

# WORKING TOWARDS A PLURALISTIC FUTURE

NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP  
NGO WITH SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

COP26 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE	4
THE STRUGGLE REPEALING THE INDIAN FARM LAWS	7
THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPEN-ENDED WORKING ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT	9
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SERIES	13
ENVIRONMENTAL AND DIVERSITY SPEAKER SERIES	15
FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WEBINARS: PERIODS	17
WEBINAR: WHY SMALL FARMERS AROUND THE GLOBE ARE ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION	19
INTERSECTIONALITY WARS: THE COMING AGE OF INTERSECTIONALITY AND ITS APPROPRIATION	20
WHAT IT IS LIKE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE SHRG	22



# WELCOME TO OUR NOVEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

## DIRECTORS NOTE

BY DR JASDEV SINGH RAI (SHRG DIRECTOR) (LONDON OFFICE)

November 2021 will be remembered by an overwhelming number of Sikhs around the world for the repeal of the notorious Farm Laws that were introduced in September 2020 in India. In fact small farmers around the world will see this as a great victory by a determined and relentless farmers protest in India against these laws. The laws were seen as existential threat to the lives and lifestyles of small farmers in India. Over 50% of the Indian population is engaged in the farming sector either directly or indirectly. The Indian Government was promoting these laws as progressive and good for farmers.

The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) is proud to have played its small part in this historic struggle. We sincerely hope that the Government of India will abide by the **United Nations Declaration on Rights of Peasants 2018**, start consultations with the farmers and develop a new set of farming policies acceptable to all parties. Our human rights officers worked hard in the background researching and bringing issues to the attention of the international diplomatic community.

The webinar hosted by our representative in United States on why small farmers are on the brink of extinction was well attended and introduced many shared issues amongst farmers around the world, particularly in the United States and India. It was encouraging to know that American small farmers feel inspired by the protests in India.

The SHRGs work continues to expand with its excellent team and advisors. The Right to Development is a fundamental right that the United Nations wants to push. Development has the potential to ensure livelihoods, tackle poverty, promote equity and good health. But all these have to be intricately woven into Developmental strategies and policies. The SHRG engaged with the Open Ended Inter-Governmental Working group on Right to Development. We suggested some additions to the Preamble of the **Draft Convention on the Right to Development** that is currently being prepared by the Working Group as well as some amendments to Article 15 of the document. We hope these will be taken on board.

We continued our podcast series with remarkable academics working in the climate and environmental field. We have also started engaging with the corporate sector on the issue of Binding Legal Instruments for Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises. Fidelity International Limited, a large investment and financial institution was the first to engage with us in this series.

The Female Empowerment series of events, webinars, conferences are all part of the Diversity, Dignity and Respect pillar of the SHRG work. The participation of many organisations is increasing. We hope this will have real impact. Binti Period International is a remarkable organisation that is working in the field of female reproductive health. The webinar is linked in the newsmagazine.

We were extremely glad that the small group of young students, that we took to COP26, enjoyed and learnt so much from it. They tell us in their own words in this newsmagazine. They are going to soldier on and engage with the larger community through schools, community events and webinars to bring awareness on the climate crises.

We are also glad that our interns continue to benefit from joining in our work and attending international conferences at the United Nations through Zoom. We hope they will greatly add value to society through their experience and learning at the SHRG.

We wish everyone season's greetings and hope to connect with you in the new year!

Yours sincerely,

*Dr Jasdev Singh Rai*

# WELCOME TO OUR NOVEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

## EDITORS NOTE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

(EDITOR AND HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER & PROJECT COORDINATOR AT THE SHRG)

Welcome to the November 2021 edition of the Sikh Human Rights Groups monthly newsletter informing you of our ongoing work. Unfortunately, we are not able to cover everything that we do in this brief newsletter. Nevertheless, and as you will see we are engaged in a wide variety of international human rights issues to promote our founding doctrine of Pluralism.

We have also taken on a number of interns and volunteers who take up research, take notes during United Nations conferences and events and write reports. Consequently, we always try to encourage them to contribute to our newsletter.

If you would like to get involved in any of our ongoing projects or for anything else then please contact us via email at [info@shrg.ngo](mailto:info@shrg.ngo)

I very much hope that you enjoy the contents of this months edition.

Yours sincerely,

*Mr Carlos Arbuthnott*



(Mr Carlos Arbuthnott)



# GURDWARA SRI GURU SINGH SABHA SOUTHALL

## SEN ENGAGEMENT EVENT

This event is an opportunity for those with lifelong neurodiversity characteristics (SEN) of any age and those who care for them to come together to discuss how **Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall** can best support them and their families.

The Sikh Neurodiversity Network is currently establishing a network of children and adults with lifelong neurological characteristics, such as Autism, and listening to their experiences and the experiences of those who care for them. Specifically, regarding the problems they may have encountered whilst accessing Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions.

After we have completed this step we will establish a network of experts within Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions who will be charged with increasing Sangat understanding, engagement and support for those with lifelong neurological characteristics.

There will be:

- Food and drink
- Music
- Arts and crafts
- Toys
- Presentations on the Sikh Neurodiversity Network



**Date:** 18 December 2021 (Saturday)

**Time:** 14:00 - 16:30 (GMT)

**Address:** Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (Upstairs Hall), 2-8 Park Avenue, Southall, UB1 3AG

**To book your FREE ticket or for more information about this event and the Sikh Neurodiversity Network please scan the QR code below.**

**N.B. Wheelchair access is available**





# COP26 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) was delighted to work with Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall on our COP26 Youth Engagement Initiative. Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall who won the Queens Award for Volunteering in 2020 had been keen to encourage Sikh youth involvement at COP26. Future project engagements are being funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Nevertheless, the SHRG has embarked upon this initiative with a key group of Sikh youth.

