

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) – India

The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) was founded as a network in 1998 by a group of activists, academics, human rights organizations, and *Dalit* action groups involved in advancing the rights of India's scheduled castes (*Dalits*). For caste-related reasons, a large proportion of *Dalits* continue to face discrimination in their access to basic services and live in conditions of extreme poverty and marginalization. In cases where *Dalits* assert their rights, they often face a violent backlash, the purpose of which is to “teach them a lesson” and prevent them from accessing justice. While rights are very much enshrined in India's Constitution and many laws have been enacted to protect these rights, implementation is weak and the impunity of the perpetrators dominates not only the criminal justice system but also the implementation of economic policies, rights, and entitlements meant for *Dalits*.

NCDHR works to institutionalize *Dalit* rights as human rights by monitoring the criminal justice system and promoting *Dalit* women's rights. The organization also collaborates and supports *Dalit* movements and initiatives; leads awareness-raising campaigns on *Dalit* rights; monitors and documents human rights violations against *Dalits*; informs and sensitizes other civil society movements and the community on human rights and *Dalits*; and works directly with *Dalit* communities to promote gender equity, children rights, and human rights. NCDHR also presents cases of human rights violations against *Dalits* to the National Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Women, and National Commission for *Safai Karamcharis* (*Dalits* engaged in the manual removal of human waste, who are considered one of the most oppressed communities in India).

NCDHR Advocates for Increased Budget Allocations for Dalits and Tribal Groups in Rajasthan

In 1980 the Indian government initiated the Special Component Plan (SCP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) to promote the social and economic development of *Dalits* and tribal groups, who constitute approximately 24 percent of the total population yet lack access to basic health, education, water, sanitation, and agricultural extension services. These two programs mandate that the national and state governments earmark resources for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes – in proportion to the percent of the total population that they comprise – in order to decrease the extreme inequalities between these two marginalized populations and other



INDIA
Open Budget Index 2010
Overall Score: 67
Government provides significant information to the public on how it manages public resources.

Availability of budget documents critical for effective public input:	
Pre-Budget Statement	No
Executive's Budget Proposal	Yes
Citizens Budget	Yes
Enacted Budget	Yes
In-Year Reports	Yes
Mid-Year Review	Yes
Year-End Report	Yes
Audit Report	Yes
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groups. The SCP and TSP also provide for institutional mechanisms to develop and monitor programs.

In March 2010 NCDHR analyzed allocations for the SCP and TSP in the Rajasthan state budget for 2010/11. The organization's analysis indicated that the state government had denied approximately US\$ 120 million to scheduled castes and US\$ 140 million to scheduled tribes in the budget. Before and during the budget approval process, NCDHR met with members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) from different political parties and shared their research and analysis of the SCP and TSP over the last five years.

In a meeting with one MLA, NCDHR requested that he raise several specific questions regarding the SCP and TSP during the budget discussion in the Legislative Assembly. One question related to the low allocation and underutilization of SCP and TSP over the last 10 years. Another question focused

on the increase in the number of *sambal gram panchayats* (villages where the *Dalit* population is more than 40 percent of the total population) from 2,463 to 4,110 without a corresponding increase in the SCP allocation, which remained at approximately US\$ 850,000. The last question was about the inconsistent use of specific budget identifiers (minor codes) for SCP and TSP expenditures, which would enable allocations for scheduled tribes and castes to be identified and audited. Such a budget identifier has already been recommended by the government of India, but it is not being used consistently by state government departments in Rajasthan when they submit their budget demands to the finance department.

When these questions were raised in the Legislative Assembly, the Rajasthan Home Minister responded to the questions and announced that the state government will include budget allocations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes according to their proportion of the state's

population. The state's Social Justice and Empowerment Minister then committed to the full utilization of funds allocated to these populations. He also ensured that separate budget heads would be identified in the 2011/12 state budget to ensure complete expenditure for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Furthermore, he promised that the actual expenditure would be spelled out every year in the future, and he appealed to MLAs to provide suggestions on how best to implement this system. On the final day of the budget session, the Rajasthan Chief Minister also made a similar announcement while addressing MLAs.

NCDHR staff and its partner organizations, such as the Centre for Dalit Rights (CDR) and the Budget Analysis Rajasthan Centre (BARC), were instrumental in advocating for these commitments. NCDHR plans to follow up with the concerned ministers and executive officials to hold them accountable to their commitments.

NCDHR's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

NCDHR's analyses of the national and state budgets in India reveal that the government has failed to implement the Special Component Plan (SCP), which supports the social and economic development of *Dalits*. In order to reclaim the SCP in government budgets, NCDHR is undertaking budget research, analysis, and advocacy in two blocks of two districts in the states of Bihar and Rajasthan. With the support of the Partnership Initiative, NCDHR is carrying out the following activities: 1) establishing budget analysis and advocacy centers in Bihar and Rajasthan, which will analyze central and state budgets; 2) capacity building for other *Dalit* civil society organizations and movements on budget monitoring and advocacy; 3) conducting a pilot survey on the flow of SCP funds from the national to the district level; 4) undertaking social audit exercises in Rajasthan and Bihar; and 5) engaging in advocacy campaigns at the state and national levels.

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The IBP's Partnership Initiative is a collaborative effort that seeks to enhance the impact of civil society budget work in selected countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The initiative strives to contribute to the development of sustainable institutions; to increase public access to timely, reliable, and useful information; to enhance the effective participation of civil society in policy and budget processes; and to establish a platform of good practices on which future generations of civil society can build.