

ANNUAL REPORT

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ABOUT SAMATA FOUNDATION

Samata Foundation was officially registered under the Company Act, 2063 BS as a profit-not-sharing organization in 2009. It engages in research both empirical and policy, and informed advocacy for the rights of marginalized people, especially Dalit social groups, both from Hill and Madhesh. It firmly believes that real change can only be brought by producing critical youth mass of Dalit and non-Dalit, disseminating knowledge, encouraging civic participation and preparing individuals from Dalit social groups to become leaders of the next generation. In this manner, it has been engaging in different thematic areas such as: Democracy and Good governance; Dalit Human Rights; Social Inclusion; Land, Livelihoods and Food Rights; and Culture, Education and Media.

Samata Foundation is emerging as an independent think-tank specializing in the area of caste related issues concerning Dalit community of Nepal. Samata Foundation believes it has a crucial role of generating concrete and scientific information to bring positive changes in society, helping to develop appropriate policies and suitably amend when deemed necessary. Samata Foundation envisions creating caste-based discrimination and untouchability free society in days to come.

With the financial support from various funding partners, Samata Foundation has been conducting various programs on Dalit and social exclusion issues through research, informed-advocacy, capacity building of Dalit youths, high level policy dialogues and discussions, and Samata Foundation resource center to achieve its intended objectives. In this regard, researchers from Dalit social group have been involving in various activities mainly conduction of studies, compilation and analysis of Dalit related data, translation of documents related to Dalit issues both in Nepali and English language, providing necessary supports to Parliamentarians/Lawmakers with factual information, publications, review of existing government policies and laws on Dalit issues.



**Research and
Evidence-based
Informed Policy
Advocacy**



**Publication,
Communication
and Outreach**



**Human Rights
and Justice**



**Cultivating
Leadership**

Research and Evidence-based Informed Policy Advocacy

Our research seeks to expand the body of knowledge specific to issues and experiences of Dalit communities and other under-represented groups within Nepal. We have published a wide variety of books and resources covering ethnographic studies, social and political movements, philosophy, history, and literature related to Dalit communities and caste-systems. These resources have been produced to provide general public an access to critical research and raise awareness for positive change. In addition to publishing books, we have also produced briefs for policy reviews and advocacy that review current legislation and provide recommendations to advance the rights of marginalized groups.

We conduct both independent and collaborative research with partners. The outcomes of research are integrated into advocacy tools such as policy papers, advocacy briefs, informational briefs, newsletters, campaigns, and other materials to disseminate among major stakeholders. The findings of research conducted have been used for advocacy purposes for positive societal transformation.

Our policy advocacy efforts have aided law enactment processes and campaigns for the amendment procedure of laws and regulations concerning Dalits and human rights as a whole. Our advocacy and lobbying actions are extended to regional and international level. At the regional level campaigning and lobbying, Samata Foundation engages with the Asia Dalit Right Forum (ADRF) and Asia Democracy Research Network (ADRN).

Publication, Communication and Outreach

Since 2009 we have released over 60 publications by Samata Foundation. Our publications include books based on empirical research, policy papers, research reports, policy review reports, Dalit projects in Nepal, advocacy briefs, and regular newsletters. Publications are available in both Nepali and English. In addition to published resources, information is shared on other platforms including Samata Foundation's website, social media, radio, and video programs. Furthermore, talk programs and lectures series are conducted on a regular basis.

We have broadened the spectrum of our alliance at national and international levels. At the international level we collaborate with the Asia Dalit Right Forum (ADRF) and Asia Democracy Research Network (ADRN).

In addition to contributing to building a greater body of knowledge about Dalits and Dalit projects in Nepal, we have also created an on-site library, Samata Resource Centre, with open access to the public to improve availability of critically engaged information and research.

Human Rights and Justice

Our work in social justice and human rights includes investigation into caste-based discrimination and untouchability (CBD & U) and advocacy for its elimination. Since 2013, a series of fact-finding missions of human rights violation (HRV) incidences are being carried out involving Dalit individuals who have been targeted because of their caste and experienced intimidation, discrimination, or violence. Fact-finding missions are carried out throughout Nepal to bring justice to the individuals and communities impacted by acts of discrimination and violence.

Fact-finding missions are carried out by staff and a team of volunteers trained through the Dalit Human Rights Defenders (DHRD) program during the time of incident(s) or a possible human rights violation. Fact finding mission concerning caste-based discrimination and atrocities against Dalits are sensitively collected from communities and presented to parliamentarians, lawmakers, and law enforcement agencies at the local and national level for appropriate measures to be taken that address justice.