To give you an insight into our current project between the 4th and the 6th of November 2021 our Human Rights Officers and Project Coordinators took secondary school and undergraduate students to COP26. Our Human Rights Officers and Project Coordinators come from a range of backgrounds including UK Barristers, medical professionals, university lecturers, international relations experts and human rights campaigners who have been actively involved in a myriad of human rights issues for over 40 years. Consequently, this provided the students with an unparalleled insight into the type and form of career paths that they may like to take but just as importantly it allowed them to gain a rare insight into the various ways that we as a global society can come together in order to mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change.

However, our engagement with young members of our society does not stop there as we are thrilled to announce that we are currently searching for student participants for our COP26 Youth Engagement Initiative.

The primary purpose to which is threefold:

Firstly, by running a series of practitioner-led and/or academic-led environmental conservation workshops and seminars (January 2022 to July 2022) within local West London schools, sixth form college and universities we hope to educate and upskill students from a variety of backgrounds on the practical environmental conservation methods they can undertake within their local communities, supported by us, to help their local communities plan for and/or mitigate and adapt to the negative and imminent impacts of climate change. Our hope and primary focus is on ensuring that these students will then be enabled to take these project planning and implementation skills with them into later life.

# COP26 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

Secondly, we hope to benefit our local communities by having students plant trees, participate in and encourage a cycle to school and work initiative as well as host a series of student-led environmental conservation workshops, seminars and lectures (March 2022 to November 2022) for their friends, family members, teachers and select members of civil society.

Finally through our Special Consultative Status at the United Nations, we will offer some students the opportunity to submit written and/or oral statements at United Nations environmental conservation conferences and events in order to further cement their knowledge and commitment to helping their local communities overcome the many challenges of climate change.

Therefore, in summary we will provide students with the requisite knowledge, training and support to become independent environmental campaigners and strengthen local community knowledge and commitment through the joint planning and implementation of practical environmental conservation projects.

**CALL TO ACTION:** If you would like to become involved in this initiative then please email Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer & Project Coordinator at the SHRG) at: [carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)

## WHAT DID WE GET UP TO AT COP26?

We joined youth climate activists from around the world as they spoke about the impacts of climate change they were experiencing and the action and campaigning they are part of. Campaigners from Mock COP26 and Fridays for Future MAPA (Most Affected People and Areas) shared what was achieved when hundreds of youth came together to showcase their climate ambitions through Mock COP26, an online conference that filled the void left by the postponement of COP26 last year. During this event there was space for the young people on the panel to answer our students questions and talk to them about their vision for real youth leadership on climate.

We also attended Armagh Observatory and Planetariums show entitled 'Our Place in the Cosmos'. 'Our Place in the Cosmos' is a planetarium show about the special, fragile place of the Earth in our Galaxy, the only habitat we yet know able to sustain life.

Our home needs to be in the right place of our Galaxy to be safe from violent activity like supernovae. Yet we needed such activity in the past for the elements that support life, produced inside stars, to be seeded in the proto-solar nebula from which the Earth formed.

Our home also needs to be in the right place of the Solar System to be in its habitable zone, a place capable of sustaining liquid water on its surface for eons. The show compares the Earth to our nearest planetary neighbours, Venus and Mars, which also began their lives in the habitable zone. Soon after their birth, over 4 billion years ago, these three planets looked similar – rocky worlds with flowing lava and water under an atmosphere.

Yet their subsequent evolution followed very different paths. Venus turned into a Hades, the oceans boiling away to create a thick, hot toxic atmosphere. Mars lost its atmosphere and the oceans evaporated into space, to leave a dead world, yet where evidence of past liquid flows is still apparent.

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium illustrates these contrasts in the show and delves beneath the atmospheres to show how oceans might have looked on Venus and Mars. They then contrast these atmospheres to the Earths and demonstrate what would happen to our continents should sea level rise amongst a myriad of other extremely important matters.



# COP26 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

We also attended 'I stand for what I stand on' a dramatic presentation by four young climate activists from Gloucester supported by a global digital cast and produced by Strike A Light. Drawing on autobiographical experiences, a love of Harry Styles and Abba, an extraordinary understanding of the climate crisis and cardboard protest signs, this event shares the young international cast's thoughts and fears about the climate emergency and explores the reality of being a teenager and growing up in the shadow of the climate crisis.

Finally, our students also seized the opportunity to network with a variety of Non-Governmental Organisations, large and small businesses and members of civil society.

