

Status of Women Engaged in Manual Scavenging



Report based on a Baseline survey undertaken in 2018 in four states of India

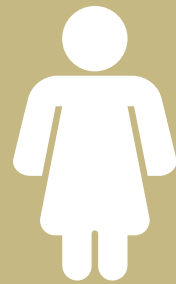


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Baseline
Survey Report



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Karmachari Andolan (SKA), steered under the leadership of Mr. Bezwada Wilson, Convenor, SKA, along with project coordination by Mr. Vishwajeet Yadav, ARUN.

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We would appreciate every avid reader of the report for having thoughtful considerations for some of the most vulnerable sections of the society as manual scavengers.

Disclaimer: The report is an attempt to understand the challenges faced by manual scavenging communities and would not necessarily be a deep insight. Also, it does not seek to make specific conclusions or detailed recommendations on how to improve the lives of manual scavengers but a factual representation of the communities in the defined project areas.



Executive Summary

The baseline survey was conducted in the four states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. This report has analysed the data generated for the following areas:

- a. Manual scavenging (MS) and dry latrines
- b. Prevalence of stigma, discrimination, untouchability, gender and caste-based discrimination and violence
- c. Participation in community led initiatives for rights and dignity
- d. Aspirations for economic and social empowerment
- e. Linkages/ inclusion with/in government institutions, banks, government schemes
- f. Awareness and access to rights and entitlements under 'Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013 (MSA 2013), The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015 (1 of 2016) and any other constitutional guarantees and provisions

A summary of the baseline survey findings in the four target states are presented in the table below:

Indicator	Baseline figure
Number of dry latrines	2505
Women safaikarmacharis engaged in all forms of MS	1172
Women safaikarmacharis engaged in MS in dry latrines + open drains	1139
Men safaikarmacharis engaged in all forms of MS	514
% of women among total cleaning dry latrines	92%
% of women who reported feeling discriminated based on caste	85%
Women who faced violence from family and people from other caste	429 women
Participation of women in community led initiatives	86 women
% of women with aspirations for liberation & empowerment	50%
% of women with linkages in government schemes under MSA 2013	1%
% of women with awareness and access to MSA 2013	25%
% of women with awareness regarding SC/ST POA 2015	9%

Survey strategy and methodology

The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the status of women in the above areas at the beginning of the action titled *Strengthening rule of law to advance rights and freedoms of Manual Scavengers in India* funded by 'Lot 3: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights - Country Based Support Scheme (EIDHR-CBSS)'. The survey was conducted by Association for Rural Urban and Needy (ARUN) in the four target states. The survey was conducted to obtain a better understanding of the situation in relation to the above areas and establish key baseline figures to measure the success of the action on completion.

ARUN identified 36 enumerators from the safai karmachari community in 36 bastis in 12 districts in the four states. A survey template was designed and finalised. A simple app was developed to conduct the survey. The enumerators were trained to administer the survey through computer-assisted personal interviewing method (CAPI) method. The enumerators with the support of the district organisers and the state coordinator conducted the survey. An initial pilot was conducted which was used to further improve the survey content and

methodology. However, due to technical glitches in the survey application, Pen-and-Paper Personal Interview (PAPI) method was used. The 36 enumerators visited each household in the 36 bastis and entered the data in the survey forms. The 36 survey locations are segregated basti areas where only safai karmacharis live and is the target area of the action.

The enumerators submitted 1686 forms including 1172 women and 514 men. The enumerator made personal contact with each safai karmachari and read out every question in the survey in Hindi to the safai karmachari and filled in the response. The survey responses were then sent to the ARUN, Delhi where the data was extracted for computation and compiled. The survey data has shown that of the 1686 persons surveyed, 956 persons are engaged in cleaning of 2505 dry latrines and included 882 women.

This baseline report is prepared by presenting and analysing the data in the above areas of the action.

Demographics

Caste and community

Under social status, the safai karmcharis were asked to indicate their caste, sub group, and religion. Except for one person who did not mention either caste or religion status, all the others have mentioned their caste or sub group. The specific community names listed by the safai karmcharis are Valmiki, Dom, Bhangji, Mehtar, Basfore, Balmiki, SC etc. The safai karmcharis have interchanged caste and religion. But not a single person has mentioned a religion other than 'Hindu'. When asked for religion many have mentioned their community and when asked for community many have mentioned 'Hindu'. It may be assumed that all the 1686 safai karmcharis covered in the survey are scheduled caste persons making it 100% dalits. Of the 1686 respondents there were 1172 women and 514 men.

