



# 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?

UPCOMING SIKH  
NEURODIVERSITY  
NETWORK EVENTS 3

SHRG SIDE EVENT:  
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN  
RIGHTS COUNCIL 7

SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT IN FOCUS 9

UNITED NATIONS  
ENGAGEMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES 2023 10

# WELCOME TO OUR JULY 2023 NEWSLETTER

## DIRECTORS NOTE

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

Welcome to our July 2023 monthly newsletter. The United Nations Human Rights Council held the second of its three yearly sessions in Geneva, in fact, its 53rd Regular Session overall. This session is quite essential as it is mainly Member State Governments who attend. Time given to NGOs is limited at this Regular Session. Nevertheless, we managed to speak on five items. We also held a major side event to inform interested delegates of another of our ambitious campaigns, to put an end to the Tax on Menstrual products and even free distribution for those who may need it.

The side event was successful. Two major countries, USA and China were represented including another six countries. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) deputy director in Geneva participated as a speaker. The Chief Guest speaker in our side event was Senator Gloria Orwoba from Kenya. Unfortunately, she was not able to get a visa to Switzerland in time. She spoke on Zoom.

Gloria Orwoba has persuaded the legislators of her country to pass a Bill providing free menstrual products to girls and women. This is a first in the world and a great achievement. It will get around to other countries. It is extremely important as many young girls living in poverty cannot afford to buy products to manage their menstrual health. As a result, many develop infections and some tragically die from these. Many girls miss school and young women take time off work only to be sacked. It is incredible that with all the focus on 'equality' this very basic need of women has been ignored.

And not only ignored, but Governments have 'taxed' it under VAT, which means treating it as a luxury item. While hair transplant products for men are treated as a medical necessity. Still a man's world. When did menstruation become a luxury that women can forego if they don't want to pay extra tax? The SHRG has joined forces with other NGOs and Governments to get rid of this tax and in fact, take that extra step to provide menstrual health products free.

Olivia Ahn who has invented a biodegradable menstrual health tampon was also a speaker. In today's climate change and environmental consciousness, it is important that tampons are biodegradable rather than add to the plastic tonnage of the world. Olivia has managed to persuade many schools and institutions to buy the product so that the profit can go to subsidise free provisions in developing countries in places of need.

Jagdish Kaur Lall, the Co-General Secretary of Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall, UK, and as a Panelist, committed one of the most influential Sikh institutions outside India, to start providing biodegradable products in women's washrooms at the Gurdwara. Jagdish is going to start a national campaign among Sikh organisations. We are confident that Gurdwaras in other countries will join in a chain to do this.

All this was put together by our very active, energetic, and resourceful human rights officer, Bethan Walters. Bethan joined us during the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued with her work on Gender, Diversity, and Child Rights issues.

Our other Human Rights Officers have been as active. Carlos Arbuthnott has now managed to get five Gurdwaras in the UK to organise special events, get-togethers, and religious days for children on the neurodiverse spectrum (Autism, ADHD, etc...). They now have a sports club, particularly playing football. There is also an arts and crafts club and an after-school club. These activities can be seen on our website and in this magazine's pages.

Helping the project is a remarkable doctor, Doctor Pawan Rajpal. Dr Rajpal is a Consultant Psychiatrist specialising in Neurodiversity. He has given a great deal of volunteering time to help parents and carers understand how to help their children, and advise teachers and Gurdwara staff on neurodiversity and managing children with neurodiverse needs. Dr Rajpal loves his work and parents, carers and staff have found him extremely helpful, easy to get on with, and an excellent teacher.

Our other human rights officers have been invading the human rights space in New York in fields ranging from education, water to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. They have joined a few committees and their work will be highlighted here.

Meanwhile, the SHRG is preparing for COP 28 where Nishan-e-Sikhi will be our main partner to showcase the work undertaken by the Khadur Sahib based Charity. Its work has impressed many and we hope it will impress the world at COP 28 in Dubai where some 25000 delegates are expected.

By the way this newsletter is put together with the help of one of our youngest volunteers, Dilpreet Kaur, who made quite an impression at COP 27 in Sharm-el Sheikh, Egypt last year.