## STUDENTS REFLECTIONS ON OUR TRIP TO COP26



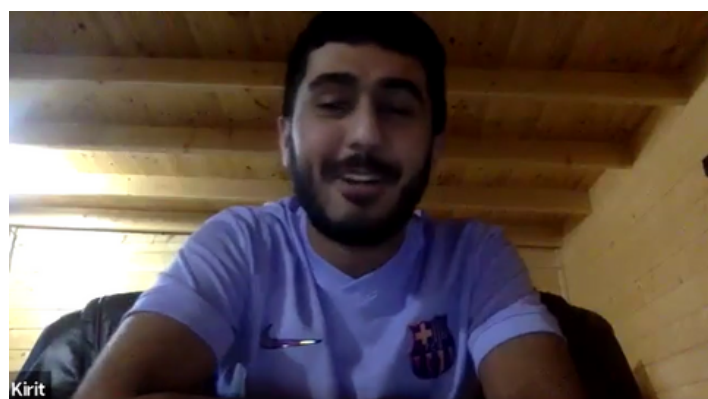
**Mr Brahmjot Singh**  
18 Years Old  
University of Leicester

To watch the full video please click [here](#)



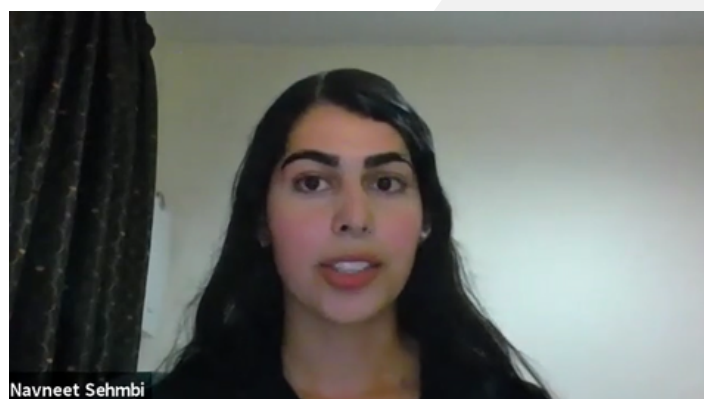
**Ms Davina Kaur Sohal**  
20 Years Old  
SOAS University of London

To watch the full video please click [here](#)



**Mr Kirit Sidhu**  
16 Years Old  
Heston Community School

To watch the full video please click [here](#)



**Ms Navneet Sehmbi**  
16 Years Old  
Tiffin School

To watch the full video please click [here](#)

# THE STRUGGLE REPEALING THE INDIAN FARM LAWS

BY DR JASDEV RAI (DIRECTOR OF THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

The notorious Indian Farm Laws have been repealed. India's Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, bowed to the democratic wish of a large contingent of his citizens and after a brief apology that he hadn't been able to persuade them of the merits of the laws, announced repealing them. Finally, they were repealed in the Indian Parliament called Lok Sabha on 29th of December 2021.

Nearly half of the Indian population works directly or indirectly in the farming sector. Over 85% of farms in India are small farms, ranging from one hectare to five hectares. Three states, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh are essentially agrarian states. Most farmers suspected that the laws, enacted formally with President's assent on the 27th of September 2020, would push them into bankruptcy and force them to sell their land to large agribusinesses. Generally people suspected that the laws were a backdoor attempt to sweep away small farms and introduce large scale farming in India comparable to mega farms in Canada, the USA and Australia.

There was justification in their suspicions. Small farming is not lucrative. It sustains the family and brings in some profits. Around the world, small farms have been supported by State subsidies. This ensures food security, reduces poverty and is helpful for the environment as well as diversity of crops.

Subsidy has been key to farming, whether large scale farms or small scale farms. Large farms make larger profits by economy of scales. Small farms make very small profits and often need a larger subsidy in some cases.

Europe, China, India and parts of South America, all have small farms dependent on subsidies from their Governments. This is disliked by some leading western countries with mega farms, who want to sell their crops to developing countries. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) insidiously favours these developed countries by treating farming in the same way as manufacturing. WTO restricts subsidy to a mere 10% above production costs. This has the effect of pushing small farmers out of business as 10% margin on a 2 hectare farm is not enough to buy even essentials for a family, such as education for children, water heating etc... Governments creatively push subsidy to between 50% and 80% above production costs.

The Indian Farm Laws had three aspects that farmers found threatening to their way of life.

The Government wanted to take away their subsidy, called Minimum Support Price. It wanted farmers to sell in the open market to large traders.

The Government wanted to run down State run markets that were set up to buy produce from farmers. Instead the private sector was being invited to build larger but fewer centres. This would have added considerable costs and time as they would have had to travel hundreds of miles in some cases to sell their produce.

Thirdly, the Government wanted to bring in contract farming but block access to courts in case of disputes. Farmers would have been at the mercy of corporates interpreting the contract as they wanted. The dispute would have then been resolved by civil servants, often given to the corruption that is rife across India.

For more information please click [here](#)

Eighteen months of a relentless and sustained protest by the farmers, that started in Punjab and then moved to outskirts of Delhi forced the Government to change its mind. The Indian public started to back the farmers and the party in Government, the BJP, started to lose votes around the country. The most spectacular was in Bengal state elections.



# THE STRUGGLE REPEALING THE INDIAN FARM LAWS

BY DR JASDEV RAI (DIRECTOR OF THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

The protest has been an incredible show of strength, endurance and determination. Men, women, children and the elderly, camped in their tractors, trolleys and tents surrounding Delhi. Food poured in and kitchens were set up. Entertainment was set up. Talks, lectures and daily briefings were set up. The leaders of the farmers, some 40 of them, showed a unique unity. The protesting farmers endured cold, heat, rain and COVID-19, but refused to back down.

The protest was helped by the international community. Most of the help came from Punjabis settled around the world. But many international politicians, celebrities and academics made statements in support of farmers.

The Sikh Human Rights Group, started to work on the issue quite early on. It brought out a [document](#) that showed that the Farm Laws breached the **United Nations Declaration on Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in rural Areas 2018** (UNDROP) that India had signed only 2 years before. All three farm laws contravened the main articles of the UNDROP. This was picked up by the farm leaders.

