionally guaranteed rights into reality. The NDC presence must be expanded to the provinces in line with the constitutional commitments.

### **SDG 16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.**

Dalits face discrimination in their personal, professional, and public spheres, with Dalit women experiencing particularly high levels of discrimination. Despite constitutional protections and international commitments, systemic and structural problems persist. These problems must be addressed in the annual policies, programs, and budgetary allocations of all three layers of government. There are human rights treaties and agreements which prohibit discrimination including such as ICCPR, CERD and CEDAW. In addition, the State has expressed its commitment to needful law reform. However, it is observed that the recommendations related to discriminatory policies and legislations have not been addressed or remain outstanding.

**Case study:** On May 23, Dalit youth Nawaraj BK and his friends were lynched in Soti, Rukum district. Nawaraj had been seeing a so called 'upper caste' girl, whose family disapproved the relationship. When Nawaraj and 18 of his friends went to Soti Village on May 23 to bring his girlfriend home as bride, they were attacked by villagers and chased into the Bheri River. Six bodies, including Nawaraj's, were recovered from the river. Thirteen youths survived the brutal attack.

The UN Special Rapporteur<sup>32</sup> on minority issues has pointed out that caste represents a barrier to claiming rights and justice in relation to violence, highlighting discrimination within criminal justice systems, fear of reprisals (contributing to under reporting) and notions that caste-based discrimination needs to be solved within the community rather than treated as a crime, with refusal to register such cases as criminal justified as preserving 'social harmony'.



### **SDG-17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.**

These are some of the areas where the attention is required from a Dalit perspective:

**International support:** SDGs are the transformative roadmap for peace, prosperity, people and planet which need commitment and partnership not only at the national level but also at the international level. Achieving these transformational goals also require major systemic changes in the means of implementation such as finance, trade, capacity building, technology and innovation. The major stakeholders for this are governments, private sector (business) and national and international NGOs. In the context of SDG 16, it appears that Dalit issues have not been receiving adequate attention and resources from international organizations and aid agencies. For instance, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), a core instrument providing strategic direction to all UN agencies working in Nepal, fails to specifically recognize the term "Dalit" or address caste-related issues. Instead, Dalit issues/concerns are subsumed under the broader category of the most marginalized groups. They appear to be apprehensive about not receiving government approval. However, they should demand accountability from the government to implement constitutional commitments and international human rights obligations.

<sup>32</sup> See note 2, UN HRC, paras 60 and 61.

The total flow of foreign aid in the development sector has decreased, the most marginalized groups have scarcely benefited from it. International donor agencies must direct their investment and resources toward these groups. Effective resource mobilization and strong partnerships are essential to ensure that aid supports the most marginalized communities in the country. However, funding for this purpose has dried up, and some organizations are on the verge of closure.

**Disaggregated data:** The data is unavailable for many SDG indicators and this has caused difficulty in tracking SDGs progress. It has made it impossible to track progress, monitor inclusivity and improvement and make sure that no one is left behind. This has affected transparency, accountability and just distribution of resources and opportunities.

**Internet penetration:** At the start of 2024, Nepal had 15.40 million internet users<sup>33</sup>, representing an internet penetration rate of 49.6 percent. There were 13.50 million social media users, equating to 43.5 percent of the population. The country also had 37.47 million active cellular mobile connections, which is 120.6 percent of the total population. Furthermore, 73 percent of people in Nepal used smart mobile phones, 15 percent had access to computers and laptops, and 37.8 percent were using the internet. There is no such data available in relation to Dalits.

**Leave No One Behind (LNOB):** The government of Nepal has developed a national framework for "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB), which requires a genuine and deliberate effort to reach the poorest of the poor, reduce discrimination, and address escalating inequalities by tackling their root causes. Although the government has pledged to address the systemic and structural problems faced by Dalits, this commitment has not yet been translated into action. To truly honor the LNOB framework, historical wrongs committed against Dalits must be corrected, and their issues and concerns must be addressed through annual policies, programs, and budgetary commitments at both the national and sub-national levels.

**Localization of the SDGs:** Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is crucial for implementing them in alignment with the national framework. This process requires robust monitoring, evaluation, and feedback systems to ensure that lessons learned are integrated into planning processes. Although the government has published a guiding document on the localization of the SDGs, it has been scarcely followed by local governments.

#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations are:

##### **SDG-1: No poverty**

- Ascertain the actual poverty situation of Dalits and other caste ethnic group by bringing out the data of Nepal Living Standard Survey 4th.
- Implement effectively all the poverty related plans and program and gear them towards poor Dalits with short, mid and long-term plans and program.
- Give the responsibility of effective monitoring and supervision of poverty related plans, program and budget to National Dalit Commission with proper human and financial resources.

##### **SDG-2: Zero hunger**

- The government should first ascertain landlessness among Dalits and provide them sufficient land to make a living from it fulfill their constitutional rights as enshrined in article 40 sub-article 5.
- Conduct a mapping related to food deficiency among Dalits and take appropriate measures to address it so that no one has to remain in hunger.
- Though Dalits are one of the beneficiaries in land allocation by the Land Commission, no data has been made public. Land allocation data must be made public immediately.