For more information on our ongoing work please visit our website by clicking [here](#)

Yours sincerely,

*Dr Jasdev Singh Rai*



# WELCOME TO OUR JULY 2023 NEWSLETTER

## EDITORS NOTE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER & PROJECT COORDINATOR AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

Welcome to the July 2023 edition of the Sikh Human Rights Group's 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 domestic and 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 me via: [carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)

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

Yours sincerely,

*Mr Carlos Arbuthnott*



(Mr Carlos Arbuthnott)



GURDWARA SRI GURU  
SINGH SABHA

SOUTHALL

shrg  
SIKH HUMAN  
RIGHTS GROUP

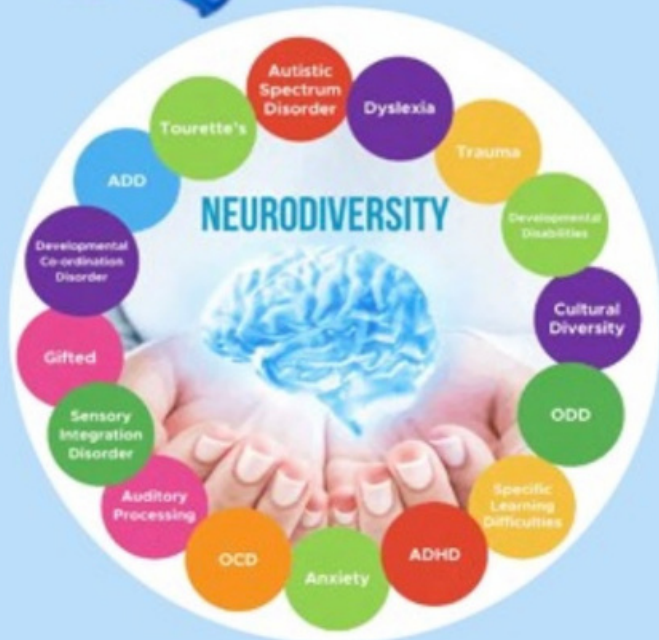
## SEND After School Club

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Every Wednesday from 4:30pm to 5:30pm

At Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Upstairs Hall)

2-8 Park Avenue, Southall, UB1 3AG



LET'S LEARN ABOUT ...

GURDWARA SAHIB

SIKH CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

SENSORY PLAY

KIRTAN

STORIES - SAKHIES

SIKH RHYMES

MUCH MORE



PLAY. LEARN. GROW.

**For more information please contact Mr Carlos Arbuthnott via:**

[carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)



# Art & Craft Workshop

**SEND** FAMILIES ONLY

EVERY **TUESDAY** FROM **4:30 PM** TO **5:30 PM**

GURDWARA SRI GURU SINGH SABHA SOUTHALL,  
PARK AVENUE, GIANI DITT SINGH HALL, UBI 3AG

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT VIA:  
[CARLOS.ARBUTHNOTT@SHRG.NGO](mailto:CARLOS.ARBUTHNOTT@SHRG.NGO)

See you there!



# Brand New West London SEND Football Club

AFTER A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL START, OUR SEND FOOTBALL TRAINING SESSIONS AT RECTORY PARK FOOTBALL CENTRE (UB5 5FA) ARE NOW RUNNING ON A WEEKLY BASIS (EVERY WEDNESDAY) FOR 1 HOUR BETWEEN 16:30 AND 17:30. OPEN TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND AGED 5 - 16.

## Date & Time:

Every Wednesday  
Including School Holidays

16:30 to 17:30

## Venue:

Rectory Park Football Centre, Middlesex FA,  
Ruislip Road, Northolt, UB5 5FA

Cost: Free

For more information please scan the QR code below or contact Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer & Project Coordinator) via:

[carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)

**"Football gives you the confidence not to hide your disability and shows you can do amazing things..."**

**Liam Irons**

**England Cerebral Palsy Team Star**



SCAN ME





GURDWARA SRI GURU SINGH SABHA  
SOUTHALL

**Please join our FREE teacher and educator training session on 26 August 2023 (Saturday) at Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (Park Avenue - UBI 3AG).**

**The session will be led by Dr Pawan Rajpal a consultant from the Priory Hospital and a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.**