The SHRG then gave its platform to one of the farm leaders to speak at the **UN Human Rights Council**, where **Dr Darshanpal** was able to explain the issue and debunk Government propaganda in a [speech](#) that only lasted 90 seconds.

The SHRG then held a [press conference](#) at the **Geneva Press Club** in association with **Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall, UK**. Five of the farm leaders were present on Zoom along with an MP from Switzerland. These actions had the result of addressing disinformation about farmers and the laws that was circulating among the diplomats at the United Nations.

SHRG continued to work quietly and influencing the debate. Its main concerns were:

- The lack of negotiation and consultation with the farmers and their leaders;
- Denial of access to courts (Justice) in disputes;
- The very real possibility of poverty deepening; and
- The devastating effect this new model would have on the environment should large scale farming have been allowed to take over in India.

To read the full report please click [here](#)

The SHRG also intervened at the United Nations when police heavy handedness led to human rights violations and the Indian Government stopped water and sanitary facilities. Concerns expressed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights helped restore these facilities and checked any human rights violations. For more information please click [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)

Small farming Unions around the world have been boosted by the success of the protests. There is growing concern about the WTO and its pro developed countries leaning. There is also a growing awareness that small farms are best for the climate, the environment, the social fabric of communities and for reducing poverty and thus need to be protected!

The SHRG is proud to play its part in this movement.

# THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPEN-ENDED WORKING ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

BY MR IVAN LORENCI DE FRANCISCO (HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (GENEVA OFFICE)

The Intergovernmental Open-ended Working on the Right to Development (IOWGR2D) was established by the Commission on Human Rights in its **Resolution 1998/72** and by the Economic and Social Council in its **Decision E/DEC/1998/269** with the following mandate:

- To monitor and review progress in the promotion and implementation of the right to development;
- To examine reports and any other information submitted by States, United Nations agencies, other relevant international organisations and non-governmental organisations on the relationship between their activities and the right to development;
- Submit for consideration by the Commission on Human Rights a sessional report on its discussions, including, among other things, advice provided to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights concerning the implementation of the right to development; and
- Suggest possible technical assistance programmes, at the request of individual countries, to promote the implementation of the right to development.

The Working Group meets once a year in Geneva and submits its report to the Human Rights Council as well as to the UN General Assembly. In this context, different UN agencies, other international organisations and civil society organisations can participate in its sessions and offer suggestions for improvements and language for the forthcoming **Convention on the Right to Development**.

During the 21st Session of the IOWGR2D meetings, the Sikh Human Rights Group was able to intervene in numerous discussions and suggest the language to be adopted in the **Preamble** of the **Draft Convention on the Right to Development**. The significance of this participation is highly relevant for several reasons.

Firstly, it means that the SHRG can contact and influence the United Nations and State Government Representatives who are today defining and/or drafting what the right to development will look like in the future.

Secondly, it illustrates how international organisations are striving to establish channels of dialogue with civil society organisations and civil society generally.

Finally, it shows how everyday struggles are writing and/or defining the socio-economic future of us all.





# THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPEN-ENDED WORKING ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

On Tuesday the 23rd of November 2021 our Human Rights Officer (Mr Ivan Lorenci de Francisco) made the following oral submission, regarding the **Preamble** to the **Draft Convention on the Right to Development**, at the 22nd Session of the Working Group on the Right to Development.

## **Full Text:**

We thank Mr Kanade and the working group for their work and efforts.

This is a critical Convention, given that without development, neither poverty nor hunger can be eradicated nor human rights can be meaningfully respected.

We are sure that the parties and organisations engaged with drafting the Convention will agree that although there has been a Declaration on Right to Development since 1986, the current elaborated Convention may be at odds with some pre-existing focuses and rules of some UN bodies.

It is encouraging that the Right to Development is now considered a fundamental human right.

However, the prerogatives of bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) are essentially trade related, and are often at the expense of individual rights and protections.

WTO and related bodies tend to be protective of the big corporate sector rather than small communities and individual development needs.

We suggest an appropriate addition be made to this Preamble that would direct existing international bodies, the focus of international bodies and UN treaties to integrate the principles of the Right to Development and modify their deliberations accordingly.

We think this should also be communicated to the upcoming Ministerial Conference at WTO.

We also think that the Preamble should clarify that in the case of a balance between the Right to Development of the State, often seen in GDP figures, and that of the human person, the latter, that is the human person, should take precedence.

We are glad that the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants is mentioned. We think a reference should be made to Transnational Corporations (TNCs), too, as entities obligated to ensure that the Right to Development is not violated. While they may be considered as 'legal person', we think a specific reference to TNCs will strengthen the obligation.

Perhaps the Working group on Binding Agreements on Transnationals can be persuaded to incorporate parts of the emerging Right to Development Convention.

We will be happy to suggest an appropriate wording in the Preamble by the end of the day today if the Chair so wishes.

