

End of the Action Study Report

**STRENGTHENING RULE OF LAW TO ADVANCE RIGHTS
AND FREEDOMS OF MANUAL SCAVENGERS IN INDIA**

A European Union supported Project



March 2021



This project is funded by
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WaterAid/ Sharada Prasad

1. Context

Manual scavenging is an age-old inhuman sanitation work tradition in India, mostly associated with caste and social hierarchies. One of the worst forms of manual scavenging is of emptying and collecting the human waste from insanitary dry latrines, and carrying it on head and disposing the same on a daily basis - mostly performed by women from specific most marginalized caste groups of the society. Despite its prohibition through legislative acts and judicial interventions since 1993 and an enactment of new law in 2013, manual scavenging practice still continues and has perpetuated in newer forms. Women engaged in manual scavenging are discriminated and stigmatized by the society and they often face systemic exclusion from development entitlements, basic healthcare and education services, and various government welfare and social security schemes. The user families engage them informally with extremely negligible wages, and most of them do not have any realistic access to alternative livelihood opportunities despite specific government schemes for the purpose. In essence, the basic rights of these workers and their freedom to choose decent work has been denied, despite legal instruments and programmatic measures.

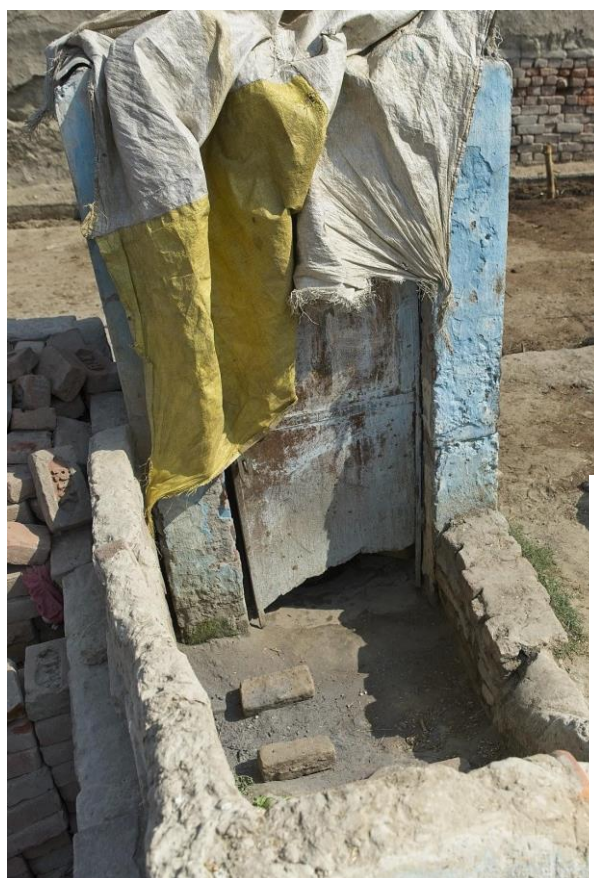
To bring this issue into light and to explore solutions for the same, Jal Seva Charitable Foundation (WaterAid India), in collaboration with Association for Rural and Urban Needy (ARUN) and Centre for Equity Studies (CES), had initiated a three-year project (January 2018 to March 2021) titled ‘Strengthening rule of law to advance rights and freedoms of manual scavengers in India’, supported by the European Commission (EC). This project, under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), aimed to improve the situation of women engaged in manual scavenging (WMS) in India through association with a grassroots level organisation and empowerment initiatives; research as well as evidence generation; and advocacy initiatives at various levels.

As the project neared its end, an End of the Action (EOA) study was conducted in 2021 by two external consultants, to track the impact of the project on the beneficiaries and stakeholders and come up with recommendations for the way forward to sustain the success of the works undertaken during this project. **For this study, the term WMS was used to represent women who are engaged in cleaning dry latrines and/ or other forms of sanitation work and belong to families wherein one or more of the family members are/ were engaged in manual scavenging.** The term Safai Karmachari refers to a person engaged in cleaning work.

