

**UN Forum on Minority Issues**  
**Intervention by Annie Namala, Director,**  
**Centre for Programming Inclusion and Equity, New Delhi, India**  
annie.namala@gmail.com

**On 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 08**

Madam Chair person, Prof. McDougal, members and friends,

## **EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES**

### **1. Non Discrimination**

I thank you for this opportunity to place before you the concerns of discrimination arising out of untouchability and caste practices against Dalit children in their schooling process. For many Dalit children, so far protected within their segregated habitations school becomes the first systematic instruction and experience on caste bias. Discrimination of Dalit children is compounded by the belief and practices of untouchability in India.

Non discrimination needs to be ensured at two levels:

- a. Non discrimination in the provision of education by the state
- b. Non discrimination in the process of schooling

In the context of Dalit students we see that both these are being violated and there is no effective state mechanism to address them.

### **Discrimination in the state provisioning accounts on the following counts:**

- In the first case state itself promotes differential education through its many policies – we have Alternate and Innovative Education (A&IE) Programme where the state allocates about \$25/year/child, regular government schooling where the budget per child per year works out to about \$60 and special residential schools where the budget allocation per child is about \$300-400/child/year.
- The state also does not regulate the private education where costs are prohibitory for poor and minority students.

### **Discrimination in the process of schooling:**

The caste system continues to be the basis of larger social norms and practices in India. The norms of hierarchy, untouchability and exclusion of Dalits in society are reflected in the school by the untouchability practices of dominant caste children, teachers and society on Dalit children.

- Dominant caste children refuse to sit, play or eat with Dalit children
- They humiliate and physically abuse Dalit children
- They do not share or build friendship with Dalit children

- Caste beliefs and practices of teachers are reflected in them condoning the untouchability practices of dominant caste children, not supporting Dalit children when they make complaints, them directly abusing Dalit children, teachers giving caste based tasks like (cleaning, washing toilets to Dalit children), teachers not accepting water, tea etc at the hands of Dalit children, excluding them from leadership positions and social functions in the school, teachers attitudes of disrespect to Dalit parents and most of all them not fulfilling their role in teaching reflected in the low achievement and high drop out rather 'push out phenomenon'.

Discrimination was reported from three premium institutions during 2008, showing that education does not automatically reduce caste bias. A major case of discrimination was reported in the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi and the 'Thorat' committee was set up by the state to enquire into the matter. 20 Dalit students were expelled from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delh. A Dalit student was pushed to commit suicide owing to the harassment he experienced.

As we do not have any provisions to address discrimination we recommend that:

- The state makes legislation against discrimination in education, creates mechanism for complaint procedures and redress.
- We also recommend that an 'anti-discrimination check on caste' be developed, administered and routinely monitored so that the caste bias can be routed out and schools can become 'zero-discrimination zones' creating friendship across all children.
- We recommend that educated Dalit youth that are currently available even in all far-flung villages be enrolled to take educational provisions and programmes to Dalit children
- We recommend that education engages in public education and social messaging against caste and untouchability.

Thank you,

**Intervention by Annie Namala, Director,  
Centre for Programming Inclusion and Equity, New Delhi, India**  
annie.namala@gmail.com

**16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 08**

Madam Chairperson and members,

### **Content and Delivery of Curriculum**

Thank you for this second opportunity to speak on behalf of Dalit children and their education. As far as the curriculum and its delivery are concerned we would like to bring to your notice that:

1. The Indian society continues to present the caste system as a suitable social structuring and division of labour, and does not see its inhuman impact on Dalits and other lower caste communities. This is reflected in the curriculum and its delivery. The attitude and behaviour in the class room and outside reflects this.
2. Education can become an effective tool to dismantle the age old tradition of caste and bring up all children in the norms of equality, fraternity and dignity.
3. The knowledge, contribution and leadership from among Dalit communities are not reflected in the curriculum, robbing Dalit children role models and positive image building. This fact has been reflected by the National focus group on the problems of SC/ST children under the National council for education, research and training (NCERT).

We recommend that:

1. The curriculum incorporates the large body of literature, being created by Dalits themselves, that is available in all languages across the country
2. Positive portrayal of Dalit life, contribution and leadership in the curriculum. The state should promote research in this connection to unravel the contribution of Dalits in various spheres.
3. Human rights education in India should reflect the caste issues and Dalit human rights issues
4. Members from Dalits and other minority communities with expertise and track record be enrolled in high proportion be engaged in the process of designing, implementing and monitoring curriculum and its delivery.

Thank you very much