**N.B. We were then asked by the Chair of the Working Group to submit our proposals to them by the end of next working day (please see below).**

# THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPEN-ENDED WORKING ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

## SHRGs Textual Proposal Re: The Preamble to the Draft Convention on the Right to Development

In relation to our statement on Preamble on 23 November 2021 and responding to the Chair's direction that we submit our suggestion by the next day, we offer our suggestions as add to the preamble in order to stress the fundamental nature of Right to Development across all institutions. While some other Articles in the preamble may cover these, they remain as vague references. Hence to promote clarity, we propose the following additions:

***Stressing (or Confirming) that every institution of the United Nations in the field of trade and finance, such as WTO, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, has a responsibility to ensure that right to development is respected as a fundamental right in its policies and rules along with duties to uphold human rights.***

***Reaffirming that all evolving Treaties such as the International Binding Legal Instrument to Regulate, in International Human Rights Law, the activities of Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises to be cognisant of the Right to Development as a Fundamental Right.***

***Recognising the inalienable nature of all fundamental human rights including right to development as a non-derogable right to mean that the human person's right to development takes precedence in relation to sovereign right of States to development.***



Mr Ivan Lorenci de Francisco



Preamble Suggestion Drafted by Dr Jasdev Rai





# THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPEN-ENDED WORKING ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

On Wednesday the 24th of November 2021 our Human Rights Officer and Project Coordinator (Mr Carlos Arbuthnott) made the following oral submission, regarding our proposed textual amendment to **Article 15 Subsection (1)** of the **Draft Convention on the Right to Development**, at the 22nd Session of the Working Group on the Right to Development.

## Full Text:

The Sikh Human Rights Group wholeheartedly welcomes and supports the formulation and enactment of this draft Convention on the Right to Development.

However, we respectfully submit there is a tendency amongst prominent international organisations and agencies, towards universalising ethical values and attempting to form Conventions, Treaties, Regulations and agreements based on a false assumption that there is one universal set of collective values. This type of so-called universalism is the idea that one universal ideology of ethics can justifiably permeate all International Agreements and is therefore directly applicable to all civilisations and cultures around the world.

In other words, that this universalistic outlook is the key to solving all of the development issues that are currently persist around the globe.

However, what the aforementioned model fails to include is the fact that different peoples, cultures, civilisations and countries have different approaches, which also change over time, to political, economic, social policies based on historical and cultural influences that determine their governance and/or their individual approaches towards tackling development issues.

Therefore, we believe that Article 15 Subsection (1) of the draft text could be further strengthened by the addition of the following text:

*'States Parties recognize that certain human persons, groups and peoples, owing to their age, disability, marginalization, vulnerability, indigeneity, minority status, [then the addition of] cultures, traditions, customs, festivals and/or outlooks may require special or remedial measures to accelerate or achieve de facto equality in their enjoyment of the right to development'.*

Only then will all members of our global society innately feel and be empowered to take ownership of their development and move away from what is currently found under the prevailing utilitarian, legalistic and rationalistic approach.

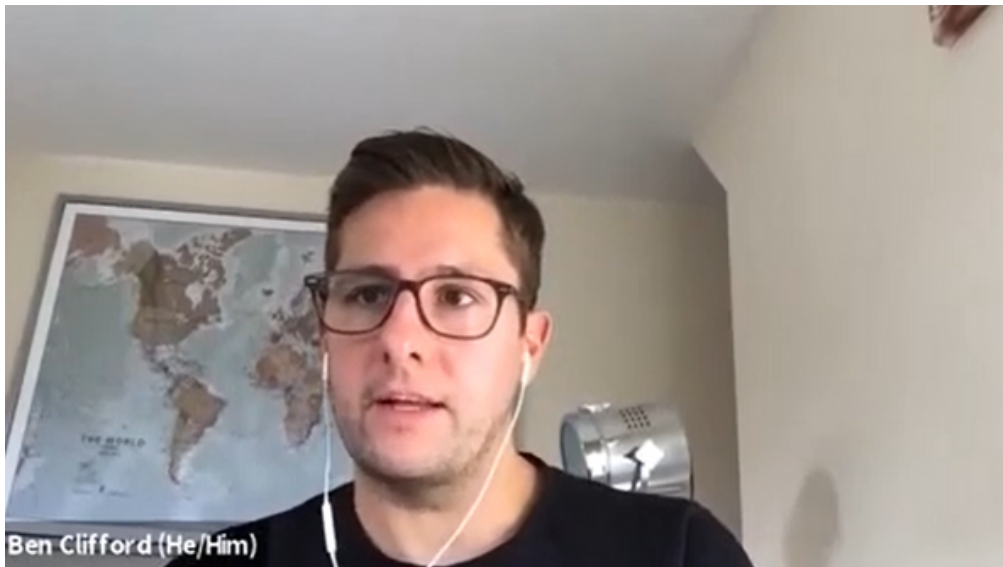
To watch the full video please click [here](#)



# SHRGS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SERIES

## MR BEN CLIFFORD - FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

Recorded live on the 17th of November 2021 this is the 1st podcast in Sikh Human Rights Groups Corporate Social Responsibility Series.

### Topic:

*'How large and small businesses can become more sustainable whilst maintaining their current levels of operation'*

### Panellist:

Today you will be listening to Mr Ben Clifford from Fidelity International Limited.

Fidelity International Limited, or FIL for short, is a company that provides investment management services including mutual funds, pension management and fund platforms to private and institutional investors. Fidelity International was originally established in 1969 as the international investment subsidiary of Fidelity Investments in Boston before being spun out as an independent business in 1980. Since then, it has continued to operate as a private company owned by its employees.

Mr Ben Clifford is a Chartered Environmentalist and a full member of the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment. He is the Global Health, Safety and Sustainability Associate Director at Fidelity International and has been working in the Health, Safety and Sustainability field for over 15 years - across a number different sectors including Aerospace, Defence, Technology, Transportation and Finance. Through his varied career he has focused on a number of different areas specializing in H&S and Environmental Management Systems, Environmental Management, Safety Culture, Mental Health, Corporate Governance and Design for Environment.

