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This month was filled with participatory engagements to advance the rights of CDWD, including visits to remote communities, organization of informative events and collaborations with leaders and partners.

Gfod at the 2024 UN Civil Society Conference

 Nairobi, Kenya

A vital prelude to the Summit of the Future, scheduled to be held on 24th September in New York, the UN Civil Society Conference took place in Nairobi, Kenya, for two days on 9-10 May, 2024. The Conference was attended widely by the representatives of civil society, governments, United Nations entities, international governmental organizations and other stakeholders. Gfod delegation actively participated in the conference - with engagements through ImPACT coalitions, side-event, information booth, interventions and more!



Representing CDWD concerns through [“ImPACT Coalition”](#)

The ImPACT Coalition's session on "Underrepresented Communities" at the UN Civil Society Conference saw robust participation, with over 100 participants both in-person and via Zoom. Though not the primary organizer, GFoD played a significant role in organizing and participating in the session. Key stakeholders joined through Zoom, and thanks to the tremendous efforts of our interpreters and those who provided technical support, we ensured a broad participation with sign language interpretation as well as 4 additional languages.

The ImPACT Coalitions face significant obstacles to be inclusive, representative, and effective as mechanisms to contribute towards the Summit of the Future (SoTF). Lack of funding, lack of rules, membership, and a clear mandate pose significant challenges to meeting the ambitions and expectations. There is a significant concern that the ImPACT coalitions may duplicate, delegitimise, and undermine existing civil society engagement mechanisms. Hence, creating a new structure is easy, but making them inclusive, effective and truly consultative requires a lot of resources. Therefore, we call for existing functioning structures, including the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS), to take a prominent role in the consultation processes towards the SOTF and beyond.

The above concerns were raised during the in-person session in Nairobi. It also focused on refining the coalition's aims related to the zero draft and its annexes, adopting recommendations, and collecting suggestions for the SoTF, highlighting systematic barriers and exclusion. It laid down key principles for the group, such as, direct representation from communities and combating social constructs like race, class, caste, age, and disability.



Side-event: Empowering Youth from Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

Parallely with the discussions around the Zero Draft of the Pact of the Future, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent organised an off site side event on the rights of CDWD youth during the UN Civil Society Conference. The event was held around 200 meters from the United Nation office in Nairobi. 40 people participated in the youth event from different organisations including Global Call to Action Against Poverty, Protection International, ARROW and others. We had an engaging discussion on how youth from communities discriminated on work and descent face unique challenges that hinder their full participation and contribution to society. The panel, represented by CDWD youth from four countries, discussed how discrimination based on caste, ethnicity, or descent often limits their access to education, employment, and basic rights, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion. However, it was noted that youth are also agents of change, capable of driving social transformation and building a more inclusive future. This session aimed to explore strategies and good practices of empowering youth from discriminated communities and unlocking their potential as catalysts for sustainable development.



GFoD's Information Booth at UN building exhibits the situation of CDWD worldwide and advocacy efforts

The exhibit information kiosk set up by Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent in the United Nations Building in Nairobi presented a powerful display of advocacy and awareness-raising efforts. Under the broad theme of "Unlocking Potential: Empowering Youth from Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent for a Sustainable Future" the booth featured a comprehensive array of informative materials, including powerful infographics, detailed reports, videos on CDWD, and other visibility materials, contributed to a high engagement of conference participants with these themes and at shed light on the challenges faced by CDWD globally.

CDWD Youth register their voice in Discussions on the Future



Statement from CDWD Youth in 'Youth and Intergenerational Engagement' IMPACT coalition session

GFoD delegate, Naveen Gautam was invited to speak at a session of the Impact Coalition - Youth and Intergenerational Engagement hosted by MGCY, Help-Age International, and Population Council GIRL Center as part of Mobilization Day in the margins of the UN Civil Society Conference on Friday 10th of May from 10:45 am to 12:15 pm at Conference Room 1, UNON, Nairobi. He spoke about the existing challenges and highlighted the demands from the Stakeholder Group for Communities Based on Work and Descent Based Discrimination.

[Watch here](#)



Advocacy through Art: GFoD delegate leads a group exercise

Our delegates, Queen and Yacouba attended the workshop - Bridging Art and Advocacy: Creative Expression Towards the Summit of the Future, led by Intergenerational and Youth Subcommittee and Major Group of Children and Youth. In the picture, Yacouba is seen leading the Group in expressing through arts the road map to address the 2030 agenda. The role of the artist and the power of arts in translating the five charters of the pact for the future were explored.