Age

The data for the age of 956 safai karmcharis engaged in manual scavenging of dry latrines and open drains is presented in table 1:

TABLE 1: Age

Age	Female	Male
18-30	214	35
31-40	297	30
41-50	169	6
51-65	130	3
Above 65	27	0

Of the 1686 respondents, 45 women did not reveal their age. 11 women were above 75 years of age and manually cleaning dry latrines. From the above table it is evident that a large number of women, 60% are below 40 years. 92% of the manual scavengers surveyed are women and further increases with age to almost 100%.



Education

The safai karmachari community have a very low education status. Many of them have never gone to school or only till the primary level.

TABLE 2: Education status of 956 safai karmcharis cleaning dry latrines

Education level	Female	Male	Total
Never gone to school	510	38	548
Class 1 -5	305	23	328
Class 6 – 10	59	10	69
Class 11-12	4	1	5
Above 12	5	1	6

91% of the safai karmcharis have either never attended school or only for 5 years. Among the women, 92 % of the 882 safai karmcharis engaged in cleaning dry latrines, have never attended school or have studied only up to Class 5. Among the 74 men, 51% have never attended school and 31% have studied only up to Class 5. The figures are more dismal for higher education levels. Only 7% women had studied from Classes 6th to 10th grade in school against 13% from men. Only 5 women have attended school above Class 12 and 3 among them are from the same family and still engaged in manual scavenging.

Age and manual scavenging

The survey data indicates that the safai karmcharis have been engaged in manual scavenging for many generations. It was reported by 455 people that two to three generations of their families have been engaged in manual scavenging. All the safai karmcharis surveyed indicated that manual scavenging is the first and only work they have been doing.

TABLE 3: Age and manual scavenging

Number of years engaged in MS	Average age	Female	Male
1-5	28 (17 – 80 years)	139	85
6-10	34 (18 – 70 years)	255	121
11-20	37 (20 – 85 years)	233	113
21-30	48 (24 – 98 years)	58	20
31-40	59 (40 – 73 years)	20	14
Above 40 years	65 (40 – 86 years)	21	15

An analysis of the data in Table 3, shows that safai karmcharis were initiated in this work since they were very young. Many of them were just children between the age of 6 – 14 years when they were first engaged as manual scavengers. The survey did not cover children currently engaged in manual scavenging. By analysing the data in terms of estimating the age and number of years engaged in manual scavenging, it was evident that many of the manual scavengers were just children between the ages of 7-14 years when they started the work of manual scavenging. There are two girls of 17 years of age who have been recorded as manual scavengers and they have reported to have been working for four years already. This shows that they were forced into manual scavenging when they were only 13 years of age. One woman in Madhya Pradesh, who is 67 years old has been working as a manual scavenger for 60 years. She was forced into manual scavenging when she was just 7 years old.

Manual Scavenging and dry latrines

The surveyed number of safai karmcharis was 1686. Of this, 956 were found to be directly engaged in manual scavenging of

dry latrines. The following table gives details of safai karmcharis engaged in the different forms of manual scavenging:

TABLE 4: Safai karmcharis engaged in different forms of manual scavenging

Form of manual scavenging	Female	Male
Cleaning of dry latrines	882	74
Cleaning of open drain	257	29
Cleaning of septic tank/ pit	32	394
Cleaning of sewer	0	13
Cleaning of railway track	0	4
Cleaning of open defecation	1	0
Total number of safai karmacharis surveyed	1172	514

The number of women cleaning dry latrines and open drains is disproportionately large. 75% of women and 14% of men who participated in the survey reported manual cleaning of dry latrines. The caste and patriarchal nature of manual scavenging is clearly visible. These forms of scavenging are more visible, increasing the vulnerability

of the women to caste and patriarchal attitudes and behaviour. Women formed 92% of the total surveyed cleaning dry latrines: a task done alone and is individual in nature. Making a dalit woman scoop out human excreta with bare hands is a clear manifestation of patriarchy and the caste based untouchability.