In his free time Ben enjoys spending time with his young family exploring the outdoors and has a passion for cooking.

### Sikh Human Rights Group Panellist:

Dr Jasdev Rai (Director)



# SHRGS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SERIES

## MR BEN CLIFFORD - FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

### Sikh Human Rights Group Hosts:

Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer and Project Coordinator)

Ms Bethan Walters (Human Rights, Communications and Media Officer)

### Questions include but are not limited to:

What is Fidelity's long term CSR strategy?

How involved is the senior leadership team at Fidelity with CSR initiatives and decisions? For example, in your professional opinion how much does sustainability and CSR weigh into your executive teams decisions?

What are the greatest issues and challenges to large and small businesses, especially in the UK, becoming more sustainable and/or adopting more aggressive CSR strategies?

What measures should large and small businesses be implementing in their offices in order to help to mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change?

What initial steps should large and small businesses be taking when they are attempting to become more sustainable? and what tips and advice would offer them?

Can you please tell our audience a little bit about Fidelity's commitment to equity and inclusion?

For more information about Fidelity International Limited's CSR Strategy please visit the following website:

[Fidelity International Limited's CSR Strategy](#)





# SHRGS ENVIRONMENTAL AND DIVERSITY SPEAKER SERIES

## DR OLALEKAN ADEKOLA - YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

Recorded live on the 25th of November 2021 this is the 12th podcast in Sikh Human Rights Groups 2021 Environmental and Diversity Speaker Series.

### **Topic:**

*'Addressing Climate Change through the Lens of Environmental Geography'*

### **Panellist:**

Today you will be listening to Dr Olalekan Adekola from York St John University. Dr Adekola is a geographer with an interest in using interdisciplinary approaches for understanding how the costs and benefits from climate change are distributed across different socio-economic groups.

For example, he has worked extensively on research projects aimed at improving understanding and communication amongst stakeholders on climate change related topics including but by no means limited to:

- The adaptation of urban infrastructures to enhance climate resilience;
- Co-designing sustainable aquaculture practices; and
- Stakeholder engagement projects to reduce flood risks and to enhance the management of ecosystem services.

### **Sikh Human Rights Group Panellist:**

Dr Jasdev Rai (Director)

### **Sikh Human Rights Group Hosts:**

Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer and Project Coordinator)

Ms Bethan Walters (Human Rights, Communications and Media Officer)

## DR OLALEKAN ADEKOLA - YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

**Questions include but are by no means not limited to:**

Dr in your expert opinion what are the greatest challenges that our global community faces when it comes to combating and redressing the negative impacts of climate change and how can these identified challenges be overcome?

What lessons have you taken away from your research that can inform us about the most effective methods to mitigate and adapt the negative impacts of climate change? Both in terms of the physical effects and the Governance gaps that are currently persisting around the globe.

Dr in your expert opinion do you consider COP26 to have been a success, a failure or somewhere in the middle? For those of you who don't know COP26 was the 26th United Nations Conference on Climate Change. It took place in Glasgow from the 1st of November 2021 to the 12th of November 2021 and brought together 197 countries and world leaders to present their updated plans to reduce carbon emissions worldwide.

For many decades the SHRG has been focused on encouraging the concept of pluralism and understanding. That in short refers to the fact that whilst we all might want to save the planet we will all arrive at the point of positive action in a different way depending on your gender, religion, race, ability, economic status and so on... With that being said, can you please explain to our listeners how important the perception of different people from diverse backgrounds has when it comes to understanding how to prevent the impacts of climate change?



# FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WEBINARS PERIODS

BY MS BETHAN WALTERS (HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

Monday the 22nd of November 2021 saw the first of Sikh Human Rights Groups female reproductive health webinars as a part of our female empowerment series. The concept is to hold monthly webinars that invite all genders, communities and ages to learn and discuss different topics around female reproductive health. This is not just to educate people more about these topics but to actually unpack why there is such shame and disgust attached to these topics and the negative impact that it has on women or those who experience these milestones and do not identify as female.

The first webinar was on periods, discussing the political issues, the environmental issues, gaslighting and female empowerment generally. The expert was none other than Ms Manjit K Gill MBE, and founder of Binti Period.

Before creating Binti Period, Manjit had over 20 years of business enterprise experience. Her role as a mentor for a businesswoman in Kenya with the Cherie Blair Foundation led her to start this project. Her mission is to create a huge, social impact whilst generating a sustainable organisation. As a British Indian, providing basic menstrual rights for women in India has become her overarching commitment to making a change. She was awarded the MBE in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours List for her work in the provision of period products to women around the world. Manjit is a Trustee for the Leus Family Foundation and Global Sikh Economic Forum. She is an Ambassador for The Cherie Blair Foundation and Women of the Future. So, a pretty impressive woman.

Binti Period believe that every female deserves menstrual dignity, meaning access to education about menstruation, access to pads, and freedom from stigmas and taboos surrounding menstruation. They are the first period charity in the UK and are registered in India, the US and The Gambia. They also lead the UK Governments Period Taskforce with a remit to end Stigma and Taboo, and work on Period Education as a charity.

Throughout the webinar many subjects around menstruation were discussed but they all came back to the need for better education. To allow a person to have period dignity, a dignified period that individual needs to understand what is going on in their body. Their peers, family, friends, colleagues and superiors also need to understand what they are going through and to make sure that they have access to the resources they may need.

