



General Assembly

Distr.: General
31 January 2024

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-fourth session

11 September–13 October 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Association pour l'Intégration et le Développement Durable au Burundi, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation for People from the Scheduled Castes in India

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation are internationally recognized human rights, derived from the right to an adequate standard of living under Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. International human rights law demands from States to work towards achieving universal access to water and sanitation for all, without any discrimination, while prioritizing those most in need but in country like India, various challenges are being faced by the Scheduled Castes while accessing drinking water in rural India. In every state of India, many villages still lack even a communal well or hand pump. And, even if available, these sources of water are either defunct or their use is restricted to certain dominant castes.

Dalits reality of poor availability of drinking water was worsened by limited access to common resources due to their caste identity. On account of their social exclusion, Dalit women suffer from physical as well as mental anguish. Discrimination against them is rampant on account of untouchability, verbal and physical abuse accompanied with violence, which is a very real part of their everyday lives. They regularly face several problems while fetching water and are subjected to inhumane living conditions and human rights violations; discrimination and violence systematically deny them opportunities, choices and freedoms in all spheres of life. Dalits are disempowered and not allowed to use taps and wells located in non-Dalit area. Dalit Villages are not provided with water for several days. On 7 July 2023, in Rajasthan, a Dalit student tortured for drinking water from pot. Like in August 2022, I.M., a Dalit student from Surana village of Rajasthan's Jalore district, was beaten to death by his teacher reportedly for merely touching a drinking water pot. A similar death of a Dalit man occurred in Rajasthan's Jodhpur district in November 2022, Kishanlal Bheel was thrashed for drawing water from a tubewell. In 21 century water in India is a deeply contentious issue, intersecting with caste, class, and gender in India in multifaceted ways, producing complex cultural meanings and social hierarchies. Culturally, politically and economically, it has been a source of power. It has been controlled by the powerful and used to exert control over others. It has been a traditional medium for exclusion of Dalits in overt and covert ways: denying Dalits the right, and access to, water; asserting monopoly of upper castes over water bodies, including rivers, wells, tanks and taps. We urge this council to ask Indian government to stop this discrimination of access to water and sanitation and provide better facilities to its citizens for equal access to drinking water.
