A report by the Ground Level Panel of Denotified and Nomadic Tribes on their Status with Respect to the Sustainable Development Goals

JUNE 2017
The title मेरा बाप चोर है translates as My father is a thief

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The Ground Level Panel of denotified and nomadic tribes

The National Alliance group of semi-nomadic, nomadic and denotified tribes formed a Ground Level Panel on the issues that concern these communities. The members belong to families living below the poverty line and are currently facing discrimination as a result of their denotified status. This report is based on Panelists’ own experience of poverty and discrimination as well as the analysis and inference of data collected from 174 respondents across states on the Sustainable Development Goals. Further, the Panel directly presented their findings and inferences to policy makers and civil society groups.
Letter from Members of the Ground Level Panel on Denotified and Nomadic Tribes to the Prime Minister of India

Honorable Prime Minister,
7 Race Course Road,
New Delhi

We, the eleven members of the Ground Level Panel representing eight denotified, nomadic and semi nomadic tribes in India, have deliberated on the sustainable development goals and the data that has been generated from amongst our community in various states. As you present the India country report to the United Nations member states and deliberate with them, we would like to place our recommendations alongside.

Our expertise to be ground level panelists is our lived experience - an experience of stigma and discrimination as a result of us belonging to denotified communities. We discussed and deliberated many issues between 18 and 19 June 2017 and spent a significant amount of time learning from each other.

As a process, we first reviewed the status of our lives and mapped our families’ traditional occupations and when and why they had to be abandoned, the sixteen sustainable development goals and the data collected from amongst our communities in five states including Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Maharashtra. While our Indian Constitution, in 1950, directed successive governments to ensure Food, Shelter, Health, Education and Livelihood to all citizens, these were reaffirmed by the MDGs and now the SDGs. Despite this, we are unable to access these and we feel that the targets should be set on the means to overcome those barriers, which have prevented governments from achieving these goals. We have identified many such impediments that are fundamental and we must find both the political will and institutional mechanisms to overcome these.

While we have multiple identities, we do not claim these as a representative voice of everyone. These are our views based on our lived experiences of stigma, marginalisation and discrimination.

We are thankful for the valuable support provided to us by the Panel’s Secretariat National Alliance Group for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Tribes and Praxis Institute for Participatory Practices.

We hope you will take cognisance of this report on planning any subsequent policies and schemes for the recognition and development of denotified tribes in India.

Members of the Ground-Level Panel
Background

The ‘Criminal’ tag inflicted by the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 on nearly 1500 nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes and 198 denotified tribes, comprising 150 million Indians, (Renke Commission, 2008) did not vanish with the repeal of the Act on August 31, 1952. Instead, it continued through the Habitual Offenders Act, 1952, in different Indian states.

Ten years ago, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stated its concern: “the so-called denotified and nomadic tribes (DNTs), which were listed for their alleged “criminal tendencies” under the former Criminal Tribes Act (1871), continue to be stigmatised under the Habitual Offenders Act (1952)” and recommended that “the State party repeal the Habitual Offenders Act and effectively rehabilitate” the DNTs.

The National Human Rights Commission recommended repealing the Act in 2000. The main occupations of the communities such as snake charming, tricks with bears and monkeys, brewing liquor and hunting – were criminalised which was leading to re-stigmatising of the communities. With their traditional occupations taken away and without access to new skills, many were pushed into criminal activities thus reinforcing the marginalisation of the DNTs.

The National Alliance Group for Denotified and Nomadic Tribe (NAG DNT) along with Praxis-Institute for Participatory Practices has facilitated a community based data collection and analysis process to deliberate and understand the role of Government and Businesses in realising specific Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the DNTs. As part of this process following highlighted SDG Goals were covered:

![SDGs Images]

Ground Level Panel: Democratising Global Policy Making and Processes through Participatory Research