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<sup>33</sup> Census Data 2021

#### **SDG-4: Quality Education**

- The government should aim to achieve 100% literacy by 2030 with significant investment in resources. Special attention and increased investment are required for Madhesi Dalits with a special strategy for the Musahar, Dom and highly marginalized castes within Dalit community; in order to bring their literacy rate up to the national average.
- Traditional occupations of Dalits can be a good source of income and prosperity for both Dalit and non-Dalit communities. These occupations should be integrated into the formal education system, employing skilled Dalits as teachers and instructors. This would not only provide jobs but also ensure dignity for them.
- The dropout rate is a significant problem for all students, but it is particularly high among Dalits, with only 25.1% remaining in grade 12 compared to 47% for other caste groups. The government should adopt a policy to include all students, provide proper education, retain them, and make them competitive for future employment. An inclusive and conducive environment should be created where Dalits can pursue education without fear and humiliation.

#### **SDG-5: Gender equality**

- Develop a robust financial support program for promoting Dalit women and girls' education, economic empowerment, economic rights.
- Ensure that all forms of violence against Dalit women and girls, such as sexual abuse and harassment, are deemed illegal and subject to prosecution. Additionally, provide support to Dalit women in reporting these incidents.
- Produce quality and comparable disaggregated data (by sex, age, ethnicity, caste, and disability) to enable effective monitoring of the progress SDGs for women and girls. Collection of quality and comparable is required.
- Address issues of poverty, access to education, safety and security, and empowerment for combatting child marriage and other harmful practices.
- Focus leadership development of Dalit women and strengthen roles of Dalit women ward members and other locally elected women members to collectively enhance gender equality.

#### **SDG-8: Decent work and economic growth**

- Expand skill development opportunities and access to financial capital for Dalit communities. When designing and implementing skill development programs, consider factors such as market demand, gender migration patterns, land ownership status, education, and gender norms affecting women's social mobility.
- Improve the effectiveness of programs designed for implementing Article 40(4) of the Constitution through research-based design, adequate resource allocation, and accountability of implementing agencies.
- Enact an integrated bill on forced labor to address all types of forced labor practices existing in different regions of the country.
- Begin the identification and verification process of freed Harawa-Charawa as the first step toward rehabilitation. Allocate resources for just and sustainable rehabilitation. Simultaneously address issues of livelihood, food security, and access to education to reduce child labor among Dalits.
- Increase Dalits' access to employment programs like the Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP) by focusing on and addressing administrative hurdles, including caste and gender biases, in field implementation.

#### **SDG-10: Reduced inequalities**

- Effectively implement LNOB framework in line with the provisions of Articles 40, 281 and other related provisions in the constitution of the country.

- Strengthen access of Dalits to social protection, employment and education.
- Enhance entrepreneurship among Dalits and facilitate policy for increasing participation of Dalits for economic growth with social justice .
- Ensure credit access from financial institutions, raise awareness and monitor roles of manpower agencies and agents to reduce the cost and risk of migration in foreign employment.
- Ensure minimum standard wages in all sectors including agriculture and effectively monitor the implementation.

### **SDG-13: Climate action**

- Policies and programs for climate action should address vulnerability and disproportionate impact of climate change and disaster towards traditionally discriminated social groups and gender minorities.
- Climate actions towards climate justice and DRM should respect the necessity of the marginalized population and mainstreaming GESI approaches instead of placing it in the cross-cutting issues.
- Effectively introduce climate and environmental education into the school curriculum to reach out to more households.
- Nepal should undertake both approaches: adaptation and mitigation to respond to the negative impacts of climate change.

### **SDG-16: Peace, justice and strong institutions**

- Government should increase its focus and allocate more resources to collect reliable data and publicize its findings. Some SDG indicators lack data to measure progress effectively.
- The government must enact necessary laws and formulate policies to ensure that the Dalit's constitutionally guaranteed rights at the federal, province and local level are upheld.
- All state institutions must be made inclusive, including constitutional bodies, and ensure the implementation of Dalit rights through annual policy, programs and budgetary allocations.  
Government must expedite the process of establishing a Dalit cell at the local level police administration and fast-track- courts in the judicial system for redressal of crimes against Dalits.
- The issue of caste discrimination must be included in school and university curriculums.
- Dalit's acquisition of citizenship, especially in the case of Madhesi and Badi community, must be ensured so that no one from the Dalit community is deprived of citizenship.
- Ensure that the police and judiciary are representative of the communities they serve and adequately trained in the issues related to caste violence and discrimination.

### **SDG-17: Partnership for the goals**

- Effectively include Dalit community in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is crucial to form partnerships that are inclusive, participatory, and sensitive to the unique challenges faced by Dalits. The government, development partners and CSOs should work collaboratively to address the specific needs and aspirations of Dalit communities.
- Address gaps in availability of caste-disaggregated data for monitoring progress towards the SDGs. The lack of disaggregated data is hindering the effective implementation and monitoring of development programs.
- The governments should prioritize the empowerment and meaningful participation of Dalit communities in decision-making processes, including those related to the localization of SDGs. This would ensure Dalit voices are heard and that their perspectives and priorities are integrated into local development plans and policies.