Additionally, we are committed to build awareness among the citizens about Dalit human rights and justice delivery system through education and trainings. The social justice and human rights advocacy is our duty towards the society as a social justice organization.

Cultivating Leadership

Through the creation of leadership programs and youth mobilization, we organize and train Dalit and non-Dalit Nepali youth through fellowship opportunities, courses, and educational events. Through fellowships and Dalit Human Right Defenders programs, we create pathways for youth and individuals engaging in human rights work to build upon their skills and knowledge to become leaders in the Dalit communities in Nepal.

Our trained volunteers, the Dalit Human Rights Defenders (DHRDs) located throughout Nepal work to defend the rights of Dalit community members. These watchdogs based at community level monitor and document incidents of Dalit human rights violations (DHRVs), conduct fact-finding missions, engage with law enforcement agencies and local/provincial governments, carry out advocacy, education, and capacity-building initiatives related to the elimination of discrimination and HR violations against Dalit communities in Nepal. Currently, we have over 100 DHRDs throughout Nepal.

We have trained numbers of Young Dalit girls from province 2. These young Madhesi Dalit girls are the Youth Ambassadors endowed with specific knowledge and skills on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). To date, there are 160 Youth Ambassadors from Madhes who are the aspiring dalit leaders in Nepal working in their community and who in turn seek to empower other young people within their community.

1.1 Election 2079: Dalit Representation at Federal, Province, and Local Levels

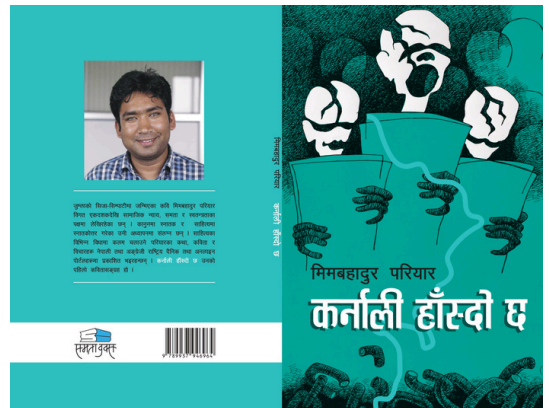
The representation of Dalit community was quite satisfactory in the two Constituent Assembly elections held in 2064 (first) and 2070 (second). Subsequently, the second Constituent Assembly, which was held on Mangsir 4, 2070, drafted the Constitution of Nepal on Ashoj 3, 2072. After the constitution was drafted, the elections for all three levels were held for the first time in 2074. Similarly, for the second time, the local-level elections were held on Baisakh 30, 2079, and the federal and provincial elections were held on Mangsir 4.



The policy paper 'Election 2079: Dalit Representation in Federal, Provincial, and Local Levels' presents the statistics regarding the representation of the Dalit community in the local level elections held on Baisakh 30, 2079, and the federal and provincial elections held on Mangsir 4.

1.2 Karnali Hasdo chha

A set of poems "Karnali Hansdo Chha" was written by poet Mim Bahadur Pariyar. This set of collection of poems comprises 35 progressive poems addressing social transformation issues. Most of the poems in this collection have been written against caste-based discrimination. Some poems depict the suffering, potential, and challenges of Karnali, foreign employment struggles, and the difficulties faced by migrants. A few poems criticize the feudal system. These poems' imagery, style, and language are filled with pain, anger, and rebellion. Most of the poems reflect anger and express suffering, carrying messages of awareness and warning.



"Karnali Hansdo Chha" is not a set of romantic poems. It does not describe affection and love for nature either. Rather, "Karnali Hansdo Chha" is the summation of Karnali sentiments, frustration towards the state, and the oppression faced by Dalits due to the caste system. The situations of Karnali and the Dalits are comparable in many ways. The pain, suffering, and abundant potential in Karnali are akin to those of Dalits. However, state power continues to marginalize and discriminate against both. Dalits of Karnali were not afraid of the feudal and casteist elements before, nor will they remain silent against such tendencies now. They will strive for social change through the surge of rebellion and through art and literature.