The Ground Level Panel consisting of 11 individuals from Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, some of whom participated in the study and some who have faced stigma and discrimination as a result of their DNT identity came together as a ground level panel, to analyse the findings as well as collectively infer. Between 18 and 19 June, the panelists collectively explored their local realities, experiences, perspectives and strategies they employ to cope with the stigma and discrimination they face. The ground level panel process enabled the community members to transition from being carriers of knowledge to the owners and users of knowledge.
Atish is 29 years old and lives in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. He belongs to the Chhara community. Many communities across India have a blend of traditional and modern forms of income generation and the Chhara are not different. It is said that almost every home in Chhara Nagar, where he lives, brews alcohol using traditional techniques. Atish firmly believes that the reason behind his community’s dependence on alcohol production is primarily because the government has not left them many other avenues of earning an income. From his childhood, Atish pledged that he would not go into the liquor business being aware of the opportunities that life could afford through education. After years of facing various challenges, he is today, a graduate in the Dramatic Arts with a diploma in Mass Communications. Atish is now working towards creating a voice for his community through what he terms as theatre activism.

Bhola Nath Sabar is 52 years old and lives in Purulia, West Bengal. He was born into the Sabar community, a traditionally forest dwelling tribe who have survived, for centuries, on the resources of the forest. Given the advent of naxalism in the area, the police often restrict their movement into the forest on the grounds of maintaining security and the community is left with no choice but to pursue agriculture, which they have no skill in. Bhola Nath was wrongfully arrested by the police when he was just 15 years old, on grounds that he had alleged links to Naxals. He spent two months in prison and although he was finally found innocent by a court of law, it took him close to 15 years to rid himself of the “criminal” tag. His current work is as the president of the Pashim Banga Kheriya Sabar Kalyan Samiti, a non-government organisation, which facilitates the upliftment of his community. He now feels hopeful for his and the community’s future.

Gomti Devi is 60, lives in Banda, Uttar Pradesh, and hails from the Bediya community, which has been traditionally engaged in doing artistic performances. She was unable to complete her education beyond class two as there is a belief in her community that ultimately the girls have to spend their life performing or becoming entertainers or mistresses of the upper caste men, so there is no need for education. She has two children; both of whom are physically challenged. Keeping with her traditional community practice, she was earlier engaged in performances, however, she later realised that the means of entertainment for people have changed drastically and their perception of nautanki has degraded. Moreover, she also feels there is no self-respect left in this job and even her children have to carry the burden of shame because of her engagement in nautanki. So she has now stopped her traditional work.

Kesar Das is 30 years old and lives in Fatehabad, Haryana. He has completed class 12 and this makes him a part of a few in his community who have received formal education. Kesar Das belongs to the Odd community that has been long regarded as a community of ‘indigenous civil engineers’. They are known in particular for their skill in building dams, embankments and even canals. However, this uniquely skilled community has been dealt a severe blow. Just over two months ago, the government suddenly evicted families of the Odd community from the area and houses where they had lived for over three decades and razed their houses.
Kiran Devi is 61-years old and lives in Banda, Uttar Pradesh. She is from the Bediya community, where women, who work as traditional performers, would not get married. Children born out of wedlock were accepted as a norm by the community. She has two daughters and three sons and ensured that she provided all of them an education. Though she herself has only studied until class two, because she was pressured into learning performing arts to support her family, she did not want her daughters or sons to suffer the same fate. She believes that there is no dignity associated with performances anymore but since she loves it herself, she continues to perform at government events. She is working towards ensuring that women from her community are respected in public spaces.

Mahendra Devi is 50 years old and lives in Fatehabad, Haryana. She hails from the Bawariya tribe. The name Bawariya comes from the word for the noose bowar with which they would trap and snare wild animals. They have, for centuries, used a sustainable model of hunting and gathering to survive. About two months ago, after houses of her community members were demolished, they moved to a settlement that served as rudimentary shelter. During one of the nights in this shelter, a stray dog walked into an unsecured enclosure and carried away a young child with him. This surreal experience made her realise the nature of their lost identity and irony that a once proud and noble tribe have been turned from hunters to the hunted.