TABLE 5: Details of dry latrines

No.	State	District	Persons engaged in cleaning dry latrines	Women cleaning open drains	Men cleaning open drains	No. of dry latrines
1	Jharkhand	Dhanbad	31	39	6	88
2	Jharkhand	Bokaro	69	75	0	125
3	Madhya Pradesh	Damoh	188	47	0	513
4	Madhya Pradesh	Panna	67	30	5	269
5	Uttar Pradesh	Farrukhabad	146	0	0	303
6	Uttar Pradesh	Kasganj	178	64	15	434
7	Uttar Pradesh	Meerut	132	0	0	449
8	Uttar Pradesh	Ghaziabad	44	0	0	205
9	Bihar	Buxar	33	1	0	47
10	Bihar	Purnea	41	0	0	44
11	Bihar	Rohtas	18	1	3	18
12	Bihar	Katihar	9	0	0	10
			956	257	29	4
				1242		2505

Total of 2505 dry latrines have been identified in the four states. 956 safai karmacharis are cleaning these dry latrines. The dry latrine owners pay wages in cash, food grain or food. Each safai karmachari

cleans between 3 – 6 individual latrines per day. They receive anything between INR 30 to INR 2000 per month. Some are paid in food grains or given rotis. Daily, they face untouchability while engaging in this work.



Link between caste, patriarchy and manual scavenging

Manual scavenging is caste based discrimination and atrocity. This is evident by the fact that generation after generation of manual scavengers are from the same scheduled caste families and households. Without a dignified livelihood and forced into the inhuman work of manual scavenging, the safai karmacharis live in conditions of exclusion, untouchability and discrimination. Their houses are spatially segregated from other communities and in locations set aside by the state administration and easily identified by caste and work based names like sweeper colony, bhangi basti etc. The organisation Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA)

will focus on this to expose the link between caste, patriarchy and manual scavenging. SKA's concern is that the safai karmacharis have deeply internalised and accepted their situation of caste based discrimination and untouchability. It is necessary for the safai karmachari communities to realise and expose the caste and patriarchal stereotyping of manual scavenging for their liberation. Through this action, SKA will engage with the safai karmachari community and develop an ideological framework to break the link between caste, patriarchy and manual scavenging. This action will focus on mobilising the safai karmachari

TABLE 6: Discrimination, untouchability and stigma

Caste, stigma and untouchability	Yes (f)	No (f)	Yes (m)	No (m)
Do you feel you are engaged in MS because of your caste?	968	204	487	27
Do you feel that you are treated with dignity as compared with others in society?	155	577	108	205
Do you feel that others look down on you because you are manual scavenger?	958	10	490	24
Do you feel that in school your children are not treated well because you are manual scavenger?	747	425	355	159
Do you think that if you were born in any other caste would you still be doing manual scavenging?	101	540	31	326
Do you face or experience untouchability?	580	39	255	24

community against caste and patriarchal values for assertion of constitutional and human rights. The data of all the 1686 safai karmacharis has been analysed to gain a deeper understanding of the link between caste, patriarchy and manual scavenging and the violence against safai karmacharis. It has already been established that 74% of the women surveyed and 14% of the men surveyed are engaged in manual scavenging of dry latrines which is the most direct and clear indication of the link between patriarchy and manual scavenging.

Taking an average of the above responses to measure the realisation and consciousness of caste, stigma and untouchability, 65% of the women said that they feel being discriminated on the basis of caste and considered untouchable in contrast to 75% of the men. It is evident that men have a

stronger realisation of caste discrimination and untouchability than women. 50% of both men and women have said that they have faced or experienced untouchability. Almost all of them have said that they experienced untouchability in public places like shops, markets or bazaars. So it can be assumed that there is limited interaction with people from other castes or the caste attitudes and behaviour of the dominant caste is so internalised that it has been normalised and not realised as an act of untouchability. 54% of all the safai karmacharis have clearly indicated that being from a particular caste is forcing them into manual scavenging. The data reveals that 85% of women and 92% of men feel that they are engaged in manual scavenging because of their caste and are looked down upon also as caste is a strong indication of untouchability.

Violence against safai karmacharis

TABLE 7: Violence against safai karmacharis

Violence and by whom	Female	Male
Have you faced any kind of violence?	429	183
Violence by a family member	85	1
Violence by an employer	121	5
Violence by a person of another caste	364	183
Violence by a government officer	2	4

Type of violence	Female	Male
Physical	97	1
Sexual	3	0
Psychological	139	19
Emotional	225	92
Financial	108	8
Verbal	33	2
Cultural	0	17

There has been public silence witnessed around the issue of violence against safai karmacharis. Engaging scheduled caste persons for manual scavenging is by itself an atrocity and violence. This survey records data on the safai karmacharis understanding and perception of violence in their lives. Around 35 to 36% of both men and women have spoken explicitly that they have faced violence. Only women spoke of violence from their own family members indicating a high rate of domestic violence. It is assumed that many women would have been reluctant to speak of domestic violence if not for the survey. Both men and women have reported violence from other people belonging to other castes. Women have

faced more instances of violence than men from their employers. This again points to the patriarchal link of manual scavenging where women are often cleaning dry latrines and come face-to-face usually alone with the employer. Violence by people from other castes is usually in public places – shops, market, bus stations etc. indicating a high rate of atrocity against scheduled castes. More women than men have faced multiple forms of violence from multiple sources. So it may be assumed that violence against Safai karmacharis is high and it is important to gain a deeper understanding and expose it for the liberation of safai karmacharis from caste and patriarchy based manual scavenging.