2. EOA Study Methodology

- An EOA survey covering 123 WMS was conducted in six select locations in two project states. This was semi-structured interviews with 30 of these survey respondents as well.
- Broad assessment of prevalence of insanitary dry latrines were done, by means of a photo documentation and brief discussions with the dry latrine owners.
- The Project baseline study findings, annual reports and other relevant project documents were reviewed.
- Discussions were held with the project team members from WaterAid India, and project partners.

Uttar Pradesh	Town 1: Andheri bag (10 respondents)
	Town 2: Mohalla Mohan (9 respondents) Jay Jayram Mohalla (21 respondents)
	Town 3: Laxmanpuri, (1 respondent) Sadar Alimpura (11 respondents) Valmiki Basti (10 respondents)
	Town 4: Banthla (7 respondents) Behta (18 respondents)
Jharkhand	Town 1: Railway colony (20 respondents)
	Town 2: Sweeper colony (4 respondents) Bhagahara jhopri (7 respondents) Lakharkhanda jhopdi (5 respondents) Kartik Nagar jhopdi - (1 respondent)



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3. Survey Findings

Demographics

The survey reaffirms the caste-based character of the practice of manual scavenging. All the respondents in project locations belonged to the Dalit community, from castes including Valmiki, Dom, Bansfore, Hari, etc. The survey data indicated that many of the surveyed WMS have been engaged in manual scavenging for generations. The survey further revealed that many women below the age of 30 were/are involved in manual scavenging. Overall, 26.8% of the 123 surveyed WMS belonged to the age group of 18-30; 39.8% belonged to the age group of 31-40; 21.1% belonged to the age group of 41-50 and 12.2% were in the age group of 51-65.

Prevalence of dry latrines

The survey results and discussions with different actors revealed that the dry latrines are still prevalent in both the study states, though in reduced numbers compared to erstwhile situation. While study locations in one town in UP reported to not have any more dry latrines at the time of the survey, the same was not the case in another town. An important observation was that, while the project's baseline survey in 2018 identified close to 2000 dry latrines, the preliminary results of a dry latrine survey completed towards the end of year 2 of the project indicated around 75% reduction in the number of dry latrines and the EOA survey results suggests a 90% reduction in dry latrines in the study areas as compared to the 2018 baseline survey.

The survey indicated that 27.6% of the surveyed WMS (34 women) are engaged in cleaning dry latrines even now, with direct contact with human faeces. Majority of these women are living in the four towns of UP. It is to be noted that these women are informal workers and they neither have fixed wages for cleaning the dry latrines nor do their employers pay them in a timely manner.



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Education

Safai karmacharis, in general, have a very low education status with many having never gone to school or only until the primary level, the same was observed in the case of the WMS. Of the 123 WMS surveyed, 76.4% of the respondents had never attended school, 10.6% had received lower primary level school education, 6.5% of them have finished upper primary level education, 4.9% went to secondary school and 1.6% had studied till senior secondary, and none of the surveyed women went to college for graduate or post graduate studies. It was also reported that even when students from the families engaged in manual scavenging rightfully entered academic spaces with necessary qualifications, they found themselves unwelcomed by their peers and administrators.

Challenges faced by women in moving out of manual scavenging

Many women have moved away or tried to move away from manual scavenging work in the past decade but they continue to be a disadvantaged group engaging in other forms of sanitation work such as cleaning flush toilets, cleaning open drains and sweeping streets/ houses. Some have become cleaning workers or caretakers in domestic, public, and institutional settings such as community/public toilet keeping, school toilet cleaning, municipalities, government, and private offices cleaning. Nevertheless, their work continues to involve toilet cleaning.

Most women interviewed stated that they faced various forms of discrimination from local people, which in turn have resulted in further implications on their well-being. The localities where they lived often do not have access to household piped water connection and have limited access to stand posts for water for drinking and domestic needs. Many of the respondents mentioned that, even now, they were commonly prohibited from eating with other people (those from “upper” castes and classes) and they are expected to drink from separate glasses in tea stalls and eat with separate utensils in restaurants (if at all they are allowed to enter the restaurants).

Income

The respondents reported how the nature of their employment is financially precarious, with very poor pay. It was found that 20.3% of the surveyed WMS were unemployed at the time of the survey with no means of income. A part of this could be attributed towards loss of livelihood opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 64% of the WMS' average monthly income ranged between INR 240 and INR 4500 and 15.5% indicated that they earn between INR 5000 and INR 9500 per month while undertaking multiple jobs.