Sakila, a young woman of 19, lives in Bihar. She and her family are from the Nat community, known traditionally for their dancing, singing and acrobatic skills. The Nat people are also known as Bhanmati, this translates literally into ‘something amazing’. Sakila’s father is a labourer working in the agricultural sector but has constantly encouraged her to study and pursue her dreams. As a result of this support and hard work, Sakila is pursuing Bachelors degree in Arts and in her free time, teaches children in her community. She believes that only when one is educated is one capable of changing the fate of their community, truly living up to the Bhanmati epithet.

Shakinaben Movar is from small village called Navahanjyasar in the coastal area of Maliya on the banks of the Little Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. She is a Muslim who belongs to a denotified tribe, called the Miyanas and like many coastal families living on the Rann, her family too is traditionally involved in prawn harvesting since the 60’s. It is her main source of livelihood and survival and she works on kanthas (Prawn catching areas) for four months every year during the prawn season. This traditional occupation has been affected by larger uncertainties of the occupation but with the support of the women’s collective that she is now a part of: Azad Machimaar Cooperative and the larger collective on women’s issues in Maliya block called the Maliya Mahila Shakti Sangathan she has been able to take forward the community struggles on livelihoods, food security, traditional fishing rights, and on basic issues of health, water and roads and raise the status of Miyanas. She is a leader in the community and has been part of the struggle for rights of the Denotified community for their traditional occupation.
Siddique Usman Sama hails from Kutchh, Gujarat, from a family of Macchimars (fishermen). At the age of 14 he joined his family occupation and thus was never able to pursue formal education. In 2009, he joined the Macchimar Adhikar Sangharsh Sangathan at the insistence of the Sarpanch of his village. Since then, he has tirelessly advocated for the rights of his community. He led his community in a four-year long battle against companies establishing power grids in creeks which adversely affected the Macchimar community. The case went to the Gujarat High Court which passed an order in their favour. Similar battles are being fought by his collective against salt companies.

Subhey Singh is 11 years old and lives in Fatehabad, Haryana. and hails from the Bawariya community of traditional hunters. He was until recently enrolled in class 9 and was preparing for his exams when his entire community was evicted and houses bulldozed. He has had to discontinue his education and has been unable to re-enrol in school. His father died five years ago and now the responsibility of ensuring his family’s economic security is on his mother until he can take over from her. Being the only bread earner in the family she sells bangles to make ends meet.

Sundari Sabar, 42, lives in Purulia, West Bengal. She was born into the Sabar community, an indigenous tribe who have relied, since time immemorial, on the resources provided by the forest to survive. More recently, due to new laws and police restrictions as a result of naxalism, their access to forests and forest produce has dwindled. Sundari is a homemaker and is also working as an agriculturalist. For the last 10 years, she has been involved as a civil rights activist; fighting for her community so that they may finally be given a voice.

The Process

The 11 GLP participants spent two days dialoguing and deliberating various issues in the context of their lives. The broad discussion themes and process followed are indicated in the figure below:
In the discussion on intergenerational occupations, the panelists shared the occupations that had been stopped due to changes in laws, criminalisation, lack of Government support and faced redundancy due to technology. Placing themselves in the centre, they depicted occupations of two generations before them and two generations after them. These are depicted in the two images below:

The panelists had a discussion about the various stakeholders that they interacted with in their daily lives and the perceptions held by some of these stakeholders. The image below shows a snapshot of some of these perceptions.
They then did a scoring exercise of the nature of discrimination they face with various stakeholders as seen in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAKEHOLDERS</th>
<th>1 (Always discriminate)</th>
<th>2 (Often discriminate)</th>
<th>3 (Sometimes discriminate)</th>
<th>4 (No discrimination)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other children</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluent neighbours</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other marginalised groups</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop keepers</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Process of exclusion: A vicious Cycle!**
The major challenge of the Community is the way their history has been written. The tag of ‘criminal’ against their community has not disappeared. The tag is deep rooted and is beyond the mention in the law.

**“Mera baap chor nahin hai”**
Most occupations have become ‘illegitimate’ (as seen alongside), many due to “progressive” laws. Saperas, Madaris, jaadugars - became criminals because of wildlife laws and the Beggary Act. Some persons do commit crimes but it is not listed as individual crimes but ascribed to the community.