Participation in community led initiatives for rights and dignity

This action is focussed on mobilising and organising safai karmacharis into groups and collectives for asserting and accessing rights and entitlements. The data and analysis of their level of participation in any organised initiative for rights and dignity will be important to assess the progress of this objective in the action. It has been

established through the survey that the safai karmachari community because of the violence, discrimination and exclusion faced in their daily lives will only be able to organise for collective bargaining for their rights and entitlements with systematic initiatives organised through focussed groups and collectives.

TABLE 8: Participation in community led initiatives for rights and dignity

	Yes	No
Have you ever approached or filed a complaint with any government authority in case of any injustice faced by you?	88	983
Are you a member of any association or any labour union?	27	1043
Did you ever file an application or a self-declare yourself to the local authority to include your name as a Manual Scavenger?	15	1055

Only 20 women of the 1722 women have said that they are members of a self-help group. The scope of these groups is limited to credit and savings activity and does not engage for rights. An almost negligible number of six women have approached or filed any complaint to authorities in case of an injustice. A very small number of just 86

women have filed an application or self-declaration for inclusion in the government survey of manual scavengers. The survey data clearly establishes that there are no community led initiatives and organised activities for assertion of rights and entitlements.

Aspirations for economic and social empowerment

The survey has established that caste and patriarchy are the main compulsive factors that force people and especially women of the scheduled caste community into manual scavenging. However it is important to ascertain the aspiration of the women

engaged in cleaning dry latrines to be liberated from this work and be rehabilitated. The survey data indicates that the community aspires for a dignified livelihood but there has been little effort to take an initiative to come out of manual scavenging.

TABLE 9: Aspirations for economic and social empowerment. Number of people who responded with a yes to the statement / question:

Aspirations	Female	Male
Do you feel you are treated with dignity as compared to others in the society?	155	108
Do you think you have the right to a dignified livelihood?	541	222
Do you want to come out of this job?	641	283
Have you done anything to come out of manual scavenging?	153	16
Have you ever filed a self-declaration to be included in government schemes?	86	2

A significant number of women want to leave manual scavenging but have not been able to make an effort to come out of it. A total of 641 women have said they want to come out of performing the task of manual scavenging but only 153 have claimed to take initiatives for an alternate and dignified occupation. Of them, a majority 134 women tried for alternative jobs and only 8 women

made an effort for self-employment. With only 4 women approaching the government authority for an alternate job, it shows the low level of empowerment and assertiveness to claim the right to a dignified livelihood. Six women said they had received some training for an alternate livelihood. When asked if they had any skill for alternate and dignified livelihoods, women mentioned



unskilled work like construction labourer (33) and livestock rearing (134). But there were a few who also said that they had skills as a cook (389), beautician (37), tailor (53) and midwifery (29). The data establishes the evidence of aspiration among women engaged in manual scavenging and a realisation of their skills to enable liberation and rehabilitation. 50% of the 1172 women engaged in manual scavenging aspire to be liberated with a dignified livelihood. However the data reiterates that this action must enable the increase in aspiration across a larger number of women and men engaged in manual scavenging.

Linkages and inclusion with government institutions, banks, government schemes

All of the above data shows the need and demand for better linkages with the government and its institutions in order for the women to be liberated from manual scavenging. At the same time, the data also exposes the failure of the institutions of the state to deliver on their commitments to implement the laws and policies for the liberation and rehabilitation of manual

scavengers. During the survey discussions, women mentioned that they felt intimidated and threatened both by their own family and the institution to make efforts for linkages. The following data will establish the extent to which the state has failed to protect the constitutional rights of Dalit women engaged in manual scavenging.

TABLE 10: Access to government schemes, benefits and entitlements

Access to government schemes and benefits by women	Number of Yes
Benefit from any Government rehabilitation scheme	10
Any education support or scholarship for children	10
Received a photo identity card to access Government schemes	3
Below Poverty Line card	397
Antodaya card	62
Above Poverty Line card	279
Have you or any senior citizen in your family received a pension?	51

The survey data clearly establishes the failure of government institutions and schemes that have been formulated to liberate and rehabilitate persons engaged in manual scavenging. 63% women have access to ration cards. However these cards are universal and are not specific for persons

engaged in manual scavenging. There is almost zero implementation of schemes that are dedicated for the liberation and rehabilitation of persons engaged in manual scavenging including health, education and pension.

