

Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO)-Nepal

Thank you chair for giving me the floor. I am Ankita speaking on behalf of Dalit youth in Nepal and also representing feminist Dalit organization. My friend from Nepal has already presented on the overall scenario whereas I would like to present on some key challenges. Dalit youth in Nepal face many challenges in participating public life. One is high illiteracy and low access to education.

The educational scenario in Nepal is highly centralized and presents difficulty of access for economically poor and marginalized groups. Despite making education free at primary level, when moving to secondary and tertiary level, there is a very low rate of enrollment. The gross enrollment rate at the primary level for Hill Dalits and Tarai Dalits is between 70 to 90 percent, while at tertiary level it can be as low as 1.2 percent.

Given this scenario it is very hard for Dalit youth to attend qualifications and participate in a growing social, economic and cultural scene in Nepal. There are many reasons for this lack of participation, one of which is due to extreme poverty and having the responsibility to sustain themselves and family. The other is systematic and systemic discrimination widely practiced across Nepal and in all spheres of life. Young Dalit women often suffer from multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion from public life. Second is discriminatory practices.

The forms of structural discrimination and abuse that Dalits face is stigmatizing due to which they are oftentimes forced to drop out of school and work from a very young age in order to sustain their families. Peer groups belonging from a so-called higher caste exclude Dalits, segregating them from social events, religious activities, including attending marriages. Even in death, Dalits are excluded and segregated in separate crematoriums.

Multiple forms of discrimination faced by Dalit women and girls and define gender roles. The extreme poverty in which most of the Dalit families live and defined gender roles force Dalit girls out of school. Dalit girls are overburdened with household works or are married off at an early age. Dalit male youth migrate for better opportunities, making Dalit women and girls with confined mobility prone to violence and discrimination. Intercaste marriage is still one of the main areas that are unaccepted by so-called high caste populations. Violence and sexual abuse is often the punishment faced by young women if they dare to marry out of their caste.