**Criminal Tag often brings them into the Crime**
When they explore alternative occupation, the criminal tag affects even their recruitment. The name of their settlements or locality itself keeps potential employers at bay. Even when they are in alternative occupation, say domestic servant, often a small incident could make them vulnerable to police violence. The onus often is on them to prove themselves ‘not guilty’. Societies and the Governments often force them away from any new occupation.

**Criminal tag often pushes children away from schools**
Children do face discrimination and verbal abuses from teachers as well as other children. Their settlements do not have adequate population for the Government to build schools in their settlements. Often children are demotivated; and their ambitions are limited to using education to move away from their present status.

The trap is described below:
The panelists were shown five digital stories created by representatives of three denotified tribes. These included:

1. *Ab kuch kar dikhana hai* (It’s time to prove myself), which was created by women from the Chhara community who shared how they continue to face the brunt of intentional criminalisation. It details the experience of a group of girls from this community including a doctor, who were accused of stealing from shops, when they had legitimately shopped, and the ill-treatment at the hands of the police.

2. *Nartaki ka jeevan* (A performer’s life) is the story of a woman from the Bedia community who pursues her traditional occupation of dancing and performing and the nature of harassment that she has to deal with as well as police atrocity. The narrator talks about leveraging modern forms of communication to reach out to the wider public to increase their awareness about rights and entitlements.
3. **Main aur mera samuday** (My community’s story) is the narration of a young person from the Kuchband community who talks about how his traditional occupation of making medicines was criminalised and his generation has been pushed into a different kind of stigmatised occupation of ragpicking. He details the discrimination he and his friends face in educational institutions, health facilities and wider society.

4. **Apni aankhon se dekho** (See for yourself) created by a member of the Bedia community talks about the life of hardship faced and how dancing and performing gave her the strength to fight with discriminatory institutions and society at large.

5. **Hamein Chahiye Azaad Samuday** (We want an independent community) traces the history of the Chhara community and how they moved from serving in royal armies to making illicit liquor and pickpocketing, to make ends meet. It is a story of hope of how community theatre helped members of this community to cope better and ends with some recommendations and demands from the Government.

**Understanding Research Data**

National Alliance Group for Denotified tribes along with Praxis conducted a small sample study across five states - Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Maharashtra. The study was initiated with the identification of some of the key goals. This identification of goals and indicators was done in consultation with the committee involving members from the community.

**Key Features of the Study**

1. The Campaign formed an Advisory Group for Design with members from the community. It was supported by a technical team from Praxis.
2. The Group evolved the research design and sample.
3. The Campaign recruited volunteers for data collection from the community itself. The data collection process was facilitated through a rigorous quality check and supervision by Praxis. 5% of sample was reviewed for quality check by an external team recruited by the campaign.
4. Praxis team organised the data entry, created database and generated tables.
5. Tables were presented to two panels: (a) An exclusive community Ground Level Panel; and (b) An Analysis Team comprising specialists from different fields.

6. These two groups did an independent analysis and generated key inferences and recommendations.

The research process involved two types of research methods - questionnaire-based household sample survey and structured community discussions using participatory methods. The data generated from the study was shared with participants and they engaged with these findings and discussed similarities and differences with their own contexts. Some of these are detailed below:

- 51% households stated that they follow a semi-nomadic way of living
- 81% households earned less than Rs. 5000 (approximately US$77) per month
- 28% households did not have access to any type of card related to food security schemes
- 88% households did not have caste certificates
- Only 25% households had legal documents for the housing land
- 39% of the respondent households did not have a family member with a bank account in their name
- 69% households had outstanding debt. Of the total households, 16% stated that they approached the bank for a loan but were denied
- In 174 households, 9 cases of mortality of children under 10 years of age were reported in last one year
- 9% of the households stated that none of the members had any legal identity document
- There were 10 instances among 174 households where a relative or a family member was denied a job in private sector owing to their DNT identity
- 11% of the households stated that they had complained or given feedback for government programme. Only 1% stated that any sort of action was taken.
- Among elementary school going age children (6 to 14 years), 40% children had dropped out or had never been to school
- Among 30+ age group, 81% had never been to school
- Among 18 to 60 years age group, only 7% had availability of work opportunities through out the year. Around 77% stated to have access to less than 100 days of work.
- Among 174 households only 3 persons were in government job and only 5 persons had accessed reservation related benefit.
### Access to basic infrastructure and services (percentage of locations; n=47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Not available</th>
<th>Available but not accessible</th>
<th>Accessed but bad quality</th>
<th>Used, good quality but expensive</th>
<th>Good quality &amp; affordable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ration Shop</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Government dispensary PHC</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Government Hospital</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Private Clinic</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Private hospital</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Health Insurance</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Government School (class 8)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Private School</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Library</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Playground</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Institutional delivery</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Immunisation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Pre-schooling (ICDS)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Nutrition-Children (ICDS)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Nutrition- pregnant women/ lactating mothers (ICDS)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Safe Drinking water</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Electricity</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Household toilet</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Banking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Transport</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The profile of respondents of the study is detailed in the image below:
From the data generated from the study the panelists also looked at the data from the “SDG Voluntary Response from Government of India”. The response of the panelists are detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government’s Interpretation of SDG Goals</th>
<th>Responses from Panel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| GOAL 1: Generating meaningful employment; Access to life and accident insurance; Basic services such as education and nutrition; Housing for all; Cooking fuel requirements of the population; Safe drinking water as well as sanitation | • These are availed of by people who already have houses, food and livelihood.  
• The supply of water is erratic and (participants from Gujarat shared) even though the Narmada river flows very close to us, we are still not getting water.  
• It is ironic that while the Government claims that houses are being constructed under the PM Awas Scheme, those of the nomadic communities are being demolished (as shared by the Odd community representatives of Haryana)  
• Regarding insurance schemes, under life insurance scheme they give money after death but when we are alive there is no care taken; nobody cares even if one dies of hunger.  
• At present there are many documents that have been mandated for availing of and implementing the government schemes but all the mandates remain only on paper  
• It is very difficult to make the employment cards. Even if the name is registered we don’t get jobs. |
| GOAL 2: One of the largest food security initiatives in the world; and since women pay higher attention to household security, ration cards issued in name of eldest woman of the household | • Regarding food security, accessibility is now a challenge. Ration cards have been digitised but the thumb impression is not working and leaves us without ration for months  
• We hear frequent news about how granaries are rotting with extra stock and ration shops have none. We are told that there is a food security law so the Government should be bound by it. Neither are ration cards made nor do we get the benefits. So what is the point having this law. This is only for rich people.  
• We have to go to the bank after getting ration. After depositing money we get ration. We have to do many rounds to get ration supply. |
| GOAL 3: Increased access and quality of health services; Health insurance cover (Rs. 100,000 (usd 1,563)) for BPL families; Providing vaccination to tackle death of children due to vaccine | • There are a lot of government statistics but our reality is different. When we are ill, medicines are not available in government hospitals. As a result we have to spend a lot of our savings on treatment.  
• The Anganwadi centre in the village opens once in six months and details of pregnant women are recorded. How then is it possible to get a monthly allowance  
• When we go to the headman and our name is not in the records then how can an insurance health card of Rs 100,000 be issued  
• Despite having a BPL card we don’t get the benefits of health insurance  
• We have neither heard about the one lakh rupee insurance nor do we know if the same exists. |
| GOAL 5: Gender equality and empowerment of girls and women; increasing female labor force participation and women empowerment centres | • The “beti bachao, beti padhao” scheme can only be seen in schools but there is no actual change taking place. There is equality among literate men and women however there are differences among non-literate and literate persons. There is a lot of difference in the situation at village and in the cities. Under the women and girls’ empowerment scheme only those who go to schools benefit but those who do not are still excluded from all the facilities.  
• In some villages of UP, committees of women have been formed and some women have benefitted under this. MNREGA card has been provided. But for some, the employment has remained on paper only. Work is not available for 100 days.  
• The poor are all excluded from the same. No women’s empowerment centre is present in the village. |
Based on discussions, the panel generated the following expectations:

1) Mechanism to stop police violence and labelling of the community
Police should not look at us as thieves and stop the use of physical and verbal violence against us. They should stop wrongly accusing us. It has been observed that they particularly abuse and target women from DNT communities. They should also not arrest innocent persons without proper investigation. There should be some mechanism to stop these excesses.