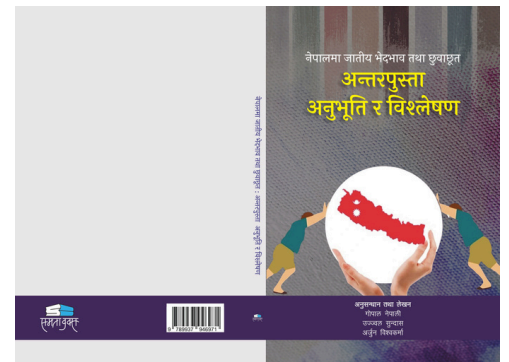
1.3 आत्मसम्मानको खोजी – दलित अधिकार सुनिश्चितताका लागि जनप्रतिनिधिको भूमिका, तेस्रो राष्ट्रिय सम्मेलन २०८० [A Report on National Conference 2023]

The Samata Foundation, in collaboration with the Asian Parliamentarians Forum on Dalit Concerns (APFDC) Nepal Chapter, organized a national conference on Dalit rights on the 19th and 20th of Bhadra, 2076 BS (September 2019). Similarly, on the 15th and 16th of Ashoj, 2078 BS (October 2021), a two-day national conference on 'The Role of Elected Representatives in Ensuring Dalit Rights' was held for the second time. Continuing this practice, the Samata Foundation hosted the third national conference from the 7th to the 9th of Baisakh, 2080 BS (April 2023) in Kathmandu.



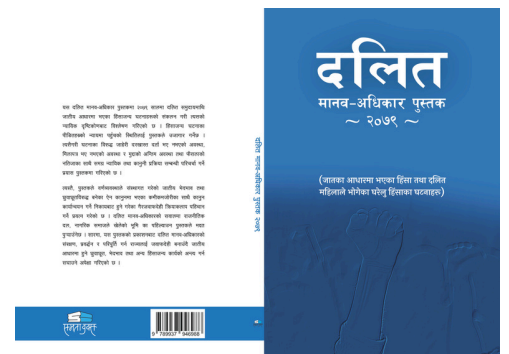
1.4 Nepalma Jatiye Bhedbhav tatha Chhuwachut: Antarpusta Anubhuti ra Bishleshan

The book 'Nepalma Jatiye Bhedbhav ra Chhuwachut: Antarpusta Anubhuti ra Bishleshan' (Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability in Nepal: Intergenerational Perceptions and Analysis) attempts to analyze how caste-based discrimination and untouchability have been transmitted along generations covering the life experiences of three different generations namely, Baby Boomers, Generation X and the Millennials.



1.5 Dalit Human Rights book 2079

Samata Foundation publishes the Dalit Human Rights Book annually to make the state more responsive for the protection, development, and fulfillment of Dalit human rights. This year's book has analyzed incidents of violence and discriminatory events based on caste in 2079, examining them from a judicial perspective. It has highlighted over 100 incidents of domestic violence against Dalit women. The book also illustrates the government's responsibility and accountability concerning incidents affecting the Dalit community, and identifies the areas of policy advocacy and lobby through the analysis of incidents. It has portrayed the facts, legal processes, and the state of justice involvement.



2.1 Nepalma Jatiye Bhedbhav तथा Chhuwachut: Antarpusta Anubhuti ra Bishleshan

This qualitative research explores the changing dynamics of caste-based discrimination and untouchability in Nepal over the past 80 years, focusing on the lived experiences of Dalits across three generations. It examines how political, legal, economic, cultural, and technological forces have driven societal changes while traditional mindsets, religious norms, and vested interests have resisted progress. The study aims to analyze these driving and resisting forces and compare the intergenerational experiences of Dalits. By documenting these experiences, the research provides a contemporary reflection on the evolution of discrimination and untouchability, offering insights that can be used for policy advocacy to promote social justice and equality for Dalits in Nepal.

Respondents were categorized into three age groups based on generation theory: the first age group is Baby Boomers, the second is Generation X, and the third is the Millennial.

The first generation experienced much more discrimination compared to the other generations. During that time, there were various traditions based on sin and virtue, purity and impurity, and heaven and hell. Dalits faced social, economic, educational, and religious restrictions. The second generation also faced discrimination but played a powerful role in revolting against it. They organized and actively participated in movements to claim their rights. Similarly, the third generation harbors aspirations similar to those of younger people from other castes/groups. However, they still get affected by the caste systems during the instances of religious customs, marriage, love -affair, and other relationships.

2.2 Horizontal Accountability: A case of Nepal

A scholar from Samata Foundation, Mr. Tirupati Pariyar conducted the study on horizontal accountability in Nepal. Mr. Pariyar presented the working paper at the 13th workshop of the East Asia Institute. The paper examines the effectiveness of mechanisms that hold the government accountable to other state institutions and the public. It highlights the challenges posed by weak institutions, lack of transparency, and political interference. The study emphasizes the need for independent media, judiciary, and robust civil society to strengthen accountability. The study advocates for improved coordination between government levels and increased public participation to ensure governance transparency and effectiveness, aiming for a more functional democracy in Nepal.