**Dr Pawan Rajpal specialises in Autism, ADHD, PTSD, addictions and complex health diagnoses.**

**We will cover the following topics as well as an audience Q&A:**

- (1) Skills, for teaching and developing children and young people in today's fast-paced world.**
- (2) How to manage challenging behaviours.**
- (3) What communication techniques work best with those with Special Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?**
- (4) The importance of working together to eradicate the stigma of additional needs in our communities.**

**Date: 26 August 2023 (Saturday)**

**Time: 11:00 - 16:00 (x2 Short Breaks & 1 Lunch Break)**

**Address: Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall, 2-8 Park Avenue, Southall, UBI 3AG**

**N.B. Open to all educators and members of the teaching profession.**

**The training session will be run in both English and Punjabi.**

**To obtain your FREE ticket or for more information please scan the QR code below or contact Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer & Project Coordinator at the Sikh Human Rights Group) via:**

**[carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)**



**(Dr Pawan Rajpal)**



**SCAN ME**



# UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SHRG SIDE EVENT RE: MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION

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

On Thursday, the 6th of July 2023, Ms Bethan Walters held a side event at the Palais de Nations (United Nations Headquarters) in Geneva on Menstrual Health and Gender Discrimination.

The aim was to foster dialogue amongst stakeholders to address multifaceted issues in menstrual health, including tax discrimination, period poverty, regulations, health, rights, & education. We advocate for effective strategies to tackle menstruation challenges.

We expressed that despite the fact that people who experience menstruation are living as a majority on this planet, our menstruating body is considered as an inconvenience rather than something society has to accept as a normal fact of women's health. We are in possession of a superpower that no one has taught us how to use, and a large part of the world is conditioned to ensure that we keep it hidden.

## Facts & Figures:

- A period is the only time that someone will bleed for several days and is expected not to say anything;
- Menstruators are only fertile for 6 days of their cycle, yet we are the only ones who can take hormonal birth control;
- A bathroom is only 50% prepared for a menstruator and 100% for a non-menstruator;
- Menstruation is taxed as a luxury good; and
- Period pain is the only severe pain we normalise.

## Our panel was made up of the incredible:

- Gloria Orwoba, a Senator in the Kenyan Parliament, discussed the menstrual movement in Kenya over the past 19 years, from being the first country to remove the tampon tax in 2004 to Kenya passing a Bill on the Provision of Free Sanitary Towels in Kenya.
- Olivia Ahn, the CEO and co-founder of Fluus | Flushable Period Care, discussed the environmental implications that have been caused by virtue of menstruation being left off the international agenda.
- Jagdish Kaur Lall, the Co-General Secretary of Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (GSGSS Southall), discussed the need for a more pluralistic approach to discussions around women's health as well as the project that the SHRGs is currently working on with GSGSS Southall and Fluus to provide menstrual products in their bathrooms and how other public places can tackle period poverty.
- Alfonso Barragues, Deputy Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Alfonso is consistently working towards advancing sexual and reproductive health and human rights from Geneva to the World.

We had over 40 attendees with a range of country delegates who were highly engaged in discussion and proposals.

As an NGO with Special Consultative Status at the United Nations, we have submitted various written and oral statements at the United Nations Human Rights Council's meetings and events. Last year Ms Bethan Walters submitted an oral statement at the Panel on Menstrual Hygiene Management, Human Rights and Gender Equality, the annual discussion on the Rights of The Child and Women's Rights and this year's Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls where in her statement, she spoke about how society uses menstruation as a tool to discriminate against women and girls.

In addition to the above, we have hosted two parallel events at the past two UN Women Commission on the Status of Women. During which we discussed the barriers that exist to prevent sustainable menstruation and the innovation of menstruation or the selective innovation that has gone into it. Ms Bethan Walters has also raised the issue of menstrual injustice at both COP 26 and 27, where it was stated that women and girls are fourteen times more likely to die due to climate change, and therefore there is a need for them to be at the decision-making table. So Ms Bethan Walters question to the United Nations, Member State Governments, etc... was how do you expect women and girls to be around the decision-making table if they cannot go to school or work?



# UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SHRG SIDE EVENT RE: MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION

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

Despite over 50% of the population experiencing menstruation at some stage in their lives, we still see much of the world treating it as a luxury or choice rather than as an involuntary natural occurrence. For instance, the taxing of menstrual products and, where not taxed, charging beyond the means of many, especially for those living in poverty, is clearly gender discrimination.

We recognise menstruation has been stigmatised, undereducated, and even used as a tool for discrimination, and we hope that this side event will provide some answers on the steps that need to be undertaken in order to alleviate discrimination.

We urge Governments to implement policies that provide free menstrual products in all public places. Such initiatives eliminate financial barriers, improve school and work attendance rates, and reduce stigma.

Menstruation should also be discussed as a vital aspect of health education rather than just a hygiene topic. By broadening our discourse on menstruation, we can challenge gendered-based tax discrimination on menstrual products, delve into the health, ethical, and environmental implications of menstrual products, and address issues around gender equality, child marriage, reproductive health, education, and water and sanitation with the gravitas they deserve.

By ensuring access, affordability, education, and safety, menstruators can live with dignity and without discrimination.

If you like the sound of this project and you would like to become involved then please contact Ms Bethan Walters via: [bethan.walters@shrg.ngo](mailto:bethan.walters@shrg.ngo)

To watch the full video recording of our side event please click [here](#)



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN FOCUS

## UN HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM AND THE ROAD TO UN SDG SUMMIT

BY MR ALBERT BARSEGHYAN (HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER AT THE SHRG) GENEVA OFFICE)

It has been an exciting week for the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) at the United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). We have engaged in numerous official meetings, special events, side-events, workshops and actions, covering the following key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation; SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy; SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities; and SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals.

Advancing on the abovementioned and all other SDGs is necessary to create a better future for all humanity by the year 2030. In this context, the Agenda 2030 serves as an overarching framework that outlines the global commitment and strategy for sustainable development. We all need to act with urgency to realise its vision as a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, leaving no one behind. All SDGs are indivisible and interlinked, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, in an integrated manner. They seek to realise the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

However, at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, we are witnessing that the progress on most of the SDGs is either moving much too slowly or has even regressed below the baseline at the moment of its adoption by all UN Member State Governments on the 25th of September, 2015. Our world is currently facing numerous crises. Years of sustainable development gains are being reversed. Millions of people have fallen into poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Further, humanitarian needs are rising, and the impacts of climate change are becoming more pronounced. This has led to increased inequality exacerbated by weakened international solidarity and a shortfall of trust to jointly overcome these crises.

The role of culture is important as an enabler of sustainable development that provides people and communities with a strong sense of identity and social cohesion and contributes to more effective and sustainable development policies and measures at all levels. The Sikh Human Rights Group's advocacy has centered on encouraging the involvement of grassroot organisations and communities in addressing the global challenges and localising the SDGs while tapping the potential of plural approaches in accelerating global action for sustainable development.

We have also used our time at the HLPF to forge partnerships and prepare for the 2023 SDG Summit which will take place on 18-19 September 2023 in New York. It will mark the beginning of a new phase of accelerated progress towards the SDGs with high-level political guidance on transformative and accelerated actions leading up to 2030. Convened by the President of the General Assembly, the Summit will mark the half-way point to the deadline set for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be the centerpiece of the High-level Week of the General Assembly and respond to the impact of multiple and interlocking crises facing the world and is expected to reignite a sense of hope, optimism, and enthusiasm for the 2030 Agenda. We are planning to host a side-event in the margins to the 2023 SDG Summit, stay tuned and follow for updates on our social media pages.



# United Nations Engagement Opportunities 2023

Want to contribute to a written and oral  
statement at the United Nations  
Human Rights Council?



We are currently searching for secondary school and undergraduate students to help us prepare our written and oral statements on climate change adaptation and mitigation for the United Nations Human Rights Councils 2023 Regular Sessions:

We want to empower you to have your say, at a truly international event, on how every member of our global society can overcome the many challenge and issues of climate change

Through online presentations and simple practical projects you will learn more about the United Nations and how you can become involved

Enhance your CV and UCAS applications whilst simultaneously learning more about climate change and how it can be overcome

To apply please send an expression of interest statement to:

[carlos.arbutnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbutnott@shrg.ngo)