2) Access to quality education
We should get free education with good hostel facilities, particularly for girls. Teachers should be from the DNT community so that they do not discriminate against us. There is a need to encourage co-education among the community.

3) Livelihood opportunities
Government should provide employment opportunities for nomadic tribes by providing loans for small enterprises. Some of those practising traditional occupations, including street performers, are struggling due to changes in laws and need to be revived. Companies that are hampering traditional occupations and polluting the local environment should be discouraged as it further marginalises us. For landed DNT communities there needs to be strengthening of irrigation as well as other input facilities so that they do well in agriculture.

4) Land rights and end to land grabbing
Landlessness is high among denotified communities and in some places powerful people have grabbed land belonging to DNTs. There are also instances where businesses and government have taken over their land for developing project sites. The land belonging to the DNT should be restored to them, there should be active consultation before any such step of displacement and allocation of land for landless. Houses should have toilets and for nomadic communities, there should be a provision of mobile toilets.

5) Identity documents to access rights
Ration cards, Aadhar cards, other identity cards and documents should be prepared so that nomadic tribes have an identity and the ability to gain access to government programmes which provide food, health, education and other basic needs as well as other social protection mechanisms.

6) Reservation and representation
There should be reservation for the denotified tribes and caste certificates should be prepared for the members of nomadic tribes. Nomadic and denotified tribes should have representation in public offices.
Quotes from the Panelists

“Priests say that our income is from illegal/immoral sources, and therefore they don’t participate in any of our functions/festivals”

“We can fight against caste but who will give us strength to fight the gender battle we have at home”

“The Government is eradicating the poor and not poverty”

“Miyana community Maulanas are not registered by the state. Our community Madarsas are not provided any financial help in Gujarat

“When our children are taken into custody by the police and they get to know that they are from X, Y or Z community (that was traditionally associated with petty thievery) then more cases are foisted on them”

“Politicians tell us, we don’t want your votes. You are too small a constituency for us”

“Chhara for most people translates as a derogatory abuse and for the police it is assumed that we are thieves, even if we are doctors, lawyers or IT professionals”

“I had to stop going to school after my house was demolished and now teachers are not willing to take me back. They say you will again run away after 15 days”

“If anything is stolen in radius of 15-20 kilometres of our basti, police picks up someone from our community”

“Mahadalits have such a strong voice and bargaining capacity, but they do not stand with us ‘Banajars’ or ‘Saperas’ - they do not even talk to us”

“75% households in my village have cases filed against them by police - they particularly abuse and harass women from our denotified community”

“The quality of teaching for schools that our children attend are terrible because the teachers there send their own children to private schools”

“Forest officers ask us to kill deer when they want to eat and when we get caught for hunting they deny it totally”

“Just because we hail from the rag picking community, in schools, other children make fun of us and tell we stink even though we are bathed and clean”

“In our own country we don’t get one inch of space and are treated like refugees, but refugees from other countries are welcomed and provided shelter”
Members of the alliance include:

ANANDI
Budhan Theatre
CHELA
Jan Kalyan Parishad
Maji Badhila khi
Maliya Mahila Shakti Sangathan
Nomad Trust
Odd Community Council of India
Paschim Banga Kheria Sabar Kalyan Samiti
Sambhawana Welfare Society
TANDA
Vajra Mahila Sangathan
Sampoorna Vimukti
Mainstreaming Denotified and Nomadic Tribes among Indian Citizenry

has been organised with support from

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