One prominent conversation was the topic of sustainable periods, and the need to take responsibility of our own period footprint on the globe and if we are in the position to do so, then to take responsibility and the steps to making our menstrual cycle as sustainable as possible. We need to encourage everyone to be environmentally conscious throughout the whole month and we need to encourage Governments to make the products affordable and accessible, schools to encourage the teachings on how to use these products and appropriately clean them. Unfortunately, due to the taboo and stigma attached to mensuration these issues are not being spoken about enough and therefore being ignored.

We also spoke about the dangers of lack of information and the gaslighting that occurs. In the UK young people who menstruate are given the birth control pill as young as 13 if they experience irregular periods, severe period pains and imbalanced hormones, unfortunately what we are failing to do is to further look into these symptoms to what might actually be causing them, but instead coving the problem up.

On average, 1 in 10 women in the UK are thought to have endometriosis, a condition where tissue similar to the lining of the womb starts to grow in other places, such as the ovaries and fallopian tubes. Endometriosis can affect women of any age. It's a long-term condition that can have a significant impact on your life, but there are treatments that can help. Shockingly it takes 8-12 years on average to...



# FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WEBINARS PERIODS

BY MS BETHAN WALTERS (HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

diagnose this condition, this is because there is little research done on it and because from 13, people who menstruate are put on the pill to treat the symptoms of endometriosis rather than the root cause.

Period pain is the only serve pain society sees as normal, and because so many people are brought up not talking about their menstrual experiences, they assume the pain they might be in, or their irregular periods or their heavy bleeds are normal, when in fact they're probably not. Our menstrual cycles are an insight into our health and can tell us so much about our hormone and vitamin balance. For example, if our diet is sufficient, we are getting enough sleep or drinking enough water or too much coffee etc...

Talking and learning about periods isn't just another feminist movement it is something that will truly empower all who menstruate and all who know someone who menstruates. We can learn so much about our own health through our periods, but we will only do that when we stop normalising the not normal and gaslighting people's experiences.

We need to collectively challenge the shame attached to mensuration, something that 50% of the globe will do for 6 and a half years of their lives.

**To watch the webinar with Ms Manjit K Gill please follow the link below and remember to please check out our SHRG website, YouTube channel and social media accounts via [@shrg\\_ngo](#)**



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

# WEBINAR: WHY SMALL FARMERS AROUND THE GLOBE ARE ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION

BY MS MONICA GILL (HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (NEW YORK OFFICE)

Earlier this month the Sikh Human Rights Group held an event with the New York United Nations Food Systems Summit on 'The Rights of Small Farmers' and the 'Increasing Dominance of Transnational corporations and Other Business Enterprises'. The objective was to unearth the proactive steps that could be taken by all members of our global society to safeguard and protect the rights of small farms while simultaneously combatting the rise of agribusinesses at a legal and policy level.

The event had a three person panel and one honourable guest. The first panellist was **Mr Bhavjit Dhillon**, an engineering graduate from Punjab, currently working as an IT professional in Australia who paused his life at the onset of the Indian Farmers Protest to start a twitter handle, [@TRACTOR2TWITR](#). The second panellist was **Mr Phil Ranstrom**, an independent documentary film maker whose multi-nominated documentaries have won the prestigious Emmy Award. His film, 'Reclaiming America', recorded the protest by members of the American agricultural movement in 1985 and is one of the few records of their protest wherein hundreds of American family farmers came to Chicago to stop trading at the Chicago Board of Trade. Third was **Dr Jasdev Rai** who is the Director of the Sikh Human Rights Group. He started the organisation in the 1980s and has worked relentlessly to bring forth any agenda either directly or indirectly aligned with the Sikh community. With the onset of the Indian Farmer's Protest, he spent much of his time understanding the nuanced details of why small farmers across the world are dying out. Lastly, we had the **Honourable Professor Daljit Singh Virk (OBE, PhD, DSc, FNA, FNASc, CBiol FRSB)** a retired professor from Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana and currently an adjunct professor at Eternal University Baru Sahib. He is a leading world expert on agriculture, small farms and seed technology. He had a very in depth understanding of the politics surrounding global agricultural sector.

Out of this context came four very poignant points made by each of the experts. The first was by Mr Phil Ranstrom. He very eloquently said that the Indian farmers are raising hopes in the heart of the American farmers. This really hit home for me because it embodied a beautiful aspect of 'Chardi Kala'. Which is that positive thinking is contagious - and this is exactly what is happening! The second point was raised by Mr Bhavjit Dhillon, and that was on cooperative farming. Farmers with low acreage can pool their resources to make ends meet and share things like tractors and fertiliser. He also stated that food processing should be introduced in villages because that would help increase profit margins for small farmers. Dr Jasdev Rai explained the processes in which the United Nations and it's related organisations function. He made a strong case for a global farmers movement which would have a much greater impact on how farming is undertaken globally. Professor Virk made the most important revelation of all, which was on how subsidies are classified at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO has been putting pressure on India as early as 2002 to get rid of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) currently paid to small farmers within India. The WTO has been under pressure from developed nations such as Canada, Australia and the USA who want access to India's lucrative food markets. Prof Virk made the point that these nations have other subsidies such as health insurance, welfare, social security and other forms of income support that developing nations simply do not have the infrastructure for. Therefore, it is not only unfair to impose the same rules on developing nations but it is also a violation of their populations human rights. He also spoke at large about many other forms of subsidies that would be classified as 'green' subsidies at the WTO and that the Government of India could implement immediately.