According to the Government of India's Ministry of Labour and Employment, basic wages for individuals employed in “employment of sweeping and cleaning excluding activities prohibited under the PEMS Act” is INR 350 per day plus appropriate dearness allowances (for tier C areas), totaling their basic monthly income to around INR 12000. While the GoI clearly indicated that the basic wage set towards sanitation workers does not include those involved in manual scavenging, the survey provides an inference that a vast majority of 87% surveyed WMS (107 in total) earned considerably less than half of the basic wage (INR 6000) set by the GoI towards sanitation workers in tier C areas. It is to be noted that 68.3% of the surveyed WMS live in locations classified as Areas A and B (One of the towns classified under Area A and three of them under Area B) where the GoI

set basic wages for sanitation workers are significantly higher compared to those set for Area C¹ thereby making these WMS more disadvantaged.

Access to Services and Schemes

The survey revealed that around 90.24% of the respondents have ration cards, 100% have an Aadhar card and 99.18% have voter card with most of them acquiring these documents in the past couple of years. Some of the respondents had reported that lack of the above-mentioned identity documents in 2013 led to failures in enlisting them as women who were carrying out manual scavenging activities during 2013 or thereafter under the government's survey regarding the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Act, 2013. Despite holding these documents now, many of them are yet to be enrolled as people employed as manual scavengers. This has excluded them from various commitments made by the PEMSAR Act and self-employment scheme for rehabilitation of manual scavengers (SRMS) for these communities, as detailed below.

Some respondents (9.76%) reported that ration cards had not been issued by the state governments to households that are eligible to purchase subsidised food grain from the public distribution system after the implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA). Many WMS reported that they do not have essential documents to meet the eligibility criteria and so are unable to access free essential items like rice, wheat, sugar, etc. needed for their daily life, which they should be ideally entitled to, under the NFSA.

“We would like our names to be included in official records as people involved in manual scavenging so we can access schemes meant for our benefit. While our ward member who is a Dalit person has been trying to enrol us, he has been unsuccessful in raising our due to the domination of “upper” caste local authorities,” said a survey respondent from UP.

Legal Awareness

The survey revealed that most respondents (93.93%) were aware that manual scavenging is prohibited by law and many (77.06%) knew about the rules and provisions under the PEMSAR Act, 2013. 62.88% respondents stated that they knew that their employer is committing a crime by employing them for manual scavenging. 27.77% of the respondents were aware of the government's schemes made for them and scholarship schemes for supporting their children's education.

Rehabilitation Challenges under PEMSAR Act, 2013

Discussions with the surveyed WMS revealed that post-2013, the state authorities had put pressure on them to shift out of the occupation. While the updated PEMSAR Act contains provisions that impose a duty on the authorities to undertake a number of actions such as the identification of people engaged in manual scavenging in the area and their subsequent rehabilitation, the same does not seem to be translated into reality, except for this initial action.

Around 42.69% of the respondents reported that they had filed an application or self-declaration to the local authority for the inclusion of their name as a manual scavenger but only 6.5% of the respondents mentioned that their name has been included in the official list of manual scavengers

¹ <https://clc.gov.in/clc/node/673>

by the government of India. 47.1% of respondents had applied for the one-time cash assistance under the government's Self Employment Scheme for rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers but only 2.44% were reported to have received the one-time cash assistance under this scheme.

"I would like to move away from sanitation work and have my own tailoring shop. I have done a certificate course through my own resources in (district name – removed) on tailoring but I do not have the capital to start my business. I have not received financial support from any schemes so far," said a survey respondent.

Access to Healthcare

In spite of the immense health risks faced by the *safai karmacharis*, not a single respondent reported having access to affordable and proper access to preventive and remedial health care services as well as enrolment to life and health insurance, including under the PMJAY.