2.3 Vertical Accountability: A case of Nepal

A team from Samata Foundation conducted a study: Vertical Accountability: Case of Nepal. The purpose of the study was to explore and analyze how the political and legal entities in Nepal are accountable towards the general public as regard to keeping the electoral system functional and to understand the challenges in fulfilling the aspiration of the voters.

A qualitative method of enquiry was employed. Parliamentarians (former and current), Member from Election Commission, Former Minister, Scholars, Media persons, CSO heads were interviewed using in-depth interview method. Additionally, several representatives from the Media and CSOs will be interviewed. Various reports, policies and relevant books were reviewed for necessary theoretical understanding.

Due to the prevailing weak voters' education and hurriedly and inadequately carried out voter's education programs just before the election, have been quite ineffective. Monitoring and controlling actions of EC needs to be largely strengthened. A specific law is required to prevent parties from forming pre-election alliances which is causing manipulation of election results. Voters should consciously cast vote and question the elected leaders about their election manifesto demanding definite delivery timelines. A culture of respecting the spirit of proportional representation model and complying with the constitutional provisions should be instilled among the leaders and political parties.

2.4 Dalit Criminalization: Plights of Dalits Behind Bar

This research studies the criminalization of Dalits, examining the root causes and socio-economic consequences of their higher rate of involvements in crime statistics. It investigates how longstanding poverty, continuous humiliation, and subjugation limit Dalits' opportunities, compelling many to engage in hazardous informal sector jobs, where crime is prevalent. The study also explores the prejudiced treatment by law enforcement and the judiciary, leading to higher conviction rates and false allegations against Dalits. The research objectives include identifying triggering factors for criminalization, analyzing disparate treatment, assessing the impact on prisoners' families, and recommending policies to support Dalit defendants. Focus areas include the nature of crimes, gender dynamics, false allegations, and challenges to rehabilitation post-acquittal.

2.5 Study of Musahar community

This research focuses on the Madhesi Dalit communities, particularly the Musahar, who are among the most marginalized groups in Nepal's social hierarchy. Compared to Hilly areas Dalits, Madhesi Dalits face greater social discrimination, economic deprivation, political underrepresentation, and exclusion, enduring untouchability for centuries. Among the Madhesi Dalits, the Musahar are the most marginalized, struggling with identity crises and loss of dignity. The Musahar, primarily residing in the Terai region, live in extreme poverty, with landlessness and inadequate access to food and clothing. The objectives of this research are to explore the historical, cultural, and religious background of the Musahar community, assess their socioeconomic status, education, health, and political access, and examine the extent of caste-based discrimination they face. The study is conducted in the Terai of Nepal, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, including surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies. A mixed-method approach has been employed to capture both the physical conditions and subjective experiences of the Musahar community, providing a comprehensive understanding of their past and present living conditions.

3.1 National Conference 2080 – April 2023

Samata Foundation hosted the third national conference from the 7th to the 9th of Baisakh, 2080 BS (April 2023) in Kathmandu. All together Dalit elected members from all three tier of government in the country attended the conference.

During the conference, there were intensive discussions on various topics, including the implementation of proportional and inclusive policies, political parties' perspectives on the Dalit community, the electoral system, Dalit community's access to the economy, integrated Dalit policies, Dalit rights acts in all seven provinces, and Dalit-friendly policies, regulations, and budgets at the local level. The significant views expressed by the elected representatives from the Dalit community representing all seven provinces on these issues have been included in this report.



Third Dalit National Conference 2023

3.2 Formation of Local level Dalit Representatives Associations Nepal - May 2023

One of the major achievements of the 3rd National Conference of Elected Dalit Representatives was the consensus building for the formation of the Local Level Dalit Representatives Association Nepal. All elected Dalit representatives will be defaulting members of this association. A decision was made at this conference to organize a grand event on May 4th and 5th, 2023, for the establishment of the Local Level Dalit Representatives Association. It was agreed that Samata Foundation would serve as the secretariat to formalize this association, and Mr. Dipak Bishwakarma (Deputy Mayor, Nilkantha Municipality) was unanimously selected as the coordinator to organize this conference. The purpose of LLDRAN is to jointly lobby Dalit agendas at various levels of government.



3.3 Local Level Dialogue – October 2023

A local-level dialogue titled "Climate Justice for Marginalized Communities: Strengthening Local Resilience and Accountability" was held at Tillottama Municipality on the 16th of October. This half-day event focused on the effects of climate change on the Dalit community and the roles of locally elected representatives in addressing these issues. Participants included the mayor, ward chairpersons, executive members of Tillottama Municipality, youth representatives, government officials, and journalists.