Awareness and access to rights and entitlements

under MSA 2013, Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe Atrocities Amendment Act (SC/ST Act) 2016 and any other constitutional guarantees and provisions.

The first law to eradicate manual scavenging came into effect in 1993. It was followed by surveys, institutions and schemes like the national scheme to liberate and rehabilitate scavengers (NSLRS) to identify, liberate and rehabilitate persons engaged in manual scavenging. SKA established through a public interest litigation and a court order that manual scavenging was still rampant in 2013. Another more stronger and detailed law was effected in 2013, 'The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013' which provided for surveys, liberation and comprehensive rehabilitation. But this baseline survey has effectively documented that the government

is once again failing to implement the law and its schemes. In addition, seeing that 100% of people engaged in manual scavenging are from the scheduled caste category, the 'Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Amendment Act 2015' (SC/ST POA 2015) included manual scavenging as a caste atrocity. Even after a Supreme Court order to strictly implement the 2013 MSA and the SC/ST POA for the protection and liberation of persons engaged in manual scavenging there has been zero implementation.

The data of this survey establishes that these acts are rarely implemented.

TABLE 11: Awareness of laws, rights and entitlements

Awareness of laws and access to rights and entitlements	Female	Male
Knowledge of 'The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 and the Rules'	283	151
Aware that manual scavenging is prohibited by law	237	93
Know that employing as manual scavenger is a crime	207	203
Aware about the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015	105	140



A critical focus in this action is to raise the awareness and knowledge of laws, rights and entitlements of the safai karmacharis especially, women. The figures in Table 11 show a weak level of awareness and knowledge among safai karmachari community. An average 25% of the people surveyed have some knowledge of the laws and entitlements. Only 9% of the women were aware of the SC/ST POA 2015. The

community can demand and access rights and entitlements only if they are aware of them. The state is accountable not only to effect laws and policies that protect historically discriminated and oppressed communities but also to ensure that there is wide awareness and sound knowledge about the laws across the population in order to effectively implement them.

Conclusion

The findings of the survey indicate that manual scavenging and dry latrines are rampant in the four states. The safai karmacharis live in segregated and excluded colonies and have faced discrimination and oppression for at least three generations. The survey data reveals that 92% of women surveyed are engaged as manual scavengers and that caste and patriarchy has and still plays a central role in holding up and sustaining manual scavenging. The survey has exposed the rampant discrimination and even violence against the safai karmacharis. Even the state has been a perpetrator by their negligence and apathy and in some cases directly employing as manual scavengers. The normalisation and internalisation of caste based discrimination and patriarchal oppression by men and women of all castes and communities has led to manual scavenging becoming deep rooted. It will require sustained and focussed efforts to dismantle and demolish these structures. The appalling fact is that girl children as young as seven years of age have been conditioned and forced into manual scavenging. The survey data also exposes the blatant and active exclusion of the institutions of the state. The safai karmcharis are generally located in the centre of all urban areas to be on call all the time for the convenience of the government and public at large. When the data reveals that they have not been included in any state welfare schemes or benefits, it points to wilful exclusion and discrimination.

The survey has established that 1) manual scavenging and dry latrines are rampant in the four states; 2) there are large gaps in the implementation of laws and policies for the liberation and rehabilitation of women engaged in different forms of manual scavenging, especially cleaning of dry latrines; 3) there is lack of knowledge and awareness among the safai karmacharis about their rights and entitlements; 4) caste and patriarchy is actively used to condition and oppress the scheduled caste women and men into manual scavenging; 5) there is large scale discrimination and violence against safai karmacharis; 6) caste and patriarchal oppression is actively disallowing and denying aspirations and initiatives for right to life and dignity with alternate livelihood options; and 7) the historical injustice by caste and patriarchy has killed efforts of safai karmachari women to organise and exercise their agency for their wellbeing along with the opportunity to transform themselves or their communities.

This baseline survey data and report aims to inform about the possible endeavours to enhanced social capital and capacities of the communities engaged in manual scavenging as well as their CSOs/ networks, to advocate for their rights to justice and thereby contribute to promote an inclusive, equitable and peaceful society in line with SDG16.



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WaterAid India Country Office

2nd floor, RK Khanna Tennis Stadium, 1, Africa Avenue, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110029

Tel +91 11 6612 4400 Email waindia@wateraid.org

WWW.WATERAIDINDIA.IN