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4. Challenges in Self-help Groups (SHG) registration, bank linkage and, operations and maintenance

- As per discussions with these women, formation of SHGs was relatively easy; there were no burdensome conditions and all WMS had to do was stand surety for one another. In some cases, there were difficulties in getting bank registrations for the SHGs due to lack of surety and assets which let the banks to quantify the WMS as unbankable and refusing their SHGs to be registered and bank accounts to be opened, despite special provisions available for opening such accounts for people from most deprived and marginalised sections of the society.
- It was told that the WMS were trapped in a cycle of debt from local moneylenders already, and the COVID-19 pandemic induced economic crisis had further worsened their situation. Among all the SHGs formed under the project, small amounts of money had been lent to members through inter-loaning. Though these small, one-off loans helped with consumption needs, these were not adequate for helping them set up or expand into a small-scale business thereby not benefiting them beyond a point.

“These women were hopeful that linking SHGs with banks would help them move beyond consumption based loans and help them engage in small scale enterprises/ self-employment such as to buy sewing machines, set up food stalls or buy livestock that can bring them reasonable incomes,” said a project coordinator.

- The supporting agency teams involved in implementation of the project had strengths in campaigning and community mobilization. They belonged to the specific communities engaged in manual scavenging as well. However, their understanding and skillsets for initiating income generation activities and livelihood initiatives were minimal. They were not fully equipped for activities like training, data collection, documentation, bank linkages etc. as well. Equipping them for these caused some delays in streamlining things.
- Whether these SHGs will be strong enough to sustain themselves once the project ends and field partner teams exit, still remains a question, unless they are appropriately linked with institutionalised programs and initiatives run by government or non-governmental agencies.

5. Overall Project Review

Awareness and mobilisation: During the project period, regular community meetings were held wherein 831 WMS were made aware of the PEMSR Act, 2013 and the 2014 Supreme Court Judgment. A [pocketbook](#) highlighting the legal and regulatory provisions for preventing manual scavenging, and government programmes for rehabilitation of manual scavengers was prepared and distributed among the community. This book can be seen as an important resource for organisations who are working with the people and communities engaged in manual scavenging.

The community level structures across project mobilised people to submit a range of petitions and demands to aid the eligible people as well, for their enrolment under the act, one-time cash assistance and loans under the Self-employment scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), enrolment of their children under educational schemes and scholarships and so on, though with very minimal results and positive responses.

Formation of self-help groups: 36 self-help groups covering 1,139 women engaged in manual scavenging were formed across 36 urban/ peri-urban settlements across all project locations in four states. Community resource persons (CRPs) and field coordinators from supporting agencies aided regular meetings of these SHGs.

Evidence generation: A [baseline study](#) was undertaken in 2018 across 36 project locations in four states, which highlighted the prevalence of dry latrines and the practice of manual scavenging, and various challenges faced by the communities engaged in this work. A photo documentation was commissioned to capture the daily realities of the manual scavengers, and a [photo exhibition](#) was organized at Delhi and in Lucknow. The photo exhibition received high visibility and [attention from media](#), civil society and the public.

An implementation review of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Act 2013 was undertaken. Based on the review, a detailed [study report](#), a [short documentary](#) and four [policy briefs](#) were developed. Another [policy brief](#) analysing the issues of manual scavengers from the SDG perspective was also developed, based on the project learnings, as well as secondary analysis.

Business case building: The process of exploring alternative livelihood options for WMS was rolled out. An orientation session on alternative livelihoods was conducted for the community resource persons and field coordinators, in partnership with Urban Management Centre (UMC), an agency that has been working with similar workers in urban contexts. This was followed by training modules development and a series of orientation sessions for close to 70 WMS leaders across 4 states - covering aspects of rehabilitation schemes by the government, SHG grading and assessment, financial literacy, business models for alternative livelihoods. Furthermore, exposure visits were organized for 20 WMS leaders and CRPs in Bihar wherein they visited the intervention areas of Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS/ Jeevika) and SEWA Bharat, to gain an understanding of various SHG-led models for alternative livelihoods, run by people from similar social strata.

National Level Advocacy: A national-level consultation ‘Including the Excluded’ was organized in 2019 to discuss the issues and way forward, with stakeholders from national and local governments, civil society actors and sanitation sector organizations. Field evidence, key challenges and recommendations were presented to NITI Aayog officials in 2019.