This Zoom event was held in early November 2021. Now that the Three Farm Laws have been repealed, it is extremely important for us to focus on our individual and collective next steps. All the expert panellists brought forth excellent ideas to help our farmers prosper. Therefore, if you would like to learn more about this topic then please watch this webinar by clicking [here](#) or head over to Sikh Human Rights Groups [website](#).

# 'INTERSECTIONALITY WARS': THE COMING AGE OF INTERSECTIONALITY AND ITS APPROPRIATION

BY MS RHEA SOMAIYA (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)



With *Intersectionality* being at the forefront of contemporary feminist discussion the term itself has socially exploded to stand for new age feminist 'inclusion'. However, this article aims to demonstrate the danger in describing *Intersectionality* as an inclusive term that embodies whole-hearted diversity.

Some may ask what the problem is with the latter description of *Intersectionality* as it provides academia with a term that encapsulates all individuals, supplying an inclusive academic space.

Without a doubt Kimberle Crenshaw's coined term is an innovative way to understand feminism in our current world. Crenshaw's original term is defined as a way of describing how black women and women of colour are discriminated through a 'multi-axis framework'. Essentially, they are discriminated through overlapping systems of oppression such as race and gender. This combination has historically not been acknowledged as discrimination has only been seen through either race or gender targeting oppression either black men or white women face. Crenshaw uses the example of the justice system to show how black women cannot claim their discrimination as a joint and overlapped mode of prejudice due to the formation of anti-racist and feminist discourse as separate entities.

Therefore, black women and women of colour more generally face a serious dilemma as their existence is only represented by that of white women and black men. What Crenshaw beautifully inserts is a theory and method that shows how race and gender overlap and work operationally to further discriminate women of colour.

This joint mode of discrimination has therefore travelled and taken off in our new age by encapsulating class, sexuality, ability, migration status and much more. In stretching the original analysis, Crenshaw's theory can actively prove the difficulty and problems that occur when assessing the prejudice and discrimination that individuals face. Whilst black feminist scholars have displayed the discrimination black women face, such as Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I A Woman* and Claudia Jones' *Black Marxism*, Crenshaw successfully used these examples through the lens of the legal system and coined a term that grew exponentially in our social world.

For example, in our new age, *Intersectionality* could be used as a method to highlight the systems of discrimination that exist in India such as the caste system. Dalit women are consistently discriminated against by their class position, complexion and gender. These systems of oppression work together to form their positionally in the world and discriminate them in multiple ways. This is not to say that individual circumstances and experiences do not also play a factor in their life stories, but these systems play a part in their overall lived experience in our post-colonial world.



# 'INTERSECTIONALITY WARS': THE COMING AGE OF INTERSECTIONALITY AND ITS APPROPRIATION

BY MS RHEA SOMAIYA (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

In highlighting the way in which this term can be actively used for women of colour, it is clear to see how the term has been appropriated and simplified into 'diversity'. As it is a method for understanding and tackling oppression, it becomes conflated with 'inclusion for all' reducing the academic and cultural impact it could have on institutional discrimination. Arguably, as *Intersectionality* travelled, so did its true meaning; unravelling the concept to become reduced to a term that embodies 'humanness' rather than its actuality. Interestingly, as it cannot be understood in one word, a short sentence, or phrase, the logical deduction for mass use was to become a synonym for diversity.

Nonetheless, I believe in the importance of possibly paying more attention when others and myself use the term and understand that its translation to the next person is as accurate as one can make it. Thus, the 'Intersectionality War' is only a conflict through original appropriation, which is incredibly ironic in our post colonised societies.



(Ms Rhea Somaiya)



# WHAT IT IS LIKE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE SHRG

BY MS SARBJEET KAUR SIDHU (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

I have been volunteering with the Sikh Human Rights Group since the middle of this year and have really enjoyed my experience so far.

The organisation's Special Consultative Status at the United Nations means that as a volunteer I can be right at the heart of the discussions and decisions being made for the workstream that I am working on.

Recently, I attended, via Zoom, a Working Group regarding a Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights. It was very interesting to hear the points that were raised by various Member States with regards to holding transnationals more accountable for their activities. This particularly resonated with because I have worked in transnationals my whole career. I know there is a great deal of good work they do within the field of social responsibility but there is a lot more still to be done. It was great to be able to provide feedback via Carlos who is leading on this workstream within the Sikh Human Rights Group.

This coming week I am due to attend the 10th Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights, which I am sure will be equally interesting and insightful.

The Sikh Human Rights Group is large enough to have a number of different workstreams and volunteers can choose to help in areas that are particularly close to their heart. At a recent team meeting, I got to know about the great work the organisation is doing with regards to women's human rights and it is well connected with organisations such as Binti Period who already do ground-breaking and great work in this field. There was also discussion around COP26. Given the importance and urgency around climate change at the moment it was great that volunteers were able to attend this important conference in person.

One major bonus for me is the hours that I volunteer are completely flexible. During weeks when I am particularly busy with work or family commitments, there is no pressure for me to volunteer. I can pick up again when I have more free time.

Overall, my experience has been very positive and I look forward to continuing my association with the Sikh Human Rights Group.

**The Sikh Human Rights Group is growing and as we do, we are in search of volunteers. So if you would like to get involved in our work, in any capacity, then please get in touch with us via email at [info@shrg.ngo](mailto:info@shrg.ngo) or through our social media channels at [shrg.ngo](https://shrg.ngo)**



(Ms Sarbjeet Kaur Sidhu)