Engagements at Youth Blast

GFoD delegate, Naveen Gautam was invited to speak on the status of CDWD youth during the Youth Blast assembly organised by Stakeholder Group on Children and Youth which took place on 8th and 11th of May 2024 respectively, as part of the Mobilization Day in the margins of the UN Civil Society Conference. The assembly offered global perspective on various issues concerning youth and brought together youth from different nations, UN System officials, prominent international civil society organizations, youth changemakers, academia, public opinion makers, and international media to discuss issues of global concern.



79th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

 Banjul, The Gambia



GFOD's delegation to the 79th ordinary session of African Commission on Human and People's Rights



GFOD's panel on the 79th ordinary session of ACHPR NGO Forum brought to light insights on Education for the CDWD

Moderated by Honourable Commissioner Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, Vice Chairperson of African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), the panel discussed the barriers and systemic challenges faced by CDWD in accessing education and explored the pathways to address these challenges. Moderators pointed out the enormous human rights violations suffered by CDWD, the types of discrimination and violence perpetrated by the caste system, and the slavery-like practices existing to this day in African countries with CDWD population.

Cheikh Sidati Hamadi from Mauritania talked about the systemic and intersectional barriers for CDWD children in accessing education in Mauritania, throwing light on the issues of poverty, gender disparities, lack of infrastructure and other intersecting needs. Alima Taal discussed the forms of discrimination faced by children from the CDWD in The Gambia and their adverse impact on education, focusing especially on slavery, bonded labour, child labour, forced labour, etc. She called for urgent action on the part of the African Commission to resolve these problems decisively. Raichatou Walett talked about traditional slavery in Mali, which is estimated to impact 300,000 people, and the associated barriers to education. Putting forth strong recommendations, Yacouba Ibrahim stressed the need to reinforce children's rights, awareness-raising and investment in education. He called for immediate action to guarantee equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their ancestry. The well-attended panel opened up

discussions on the issue of discrimination based on work and descent among key stakeholders present at the NGO Forum.

Special Interest Group on Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent



GFoD participated in the Special Interest Group Discussions, which allowed participants to identify recommendations to address challenges raised in panel discussions.

During this breakout session, we discussed the importance of education and the right to education. Key participants included Gilbert Sebihogo (NANHRI) and Danouchka Assoumou (Lawyers without Borders, Canada). After the discussion, GFoD's Sidati Mohamed presented the group's points and recommendations. The Thematic Interest Group on Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) emphasized prioritizing education for advocacy. It was asserted that education is crucial for advancing advocacy, promoting rights, and combating human rights violations by empowering individuals with knowledge to challenge systemic injustices.

Strategies for ACHPR to enhance education's impact include enhancing legal awareness and accessibility, promoting human rights education, supporting civil society organizations (CSOs), developing monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and advocating for inclusive policies. Recommendations for NGOs at the 79th Session of ACHPR stressed the importance of recognizing and promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, increasing visibility and addressing stigma, implementing human rights education in schools, passing a resolution on education as a tool for advocacy, establishing a complaints mechanism, increasing advocacy efforts, prioritizing women and girls, making education a state priority, and ensuring civil society participation.

Resolution passed by the NGO Forum of ACHPR on the Role of Education in the Realization of Human Rights for the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent in Africa



Resulting from the three days of intensive discussions and engagements on CDWD issues at the 79th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR, the NGO Forum of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a resolution on the Role of Education in the Realization of Human Rights of the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent in Africa. Recognizing the transformative power of education, the resolution recommends multilateral financing of education, the promotion of human rights, gender justice and climate change in education towards the empowerment of CDWD.

The resolution was presented to the participants for adoption, facilitated by Mr. Sadikh Niass from RADDHO and Mr. Naji Moulay Lahsen. This crucial step ensured that the collective insights and recommendations generated during the discussions were formally acknowledged and accepted by all stakeholders. Through this process, the participants had the opportunity to endorse the resolutions and commit to their implementation, thus advancing the shared goals of promoting resilience and inclusivity across Africa.

[Read Here](#)

Interventions made by GFoD Delegates

During the Q and A session on the Situation of Human Rights, GFoD's Rights Expert and GFoD Africa Representative at the UN, Queen Bisseng, raised a question regarding the human rights of education for communities discriminated on work and decent in Africa.