[A knowledge repository on the issues of sanitation work and manual scavenging](#) has been launched on the WaterAid India website, which is another important resource for people working on this issue. This comprises resources put together by WaterAid India and its partners, as well as links to the resources prepared by other organizations working on this front, and will be updated regularly. A number of media advocacy interventions were undertaken to highlight the key issues for policy makers as well as the public in general, through [opinion pieces in newspapers](#), inputs in media coverage, a [social media campaign](#), and a North-India wide FM radio programme. .

A WMS-CSO Roadmap was developed for collective advocacy actions at district, state and national level for elimination of manual scavenging. First of the series of this meeting was held in the state of Uttar Pradesh, in November 2019. Close to 50 members from civil society, human rights-based and Dalit organisations participated and discussed a broad set of action. A similar meeting was organised in Madhya Pradesh as well.

A national level consultation was organized in June 2019 in New Delhi to bring the synthesis of civil society groups, think tank institutions, government representatives and policy makers to deliberate upon the way forward of how to eradicate the manual scavenging and ensure that the entitlements and their rights are assured to them. A fortnight before the consultation, a roundtable meeting was organized of selected civil society groups to deliberate upon a collective effort and to undertake an alliance building to address the issue of manual scavenging. Meetings with National Safai Karmachari Finance Development Corporation (NSKFDC) and NITI Aayog was also held.

Global advocacy: WaterAid and its partner ARUN represented the voices of manual scavengers from India in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2019 at UN HQ, New York through a side-session with attendance from various international development sector organizations and actors, [supplemented with a brief on the plight of women engaged in manual scavenging](#). A [Call to Action](#) and a [video](#) highlighting the plight of women engaged in manual scavenging, and the ways forward were disseminated during the side event on ‘Human rights to water and sanitation’ held during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2020. A presentation on ‘Challenges of Sanitation workers in India- during and prior to the pandemic’ was made at the Stockholm World Water Week 2020, and

the 2020 global meet of the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance. The key challenges were also presented in a Public Consultation with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Water & Sanitation in December 2020.

Overall, the project could highlight the issues and challenges faced by the women engaged in manual scavenging in a highly visible manner.

COVID-19 Relief Works: The COVID-19 pandemic forced most community members out of work, and they faced severe distress and hunger. Therefore, some support measures were taken up under the project, including provision of dry rations to the most vulnerable households and setting up of community kitchens. Dry ration support was provided to 1,800 persons from the manual scavenging communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community kitchens were organised in four states during the COVID-19 pandemic, wherein 823 persons from the manual scavenging community were supported during the lockdowns and later, where most of the families engaged in this profession were out of work.

6. Recommendations - Systemic measures to eliminate manual scavenging from current and upcoming generations and rehabilitate persons engaged in this practice

- **Proper legal framework:** The study findings suggest that there is a need to reform the policy framework, have revamped systems and a proper institutional infrastructure of implementation of PEMSR Act, 2013. The particular aspects that need to be improved include - broadening of the definition of manual scavenging, clauses related to identification of insanitary latrines and identification of people engaged in manual scavenging. Considering the intergenerational extension and caste underpinnings of this work, it is important to expand the criteria for enrolment of people under the PEMSR. There should be clear guidelines for implementers at different levels, considering the complexity of these issues.
- **Improved monitoring and accountability mechanisms:** There is a need to ensure the enforcement of the provisions of the PEMSR Act; especially those that impose a duty on the authorities to undertake identification of people engaged in manual scavenging under their jurisdiction and their subsequent rehabilitation by providing cash assistance to a member of the household. However, this is challenging in absence of the state and district level institutions as well as the state level commissions in place with necessary skills and competencies. It is to be noted that despite several levels of advocacy done for state and district level institutions as part of the project, these have been realised only in one of the four project states in the span of three years.

There is a need to have State Commissions for Safai Karamcharis, an institution mandated to monitor the implement the PEMSR Act, 2013. Until date, only 8 out of 28 states and 8 union territories in India have constituted the commission, as per the data available with the National Commission for Safai Karmcharis. There is a need to constitute district level vigilance committees too, which are not constituted in many states. There is also a need to introduce incentives for proactive administrators alongside building strong culpability measures for those who fail to implement the legal provisions properly.