The event aimed to make the elected members understand the challenges faced by marginalized communities due to climate change and help explore ways to build local resilience. Discussions highlighted the importance of inclusive policymaking and targeted interventions for the Dalit community. The role of accountability in local governance was also emphasized. The event concluded with recommendations for increased resources for climate resilience projects, capacity-building programs for local leaders, and monitoring mechanisms for climate policies. Municipal authorities committed to prioritizing climate justice and working collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for the Dalit community.

3.4 Lobby meeting at Lumbini Province – October 2023

On the 18th of October, the Samata Foundation team conducted a lobby meeting in the office of Chief Minister Honorable Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary in Lumbini Province. During this meeting, the project coordinator provided an update on the current situation of the Dalits and the impacts of climate change. The team also submitted a memorandum outlining their demands for the assurance of Dalit rights and climate justice.



The memorandum emphasized the need for climate change-related programs at the local level in Lumbini Province to enhance citizens' adaptability. It demanded for equitable distribution of relief materials to support marginalized communities and fair rehabilitation programs that prioritize Dalits, ensuring they are resettled in safer areas away from risky locations. It also highlighted the necessity for special provisions for drinking water and food in drought-stricken Rukum District and resettlement programs in the landslide-prone Sunchhahari Rural Municipality of Rolpa District.

3.5 National Level Policy Dialogue: Impact of Climate Change on Dalit Communities in Nepal- December 2023

A national-level policy dialogue was organized on 29 December 2023 in Kathmandu. The objectives of this program were to explore and document the impact faced by Dalit communities at the grassroots level due to climate change and highlight how the effects of climate change have been locally handled. The event was also aimed to raise awareness among policymakers about the climate impact on the most marginalized communities and to formulate

necessary Dalit-friendly climate policies immediately. Political leaders, parliamentarians, concerned government personnel, civil society leaders, and others were present in the event. A paper was presented by Mr. Gopal Nepali, who mainly focused on three points in his presentation: assessing the impact of climate change on Dalit communities, coping, existing local coping strategies in Madhesh and Hills/project areas, and identifying the causes of climate vulnerability in project districts.



4.1 Annual Dalit Human Rights Defenders (DHRDs) Reflection and Planning Meeting



On 16-18 December, the Samata Foundation conducted the annual DHRDs Reflection and Planning Meeting at Nagarkot. Total of 21 DHRDs were present in the meeting where various sessions were conducted to enhance the capacity of the DHRDs. The DHRDs shared their experiences regarding the impact of climate change in their communities, actions taken, and challenges faced. They also reflected on their achievements throughout the year and actively participated in planning activities for 2024. Five papers were presented during these sessions: the first paper covered "Understanding Existing Laws and Policies Related to Climate Change," the second focused on "Mechanisms and Policies for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Gaps in Nepal's Context, and the roles of DHRDs and CBOS." The third paper addressed "Land Rights and the Status of Dalits". The fourth discussed "Understanding the Concept of Climate Justice and Advocacy," and the fifth paper was on "Community Leadership."

5.1 ADRN 13th annual workshop

Mr. Tirupati Pariyar participated in the East Asia Institute's (EAI) workshop titled "Enhancing the Democratic Role of Civil Society in Asia" held from June 21 to June 23, 2023, in Seoul on behalf of Samata Foundation. The workshop focused on the roles of civil society organizations in promoting democratic values and human rights across Asia. Samata Foundation's involvement highlighted its commitment to Dalit rights and social justice in Nepal. Mr. Tirupati Pariyar presented his draft paper on Horizontal Accountability in Nepal and shared insights on caste-based discrimination, discussed advocacy strategies, and networked with other Asian civil society organizations to enhance collaborative efforts in fostering inclusive democratic practices.

5.2 Asia Democracy Research Network (ADRN) 14th Regional Workshop, Bangkok

Mr. Ujjwal Sundas , Samata Foundation presented a working paper on Vertical Accountability: Case of Nepal on 14th Asia Democracy Research Network Regional Workshop in Bangkok November. The workshops were attended by Scholars and Civil Society leaders from more than 14 nations in Asia. The study revealed situation of vertical accountability in Nepal. The paper also highlighted the role of elected members and their accountability towards the public. It also emphasized the role of the Election Commission, Media and Civil society organizations to hold elected members accountable to the Nepalese voters.



THANK YOU