

PEOPLE'S CHARTER OF DEMANDS - INDIA

On 28th September 2021, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) organized the National People's Assembly, India, as part of the SDG Global Week of Action, bringing together voices from marginalized communities, global and regional civil society forums, experts and the UN in India. The purpose was to highlight the challenges India faces in ensuring a healthy, green and just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and build equitable and inclusive strategies to move forward in this decade of action.

All across the globe, the marginalized and vulnerable communities are the ones most adversely affected by the impact of COVID-19. The pandemic not only overwhelmed health systems across the country, but also substantially affected the livelihood of many, pushing the vulnerable further into acute poverty, malnutrition and debt. Despite government announcements and assurances of relief for the people impacted by COVID-19, the on-ground reality is that the entitlements and benefits are not reaching the most marginalized.

The Declaration of the Global People's Assembly 2021 recognizes COVID-19 as an 'Inequality Virus' that has revealed the fundamental inequities of a warped global order. The aftermath of COVID-19 in India has seen increased economic inequalities, exacerbated existing social inequalities, loss of learning and high drop-out from education. There were increased instances of violence and human rights violations over and above existing violence against Dalits, Tribals, Nomadic Communities, women, among others. India is also witnessing a critical concern of rising climatic vulnerabilities.

In light of these challenges, we call for:

- Designing and implementing social equity measures, recognising and respecting the intersectional dimensions, through targeted policies and provisions, affirmative action, special budget provisions and any other means to facilitate the escape of vulnerable communities from the cycle of historical exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage.
- Availability of data disaggregated to the community (geo-social) level- promoting robust community-generated data, complementing and supplementing government data with civil society/community data, and making data publicly available.

- Tracking status of vulnerable communities on multiple dimensions- poverty, access to public goods, livelihood and decent work, realization of justice, participation and inclusion.
- Encouraging and facilitating the participation and agency of vulnerable communities at all levels of governance and in all processes related to development planning and implementation.
- Strengthening public provisioning and public services to ensure essential services such as education, health, water and sanitation, housing and employment reach vulnerable communities.
- A back-to-school campaign accounting for support needed for differential learning gaps, pandemic-induced mental strains and a safe environment for all children.
- Including the Right to Education norms in schools and infrastructure from pre-school to class XII.
- Addressing the need for inclusion in schools, tackling discrimination through sensitized educators, mixed seating arrangements, peer support groups, etc.
- Sensitizing teachers and administration on learning disabilities and increasing screening
- Creating a virtual resource hub detailing available scholarship schemes, where to apply, documents needed to access them, and how to procure them
- Investing in enabling community support for education through volunteers who can help create informal spaces for learning for children in communities with low literacy rates
- Enacting a National Health Rights Act enabling right to healthcare and mandating health as a public good
- An immediate budgetary commitment of at-least 2.5 per cent of GDP with 35 per cent burden on Union government and 65 per cent on state governments
- Using the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PM-GKY) to connect interior communities to nearby health centers
- A People's Vaccine- ensuring inclusive and equitable access to the COVID-vaccine.
- Reducing gatekeeping in recognizing disabilities and launching a national campaign for door-to-door vaccination for all persons with disabilities (PwDs) including those with invisible illnesses
- National norms for sex change surgeries to be made accounting for the cost and competency of doctors needed

- The One Nation, One Ration Card scheme for universal access to the Public Distribution System (PDS) to be implemented immediately and ensuring regular supply of quality food at the PDS center
- Implementation of National Food Security Act to be strengthened to prevent exclusion of vulnerable communities, and especially those living in remote areas such as of the north-east region
- Promoting decentralized mechanisms like community-based monitoring and social audit to ensure effective functioning of Integrated Child Development Services
- Recognizing diversity in dietary and nutrition needs of vulnerable communities and ensuring that no state policy or schemes infringe upon access to food of their choice
- Developing innovations and operational guidelines to improve access to quality complementary food and improve inter-sectoral convergence of nutrition-specific and sensitive departments; at district and sub-district levels.
- Recognizing water and sanitation as human rights to provide equitable access to all irrespective of their caste, gender, location, income or any other socio-economic marker
- Enhancement and regular maintenance of public WASH facilities
- Addressing discrimination and implementing legislations to protect the vulnerable communities and promote their inclusion and equality
- Capacity building and sensitization of police personnel to document hate crimes against vulnerable communities such as the LGBTQIA+
- Consistent advocacy and government action on the stigma, discrimination and human rights violations to facilitate access to appropriate grievance redress mechanisms
- Courts of all levels to have accessible infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities for better access to justice
- The Panchayats to maintain the data of the number of people migrating so that when they return, they may continue to avail the benefits of these schemes.
- Employment for at least 200 days instead of 100 days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA)
- Employment Guarantee and Unemployment Benefit for urban areas
- Ensuring that the vocational education policy under NEP 2020 is inclusive and has a clear implementation action plan
- Ensuring portability and universal coverage of all social security schemes



**ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**



**Global
Call to Action
Against Poverty**
People Rising To End Inequalities

- The Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan Budgets to be commensurate with the population proportion as mandated by the plan
- The Scheduled Tribe Sub-Plan Budgets to be commensurate with the population proportion as mandated by the plan
- National and State commissions like Human Right Commission, Women Right Commission and Commission on Protection on Child Rights to have a separate unit within the commission to address the issues of the NT-DNT.
- Ensuring that LGBTQIA+ persons' access to social security benefits in times of crises isn't hindered due to lack of legal identity
- Ministry of Minority Affairs budget to be increased at least 10-times for a justified fiscal support
- Creation of disability cells and budgets in all relevant ministries and government departments, including NITI Aayog.
- Designing specific strategies to reach out to children excluded from the service net through integrated village planning with a multi-sectoral focus.
- Universal coverage for a non-contributory pension to end poverty
- Building sensitivity among the duty bearers and decision-makers to respect, consult and incorporate the values and knowledge of vulnerable communities in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.
- Translating the Government of India demand on climate justice at the international level towards a holistic domestic climate policy to tackle climate change while being cognizant of the specific vulnerabilities of communities most at risk of being adversely affected.
- Promoting accountability for all agencies, government and private, to ensure that vulnerable communities are not left behind, and integrating inclusion and human rights norms and standards in their work.

The pandemic has highlighted the interconnected nature of the world, and the need for a renewed social contract between government and people, a deepening of global solidarity and multi-stakeholder platforms for transformative solutions. At this critical juncture, it is imperative that we take a whole-of-society- approach with the people at the forefront in order to create a new social contract that is just and fair, particularly for the most marginalized.