During the Q and A Panel Session on GBV and Harmful Traditional Practices (Female Genital Mutilation in Africa), GFoD 's Rights expert from The Gambia, Halimatou Ceesay, talked about how unsafe women and girls would be if female genital mutilation were legalized.

Cheikh Sidati Hamadi intervening in the panel on Election Delays and Democratic Regression in Africa and raising the issue of Haratins in Mauritania.



Community visits to Garawol and Koina in the Upper River Region (URR) of The Gambia



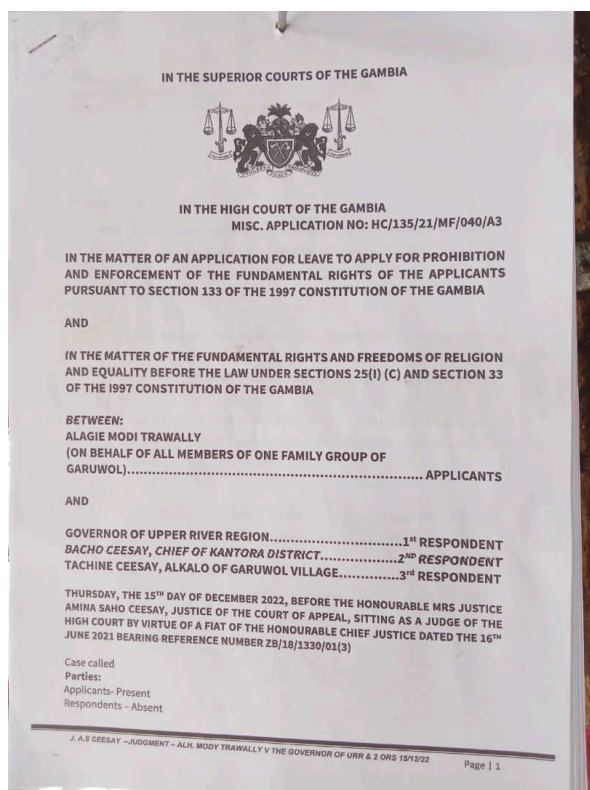
On Monday, May 13, 2024, the GFoD delegation set out on a journey of 424.5 kilometers, on a 7 hours drive from Banjul to Garawol and Koina in the Upper River Region of The Gambia through the South Bank Road, to visit communities fighting against caste and descent based discrimination in The Gambia. These communities in Garawol and Koina are among many other Soninke communities in the Gambia fighting against caste and descent based discrimination and saying NO to an age long tradition accepted by their forefathers and fathers. Caste and descent based discrimination in The Gambia can be found in most, if not all, tribes, but the Sarahulleh communities in the Upper River Region of the Gambia have been making headlines due

to violence between the so-called nobles (freeborn) and so-called slaves who called themselves the “Gambana” community.

Gambanaxu Fedde is an organization founded by Gaye Tene to fight against caste and descent based slavery in the Soninke Communities. Gambana means, ‘we are all equal.’ Alajie Sulayman Camara, an elder from the community in Koina, talked at length about the persecutions against them, such as isolating and banning them from social and developmental activities concerning the village, and not allowing them in places of worship. He said that this fight to free themselves and their generations, yet unborn from caste and descent based slavery, is a never ending fight.



These engagements have been enriching for the cause of CDWD and in building an actionable and robust regional as well as global network. GFoD will continue to follow up on these issues while providing global network support.



Read about the Fight against Caste-based discrimination in The Gambia: A tale of repression and resistance by the CDWD

In the long-standing resistance against a socially stratified society in the West Africa region, and particularly in the Upper River Region (URR) of The Gambia, a legal case and the following High Court judgement brought to light the persistence of caste practices and associated discrimination based on work and descent in the region.

[Read Here](#)

Meeting with the National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia

On May 15, 2024, GFoD delegation had a meeting in the office of The Gambian National Human Rights Commission. In the absence of the commissioners, we had a positive discussion with the senior legal officer, Mr. Basiru Bah, who conducted a study on slavery and slave like systems with a case focus on Koina. He confirmed that the commission is aware of the conflicts going on between the so-called nobles and the lower caste group, which is relegated to menial jobs such as leatherwork, blacksmithing, etc.

He also shared some of the actions taken by the NHRC to solve the conflict from a human rights perspective, especially the religious perspective based on fundamental freedoms. Fruitful discussions explored the pathways for an effective resolution of current challenges and possibility of a joint shadow report submission with Gambana leaders.