At the national/state level, the governments should develop and implement time bound plans and targets to facilitate identification, enrolment and rehabilitation of WMS. To facilitate proper

survey and identification, creating an atmosphere of acceptance about the prevalence of the practice is mandatory. All legal affidavits and statements saying that the practice of manual scavenging does not exist in specific localities should be declared null and void as a first step.

- ***Better data:*** There is a need for robust, consistent and reliable data collection by government, leading to proper analysis and action including availability of the same in the public domain. This should be done considering the existing data as just the beginning. Without this, the rehabilitation efforts of people engaged in manual scavenging cannot be completed. A national indicator related to eradication of manual scavenging should be introduced under the broad SDG frameworks as well, to make it a flagship initiative.
- ***Adequate financing:*** Adequate budget needs to be allocated and utilised for the Self-employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) of 2007 by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and the data on its spending and outcomes should be made publicly available. Linked departments such as labour, urban and rural development, education, health, etc. should be given adequate responsibilities and allocations as well, in order to ensure the upliftment goals of the communities engaged in this work.
- Loans under the government's self-employment scheme for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers should be available on simple terms to the eligible individuals. Relevant administrations and actors should prioritize the rights and freedoms of families involved in manual scavenging.
- ***Rehabilitation compensation to WMS should be increased:*** Grants are capped at no more than INR 40,000 per individual, which is too small considering that poor women from the community cannot fill the gap through owner equity and borrowings from the informal system. The National Human Rights Commission has recommended to make this to INR 100,000. There is a need to enhance the grant amount even higher, for these people to be able to set up viable enterprises. The loans available should add value this further, rather than acting as the entire capital.
- ***Faster disbursement of compensations/ grants:*** To improve the effectiveness of the rehabilitation scheme, there needs to be a faster process of clearing applications and disbursement of one-time compensation and loan. There should be a charter that mandates to ensure disbursement of applications within stipulated time and appellate authorities or grievance redressal arrangements where people can take up the non-fulfilment of mandates or injustice faced.
- ***Better facilitation of bank linkage for loans:*** Once a WMS is eligible for a loan, a nodal (resource) centre should have staff who are trained to facilitate credit linkage with financial institutions. The resource agencies should be well versed with the loan fund policies and procedures of banks along with PEMSAR Act/ SRMS scheme related logistics so to better support WMS in developing successful financial linkages with banks for loans under NSKFDC schemes, MUDRA or other schemes along with supporting them with their business plans. These institutions should also facilitate bank account opening and ease of operations for the groups formed by the WMS as well. Necessary directives to banks should be given if the same is missing. Linkages with National Urban or Rural Livelihood Missions is another important measure to

realise through interdepartmental coordination. This will expand the horizon of rehabilitation and enhance limited scope of current schemes.

- ***Better technology:*** On priority, Centre and States should introduce sustainable technological alternatives that will aid eradication of all forms of manual scavenging. For this, a matrix including possible technologies, taking into consideration possible limitations in urban, peri-urban and rural settings, in consultation with sanitation workers and engineering departments. They should also promote the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for all sanitation works. Budgets for sewage treatment infrastructure or faecal sludge treatment infrastructure should necessarily be enhanced to cover total mechanisation of toilet tank emptying, cleaning and transportation. Similarly, provisions for full-fledged machines and technologies for repair and management of sewer lines and treatment infrastructure should be ensured. It will be also important to empower and facilitate currently manual scavenging communities to start or own such entrepreneurship as one of the options of their rehabilitation, if they are interested and willing to take them up.
- ***Need of coordinated action by CSOs:*** CSOs need to build the evidence base to highlight the prevalence of the practice and push for more concerted and comprehensive efforts to raise awareness, address knowledge gaps, and highlight good practices related to rehabilitation of WMS and take action to improve the health, safety and dignity of the WMS. There is a dire need for all WASH sector organisations to prioritise this issue under their strategies and plans, and to work together with trade unions, organisations working on caste based discrimination, labour rights, livelihoods and larger human rights, who are highlighting these issues in an isolated manner. Work related to faecal sludge management and waste management should position this agenda prominently. Pilot projects should demonstrate ways and strategies for better rehabilitation of these communities and technologies that completely do away with scope for manual interfaces in faecal matter management.

