

Krishna Gahatraj

Thank you Chair. My name is Krishna Gahatraj, I speak on behalf of the Dalit Disability Association in Nepal, a Dalit-led disability rights organization, representing those who face the harshest form of exclusion in Nepal. For Dalits with disabilities, especially women, girls, and queer individuals, peaceful coexistence is made difficult by multiple discrimination, arising from caste-based discrimination, disability-based exclusion, gender inequality, and chronic poverty. These overlapping barriers reinforce each other, leaving them among the most invisible and marginalized minority groups in Nepal. For example, neither caste-based discrimination nor intersectional discrimination are explicitly mentioned in the Disability Rights Act in Nepal. This denial of legal recognition, together with a lack of disaggregated data, contributes to their invisibility and entrenched marginalization, threatening their peaceful coexistence within Nepali society. In addition, Dalits with disabilities are denied meaningful participation and representation in state mechanisms and social organizations, creating further barriers to social cohesion with other communities. One young Dalit woman with a disability from our network was barred from participating in a ward-level development planning meeting, because she was considered unfit to contribute. This not only violates her dignity, it destroys trust in local governance and perpetrates social division. To promote peaceful coexistence and rebuild trust, we offer the following recommendations: ensure legal recognition of Dalits with disabilities in all relevant policies and uphold the international normative framework [inaudible] social norms and strengthen social cohesion, ensure access to justice for those experiences intersectional discrimination on the grounds of caste, disability and gender; collect disaggregated data on disability, caste, and gender identity to better monitor the meaningful participation of Dalits with disabilities at all levels. Thank you.