Raising the concerns of CDWD in Expert Group Meeting on SDG 1



This month, Simona Torotcoi represented GFoD and ERGO Network in the "Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Development Goal 1: End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere" organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the World Bank UN Trade and Development, and other partners. She contributed to the thematic discussion on "Social Protection to Ensure Leaving No One Behind" and talked about how poverty has remained both the cause and effect of discrimination for 270 million people discriminated against on work and descent, including Roma, and pointed out that social protection systems discriminate against work and descent-based communities!

Do not miss this Upcoming Event!

We request the honour of your presence at a
SPECIAL INVITED LECTURE

**CARVING OUT A NORM AT THE UN
ON THE RIGHTS OF COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED
ON WORK AND DESCENT (CDWD)**

based on the book: *Transnational Social Mobilisation and Minority Rights: Identity, Advocacy, and Norms* by Dr. Corinne Lennox

Moderated by Paul Divakar, Convener, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work & Descent

followed by a Roundtable discussion led by CDWD leaders

Queen Bisseng (UN Programme Specialist: Africa, TIP), Vercilene Dias (Legal Coordinator, CONAQ), Gabriela Hrabanova (Executive Director, ERGO Network), Beena Pallical (Chair, ADRF & General Secretary, NCDHR)

Zoom Registration Link: <https://tinyurl.com/nh9kztas>

TUESDAY | 11 JUNE 2024 | 13.00 BST / 12.00 GMT
*Interpretation available in French, Portuguese, Spanish & Hindi

Logos: GFO, ICWS, INSTITUTE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES, SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, INCLUSIVITY PROJECT, ASIA DALIT RIGHTS FORUM, ERGO, CONAQ, AFRICAN NETWORK ON DISCRIMINATION BASED ON WORK, DESCENT AND CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY, BAHUMAN SCHOLARS.

Webinar: Carving out a Norm at the UN on the Rights of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

📅 11th June, 2024 | Zoom

We are pleased to inform you that TIP, GfOD, the University of London, and other partners are organizing a special invited lecture followed by a roundtable discussion on 'Carving out a Norm at the UN': On the Rights of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent' on June 11, 2024, at 1:00 pm BST.

The event will consist of two sessions moderated by Mr. Paul Divakar, Convenor, GfOD. Session 1 will feature a presentation by Dr. Corinne Lennox, Senior Lecturer in Human Rights at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London on insights from her book, "Transnational Social Mobilisation and Minority Rights: Identity, Advocacy, and Norms" (Routledge 2020). This will be followed by a roundtable discussion in the Session 2 aimed at forging new pathways to ensure justice for CDWD on the international stage. Do attend!

Read in: French, Portuguese, Spanish, Hindi

Register Here

News from Partners

NCDHR raises the issues surrounding Dalits in Ship breaking industry: A visit to Alang Ship-breaking Yard



The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights has been working on the issues of shipbreaking for quite some time, and has done the first of its kind study on the shipbreaking industry from the perspective of Dalits. GfOD supported the work of NCDHR on Business and Human Rights and visited the site of Alang Shipbreaking Yard, Gujarat, where the shipbreaking and recycling of the ships take place. Paul Divakar from GfOD visited this site. While the recycling of the various parts is very well organized, the visiting team found the working conditions inhospitable. Moreover, the environmental impacts of this industry has a far reaching impact on the ground water, people and workers. Based on the international standards and guidelines, there is much to do. Efforts are being made to ensure that worker rights are protected and promoted.

ERGO Network invites applications for “Youth Ambassadors of the Decade against Antigypsyism – Study Session”

ERGO Network invites young Roma and non-Roma to apply for a six-day youth meeting: A study session, to empower them as ambassadors for the “Decade to Counter Antigypsyism” in the European Youth Centre in Budapest (Hungary) from 8th -15th September 2024 (travel days are 8th and 15th September).

[Read More →](#)

TrustAfrica Celebrates Agents of Transgenerational Leadership in Africa

On Saturday, May 18 2024, TrustAfrica, in partnership with the Invisible Giants Foundation and Kumbati.com, held a successful public event on Leadership in Africa and the Critical Roles of Invisible Giants. The public event, which was attended by key leaders in government ministries, civil society organisations, academia, and policy think tanks, reflected on the critical situation in Africa, including worsening inequalities, climate crisis, divisive identity politics and the changing landscape of democracies on the continent.

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