7. Way Forward for working with people and communities engaged in manual scavenging

Following are some community-based measures to sustain the success of the project under study, to take it forward and to identify and promote best possible alternative livelihood options for WMS.

Sustainability of SHGs

Linking SHGs to a banking mechanism has helped lay a foundation for sustainability of the improved access to savings of WMS groups. There is also a need for greater regulation and supervision in some cases and it is highly recommended that the empowering processes of SHG promotion should be continued lest such groups buckle under persistent internal pressures, especially after the COVID-19 induced socio-economic crisis.

A concreted drive towards institutional capacity building and financial literacy is needed to ensure sustainability of the SHGs formed by WMS. Training local youth on cashbook entry and basic accounting and financial management could be a possible way forward for this. Leadership training can be provided to select leaders from the community so they can manage their groups.

A demand from WMS across the study locations was for the program to promote SHGs to establish microenterprises. For this, a cluster/ federation of SHGs can be formed through which women can start a small enterprise to improve their livelihood. These clusters would help bring members from multiple SHGs together, provide them a safe space and provide enough finances to be able to set up, operate and maintain their enterprises. Ensuring interactions of these women with successful entrepreneurs and exposure visits to such groups have been seen as a great energiser as part of the project, which needs to be scaled up exponentially.

Finally, working closely with the government to come up with guidelines to ensure WMS' and their SHGs are provided with access low interest state government credit to set up businesses. Small credit should also be made available to individual WMS without the requirement that they be part of a women's collective so to support women who have independent business plans and/ or support those who do not have access to such collectives. All these can be done within the powers of state, district and urban level administrators but such action should be mandated and promoted actively.

Enterprise development

Projects such as this, should in future build microenterprises of women by providing them with a range of critical services, such as business development support, mentoring, finance, as well as access to the banking system. Continuous capacity building and troubleshooting is essential too, including for ensuring availability of loans from different financial sources, the ease of disbursement of loans, negotiating interest levied on it, getting the most supportive method of loan repayment, etc. These should be supported by facilitation by trained personnel.

"We need technical and financial support in accessing working capital for setting up some activities like livestock rearing," said a survey respondent.

Need of community level Facilitators for ensuring inclusion of WMS in SRMS: Similar to the system of banking correspondents, such facilitation can be done by educated youth from the community, engaged as Community Facilitators (CFs) by the NSKFD/ nodal centre at district level. This could help the women prepare a profit and loss account for the enterprise based on basic business data - record of sales, expenses, withdrawals from business etc. The CFs should be trained to offer suggestions and solutions for enterprise promotion, address the needs and grievances of the community. Their role will primarily be in facilitating start-up support, handholding entrepreneurs, monitoring progress and ensuring timely loan repayment from enterprises. Also, there should be mechanisms for peer-to-peer learning from similar entrepreneurs; CFs should be empowered and trained to facilitate such dialogues to ensure sustainability of enterprises. In many cases, enterprises fail first 6 months of operations because of the lack of a support system. CFs could help bridge this gap, including in supporting the incubation and various processes around the same.

To conclude, the project has been able to set up some good examples for organising and mobilising the community of WMS across project sites, however, the existing systemic and structural challenges has prevented it actually trigger changes in the lives of the WMS. The future projects on this issue should consider all the complex administrative and societal realities around this issue while planning interventions and strategizing them. Partnerships for such projects should be drawn based on the skillsets required as well. The community organisations can facilitate the ground level processes, but necessary skillsets and experience should be brought in for negotiating and shaping changes as envisaged. The current project tried these strategies towards the end of the project; however, these could be formed as considerations for the very beginning in the future.



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Report on the End of the Action Study

Strengthening rule of law to advance rights and freedoms of manual scavengers in India

March 2021

This summary report is based on the end of the action (EOA) study undertaken by WaterAid India with support from Amita Bhaduri and Sharada Prasad, consultants for the purpose, under the project ‘Strengthening rule of law for advancing the rights and freedoms of manual scavengers in India’, supported by the European Commission- European Instrument of Democracy and Human Rights.



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A movement for elimination of manual scavenging